

Minutes of the Special Board of Finance Meeting and Minutes of the Regular Board of Finance Meeting
Nov. 10, 2008 – Police Station Conference Room – 7 p.m.

Members present: Justin Donnelly, Joseph Sangiovanni, David Tagliavini, Dennis Kreps, Sam Fuller, alts. James Lennon, and Tom Frenaye

Also present: First Selectman Scott Lingenfelter, Selectman Tim Reynolds, Treasurer Christine Davidson, Director of Finance Deborah Cerrato

Chairman Justin Donnelly called the Special Meeting to order at 7 p.m.

Appointment of a full time member; to fill the vacated seat by resignation of Joanne Sullivan - The Chairman asked for nominations from the Board Of Finance. Mr. Tagliavini nominated Brian Kost; Mr. Kreps seconded. Mr. Kreps noted that the BOF should have resumes of those being considered. It was noted that Mr. Kost had served on the BOF for approximately 10 years, and had served as its Chairman. The motion to appoint Brian Kost, to complete the term of Joanne Sullivan was approved by unanimous vote.

The Chairman noted that Town Clerk Elaine O'Brien was present. The Town Clerk came forward and administered the oath of office to Mr. Kost.

The Special Meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Chairman Justin Donnelly called the Regular Board of Finance Meeting to order.

The Chairman asked for Citizen Comment:

- Sami Mehmed, 10 Dara Lane, spoke and asked for budget restraints. He made several suggestions regarding the possible funding of the Senior Center and the general budget.
- Ernie Petkovich, 40 Valley View, spoke as the Chairman of the Social Services Commission. He stated it was time to be proactive, the senior population is increasing. Space is now limited in the current center. The proposed senior center will almost double the size of the current center, and the site is ideally located. He strongly supports the proposed senior center project and asked the BOF to forward this to a Town Meeting.
- Joanne Sullivan, 44 North Grand Street, stated her support for the proposed senior center. We need a new center, and this is the perfect opportunity, as most of the cost is funded by grants awarded to the Town.
- Tim Reynolds, Selectman, supported the proposed senior center project. Monies have been spent on schools, and it is time for Suffield to do something for the seniors.
- Charles Grieger, Parkview Glen, spoke strongly in favor of the proposed senior center. He noted that Enfield had spent millions on its senior center.
- Robert Price, 12 Oxford Drive, supported the purchase of the Calvary Church. The current space is woefully inadequate. The Calvary Church would be the solution.

Correspondence: The Chairman noted a letter from Heather Lee, 20 Deep Brook Harbor, supporting the proposed senior center project. Copies of this letter were distributed to the BOF. The Chairman also noted a letter from Trinity College that was sent to him, noting the need for fiscal restraint at Trinity College.

Minutes of the Oct. 14, 08 meeting: Mr. Tagliavini moved to approve the minutes of the Oct. 14 meeting; Mr. Sangiovanni seconded. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

Appointment to the Retirement Commission, Board of Finance representative; The Chairman noted that Mr. Kost had indicated his willingness to serve as representative to the Retirement Commission. Mr. Tagliavini moved to appoint Brian Kost to the Retirement Commission, as a representative of the Board of Finance; Mr. Fuller seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Report from the Advisory Commission for Capital Expenditures (ACCE) – Chairman Craig Horrigan stated the ACCE had met Oct. 30, 08 and toured the Calvary Church site and then toured the current Senior Center. We then met and discussed the project. After considerable deliberation, by a majority vote, the approval of Calvary Church project was endorsed.

Mr. Horrigan stated he would like to address this from a personal perspective. For several years he has been urging the current administration to develop a long range plan. He felt that the senior center project did not follow the process of capital project approval process. It was his hope that once a long range plan was in place, a process could be developed that would serve the Town well. It has become clear that the process is dysfunctional and there is no sign that it will improve. Favored projects come out of nowhere and go to the front of the line without justification or prioritization. Even now no presentation of the long range plan has been made known to the general public or ACCE. He feels that other municipal projects should have higher priority. By Charter, the Board of Selectmen (BOS) is required to develop a five year plan. The current administration has failed to provide a meaningful long range plan however and a lack of a fair and well conceived process to guide it leaves ACCE in a position of providing no real value to the major capital projects. In light of this approach, he cannot continue in good conscience to continue to be associated with this dysfunctional process in any way. Therefore he resigned from ACCE immediately. He thanked members of ACCE and the Board of Finance for their dedicated efforts.

Chairman Donnelly stated that he is sorry that Mr. Horrigan resigned and asked him to reconsider. Mr. Horrigan has done a fine job leading ACCE. He hopes that Mr. Horrigan will continue to serve on the ad hoc Bridge Street School Study Committee.

Mr. Kreps thinks that what Mr. Horrigan has said, he is very correct. It is not a fair process.

Mr. Tagliavini: I had served on ACCE for ten or twelve years. ACCE has made great strides as to giving direction and meaning. You must give it time; it is not a quick process. The senior center and the library have been on the docket. When you have a project that has been discussed long term, and you have almost 80% of the funding, outside of the Town money, you have to look at it seriously.

Mr. Tagliavini stated that even with a long term plan, you must have some flexibility, especially when funds become available. You have an opportunity to act; to double the space for this kind of money, I see no reason not to go ahead with it. You are too important to walk away from this position, for you are a great leader in formulating structure for the future. I hope you reconsider.

Mr. Fuller said he shares Mr. Horrigan's feelings about the long range plan. How long must we wait? He wished that Mr. Horrigan would remain as Chairman.

Mr. Sangiovanni stated he agreed with Mr. Fuller. There is the lack of a long range plan, ACCE's recommendations are not a long range plan. A long range plan should contain fiscal planning, that is what is lacking from the BOS. But we have to take advantage of opportunities when they come along.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Horrigan for his services and asked him to reconsider his resignation.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) – Small Cities Grant – Senior Center – Calvary Church – acquisition and conversion of Calvary Church for a Senior Center and possible recommendation to Town Meeting

EDC Director Patrick McMahon noted that the senior population strongly supports this project. For the record, approximately 45 persons were in attendance. He reviewed his memo as sent to the Board of Finance, dated November 5, along with other documents, and letters of support. This memo and other material had been sent to BOF members in their Board packet prior to the meeting. He is seeking approval of the project from the BOF, as

well as acceptance of the \$750,000 Small Cities grant and a \$500,000 Small Town Economic Assistance Program grant to be utilized on this project. The \$750,000 grant would allow the purchase of the Calvary Church (purchase price, \$675,000). This building is 11,800 sq. feet and sits on 3.2 acres. This would double the size of the current senior center. The new site would provide a commercial kitchen, expanded program space, and added restroom space. The location is prime. Eighty parking spaces are available.

The Town has retained the services of Hibbard and Rosa to conduct a structural/mechanical analysis of the facility. Including a contingency fund of 20% and a 10% escalator, the total project cost is therefore estimated to be \$1,821,000.

Financial Impact:

Small Cities CDBG grant	\$750,000
Small Cities Program income	185,000
Small Town Economic Assistance Program (STEAP) reallocated grant	500,000
Town Funds or private funds	386,000 for a total of
\$1,821,000	

Mr. McMahon noted that the Town will seek other grants and private donations. The Board of Selectmen have approved of this project. The Town will go before Zoning and Planning, Nov. 17 for a special permit.

Questions and Comments from the BOF members:

Mr. Donnelly: Could that STEAP grant be used to repair the Library? Or the Town Hall?

Mr. McMahon: No. The grant cannot be used for the Town Hall or the Library. The grant can only be used for projects that benefits low and moderate income individuals. We can do playing fields and other related activities.

Mr. Kreps: You have a done a good job on the presentation. How are we are going to oversee this project? Do we use our own Town officials? I am concerned about the management of the project. Who is going to run this project? And on budget. Who will be responsible?

Mr. Donnelly: I have seen one project come in on budget in the last 12 years. We have undisclosed conditions that could exist, and probably the price will go up. We are at risk for whatever we decide here. This is a construction project. The estimates run from the low to the high. This is the low bid. We are talking about putting the Town at risk.

Mr. Kreps: Who is going to run it? Who is going to step forward?

Mr. Lingenfelter: The Board of Selectmen ranked this project AB several months back.

The building is available, funding is available from grants, this is an opportunity that the Town must seize. We only spend approximately \$120,000 on the senior population. The seniors deserve this; they have been waiting for a long time.

Mr. Kreps: Can we afford it?

Mr. Kost: I believe the proposed motion should be changed. Optional wording was discussed. I believe it will be a difficult budget year and I feel that this project should not be dealt within the context of the general budget session.

Mr. Tagliavini: This is the type of spending that the undesignated fund balance should be used. It should not be used to reduce our operating expenses as we have done in the past budgets.

Mr. Lennon: I suggest that a member of the Board of Finance sit on that building committee and report back to the Board.

Mr. Fuller: I look at this economy. I am concerned that it does not really fit into the long range plan. I think we are going to have to tighten our belts. I recognize that the need is there.

How can we ask other boards and commissions to use fiscal restraint if we go forward.

Mr. Donnelly: For us to be risking the Town finances, I think it is an awful time to go after the undesignated fund balance. I think we are going to need the undesignated fund balance.

Mr. Kreps: The undesignated fund balance is there for opportunities like this. I think we have a duty to use these funds for the Town. This is an opportunity for us to provide something for the senior citizens. I do not think that we are going to have an opportunity like this to come along too often. We have to consider providing services to the senior citizens. We improved the schools, and the senior citizens have stayed. This is an opportunity to provide additional services. The Town might have to pay some of the funding. I like Brian's ideas of a cap. Let us seek more grants and do private fund raising.

Mr. Tagliavini: The senior center has been a long term item that has been on the agenda.

Mr. Fuller: I am worried about making this year's budget.

Mr. Lennon: The senior center has been moved from Suffield on the River, placed in the High School for a short time, and now located in the Suffield Village; we pay \$40,000 rental per year. This proposed new center is almost a bargain price. We should go forward with this. The senior population is going to keep increasing.

Mr. Lingenfelter: Currently the Town is paying \$40,000 rental; this is well below market value. The price of a new lease will go up. Senior Center Director Paula Pascoe has run the facility unbelievably well but she needs more program space, more restrooms, parking space and a larger facility is needed. This project is a bargain for the Town. We can tighten our purse strings, but we cannot turn a blind eye to the opportunities that present themselves right now.

Mr. Sangiovanni: What about the code update for the kitchen.

Ms. Pascoe stated she had a preliminary number; she had reviewed the kitchen with North Central Health District. She has an estimate of \$12,000 to bring the kitchen up to code. She has also consulted with the Fire Marshal.

Mr. Sangiovanni: I am concerned about your costs estimate. You may need more contingency funding. I think we need more detailed estimates.

Mr. Kost: I moved that the Board of Finance, pending Town Meeting approval, approve the expenditure not to exceed \$1,821,000 for the acquisition and renovation of the Calvary Church for a permanent senior center and recommend to Town Meeting.

Further moved that the Board of Finance accepts and authorizes the expenditure of funds related to the \$750,000 Small Cities Community Development Block Grant, the \$500,000 Small Town Economic Assistance Program grant, and the \$185,000 in small Cities Program Income for this project pending Town Meeting approval

Furthermore moved that the Board of Finance recommends designating \$386,000 of the undesignated fund balance, pending Town Meeting approval to provide for the Town's estimated share of the total project. To the extent there shall be any alternative private financing (through gifts or otherwise) received in the future related to this proposed acquisition and renovation of the Calvary facility, such additional funds shall be returned to the benefit of the general fund in the amount of the \$386,000 designation referred to above.

Mr. Sangiovanni seconded the motion:

Mr. Donnelly: I am just going to say that I think it is the wrong time fiscally. I am very concerned about what is going on, nationally and statewide. I have a great, great deal of concern based on my experience, as a lawyer who has done a lot of construction work. This thing will blow up.

The Chairman called for a vote:

Voting for the motion: Mr. Tagliavini, Mr. Kreps, Mr. Sangiovanni, Mr. Kost

Voting against the motion: Mr. Fuller, Mr. Donnelly

The motion was approved by a 4 to 2 vote.

Transfers/Funding Requests

Captain David Bourque explained the need for a funding transfer of \$4,000 for the replacement of a vehicle for Animal Control by the sale of used police cruiser. He reviewed his memo as sent to the board, dated November 6. This request is to transfer \$4,000 to the Police Cruisers from the Animal Control budget. Mr. Tagliavini moved to transfer \$4,000 from Animal Control – Operating Expense 0151551-50801 to Police Department – Police Cruisers 0151501 50744. Mr. Kost seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote. The Board did not take action on the second request to transfer funds from the sale of a cruiser. This will be acted upon when figures are known.

Human Resources Position – Salary Increase

The First Selectman stated he has interviewed candidates for the HR Director's position. He needs to offer \$65,000 per year in order to hire the recommended candidate. The current salary is budgeted for \$62,500. There will be no need to make a funding transfer, as there are sufficient funds in the budget, due to the fact the position has been vacant for 5 months. Mr. Kost moved to approve the increase of the HR Director's salary to \$65,000. Mr. Fuller seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Director of Finance – Deborah Cerrato distributed copies of a report, Town of Suffield, Status of Diesel, # 2 Heating Oil, and Gasoline, through 10/31/08. She reported that she has locked in prices for diesel fuel at \$2.76 and heating oil at \$2.52. Based on these figures, she projects a deficient of approximately \$13,000 at the end of the year. The Town cannot lock in gasoline prices until January. The Chairman complimented the Director of Finance for her timely wise decision.

Budget Highlights – Ms. Cerrato noted that through October, the Town has collected 9% less in current year taxes. Mr. Tagliavini requested an update on the CREC activity to expedite the re-imbusement of funds by the State for the School/Renovation projects. Mr. Kost would like to know how much and when is the Town going to collect. Ms. Cerrato will compile an update.

Audit Update: Ms. Cerrato reported that the field work has been completed. This work has been completed much earlier than last year.

First Selectman's Report: Mr. Lingenfelter noted that a Town Meeting will be held Dec. 2, 2008 at the High School at 7 p.m. for a vote on road acceptance, the Calvary Church purchase and the purchase of the Cannon property. He announced that Jeff Miner, as part of his Eagle Scout project, raised funds (received a grant), bought and installed 9 AD (automatic defibrillators) in municipal buildings. He also provided training for the municipal employees. The Town is grateful for Mr. Miner's devoted efforts.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Bobbie C. Kling, Secretary
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