

**MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING - BOARD OF FINANCE
OXFORD TOWN HALL
TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2015, 7:00 p.m.**

Present: Chairman Jack Kiley, Richard Burke, Lila Ferrillo, Robert DeBisschop, Tom Kelly.
Also present: James Hliva, Finance Director. Absent: Nancy Schmitt.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Kiley at 7:03 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Mr. Kelly moved to accept Minutes of the June 22, 2015 Regular Meeting; Mr. Burke seconded the motion. All in favor; Minutes approved and accepted. Mr. DeBisschop abstained from Minutes of June 22, 2015 because he was not in attendance for that meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

(A) Transfer for Fire Department 2015-2016 Fiscal Year

Mr. DeBisschop moved to approve the transfer; Mr. Burke seconded. Discussion ensued.

Scott Pelletier was present at this meeting to provide the explanation for this request. Even though budget had been approved, from time to time cuts need to be made to realign/shift the money from one project to another. Fire Department always presents to Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance. Ms. Ferrillo asked about the purchase of the portable pump. Mr. Pelletier said that the department was able to purchase less expensive pumps so there is residual money. Pumps were actually purchased with money from last year's budget. Money was allocated in current budget and three pumps were purchased (one for each station).

The Board members reviewed the Fire Department 2015-2016 budget. The handout reflects changes already made. Mr. Hliva advised the BOF of original budget numbers and where shifting will occur.

Ms. Ferrillo asked by moving \$3,850 to line 604, accomplishes what? Mr. Pelletier responded that HCN meters can be purchased and also continue to replace some, but not all, halogen bars which are safe.

Ms. Ferrillo noted that these changes are interdepartmental. Mr. Kiley noted that this was a good move by Mr. Pelletier.

All in favor of approving the transfer; motion passes.

Old fire truck may be donated to a small firehouse in Vermont. Board of Selectmen had given Mr. Pelletier the recommendation.

NEW BUSINESS

(A) Transfer approved by Board of Selectman (1) for Town Attorney

Transfer of \$20,000 had been denied at June 22, 2015 meeting. Board of Selectmen re-voted on an amount of \$29,000 (June bill came in). Attorney Kevin Condon is in attendance at this meeting.

Mr. Kiley asked Mr. Condon to help the BOF to understand legal bills. Are the bills monitored against budgeted amount? Mr. Condon stated that he is aware that an amount is budgeted every year (this year's amount was originally \$80,000 and reduced to \$60,000 by BOF). He believes that given the legal issues going on in the Town, \$60,000 is low but that is the budgeted amount. Mr. Condon went on to discuss the detailed billing process which is presented to Mr. Hliva and the Selectmen.

Mr. Kiley said that the \$29,000 came as a surprise at the end of year, because BOF did not know that legal was running over budget. Nobody monitors the budget reports. He asked Mr. Condon what happened. Mr. Condon has been asked by BOS to keep legal fees in check, i.e. not attending meetings. He went on to discuss, in great detail, some of the larger cases in the Town (in particular Guillette), Nichols property case; power plant; Haynes; Soules, which account for the larger legal fees.

Mr. Kiley asked Mr. Condon if he did work for Planning & Zoning. Mr. Condon said he did, as well as Inland Wetlands, and the Town and each get billed accordingly. Mr. Kiley said he was only concerned with the Town. Mr. Condon asked if they were actually over \$29,000 last years' budget or where they were. Mr. Hliva said they are actually \$29,000 over and toward the end of 2014, bills actually got larger because Mr. Condon was spending a lot of time at the Siting Council. When the April 2015 bill came in the legal budget was put into the negative. Legal fees were roughly \$10,000 per month for April, May and June 2015.

Ms. Ferrillo asked if the energy company could be billed for Mr. Condon's appearance on the Siting Council. Mr. Condon said he didn't believe so; the Town of Oxford is only a party to the action. He proceeded to explain what is going on with the power plant.

Mr. Burke asked how this year's bill will compare to past few years. Mr. Hliva said it ends at \$89,200; last year was \$65,000; he read back previous years' bills.

Mr. Kiley made the motion to transfer \$29,000 from Contingency to pay excess legal bills. Mr. Kelly seconded the motion. Mr. Burke made the suggestion that going forward the Board should be more diligent monitoring the legal bills. Mr. Kelly suggested that when Mr. Hliva has monthly legal bills, they should be presented at the monthly BOF meeting in such a way to show what was budgeted, what was actually spent. Mr. Burke asked if a portion of the monthly bill "fixed" i.e. same charge every month. Mr. Condon said he bills \$160.00 per hour

only for the work he performs, what he is asked to do on a daily basis. He pays his own expenses (staff, stationery, stamps, etc.).

There being no further discussion, a vote is taken. All in favor, motion to transfer \$29,000 is passed.

Mr. Burke asked about the status of the energy project. Mr. Condon spoke about the “implementation date” and explained the planned procedure.

Mr. Kiley asked Mr. Condon about the status of the \$300,000 from the Masonicare project. Where is it? When is it coming? Mr. Condon said he spoke with Mr. Bishop. Mr. Bishop is supposed to be sending a pilot agreement. The reason the \$300,000 has not been paid is because there was a title problem (issue with a neighbor) and that’s been the hold up, but the money will be paid.

(B) Update on lease of Cell Phone Towers

Mr. Hliva gave the update. Cell Phone Towers has not made it to BOF. Bid has gone out for ground rights for cell towers. Expecting bids in the \$700,000-\$800,000. Bids came back in this range. The highest bid was close to \$1.350MM. They are offering 29 years rent up front. BOS approved it; Town meeting approved it. Mr. Hliva was emphatic that BOS cannot spend money. Money goes into General Fund. Any spending of the money has to go Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Town Meeting. Ms. Ferrillo asked what the Town would actually get. Mr. Hliva said \$1.350MM but \$60,000 would have to be taken to balance budget which would leave \$1.290MM of excess revenue. Mr. Condon has reviewed contracts and saw no concerns. One tower is at Public Works; the other is at Riverside Firehouse.

Mr. Kelly asked if “extra” money, i.e. \$7MM, \$300,000, and \$1.350MM will go into General Fund. Mr. Hliva said yes, monies will go into General Fund. \$50,000 most likely will not be part of General Fund. Mr. Kelly wants to know what has been proposed for use of these monies and he asked Mr. Hliva to please find out.

Ms. Ferrillo said the best use of money would be for it to be put into Special Activities under Community Services with rules put in place for its use. She would also like to see the fire truck paid off when the \$300,000 comes in.

Mr. Kiley said the Quaker Farm roof should be paid if the money for cell towers comes in. Mr. Hliva said he would rather pay the solar panels at Great Oak because it’s a higher interest rate, or pay off a couple of the leases.

Mr. Kiley spoke about an economic development meeting he attended and the discussions that were held regarding spending the money.

There was a lengthy discussion among Board members regarding suggestions for spending the money for the Town. There are definite needs in the Town.

(C) Update on Quaker Farms School roof project

Mr. Hliva said \$800,000 was appropriated, \$500,000 was from Town. Low bids came in at \$640,000. Out that comes engineering, finance, legal, Clerk of the Works so it will probably be around \$700,000. Work began on Monday. Main section in front has all been ripped off and sealed up ready for shingles. Board of Education is concerned about the 60 days for construction which runs into mid-September. Committee will meet to discuss moving to a six-day work week but that will entail a change order for overtime. Weather is also a concern but forecast is for perfect weather.

Mr. Hliva has a tentative schedule for library project. Mr. Kiley said there is no firm cost for library. Mr. Hliva explained the process for library project.

Library Committee would like to have referendum on Election Day. Lengthy discussion ensued among BOF members regarding voting.


It was decided that the Regular Meeting scheduled to be held on Monday, July 27, 2015 will be cancelled as there is nothing for agenda. Next Regular Meeting will be August 24, 2015.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Kelly made a motion to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Mr. Kiley. All in favor; motion passed. Meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Lynnette Steeves, Clerk

15 JUL 28 AM 9:00
TOWN OF OXFORD, CT

TOWN CLERK