

The **Board of Finance** held a regular meeting on Tuesday, October 13, 2009 in the lower meeting room at Town Hall South, 3 Main Street, Newtown, CT. John Kortze called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

PRESENT: John Kortze, James Gaston, Marty Gersten, Joseph Kearney, Harry Waterbury and Michael Portnoy

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman Joseph Borst, Board of Education member Kathy Fetchick, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Janet Robinson, Director of Facilities Gino Faiella, six members of the public and two members of the press.

VOTER COMMENTS: **Bob Merola, 22 Ashford Lane** addressed the enrollment numbers and the high school expansion saying that typically the school used the middle numbers for enrollment but used the high number in 2006. There have been 371 new homes in the last seven years, with only eight this year. We should be careful about listening to the Board of Education because you have to get below the headlines to understand what is really happening. He said the town is going to be impacted by the tax burden of the high school expansion for years to come and suggested we be careful as we move forward.

Deborah Zukowski, 4 Cornfield Ridge Road hopes that when we talk about the build out and the long term projections we have the notion of the base economic support. She asked if the long term planning committee is comparing themselves to other towns and if so would it be presented here?

Mr. Kortze noted that the Board has long debated enrollment numbers. The Board did not get the dialogue requested with the Board of Education at the time. They went to the Council for direction, which was 2022 students. He explained that a build out study was done that was very informative and comparative to another town. The fastest growing demographic was found to be seniors.

Pat Llodra, Riverside Road stated that the premise of the study was given the existing land use patterns and growth patterns averaged out over the last ten years, how long will it take to reach build out and where was the build out going to occur. The difficulty of doing a build out study with a dynamic economic environment is that you are basing data on factors that might not be relevant in the time period that is established. It is likely that our build out will follow the model in the study.

Mr. Kortze stated they never intended to draw any conclusions from the data at that stage.

Ms. Fetchick said the Board of Education is looking into hiring Dr. Chung to do a more intensive study of the student population to add on to the Planimetrics study. Mr. Kortze mentioned that Dr. Chung said what the Planimetrics report generated was not an enrollment projection.

Po Murray, Charter Ridge Road said there is no long term planning commission currently. There is great data in the plan of conservation development and the Planimetrics report.

Mr. Gersten said that the greatest issue is that anyone who thinks in terms of a long term plan after 2007 doesn't appreciate the magnitude of the problem. To talk of an economic plan in the context of what we are seeing today makes no sense; even five years is overly optimistic.

COMMUNICATIONS: Mr. Kortze submitted an updated schematic from George Ferguson (Att. A) of the proposed ordinance on tax abatement for transfer of certain rights. The Hockey Booster Club request for sports information continues to be researched. Mr. Kortze reported receiving a letter from Daniel Kormanik (Att. B) critical of our educational system.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES: Mr. Gersten moved to approve the minutes of October 1, 2009. Mr. Gaston seconded. All in favor.

FIRST SELECTMAN REPORT: First Selectman Borst reported the town received a \$100,000 STEAP grant for the animal shelter. The deed has not yet been accepted, the Town is waiting for a report on the property and whether or not remediation was done by the state before closing Fairfield Hills. The Edmond Town Hall offices are scheduled to move to the new municipal office building on October 23rd. The Kendro offices, including the Board of Education, will move on October 30. There will be a dedication on November 18th with refreshments and string music provided by the school. The Environmental Protection Agency has sent a notice of insufficiency to the Housatonic Railroad giving them thirty days to correct their application.

FINANCE DIRECTOR REPORT: none

NEW BUSINESS:

Discussion and possible action:

- 1. Transfer:** Mr. Gaston moved to move \$5,000 from Contingency to the Tick Borne Disease Action Committee. Mr. Gersten seconded. Mr. Borst explained the cost includes clerking fees and speaker fees. Mr. Gaston asked why this would not be included within the Health Department saying that working with the health department may save money. Mr. Borst said that Donna Culbert, the Director of Health and Dr. Draper are available for information but not on the committee. Mr. Borst noted that the committee is to review available data and come up with a recommendation as to how the problem in Newtown should be handled by the end of the year. A copy of the Tick Borne Diseases Action Committee is attached (Att. C). The motion unanimously passed.
- 2. State of the School District:** Dr. Robinson reported that collaboration is something

she wants to stress moving forward. Plans were developed that would fall in line with the strategic plan. We have to be proactive to prepare kids for the 21st century, making sure they have critical thinking, problem solving and technological skills. The Board plans to form a CIP committee with three Board of Education members and would like to engage one or two members of the Board of Finance and one or two members of the Council from time to time so they are working as a partnership and so there are no surprises when the CIP is presented. The schools are in very good shape. The goal is to have all aspects of the school district fall under the strategic plan. The unofficial report on enrollment projections show a loss of 106 kids, the majority in kindergarten. Cost estimates will be looked into for an in depth study for student projections. Dr. Robinson is unsure of what predictions can be made on the current economy.

Mr. Gersten said he hopes the Superintendent will be more responsive to current data. Dr. Robinson agreed that getting information from a lot of sources would allow for more data to work from.

Mr. Kortze understands Dr. Robinsons not wanting to do a student projection during these economic times. The Board of Finance has long debated the economic pinnacle in development in town and whether or not that should weigh in. He asked if the Board of Education considering using Prowda again. Dr. Bothwell stated that the most optimal number to use was middle; the next logical number to use was low but we used the high number. We paid money for information and ignored it.

Mr. Portnoy clarified Dr. Bothwell recommended the mid point in September 2006. In 2007 Bothwell recommended the high number even though births had declined, building permits had declined, home prices and sales had begun to fall and zoning regulations had been tightened, reducing the amount of land available to developers. Mr. Portnoy questioned if some of the money for the high school expansion could be used on other projects.

Mr. Gaston said the kids will thank the school board when the high school addition is complete; in fifteen years the town will thank them.

- 3. CIP: Board of Education:** Ms. Fetchick went over the questions that the Board of Finance had submitted regarding the CIP, (Att. D). Dr. Robinson said that projects can be broken down and phased in. She spoke of boilers, noise issues in classrooms near the road and the air factor at Hawley School. Mr. Waterbury requested cost estimates for next year. The Middle School roof remains a high priority and the project that is five years out for the Middle School needs an in depth study. Mr. Gersten is troubled by the dollar numbers that started off much smaller and over time became greater numbers. Before the bonding is authorized there should be an understanding of what is going to be built and what it is going to cost through plans, specs and bidding. He suggested dropping back a year on projects that are in the millions to plan and get real numbers prior to the bonding. Both the Board of Education and the Board of Finance should know more. Mr. Gaston stated that Hawley School has continuously been bumped. There was a study done in 2001 that suggested not breaking projects down and now we

are considering doing exactly what was not recommended which will be more expensive. Dr. Robinson answered that maybe Hawley will get passed if it is broken down because as a whole it continues to get pushed back. Mr. Faiella reported that there is one critical boiler at Hawley School, however the next boiler can carry both. Mr. Portnoy thinks that the exercise of breaking down the projects will be excellent for planning purposes and will help to isolate the most critical things needed with the least amount of money. Mr. Faiella said that once the project gets closer he will commission a hydraulic study in front of the foundation to see where the water is coming from in the 'D' wing of the Middle School.

Mr. Kortze invited anybody to ask questions of the Board of Education. Ms. Murray asked for specific dates of original requests of BOE capitol projects. He commented that it is reassuring that the BOE is looking at different ways to address issues. It is apparent that Mr. Faiella has been an asset to the Board. There have been many changes to projects and Mr. Kortze asked what has changed and why are things being moved around, why is the board more receptive to scalable options. Dr. Robinson said there are fresh eyes looking at things. The CIP Committee was helpful in making the board see how much better it could be in terms of research. There is a common vision, better data and the willingness to dialogue. Mr. Kortze asked, from the administrative prospective, who is best equipped to render these recommendations to the Board of Education, the Board of Finance or the Council. Dr. Robinson answered that the three members of the BOE that will form the CIP Committee would be best equipped but stated ultimately she is responsible along with the business manager. Dr. Robinson said that the role of the BOF and Council in the CIP committee would be feedback, discussing the feasibility of the money and planning.

The Board of Education CIP will be revisited in total in November.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: none

ADJOURNMENT:

Having no further business, the Board of Finance adjourned their regular meeting at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Susan Marcinek, Clerk

Att. A: Proposed Ordinance on Tax Abatement for Transfer of Certain Rights

Att. B: Daniel Kormanik letter

Att. C: Tick Borne Diseases Action Committee Charge

Att. D: BOF questions re: 2009-2010 BOE CIP