

**Town of New Hartford  
Board of Finance  
Special Meeting  
November 16, 2021  
Minutes**

**Present:** Chairman Regina Wexler, Members: Ben Witte, Dan Charest, Kerry Guilfoyle, Paul LeClair, Lou Helt; Alternate Ryan Bingham.

**Others Present:** First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectman Laura Garay, Member of the Public Charlie Neale, Administrative Assistant Christine Hayward.

Chairman Wexler called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM and noted that all regular members were present, therefore there was no need to seat any alternates.

Chairman Wexler asked the Board if there was any objection to moving Election of Officers so that it would be the next item on the agenda. No objections noted.

**Election of Officers:**

Ms. Wexler opened the agenda item by stating that she was elected as a member to the Board of Finance in 2017 and that she was honored to have served as the Chairman. She informed the Board that due to an increase in family obligations that will prevent her from serving in full capacity, she is tending her resignation effective tomorrow. Ms. Wexler stated that she has recently been disappointed in the relationship between the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen and took this opportunity to express her personal beliefs. She believes that the Board of Finance has been left out of participating in some very crucial operational matters. She mentioned the sale of the water and sewer assets as an example. She stated that she was of the opinion that a member of the Board of Finance should have served as member of the Asset Sale committee and she believes it was wrong that there was no representation from the finance board. She believes that there has been a lack of transparency with the ARPA funding; she would like to see more public involvement rather than have the Board of Selectmen making crucial decisions regarding the use of funds. She commented that she hoped that the Board of Finance will continue to push for open communication with the Selectmen.

Following her commentary, Ms. Wexler opened the floor for nominations for Chairman of the Board of Finance.

Ben Witte nominated Kerry Guilfoyle as Chairman. He thanked Regina for service and thanked her for bringing civility back to the Board. Lourena Helt seconded the nomination.

There were no other nominations.

Ms. Wexler commented that she had some prior discussion with Kerry regarding assuming Chairmanship and she agreed that this was a good choice. Ms. Wexler encouraged Ms. Guilfoyle to maintain bi-partisan objectivity and to "put residents over the politics." Ms. Wexler called for a vote for chairman and the vote was unanimous in its approval.

Unanimous.

Following the election of the Chair, Ms. Wexler turned her key and thumb drive that held pertinent information regarding Board of Finance business over to the new Chairman and exited from the meeting.

Chairman Guilfoyle assumed Chairmanship of the meeting and thanked everyone for their support.

Bart Baxter was seated for the meeting.

**Approval of meeting minutes**

Ms. Helt motioned to approve and Witte seconded the approval of the minutes of the Board of Finance meeting dated October 12, 2021. There was no objection to the approval and Chairman Guilfoyle deemed them approved.

**Communication to Board**

No communications noted.

**Opportunity for Public Comment:**

Charlie Neale, longtime resident of New Hartford, was given the opportunity to offer public comment. He stated that he came to the meeting to discuss his concerns regarding the process of allocation of COVID (ARPA) money. Mr. Neale likes the idea of having a committee for deciding the process of allocation of the funds, rather than having just the Selectmen make decisions regarding use of the funds. He stated that it is important to have members of the community involved in the process.

Member Ben Witte replied that there is a meeting on Thursday to seek public input (and Member Helt added that there is one on the 30<sup>th</sup>, as well).

Ms. Guilfoyle noted that Board of Finance Alternate Ryan Bingham was nominated to act as a liaison from the Board of Finance and she asked him if he was willing to take that on. Mr. Bingham stated that he feels that there will only need to be limited involvement initially from the Board of Finance. The Board will have an opportunity to accept or reject recommendations brought to them later in the process.

Dan Jerram commented that there has been written communications received from various organizations regarding requests for funds which shows that people are aware of the discussions being held. Information regarding the ARPA funds has been disseminated via Senior newsletters, Website notifications, and through various Boards and Commissions. In addition to the requests received, Selectmen have also discussed reserving some of the funds to be used for Pine Meadow sewer expansion. There are no bad ideas at this point. The Board wants to hear from constituents. Mr. Jerram explained that once the Selectmen have reviewed requests for funding and come to a consensus as a Board, they will then come to the Board of Finance to seek approval and take the recommendations to Town Meeting. He stated that there is town involvement in the entirety of the process.

Member Witte asked about parameters regarding use of the funds. The First Selectman replied that there are a few projects that do not have to go through the approval process. Projects for water improvement, sewer improvement and broadband all have a “green light.” The funds cannot be used to pay expenses that are considered to be annual operating expenses.

Mr. Jerram gave some examples of what some neighboring towns are doing with their funds. Harwinton is using funds for improved HVAC to provide better air flow in their Town Hall. Winsted is using funds for water and sewer pumps, emergency communications radios and plans to establish a small business

revolving loan fund to help businesses get back on their feet after the pandemic.

Dan informed the Board of Finance members that the ambulance association has asked for assistance in replacing an ambulance and commented that this would be an allowable expense. No decisions have been made regarding the allocation of the ARPA funds.

**First Selectman's Report:**

The First Selectman informed the Board that as of now, 60% of taxes due has been collected and this is about average. There are no concerns at this point.

He noted that property values have been increasing. He stated that the "Waring property" located at 283 Main Street recently sold for \$8 million where the town's assessment was at \$2.5 million.

Marandinos Plaza sold for \$2.5 million a little over 2 years ago; this shows how values have increased.

Dan Charest asked if these values will be reflected on the Grand List. Dan Jerram replied that the next revaluation is not until 2023.

Mr. Jerram stated that he has completed the most recent CARES act reporting. This is an interim reporting and it was done at the end of October.

There has been a change in Town Hall staff. The Town Clerk position has changed. Lynn Florio, a certified town clerk has taken on the role, replacing Debbie Ventre who moved out of state. The Town Clerk position remains an elected position until the completion of the current term and then the position becomes an appointed position. This occurs in January. The First Selectman noted that Debbie will be missed and commented that she did a great job. Dan expressed his gratitude to her for a job well done.

A Highway Maintainer was hired to replace Joe Wainman. Tim Hiller comes to the town crew with experience as a maintainer in a neighboring town.

Dan updated the Board with respect to the costs associated with the New Hartford House. Debris removal and clean up has all been taken care of with no cost to the Town of New Hartford. Tenant relocation expenses are at about \$17,000. The Property owner will be billed for these expenses as agreed upon.

Mr. Jerram informed the Finance Board that the Water Pollution Control Authority has submitted a claim for \$10,000 for utility charges. These charges were due to the impact on the sewer treatment plant caused by ash in the system. The adjuster was sent the claim and the town/WPCA has not received a formal response as of yet. Dan stated that costs incurred have not amounted anywhere near the \$225,000 that was appropriated at town meeting (to be used, if needed).

Ski Sundown has been working with MDC to get a diversion permit to use water from the river to supply water for snow making equipment. This increases efficiency to make the snow and will help him to keep the business running smoothly during times when there is lack of natural snow.

Dan expressed his Congratulations to those elected to the Board of Finance.

Board of Finance member Dan Charest requested that bookkeeping reports be distributed in advance of the meeting to allow Board members time to review the data. Receiving the information the day of or even the day before does not allow for adequate time.

**Other business to Come Before the Board:**

Ben Witte and Kerry attended the Regional 7 meeting regarding regionalization.

There was a general discussion regarding this and information was shared regarding the efforts of regionalization of Cheshire and Deep River. It was noted that consolidation/regionalization of these districts did not save money. There were too many layers of administration.

Kerry informed the Board that Molly is a proponent of regionalization. Of interest to note is that Ms. Guilfoyle received some information regarding potential expenditures down the road. The estimate shows that there could be a 24% reduction in student enrollment which translates into a substantial increase in New Hartford's share of the expenses. It is predicted that in 2 years, New Hartford could see an increase of assessment in the area of \$600,000.

Member Witte stated that everyone should keep an eye on the consolidation of Litchfield Schools and Wamogo. It should be interesting to see how that goes.

**MOTION:** by Helt to adjourn at 8:00 PM, seconded by Witte.

Unanimous.

*Respectfully Submitted,*

*Christine Hayward, Administrative Assistant (Substituting for Recording Secretary Penny Miller)*

*No Attachments submitted to Town Clerk*