

**NEW HARTFORD BOARD OF FINANCE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, MAY 10, 2018 – 7:00PM
NEW HARTFORD TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: Chairman Jim Fitzgerald, Dan Charest, Reggie Smith, Jr., Steve Tuxbury, Regina Wexler, Ben Witte, Alternate: Paul Leclair, Substitute Recording Secretary Debbie Ventre.

ABSENT: Alternates: Bart Baxter, Kerry Guilfoyle,

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: Tax Collector Linda Sheffield, Tom Buzzi, Laura Garay, Aulay Carlson, Selectman Eric Claman, First Selectman Dan Jerram (7:08) and Selectman Alesia Kennerson (7:08)

I. Call To Order

Chairman Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

II. Seating of Alternates

All regular members were present. No alternates needed to be seated.

III. Discuss and take any action on the Suspense List as presented by Linda Sheffield, Tax Collector, Town of New Hartford

Chairman Fitzgerald asked Linda Sheffield for her comments on the Suspense List. She noted that placing accounts in Suspense removes them from anticipated revenue for the town, but they remain collectible to the town for 15 years. She sends the suspended accounts out to a collection agency and they have had some success in retrieving funds for the town.

MOTION Tuxbury, second Witte, to approve the Suspense List dated May, 10, 2018 for 19,527.98.

Unanimously Approved.

Chairman Fitzgerald inquired about the increase in this year's suspense list over prior years. Mrs. Sheffield explained that the town acquired a real estate parcel at last year's tax sale and the taxes previously due on that property are transferred to suspense until they are no longer collectible.

IV. Approval of Meeting Minutes

April 10, 2018 Special Meeting

MOTION Smith, second Charest, to approve the minutes of the April 10, 2018 Board of Finance Special Meeting.

Aye: Fitzgerald, Charest, Tuxbury, Smith, Wexler, Opposed: None, Abstained: Witte

Motion passes

V. Communications to the Board

Chairman Fitzgerald noted that he does not have any communications to the Board and inquired if anyone else had received anything.

VI. Public Comment

Chairman Fitzgerald recognized Selectman Eric Claman. He commented that he agrees with the Board's interpretation of the State Statute regarding Board of Finance approval of line item transfers. He realizes that there has been friction between the Board of Finance and the First Selectman due to the difference in opinion on this matter. He suggests a meeting between the Boards and the Town Attorney to reach an agreement on this issue to move forward in a more cooperative relationship.

Chairman Fitzgerald recognized Aulay Carlson who commented that the mill rate in New Hartford increases each year while neighboring towns are 50% lower. Prospective residents may choose to live in the neighboring towns due to the more favorable mill rates. He suggests that the town focus on needs versus wants and require that the need be demonstrated before the want is satisfied. First Selectman Jerram responded that the budget was just passed by an overwhelming majority and commends the Board of Finance on the budget presented for the vote. He noted that other residents have demonstrated by voting that they support the budget. Mr. Witte noted that Mr. Carlson is entitled to his opinion but requested specific examples of towns that have a mill rate which is half of New Hartford's. Mr. Carlson cited Morris as an example.

VII. Discuss and take any action on Board of Finance Legal Representation

Chairman Fitzgerald shared that he and Ms. Wexler have been working to have something to present to the Board. First Selectman commented that per a legal opinion presented to this Board, the Board of Finance does not have authority to hire their own legal counsel.

VIII. Discussion regarding the detailed information submitted by Bookkeeper Annie Witte at the direction of the First Selectman regarding Carpenter Road Bridge

Chairman Fitzgerald asked if all members had received and reviewed the information provided by Bookkeeper Annie Witte. All members agreed that they had received the report. He opened the floor to questions from the Board.

Mr. Smith asked when the bridge is expected to be completed. First Selectman noted that the town had to file for a new general permit. It was filed in November but to date has not been received. Work cannot begin without the permit being issued. Some legal fees are being incurred in pursuing resolution but other than that there have been no expenses on this project. Mr. Fitzgerald inquired if the bridge needs to be redesigned. Mr. Jerram indicated there are changes to the design related to dewatering. Mr. Tuxbury inquired if there is an expectation that the project will be more expensive than the original bid. Mr. Jerram indicated that at such time that he has that expectation he will bring the request to this Board. Ms. Wexler inquired if two lawyers on this project are redundant. Mr. Jerram replied that they have different areas of expertise.

IX. Discuss and take any action regarding the WPCA, and its debt payments to the Town of New Hartford

Chairman Fitzgerald shared copies of the minutes of the WPCA from May 3, 2018. He noted that the revenue number of \$66,000 and change has been cut in half in the current budget. Based upon the discussion detailed in the minutes, there are concerns regarding the revenue. Mr. Tuxbury inquired if there is a date or timeline for the potential sale. Mr. Jerram responded there is not, the Asset Evaluation Subcommittee continues to review the 3 bids. There have been delays in this review during the budget process but he expects the process to ramp up over the summer. He noted that the revenue of the WPCA is declining, even with rate increases. The loss of the laundromat which was replaced by an office building with much lower water and sewer usage has substantially impacted their revenue. Mr. Jerram further commented that the sale of this asset is a complicated issue with many areas to be considered. Ms. Wexler inquired if anything can be done until the State issues a decision on the map. Mr. Jerram indicated that the new 2016 map is still a pending application. There is an approved map in place from 2008. Mr. Charest inquired about how to manage the debt service with the State. Mr. Jerram responded that he would assume any offer accepted would include a payoff of the debt service. Chairman Fitzgerald inquired about the potential for benefit assessments by the buyer of the system. He further inquired about the status of liens on delinquent accounts. Mr. Jerram noted that the WPCA does place liens and issue shut-off notices. Mr. Tuxbury commented that the debt of the WPCA which is owed to the town is not reflected on the land records. Ms. Wexler clarified that a home buyer would be concerned about the past due balance and liens on a particular property. The debt owed to the town is not something a homebuyer would be concerned with. She noted that someone purchasing a property needs to do their own due diligence.

X. Current Revenue & Expenditure Reports, Annie Witte

Chairman Fitzgerald noted that Bookkeeper Witte sent out the reports to all members. He highlighted the items in her summary report. He also commented that Treasurer Ross' short term interest is really producing this year. Mr. Charest inquired about the status of the loan and bonds. Mr. Jerram responded that it is done. Mr. Tuxbury noted that he would like to start the next year with a revenue/expenditure sheet that is cleaned up without the wash accounts and bonding in it. Mr. Jerram noted that he and Annie are working on a demo spreadsheet. Mr. Fitzgerald inquired why the bookkeeper's assistant line item is over. Mr. Jerram noted that initially extra training was needed. Recently, this individual is covering the office while Christine is away so there will be some additional overtime. Mr. Charest inquired about paving, noting that there is still a lot of money in that line. Mr. Jerram noted that the road crew is down 3 members but they do have some projects out to bid. Mr. Charest inquired if the health insurance renews on a calendar year or fiscal year and if we have received the rates for next year. Mr. Jerram noted that it renews on the fiscal year and this year it will be a zero increase. We joined the consortium with Region 7 a couple years ago and they increased their bargaining power as additional towns joined the consortium.

XI. Line Item Transfer requests from the First Selectman for consideration and approval by the Board of Finance for the current Fiscal year, July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2018 – Year-to-Date

Chairman Fitzgerald noted that Bookkeeper Witte had not sent anything regarding this item. Mr. Jerram noted that there are no significant needs at this time that would warrant a major change.

XII. Discuss and take any action on setting the mill rate for the fiscal year July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019.

Chairman Fitzgerald noted that Bookkeeper Witte sent out the estimated numbers for the ECS funding. A discussion ensued about whether to adjust the ECS value in calculating the mill rate due to the possible increased allocation from the State.

MOTION Witte, second Tuxbury, to increase the revenue line for ECS of the 2018-2019 budget by \$90,000 from \$2,835,000 to \$2,925,000.

Unanimously Approved

MOTION Smith second Tuxbury, to set the mill rate for the 2018-2019 fiscal year at 30.624.

Unanimously Approved

XIII. ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION Smith, second Charest, to adjourn at 8:02 pm; *Unanimously approved.:*

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie Ventre, Substitute Recording Secretary

Attachments:

Approved Suspense List

Carpenter Road Bridge Project Report

WPCA Minutes May, 3, 2018

Bookkeeper's Report

Notice of Mill Rate Change