

3 PRIMROSE STREET
NEWTOWN, CT 06470
TEL. (203) 270-4221

BOARD OF FINANCE
MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING

Monday, November 30, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.

These minutes are subject to approval by the Board of Finance

Present: Sandy Roussas, Keith Alexander, Ned Simpson, Chris Gardner, John Madzula and Matthew Mihalcik

Also Present: First Selectman Dan Rosenthal, Finance Director, Bob Tait, Superintendent, Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, BOE Chair, Dr. Michelle Ku, Director of Facilities, Bob Gerbert, BOE Member, Deb Zukowski, BOE Member, Dan Delia, Public Building and Site Chair, Bob Mitchell, Sustainable Energy Commission Member, Allen Adriani and five members of the Public.

Sandy Roussas called the meeting to order at 7:31 p.m. Attendees saluted the American Flag.

Voter Comments

Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, Superintendent, spoke on behalf of her educational perspective regarding the importance of a reliable ventilation system in all of the schools; specifically pushing Hawley HVAC will affect Reed and the Middle School plans on the CIP. She noted relying on Public Building and Site for their expertise on how this project unfolds.

Michelle Ku, BOE Chair, commented that she appreciates the Board and their careful consideration, but hopes the Board accepts the project on the CIP that ultimately begins 2021 (see attached).

Jennifer Padilla, 32 Glenn Road, commented as a parent and not that of a Co-President of the Hawley PTA. Mrs. Padilla believes this is about fresh air and what is conducive to the staff and the students. She noted Hawley is the oldest school building, but this is an airborne pandemic and intimately affects those at Hawley. Mrs. Padilla noted that this is a critical decision and hopes this project is not pushed any further.

Communications

Chair Roussas shared correspondence regarding Hawley HVAC project from BOE Chair Michelle Ku and Nancy White (see attached).

Minutes

Keith Alexander moved to approve the minutes of November 9, 2020. Chris Gardner seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

First Selectman's Report

First Selectman Rosenthal did not have a report.

Finance Director's Report

Finance Director, Bob Tait, did not have a report

Unfinished Business

BOE CIP

Public Building and Site Chair discussed the Hawley HVAC project at their meeting last week. Chair Bob Mitchell summarized PB&S previous discussion: the Conceptual Estimate shows a \$7.3MM project, the October air quality study to not find air quality concerns, a second air quality study is planned for early December, heat and humidity, particularly in the 1921 building is an issue, opening windows on Churchill Road is not an option for fresh air, design completion is expected by April and with this schedule it is not possible to start substantial work in the summer of 2021. Mr. Mitchell emphasized that it is essential to bring a Construction Manager into the project now to help with phasing the budget and complete the pre construction work plan and estimates. Public Building and Site will meet with Chris Williams, President Christopher William Architects LLC, Dr. Rodrigue and Bob Gerbert to attempt to solidify a plan. Opening windows no longer count as clean air, so Allen Adriani and the Sustainable Energy Commission will be called upon to address this piece. Chair Roussas asked at what point do they achieve high confidence in terms of the numbers referencing the deadline for Legislative Council to approve the CIP (January 31) and having a solid amount for an April Town referendum vote. The First Selectman responded to Chair Roussas' question that in order for it to be put on the April ballot, the numbers need to be set by February. Mr. Mitchell stated that this would be aggressive, but with the right Construction Manager it could possibly be done. Mr. Mihalcik pointed to a 2014 \$14MM proposal to air condition Hawley, which is relative to his concern that the project cost could escalate significantly. Mr. Mitchell said a rough estimate right now is \$7.3MM. There are things missing in that estimate highlighting again the critical importance of getting a Construction Manager on board. Given that design estimates will not be complete until spring and that substantial construction would not start until the summer of 2022, targeting the referendum for November 2021 would not delay the project and assure voters are presented a solid cost. Mr. Madzula suggested that the major electrical work could be done during the school year. The timing of design, construction start and amounts in various CIP years was further discussed. The First Selectman suggested putting \$1MM in Year 1 of the CIP to act as a placeholder in 2021 to commence the project. Mr. Simpson expressed concern that it has not been determined how, nor how much it will cost to have half of the classes accommodated for the months when construction is underway. The Board discussed further. Mr. Gardner expressed his sincere disappointment that this project has been on the CIP for over a decade. Chair Roussas countered that she is extremely proud of this Board for being diligent in obtaining the details of this project. Matt Mihalcik added that there are too many unknowns to vote on this project tonight. Mr. Mitchell supported planning for a November referendum and with consensus a November ballot seems more reasonable and would not affect the actual construction. Discussion focused on how what amounts should be in the CIP and then sent to LC.

Matt Mihalcik made a motion to accept CIP as presented. John Madzula seconded.

The following amendments to the main motion above were addressed:

Matt Mihalcik made a motion to change BOE-01 Hawley HVAC to have \$1.5MM to Year 1 and \$2.5MM to Year 2 and \$4MM to Year 3. Ned Simpson seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

Matt Mihalcik made a motion to change BOE-03 Reed Boiler Plant & Lighting To Year 1. Chris Gardner seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

Matt Mihalcik made a motion to change BOE Middle School Improvements to Year 5 and also Middle School Improvements Design to Year 3. Chris Gardner seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

Chris Gardner made a motion to move Hawley generator, Middle Gate Window Modifications and High School Turf Practice Field to Year 6. Matt Mihalcik seconded. Chris Gardner amended his motion to move Middle Gate Window Modifications and High School Turf Practice Field to Year 6. All in favor and motion passes.

Matt Mihalcik made a motion to move the Hawley Generator to Year 1. Chris Gardner seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

Ned Simpson moved that the name of BOE-04 Middle School Improvements be changed to Middle School HVAC for years 2022/23 and 2023/24. Chris Gardner seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

Ned Simpson moved that the BOE-05 HOM Boiler Plant & Lighting be split into Head O'Meadow Boiler Plant \$425,000 for 2023/24 Bonded and Head O'Meadow LED Lighting \$425,500 for 2021/2022 funded from Other (\$26,500 vender incentive) and General Funds. Chris Gardner seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

Additional projects such as High School Pool Room Energy Recovery, Middle School Boiler Redundancy and High School Roof Top HVAC should be sent to Sustainable Energy Commission next year for careful review in the latter part of the CIP.

BOS CIP

Ned Simpson made a motion that the name of PW-03 Multi-Purpose Building Improvements be changed to Multi-Purpose Building Electrical, Mechanical & HVAC. Matt Mihalcik seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

Ned Simpson made a motion to add Fairfield Hills Water Infrastructure \$750,000 for 2026/27. Chris Gardner seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

Ned Simpson made a motion to move that LIB-01 for 2023/24 be increased by \$396,000 for Repaving Parking Lot Replace Sidewalks. Matt Mihalcik seconded. All in favor and motion passes.

Roll Call (on the main motion as amended)

Sandy Roussas - Aye
Keith Alexander - Aye
Ned Simpson - Aye
Chris Gardner - Aye
John Madzula - Aye
Matthew Mihalcik - Aye

Chair Roussas said the Grand List and BOE Non Lapsing Account Policy will be discussed at the next meeting.

New Business

None

Voter Comments

Allen Adriani expressed his concern that the Hawley generator takes precedence over the HOM Boiler that is 43 years old.

Michelle Ku thanked the Board for their honest conversation and dedicated work in making this come together as well as Bob Tait and First Selectman Rosenthal for their financial expertise. Dr Ku also thanked Bob Mitchell and Allen Adriani for their efforts as well.

Announcements

The BOF will present this to the Legislative Council at their next meeting.

Adjournment

Keith Alexander made a motion to adjourn. John Madzula seconded. All members were in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 9:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Kiley Morrison Gottschalk, Clerk

Attachments

Hawley HVAC correspondence

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Ku, Michelle** <kum_boe@newtown.k12.ct.us>

Date: Mon, Nov 30, 2020 at 11:49 AM

Subject: Hawley HVAC - BOE CIP

To: Roussas, Sandy <sandyroussasBOF@gmail.com>, Alexander, Keith <alexanderk.bof@gmail.com>, Chris Gardner <cgardner4242@gmail.com>, John Madzula <jmadzula2@gmail.com>, Matthew Mihalcik <mattmihalcik@gmail.com>, Ned Simpson <neds2124@gmail.com>

Cc: Lorrie Rodrigue <rodrigue@newtown.k12.ct.us>

Dear Board of Finance Members,

I wanted to share some thoughts in advance of this evening's meeting and can speak to them in more detail, as we will also be at the BOF meeting this evening to answer any remaining questions about the BOE's CIP.

I appreciate the Board of Finance's careful consideration of the Hawley HVAC project and the complexities it brings. Ultimately, I hope that you approve a plan that will allow the construction to begin this year, as I think this project is important and long overdue. The Board of Education has had ventilation projects for three different schools on 5-year plans for more than a decade. Meanwhile, the need for updated temperature control and ventilation has become increasingly apparent. Additionally, when these large projects are continually delayed, it has the overall effect of decreasing the long term investment in schools.

In this context, the trend in debt service is worth paying attention to. In 2015, schools made up 62% of the previous 20 years of bonding. And five years ago 52% of the debt service was attributable to BOE projects. At this time, approximately 40% of Newtown's total debt service is due to Board of Education projects. Looking forward, BOE capital projects account for just 24% of the next five years of capital improvement projects in Newtown (as presented in the CIP plan – that is, before adjustments for Hawley, FFH or any other changes). Clearly, there can be purposeful reasons for a downward trend in capital spending on school buildings as the infrastructural needs of a community change over time, but the sharp trend downward is worth discussing as decisions are made.

The Hawley HVAC/ventilation project is complex not only because of the nature of the project, but also because of the timing for construction and financial review. I appreciate the thoughtfulness and expertise that both you and the members of Public Building and Site bring to the project, and am optimistic that we can work together to make the project successful.

Sincerely,

Michelle Embree Ku
Newtown Board of Education, Chair
203-364-9862

bcc: Newtown BOE – informational

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Nancy Gabrielle White** <nancygwhite@yahoo.com>

Date: Mon, Nov 30, 2020 at 1:50 PM

Subject: Letter 11/30/20

To: Alexander, Keith <alexanderk.bof@gmail.com>, Chris Gardner <cgardner4242@gmail.com>, John Madzula <jmadzula2@gmail.com>, Matthew Mihalcik <mattmihalcik@gmail.com>, Ned Simpson <neds2124@gmail.com>, Roussas, Sandy <sandyroussasBOF@gmail.com>

November 30, 2020

Dear Newtown Board of Finance,

Tonight you will be meeting to discuss the Hawley HVAC project on the Board of Education (BOE) Capital Improvement Project (CIP) list. We have had this project on and off the CIP for what seems close to 12 years. This project needs to be completed to improve the air quality at Hawley as the majority of the building is not receiving outside fresh air on a daily basis. The original section can't even open up windows on super hot days due to all the noise from Church Hill Road traffic. The temperatures in those classrooms on certain days reaches well into the 90s on the upper floors.

As a taxpayer I am in full agreement with this project moving to the voters for the April 2021 referendum, for work to begin Summer 2021 if approved. I am also in agreement with the subsequent HVAC projects at Newtown Middle School and Middle Gate in future years. Delaying the Hawley project further delays fresh air to those schools.

Sincerely,
Nancy White
14 Butternut Ridge
Newtown, CT 06470