

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE**

Special Meeting

Meeting Room of the Community Center, 3 Primrose St, Newtown, CT

Thursday, March 23, 2023

Minutes

PRESENT: Jeff Capeci, Ryan Knapp, Michelle Embree Ku, Matthew Mihalcik, Dan Rosenthal (8:10pm)

ABSENT: Angela Curi, Charles Gardner

CALL TO ORDER: Matthew Mihalcik called the meeting to order at 7:45pm

VOTER COMMENT: None

DEBT SERVICE AND CAPITAL NON-RECURRING POLICIES

Ryan Knapp reported having spoken with Bob Tait about developing a policy to dovetail with debt service policy. Ryan Knapp suggested that the policy could direct excess fund balance be used for CIP items (as opposed to supplanting budgeted items).

2023-24 BOARD OF SELECTMEN BUDGET

Per the Legislative Council's referral to committee (3/15/23), General Government, Health and Welfare, Planning, Contingency, Debt Services and Other Financing Revenue in the BOS budget were reviewed:

- Ryan Knapp shared a list of questions that he submitted (**Attachment A**)
- Revenue – investment income forecast, intergovernmental revenue, and how new assessments would affect residential and business tax burden, as well as how the change in mil rate would affect car owners and town revenue, was discussed. Once the mil rate changes, Newtown will not qualify for the motor vehicle tax offset, provided by the state.
- Staff turnover savings in recent years was noted – whether this trend would continue was discussed.
- The Registrar's budget has been increased to reflect the presidential election year and the possibility of early voting (being discussed in the state legislature).
- Health district – some towns in the area have been moved to another health district. How is that likely to affect Newtown?
- Emergency communications – there was discussion about how surrounding towns' needs might affect Newtown.
- Economic Development and Land Use – changes in personnel were noted.

VOTER COMMENT: None

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, Mr. Capeci moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:40pm. Seconded by Mr Knapp. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Embree Ku

Vice Chair

Finance and Administration Committee of the Legislative Council

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE. ANY EDITS WILL BE REFLECTED IN THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING AT WHICH THEY ARE APPROVED.

ATTACHMENT A

Below are my Budget Questions so far from the Town side. Most of them are Finance and Administration, but a few would fall under Muni Ops. Please add these to the respective questions lists.

- Last year we discussed BOF developing a policy around contributions to outside agencies with large fund balances. What is the status of this policy? Was this topic discussed at BOF level for this budget?

- Capital non recurring has been described as returning funds to the taxpayers, so would it be a reasonable description to say the taxpayers were over taxed by 1.5M last year? Do annual surpluses suggest over taxation and thus room for decreases?

- Motor vehicle tax offset, will we get it next year given our change in revaluation? Will this be a loss of revenue next year that will need to be offset, (likely be increases in taxation)?

- p34 There is a comment that intergovernmental revenue has been decreasing, however over the last few years it has actually been increasing. Is this relative and our budget is just increasing faster? Does this include the Motor Vehicle offset?

7.1m—> 7.35m—>7.680m

-p43 Describes a “Landfill fee”, is this a misnomer?

-p44 The investment income projection shows a projected increase, and the last sentence is a bit confusing, is this driven by interest rates or market driven? How confident are we in this projection? What could make it under perform?

-p46 As NUSAR provides a regional service, is municipal support shared with other Towns like the Lake Authorities funding?

-p52/53 shows a 1.85% tax increase, however due to Revaluation many residential real estate property tax payers will see larger increases. According to the sheet we received in December “Town of Newtown Revaluation Analysis” dated 10/1/22, residential real estate 43.0% while all Real Estate increased 38.8% and the Total Net Assessment increased 34.1%. Comparing ratios of percent of the total before and after, to solve for the change in grand list share:

$$(100\%+43\%)/(100\%+38.8\%)= 1.03$$

$$(100\%+43\%)/(100\%+34.1\%)=1.066$$

Does the average Residential Real Estate Tax Bill therefore have a 6.6% larger share of the total Grand List due to relative growth?

-p55/60 investment income up 250% why? How does this relate to page 44?

-p81 says “the budget has decreased \$6,682” should this actually say increased?

-p81 This is listed as being shared 50/50 with BOE, but please confirm if all insurance and retirement contributions are carried on the Town side?

-p82 During the conversations around creating the Purchasing Agent position the rationale was that it would be offset by savings, could you provide some examples where the Purchasing Agent has been able to find savings and deliver better value for the Tax Payers?

- BOE/BOS shared services? Tech infrastructure, service, maintenance... Facilities engineer perhaps

-p115 What is the FFHA CAM charges balance?

-p132 What is our standard replacement cycle for Police Vehicles? If 1 patrol vehicle in cap non recurring, are we still buying three patrol vehicles? If we are on a usual replacement cycle of 3, then is that by definition a recurring cost? Concern of a future increase without an increase in services.

- p154, Why is LLA request so much higher than LZA? Lake Lillinonah is 2 miles longer with fewer homes, and more towns to apportion the expense over. This contribution appears to be over \$1000 per Newtown household on the lake.

-p154 Has there been any progress on savings opportunities discussed during the meeting we had (insurance and scheduling for example)?

-p164 What was the reason for the highway salaries and wages line variations from adopted to amended?

-p165 Noticed the blank box, is there any intention to fill vacant Assistant Town Engineer position?

-p177 What is the status of the improvements funded with ARP funds? Do we expect there to be a budget impact?

-p179 The recycling committee has not met in a while, and has progress at the transfer station has been slower than expected. Given the curbside recycling program \$775,000, with nominal efficacy for a service most private haulers include in other towns, is there still a consideration of moving away from it to a model more in line with other HRRRA towns?

- p198 health district - What would the effect be of another town joining? Would there be a savings for Newtown due to economies of scale?

- p226 EDC is shown as headed by a deputy director, deputy to who?

-p261 Debt Service in actual dollars is shown just under \$10m, up \$188k, but could you confirm it is decreasing as a percent of budget?

-p262 Amount from debt service applied (9,000,000,) please explain this calculation and where that comes from.

-p293 Several departments show increases but are offset by a decrease in retirement contributions, what is the typical volatility here? How often do we have years where we get to decrease retirement contributions compared to years they need to be increased? Why are the police and town pension contributions going in opposite directions? Why such a disparity? What is driving the police pension up 2x over 10 years? Is there any relief from having moved to a defined benefit plan?

Thank you very much,

-Ryan