

Town of Plymouth
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Plymouth Board of Finance
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Minutes

July 15, 2010

Call to Order: Chairman Ralph Zovich called the scheduled July 15, 2010 Plymouth Board of Finance Commission Meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. in the Assembly Room, Town Hall.

Present were Plymouth Board of Finance Member Patricia Budnick, Plymouth Board of Finance Member Peter Cook, Plymouth Board of Finance Member Michael Drozdick, Plymouth Board of Finance Member Daniel Murray III, and Plymouth Board of Finance Chairman/Member Ralph Zovich. Excused absence: Plymouth Board of Finance Vice-Chair Victoria Carey. Also in attendance were Plymouth Director of Finance David Bernagel, Mayor Vincent Festa, Jr., Plymouth Tax Collector, Linda Hood, Plymouth Town Clerk, Barbara Rockwell, Plymouth Board of Education Business Manager, Michael Santogatta, and Administrative Assistant to the Mayor, Theodore Scheidel.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Zovich led the Plymouth Board of Finance Members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Fire Exits Notification

Chairman Zovich noted the Fire Exits for the Plymouth Board of Finance and Public Audience.

Acceptance of Minutes (June 17, 2010/Regular Meeting)

Cmsr. Cook made a motion, seconded by Cmsr. Budnick, to accept the June 17, 2010 Regular Plymouth Board of Finance Minutes with the following corrections: Michael Drozdick's name was misspelled; Cmsr. Zovich noted that the State of CT Safe Routes to Schools Grant was still pending Town Council's approval. This motion was approved unanimously.

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Mayor's Report

Mayor Vincent Festa stated that as of today's date, the Town was no longer in debt to the Internal Revenue Service, and had a credit of \$221.00. When questioned about the total monies paid out to the IRS, Mayor Festa stated he did not have that figure, but report it as soon as everything was totaled out; a brief discussion followed.

Mayor Festa stated that the Town was still in negotiations with the Union to consolidate positions within the Town Hall. Mayor Festa stated that the old custodial position was also being examined. Mayor Festa stated the Town was moving forward time clocks in August, as well as consolidating offices in particular departments. Mayor Festa a couple of Union issues still existed.

When questioned by Melanie Church, Mayor Festa stated that the Town was looking to combine Secretarial positions where two employees were not a necessity.

Ralph Zovich stated the Town had submitted an application in May 2010, to the State of Connecticut, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), for an Open Space Grant noting he had read the letter request previously to the Board of Finance.

When questioned by Chairman Zovich, Mayor Festa stated nothing has come of the application to date; a brief discussion followed.

PBOE Business Manager, Michael Santogatta stated the closing of the FY2009-10 Budget had proven to be a good year for the Plymouth Board of Education (BOE). M. Santogatta stated that the BOE had given \$63,000.00 back to the Town, noting that number might rise a little. He further stated that all of the oil tanks (including the Town Hall) had been filled, using last years' fiscal monies.

Chairman Zovich stated Town Councilman Martin Sandshaw had given a presentation (last month) from the energy audit that showed how much the Plymouth Board of Education had saved and noted they were off to a good start; a brief discussion followed.

Chairman Zovich stated the \$63,000.00 tentative surplus more than covers the \$61,000.00 payment for the roof repair at the Eli Terry Jr. Middle School.

When questioned by R. Zovich, M. Santogatta stated the Mayor was instrumental in obtaining the Health Department's approval signature and noted approval and authorization had been received to move forward with bidding the project out.

M. Santogatta stated the roof would have a 72% reimbursement; a brief discussion followed.

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Director of Finance, David Bertnagel stated the trial balance of the closing fiscal year came in between \$470,000 and \$520,000.00 short (showing on the revenue side) and that the expenditure side was \$650,000.00 under budget, noting this would give the Town a tentative surplus, however he would be going through the numbers to be certain.

R. Zovich distributed copies (see attachments) of the total tax collections to-date, the Town of Plymouth's Fund Balance Policy, the Delinquent Taxpayer List, and the Tax Sale List/Summary of Non-Performing Tax Delinquencies 1992-2007, dated June 17, 2010, for review and discussion.

Administrative Assistant, Theodore Scheidel stated the Tax Collector's Office was just short of collecting \$100,000.00 in real dollars in comparison with last year's collections. T. Scheidel stated the collection was 96 percent, noting the standard percentage was 97.5 for all Towns. T. Scheidel stated the Tax Department had turned over 17 accounts to Attorney Ed Smith for foreclosure and briefly reviewed and detailed the accounts. T. Scheidel stated the big news was that equipment had been confiscated at Coldform and credited Sheriff's Brian Cybalski and Vincent Messina with doing a tremendous job and noted the equipment was put into storage for the time being.

T. Scheidel and Chairman Zovich reviewed the Tax Sale List by name and property, in detail with T. Scheidel updating the status of each property. Cmsr. Zovich stated this list should be kept updated and be utilized as the sheriff's hit list; a brief discussion followed

T. Scheidel and R. Zovich then reviewed the Delinquent Taxpayer List by name and property, in detail. T. Scheidel stated the list was updated on Fridays and that approximately \$40,000.00 had been collected, so far, for the month of July 2010; a lengthy discussion followed. T. Scheidel stated the Town Attorney, Salvatore Vitrano, had been very instrumental in assisting with the back taxes collections.

Chairman Zovich stated the Delinquent Taxpayer List was on the Town's Web Site and noted that after the first page (see attachment) most of the delinquents were not that far behind in years. He further stated he was more concerned about the delinquents that were 15 to 17 years in arrears.

Tax Collector, Linda Hood, stated that many of the 15 plus year delinquents had been turned over to Town Attorneys, many times, for collection on estates where the owner(s) had passed away and heirs were difficult to locate. L. Hood further stated that many of the accounts were already delinquent before she took the position of Tax Collector. L. Hood stated that the utilization of Nexus Lexus, an online Search Engine, would be very useful for the Tax Department to research and track down delinquents. L. Hood stated the Tax Department was seeing a rise in bank foreclosures.

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Town Councilwoman DiAnna Schenkel, stated her company utilizes Nexus Lexus and noted bundling could be obtained a licensing agreement between the Police and Tax Departments. At Chairman Zovich's request, D. Bertnagel will looking into this possibility further. T. Scheidel stated that he had authorized a letter, on L. Hood's behalf, notifying tax delinquents that their name(s) would be placed on the Town's Web Site as being delinquent and noted this notification netted approximately \$30,000.00 in taxes for the Town.

When questioned by Cmsr. Budnick, T. Scheidel stated that the list represented approximately \$400,000.00 in unpaid taxes.

Cmsr. Cook made a motion, seconded by Cmsr. Budnick, to enter into Executive Session at 7:50 p.m., to discuss pending tax foreclosure litigation. This motion was approved unanimously.

In attendance for the Executive Session were D. Bertnagel, P. Budnick, P. Cook, M. Drozdick, V. Festa, L. Hood, D. Murray, T. Scheidel, and R. Zovich.

Chairman Zovich called the Plymouth Board of Finance back into the Regular Meeting session at 8:04 p.m. It was noted for the record that no motions/actions were taken as a result of the Executive Session.

R. Zovich stated that the implementation of cost saving actions for the FY2010-11 General Fund Budget included the following action items: reduction of cell phones, sale of surplus vehicles, reduced overtime in the Highway Department/Transfer Station, consolidation of checking accounts, and review of fee schedules by the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Town Council.

At the chair's request, D. Bertnagel updated items, previously identified by the Board of Finance members, for cost savings. When questioned by Chairman Zovich if the 22 cell phone contracts had been canceled, D. Bertnagel stated that Anthony Lorenzetti was reviewing the list and would have a complete updated listing, as well as a plan stating what the Town Departments needed.

Chairman Zovich stated there was no negotiating on the 22 cell phones and it was up to D. Bertnagel and A. Lorenzetti on where the 14 available cell phone contracts were distributed. R. Zovich stated the 22 cell phones needed to be canceled because the account would not be allowed to go into deficit, noting the account had been cut and approved by the voters at the second referendum. R. Zovich stated that this unpopular decision was made in an effort to head-off potential layoffs.

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Chairman Zovich stated the Town was in possession of six unmarked Ford Crown Victoria vehicles and noted four of these had been assigned to the Director of Public Works, the Town Planner, the Zoning Enforcement Officer and the Building Inspector.

Zovich noted that Ford would be discontinuing the manufacture of this vehicle next year and questioned the resale value (if any) of these vehicles. He stated that the majority of Police departments were switching over to Impalas or Dodge Chargers and noted this issue would have to be addressed by the Chief of Police and the Police Commission.

D. Bertnagel stated that eliminating the surplus cars would not reduce insurance costs because the Town pays for fleet insurance.

At chair's request, D. Bertnagel stated he would provide a listing of the Town's fixed assets at the next scheduled meeting of the Board of Finance, and noted this listing would include all Town vehicles. D. Bertnagel stated this listing would be matched up to the Town's insurance listing.

Chairman Zovich stated that the Board of Finance had suggested if the approved budget Road Repair item was done in-house by the Public Works Department, the Transfer Station should be closed one day a week. He further stated the Transfer Station operator could be taken from his duties and be put on the Public Works Department highway crew to pave the roads. Zovich stated there would be no more curbing work for the Town roads, noting it was a waste of time and money.; a brief discuss followed. Cmsr. Zovich stated A. Lorenzetti and the Highway crew needed to focus on repaving as that was the one item that was budgeted for.

When asked by Zovich, D. Bertnagel stated there were 60 checking accounts to start with and that a number of them had been consolidated and several were shutdown because of the high fees associated with them. D. Bertnagel stated he was moving forward with the work; a brief discussion followed.

Cmsr. Murray stated that A. Lorenzetti had previously come before the Board of Finance requesting the fee schedules be reviewed. Chairman Zovich replied that the Town Council and the Planning & Zoning Commission would have to review the fee schedules for the Town.

When questioned by Cmsr. Budnick, D. Bertnagel stated a request had gone out to all the Town Departments requesting an inventory of all computers and printers in each individual department.

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When questioned by Cmsr. Budnick, D. Bertnagel stated he would report on the monthly/yearly cost of running the old VNA/Fire Marshal offices located at 244 Main Street, Terryville.

Chairman Zovich stated that real estate, in general, should be added to the implementation of cost savings actions listing, and cited the sale of the Prospect Street School building as an example.

When questioned by R. Zovich, D. Bertnagel stated that the Plymouth Town Council had entertained an agreement with the potential buyer of the Prospect Street School property.

Mayor Festa stated the sale of Prospect Street School was contingent upon the Planning & Zoning Commission's acceptance of senior housing on the property, and that he did not see any issues with this proposed use.

Mayor Festa stated a Request for Proposal (RFP) had come in for the Main Street School property and the Town was waiting for a second RFP.

When asked by Chairman Zovich, D. Bertnagel stated there were no transfers between accounts to be discussed at this evenings' meeting.

D. Bertnagel stated that during the budget process, discussion took place to create two new special revenue funds, noting action would have to be taken on both. D. Bertnagel stated that the account named the Police Special Services Revenue account was created to receive extra duty payments and the other account was named the Recreation Revolving Fund and was created to receive the collection of activity fee payments.

R. Zovich detailed both newly created accounts, noting; a brief discussion followed.

Cmsr. Murray made a motion, seconded by Cmsr. Budnick, to create the Police Special Services Revenue account as discussed and outlined. This motion was approved unanimously.

Cmsr. Budnick made a motion, seconded by Cmsr. Murray, to create the Recreation Revolving Fund as discussed and outlined. This motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman. Zovich stated these two newly created accounts would show up in this year's audit.

D. Bertnagel distributed copies (see attachments) and outlined the proposed draft of the Town of Plymouth's Fund Balance Policy and noted he had done a history comparison, with fund balances, for the last ten years.

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D. Bertnagel stated he was recommending maintain an ending general fund designated and undesignated fund balance instead of operating revenues. D. Bertnagel stated the designated fund balance was 7.45 percent and the undesignated fund balance was 5.5 percent; a lengthy discussion followed.

Public Comment

Melanie Church, 328 Main Street, Terryville, stated she would like to have the annual audit include all Town employees' incomes from their W-2 slips.

When questioned by M. Church, Cmsr. Budnick stated the State of Connecticut lists all employee salaries on the State's web site; a brief discussion followed.

M. Church requested that D. Bertnagel provide the cost savings for all of the Town employees who have retired, early.

Cmsr. Cook stated that Anthony Lorenzetti, Director Public Works, wanted to review the Land Board fee structure; a brief discussion followed.

Chairman Zovich stated that BlumShapiro, the Town's Auditor, would be invited to the next scheduled meeting of the Board of Finance.

Adjournment

There being no further business of the Plymouth Board of Finance, Cmsr. Cook made a motion, seconded by Cmsr. Budnick, to adjourn at 9:15 p.m. This motion was approved unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,
Acting Recording Secretary

Copy: Mayor Vincent Festa, Jr.