

Town of Plymouth

80 Main Street, Terryville, CT 06786

www.plymouthct.us

Board of Finance

Telephone: 860-585-4001

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1. Call Meeting to Order: Jim Kilduff, Chairman called the scheduled April 5, 2021 Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. Zoom Meeting online- Meeting ID: 416 918 410. Members in attendance: Victoria Carey-Vice Chairman, Eugene Croce, Barbara Rockwell, Elizabeth Wollenberg, and Dave Sekorski Also present: Ann Marie Rheault - Director of Finance

2. Pledge of Allegiance: Jim Kilduff, Chairman led the group and audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Approval of Minutes – March 11, 2021, March 15, 2021, March 18, 2021, March 22, 2021, March 25, 2021, and March 29, 2021

Vicky Carey made a motion, seconded by Dave Sekorski to accept the minutes of March 11, 2021.

Motion passed unanimously

Beth Wollenberg made a motion, seconded by Vicky Carey to accept the minutes of March 15, 2021.

Motion passed unanimously

Vicky Carey made a motion, seconded by Beth Wollenberg to accept the minutes of March 18, 2021.

Motion passed unanimously

Vicky Carey made a motion, seconded by Dave Sekorski to accept the minutes of March 22, 2021.

Motion passed unanimously

Barbara Rockwell made a motion, seconded by Vicky Carey to accept the minutes of March 25, 2021.

Motion passed unanimously

Beth Wollenberg made a motion, seconded by Vicky Carey to accept the minutes of March 29, 2021.

Motion passed unanimously

PLYMOUTH, CT
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2021 APR 12 PM 3:21
Vicky Carey
TOWN CLERK

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4. Board of Education Budget Review

The Board of Education and Board of Finance discussed in detail the Board of Education's budget and Memorandum of Understanding request.

Walt Seaman stated the Memorandum of Understanding - if we have a surplus this would enable us to utilize the sinking fund to offset the operating budget which is legal by the State statute and briefly elaborated.

Walt Seaman noted there are viable solutions here - to get us what the school system needs.

Sherri Turner, Interim Superintendent stated having to cut this much from our budget is going to have an impact on staff since 80% of our budget is people and briefly elaborated.

Sherri Turner stated this is not the year for us to make drastic reductions to our budget, we need to catch our kids up and we need every resource that we have to be able to do that -that's our responsibility!

Vicky Carey stated we have to remain as this board unbiased, we have to remain neutral, we are working for the entire town - your focus is on the Board of Education, the teachers and the students, unfortunately, we have the town side also that we have to take care of also and briefly elaborated.

Vicky Carey clarified that Memorandum of Understanding agreement would need lawyer review and in addition the town council has to vote on it, so you still have two more steps before it could be approved.

Walt Seaman stated this is a concept – noted watermark “DRAFT” this isn't an official document.

Ann Marie Rheault stated was not to imagine this for the long term, but to amend this for a short term, set thresholds in terms of what the Board of Education could put in and what they could take out on an annual basis and briefly elaborated.

Ann Marie Rheault stated if you choose to give more money to the Board of Education.-you would (1) increase taxes, (2) increase your allocation of fund balance - if you want to keep your tax your mill rate the same. (3) find cuts in the rest of the budget that would offset and allow you to give more money to the Board of Education or, option (4) thinking outside of the box and come up with something that would assist the town in helping the Board of Education, looking at the town as a whole and how to best allow the Board of Education to help the students get back to school in the fall –by not increasing their base amount to be subject to MBR.

Eugene Croce stated you're financing recurring expenses, so at some point in the future. if they're going to run the same staffing pattern -you're going to be facing the can they got kicked down the road. Repairs may be needed and then we'll be looking at capitals.

Eugene Croce stated there may be funds available - just for that purpose, when we find out what the COVID Relief Act really has and the impact for local Boards of Education.

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Walt Seaman noted the grant money from the CARES act.

Ann Marie Rheault stated we do not have any specifications as to what that what those funds will be used for - initial discussion is not to supplement our operating budget and briefly elaborated.

Jim Kilduff stated there's a lot of people, no matter what they don't want any mill rate rate increase. Some think that the school's budget goes up every year, they want schools funded properly but they don't want money wasted.

Dave Sekorski stated it's not just local money it's all our money - state and federal money.

Dave Sekorski stated if this concept was accepted does that get you the 2.53% that you said you need when we first met, are we still short?

Walt Seaman stated as right now we don't know actual surplus -estimate \$275,000 and then, if you notice in the agreement if we could use \$150,000 of the money that's already in there, so no it doesn't get us to the \$627,000.

Beth Wollenberg stated I just don't think that taking it from the sinking fund, I understand this time it's a one shot deal but, but what do we do two years from now, to meet the Board of Education's budget.

Vicky Carey stated enrollment is down by 200 students.

Vicky Carey questioned raises and the actual percentage of those raises.

Walt Seaman stated 2.33% increase. The 2.33% out of that 2.53% were contractual obligations for one year - we do have to go back into negotiations regarding some language for the redistricting of schools.

Jim Kilduff stated system needs to be changed - you have to have a fair arbitration system for both the teacher side, unions, and the town side has to be fairly represented along with an independent arbitrator.

Matt Tencza, Business Manager stated I spoke to legal counsel last week on this subject. Because I wanted some clarification, the amount was amended that a school district can put into the non lapsing account or sinking fund from 1% to 2%. Noted very specific language that says that Board's of Education can use it for any educational costs and briefly elaborated.

Matt Tencza, Business Manager stated so, statutorily yes, we can do this - we can write any agreement that we want, as long as both sides agree.

Matt Tencza stated the law is clear that the Board of Education can put with boards approval up to 2% of their budget into the non lapsing account, and then it can be used for any educational costs. I'll send you over the upgraded statute and get opinion and briefly elaborated.

Jim Kilduff stated would need to be cleaned-up document, figures, etc.

Matt Tencza stated speaking for myself, is I dispute the 1% increase of \$250,000 because \$213,000 of that is funded with money that's already the Board of Education by statute.

Matt Tencza stated when I look at cost to the taxpayer, the taxpayers of Plymouth increase is the \$36,000.

Jim Kilduff stated due to new accounting procedure the budget line and that's all I want to say so I'll agree that it's \$36,000 and I'll agree on the past accounting, it was \$250,000. Two things can be right, at the same time period.

Ann Marie Rheault reiterated allocating fund balance is not a good general practice and briefly elaborated.

Vicky Carey stated before we actually vote on it, this is only a draft - whatever draft you come up with this needs to come in front of us again for further discussion after process.

Jim Kilduff stated will move tandem - I'll pursue that memorandum of understanding and we'll see where that goes on that so now the Board of Education knows that they are bumped up by the gross amount by another hundred thousand and briefly elaborated.

The Board of Finance received from the Board of Education –a **DRAFT** Memorandum of Understanding that included background, terms, and duration for perusal and consideration - a lengthy discussion took place.

Eugene Croce made a motion, seconded by Dave Sekorski to allow the chairman to move forward with the Memorandum of Understanding up to the amount of \$495,511 which will be returned back to the Board of Finance for further discussion after process.

Motion passed unanimously

Dave Sekorski made a motion, seconded by Eugene Croce to increase gross amount from \$250,000 to \$350,000 to the Board of Education.

Dave Sekorski – Yes

Eugene Croce – Yes

Beth Wollenberg – No

Vicky Carey – Yes

Barbara Rockwell – Yes

Passes four to one

Ann Marie Rheault, Director of Finance, and members of the Board of Finance discussed in detail Board of Education's portion of the draft budget of the Town of Plymouth Fiscal Year July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022 – Mayor's Proposed Budget Draft dated February 16, 2021, Pgs. 1 of 26 for discussion purposes – DRAFT/WORKING COPY* can be viewed in its entirety at the Plymouth, CT -Town Hall and on the Town of Plymouth's website -www.plymouthct.us.

5. Public Comment

Melanie Church, 328 Main Street, Terryville, CT – suggested to contact Office of Policy and Management re. Memorandum of Understanding, questioned increase with less students, and challenge teacher’s raises.

6. Correspondence

None

7. Board Member’s Comments

Vicky Carey – This will be dependent on what we do with final budget when we follow-up (finalize)

Eugene Croce – None.

Barbara Rockwell – None.

Elizabeth Wollenberg – it's a tough call again, but everyone should give some consideration before we have to look at the final budget to how we're going to recoup that hundred thousand.

Dave Sekorski - None

Our next meeting will be on April 8, 2021

8. Adjournment

There being no further business of the Board of Finance, a motion was made by Vicky Carey seconded by Eugene Croce to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. This motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Yokubinas

Michele Yokubinas
Recording Secretary