

**MINUTES
BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING
CITY HALL AUDITORIUM / ZOOM
June 15, 2021**

A **REGULAR MEETING** of the Board of Finance was held on Tuesday, June 15, 2021. Attendance was by ZOOM and in person. Present at City Hall were Mayor Elinor Carbone, Comptroller Alice Proulx, Fire Chief Peter Towey, Police Chief William Baldwin, Jr., Torrington Public Schools (TPS) Superintendent Susan Lubomski, Assistant Superintendent Susan Ferguson, Business Manager Ed Arum, Board of Education Chairwoman Fiona Cappabianca and Board of Finance members Christopher Anderson, Christopher Beyus, Lance Boynton, Laurene Pesce, Mark Bushka and James Wright. Deputy Comptroller Gina Casper, Public Works Director Raymond Drew, Deputy Fire Chief David Tripp, TPS Human Resources Director Kimberly Schulte and Director of Student Services Laura Klimaszewski joined by Zoom.

Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m. beginning with the Pledge of Allegiance.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

On a motion by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mr. Beyus, the Board voted unanimously to open the meeting to the public. No one from the public wished to speak.

MINUTES APPROVED

On a motion by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Beyus, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the regular meeting held on May 18, 2021. Mr. Beyus and Mr. Bushka abstained.

On a motion by Mrs. Pesce, seconded by Mr. Boynton, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the special meeting held jointly with the City Council on June 3, 2021. Mr. Bushka abstained.

On a motion by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Anderson, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the public hearing held jointly with the City Council on June 3, 2021. Mr. Bushka abstained.

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION REGARDING FY 2021 - 2022 BUDGETS

Mayor Carbone provided a historical overview of the coronavirus's impact on the FY 2020-2021 budgets, she updated the board on new guidance from the U.S. Department of Treasury regarding the allocation, distribution and restrictions pertaining to American Rescue Plan funds, and reported that Governor Lamont's coronavirus relief funding for distressed municipalities, which would have provided Torrington with \$3,098,963 additional revenue, did not survive the State's budget process. The Mayor also provided updated figures on the City's grand list growth and ECS/Alliance District funding, and presented her recommendations for the FY 2021-2022 Board of Education (BOE) and City budgets. She described the cuts and various changes that would need to be made to the budgets in order to accomplish the goal of no mill rate increase, including:

- Reducing the BOE Operating Budget by \$569,281 and utilizing funds available through ARPA to cover additional programs.
- Reducing the BOE Capital Budget by \$2,995,898 and utilizing ARPA funds for qualifying projects. (The Mayor also recommended putting the Torrington Middle School and Vogel-Wetmore roof projects out to referendum).
- Allowing the BOE to move its FY 2020-2021 surplus (estimated to be \$444,000) into capital reserve to cover additional capital expenses and the turf field annual allocation.
- Identifying additional qualifying expenses for addressing educational disparities that can be moved to the ARPA grant under qualified census tract obligations and funding opportunities through the Community Investment Fund 2030.
- Reducing the City budget by \$2,120,421.

Mrs. Pesce questioned how much of the Fund Balance that was allocated to offset the FY 2020-2021 budget was expended and Comptroller Alice Proulx reported that she believed approximately \$2,000,000 would be utilized. Mrs. Pesce also questioned the impact of having a private tax collector on the availability of ARPA funds. Mayor Carbone explained that much of the ARPA funding is tied to lost revenues and she reported that there was no evidence of lost revenues or any significant loss of interest as a result of taxpayers opting to take advantage of the 90-day extension that was granted by the City Council.

Mr. Bushka questioned how the ARPA funds would be distributed to the City. Mayor Carbone explained that, due to Torrington's population size under 50,000, the City needed to request its distribution from the CT Office of Policy and Management.

Mr. Bushka also questioned whether police outside duty revenues were included in the FY 2021-2022 public safety revenue projections and Mayor Carbone confirmed that they were. She further clarified that they were pulled out of the operating budget and put into a new enterprise account.

With regard to upcoming capital projects, Mr. Boynton expressed his concerns about the rising costs of construction materials. He also questioned whether security system upgrades at the schools could qualify for ARPA funding and Mayor Carbone reported that it was uncertain because the stipulations regarding funding for Qualified Census Tracts were uncertain.

Mr. Bushka expressed concern about the impact of eliminating funding to the BOE Capital budget and Mr. Arum explained how the most pressing capital projects could be funded through ARPA or bonding by way of referendum.

Mr. Beyus questioned whether the Mayor planned to create a special taskforce or committee to oversee how ARPA funds are spent. Mayor Carbone stated that she only intended to rely on such a committee for funds being utilized for economic development purposes.

Mayor Carbone emphasized the need to identify alternative funding streams to address the BOE's capital needs and Mr. Anderson suggested that the City consider the needs for all upcoming capital projects if a referendum is to be scheduled.

Mr. Beyus questioned how cutting \$2,120,421 from the City's budget would impact the City and Mayor Carbone described where the funds would be reduced, including:

<u>Level Fund Assessor Revaluation</u>	<u>(13,400.00)</u>
<u>Level Fund City Real Estate Capital Budget</u>	<u>(1,000,000.00)</u>
<u>50% Grant Reimbursement PD Dashcams</u>	<u>(50,000.00)</u>
<u>Part time City Hall Custodian to ARPA</u>	<u>(23,092.00)</u>
<u>50% City Pension Normal Cost to ARPA</u>	<u>(230,064.50)</u>
<u>50% P&F Normal Cost to ARPA</u>	<u>(602,863.50)</u>
<u>Adjust Defined Contribution Estimate</u>	<u>(30,000.00)</u>
<u>Adjust Employer FICA Expense Estimate (Various Depts.)</u>	<u>(36,000.00)</u>
<u>Remove Management Operations Contingency</u>	<u>(70,000.00)</u>
<u>Remove Citywide Management Operations</u>	<u>(15,000.00)</u>
<u>Balance to be applied Citywide by % of total budget</u>	<u>(50,001.00)</u>

ROLL CALL VOTE: ADOPTION OF 2021 - 2022 BOARD OF EDUCATION OPERATING BUDGET

On a motion by Mr. Beyus, seconded by Mrs. Pesce, the Board voted unanimously, with all six votes in favor and none opposed, to adopt the 2021-2022 Board of Education Operating Budget in the sum of \$76,932,898. Mrs. Pesce and Mr. Beyus expressed their support for the Board of Education.

ROLL CALL VOTE: ADOPTION OF 2021 - 2022 BOARD OF EDUCATION CAPITAL BUDGET

On a motion by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mr. Wright, the Board voted unanimously, with all six votes in favor and none opposed, to adopt the 2021-2022 Board of Education Capital Budget in the sum of \$0.

ROLL CALL VOTE: ADOPTION OF 2021 – 2022 CITY BUDGET

On a motion by Mr. Beyus, seconded by Mr. Anderson, the Board voted unanimously, with all six votes in favor and none opposed, to adopt the 2021-2022 City Budget in the sum of \$58,716,010.

ROLL CALL VOTE: MILL RATE (REAL ESTATE & PERSONAL PROPERTY)

Mr. Bushka made a motion to set the mill rate for 2021-2022 at 46.17 mills. Mr. Beyus seconded the motion and Mr. Anderson noted that the Board of Finance should also authorize the Mayor to execute the tax warrant.

On an amended motion by Mr. Bushka, seconded by Mr. Beyus, the Board voted unanimously, with all six votes in favor and none opposed, to set the mill rate for 2021-2022 at 46.17 mills and authorize the Mayor to execute the tax warrant.

ROLL CALL VOTE: MILL RATE (MOTOR VEHICLES)

On a motion by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mr. Beyus, the Board voted unanimously, with all six votes in favor and none opposed, to set the motor vehicle mill rate for 2021-2022 at 45.00 mills and authorize the Mayor to execute the tax warrant.

FRANKLIN STREET REMEDIATION

Mayor Carbone provide an update on the remediation efforts at 100 Franklin Street. She reported that the remediation was completed for the total estimated cost of \$2,016,567.37, including LEP oversight and legal fees, resulting in a funding gap of approximately \$60,000.

On a motion by Mrs. Pesce, seconded by Mr. Bushka, the Board voted unanimously to authorize the Mayor to utilize contingency funds in an amount not to exceed \$75,000 to pay off the remaining invoices for the remediation of 100 Franklin Street, including LEP oversight and legal fees.

Mr. Beyus questioned what the balance was for the Contingency Fund and Mayor Carbone reported that there was \$129,311 in the City's Contingency Fund for the remainder of FY 2020-2021.

BOE FINANCIAL REPORTS

On a motion by Mr. Beyus, seconded by Mr. Anderson, the Board voted unanimously to accept the Board of Education's financial reports.

BUSINESS BY DEPARTMENT HEADS

On a motion by Mr. Bushka, seconded by Mr. Beyus, the Board voted unanimously to consider business by Department Heads. Assistant City Clerk Jonathan Draper provided an update on dog licensing, which kicked off for the 2021-2022 licensing year on June 1, 2021.

BUSINESS BY MAYOR & MEMBERS

On a motion by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Boynton, the Board voted unanimously to consider business by the Mayor and members of the Board of Finance.

Mr. Boynton requested an update on the status of legal proceedings with respect to the Yankee Pedlar. Mayor Carbone reported that the matter made it to court and the property owner was granted an extension to June 15, 2021 to get cost estimates for the work that must be done on the property. She also noted that the attorney representing the property owner expressed concerns about jurisdictional issues pertaining to the constitutionality of the new law (PA 19-92 An Act Concerning Abandoned and Blighted Property Receivership).

Mrs. Pesce expressed her frustration with the State's budget process and stated that she was delighted to see an abundance of people returning to Torrington's downtown.

Mr. Bushka, Mr. Beyus and Mr. Wright thanked the Mayor, Ms. Proulx and others involved in the budget process for all of their work to bring the budgets forward. Mr. Wright also remarked that he was pleased to see the new civil rights mural on Water Street.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mr. Bushka, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jonathan Draper, Asst. City Clerk

ATTEST:

Carol L. Anderson
CAROL L. ANDERSON, MMC
CITY CLERK