

# Town of Plymouth

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# Board of Finance

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1. Call Meeting to Order – The Regular Meeting of the Plymouth Board of Finance was called to order on Thursday, March 20, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Peter Cook in the Assembly Room, Plymouth Town Hall. Members in attendance: Vicky Carey, Peter Cook, Pattie DeHuff, Michael Drozdick, Dan Murray, James Zalot. Also present: David Bertnagel, Director of Finance; Robin Gudczauskas, Recording Secretary; Councilwoman Sue Murawski.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Approval of Minutes

February 27, 2014

March 6, 10, 13, 2014

**MOTION:** To accept the Minutes of February 27, 2014 by Pattie DeHuff; second Dan Murray. Discussion: None. Vote: unanimous.

**MOTION:** To accept the minutes of March 6, 2014 by Pattie DeHuff; second Dan Murray. Discussion: none. Vote: unanimous.

**MOTION:** To accept the minutes of March 10, 2014 by Pattie DeHuff; second Dan Murray. Discussion: none. Vote: unanimous.

**MOTION:** To accept the minutes of March 13, 2014 by Pattie DeHuff; second Dan Murray. Discussion: none. Vote: unanimous.

4. Tax Collectors Report

a. Collection mill rate review for 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 budget year (s)

Ted Smith, Tax Collector, stated he put together and distributed synopsis of grand levy collection years and amount collected, collection rate, presently at 99.89% as of March 19<sup>th</sup> including \$1,577,789 in back taxes and interest. Peter verified at 99.89% of; Dave stated budget amount is grossed downward to 97% of assessed valuation of mill rate. Ted stated additional revenue opportunity is on delinquent taxes, reviewed. Aggressively going after delinquent taxes of \$5 million and has also collected back taxes of \$228,207; have been sending out demand letters to delinquent taxpayers and after that can lien property, serve with alias tax warrant, can go after bank accounts, suspend registration on motor vehicle, etc.

In Prior Levy budgeted \$50,000 and feels he can do that in two weeks. Review and discussion held. Commission questioned percentage of taxes collected so far, are we equal to last year; back taxes of \$1 million has to be Jasper which was done; what have we collected so far, percentage of that and comparison to last year.

**MOTION:** To take a short recess at 7:15 p.m. by Pattie DeHuff; second Jim Zalot and the vote unanimous.

Chairman Cook called the meeting back in order at 7:20 p.m.

Dave Bertnagel distributed and reviewed example of how report was structured and reviewed how grand list assessed. To date (as of 2/28) have collected \$25,187,603.02 of levy which gives us 94.52% collection on current grand list and 2.48% below of budget target. We need about \$600,000 to make 100% of budget 97%. Prior year is where collection is. 97.75% would have to collect \$800,000 for current year to balance out. Discussion held. Board requested information on where we are against line items collecting to make decision.

- b. Back taxes collection efforts update – Chairman Cook asked what the Tax Collector needs from the Board. Ted Smith stated he feels under control, staff is doing tremendous job, two attorneys working with are doing a tremendous job and adding to list on daily basis. Chairman Cook stated the Board has way of measuring effectiveness of tax collector, have 200 some odd people who owe back taxes and would like snapshot every 3-6 months or so and they can have understanding of what is happening with number; those 200 are broken in categories i.e. probate, older estate, businesses, etc and each attacked in different ways. Ted stated he will present a graphic to visualize how many people started with in real estate delinquents, personal property, motor vehicle, water and also cross section of chemistry of make up in terms of individuals, businesses and where are they in financial situation (bankrupts, declare, Chapter 7 , 11, etc). Delinquent tax sales; David Bertnagel stated Khara Dodds and Ted Scheidel did it last and there were 8-9 properties left, will be looked at again and list will be compiled. Pattie DeHuff asked (a) if he was looking at areas to streamline office; Ted Smith stated he will submit request to state to destroy records as inordinate number of records in the vault making things cumbersome when doing research; have rearranged interior and cleaned up and prettied up office to make appealing to customer and have a few things on agenda for the next year. One of which is tickler list for people in town, compile names, email and phone numbers, for those who tend to lose documents or forget when tax bills are due and they will call to remind bills due; safety guidelines to put in place in tax office. (b) Mailers that go out for property tax, personal property, can you combine so we don't have as many mailers; Ted Smith stated statutorily not and obligated through statutory guidelines 575 rule, reviewed.

#### 5. Mayor's Report

Dave Bertnagel reported for the Mayor that he has been in contact with several businesses and another business is going into the industrial park and a few opening on Main Street; one in old Western Auto and activity near Terryville Pizza. Discussion held on going out approaching and inquiries on coming into town.

#### 6. Finance Director's Report

- a. Recommended transfers between accounts if required – none.

- b. Appoint the Auditors for Fiscal Year 2013-2014 – Dave Bertnagel stated this is the third year with BlumShapiro if opt to appoint and recommend next year go out to RFP which have done in the past. He recommends BlumShaprio for the 6/30/2014 audit.

**MOTION:** To appoint BlumShapiro as auditor for 13-14 fiscal year by Dan Murray; second Vicky Carey. Discussion: Pattie DeHuff stated she is concerned with things on BOE side that are not resolved, had someone on town side commit suicide, change in personnel here and does not know why and we need to be careful who we pick as auditor and can they be assigned to look into any problems in either area. If you use same auditor will they find something. Dave Bertnagel stated the auditor comes in before the audit starts, field testing is done in June, with representation scope and asks BOE members for concerns or specifics to look into. In regard to her two areas, do not know to what extent they will look into but will take into consideration; scope of audit is financial vs personnel but if mass exodus of key personnel they will look into it. BOE's can transfer unlimited in budget and as long as ED01 is not out of line and matches with expenditure list there is nothing. Chairman Cook stated the BOE did do a forensic audit for the time and separate from regular audit and assume auditors go through tax office very well. Dave Bertnagel stated they will be more cautious with change in tax collectors; Pattie DeHuff stated she would like public works looked at very carefully as well due to changes. Vote: Mike Drozdick, yes; Pattie DeHuff, yes; Jim Zalot, yes; Vicky Carey, yes; Dan Murray, yes. Chairman Cook stated the motion carries.

7. Board of Finance Public Comment Policy

Chairman Cook explained what was presented, Version 1, what we do today and added some language and allows time limits; Version 2 is allowing public comment on any agenda item specific to the agenda item being discussed. Pattie DeHuff stated she is in agreement with Version 2 as second paragraph allowing any agenda item and specific to that and following what the town council does; this board is equal in her mind to the council, feels 2 minutes is a bit short as when she types something it runs 3 minutes and would like 3 minute limit.

Mike Drozdick, public comment is item 8 and in previous it was in beginning and is that another version and when will that be on agenda. Chairman Cook stated this policy doesn't say where public comment will be. Discussion held.

Vicky Carey prefers public comment after the minutes and her feeling is that the Board may question the public on their public comment but no discussion made on that item. If any questions to the Board or the Finance Director, instead of speaking off the cuff, feels we take in question and put on agenda for next time to answer.

Dan Murray stated he has no problem with time and doesn't think scope of times we have public comment at our meetings, no one has ever said you are under a 2 minute warning as typically attendance is same folks. Missing is any subject that lies within its jurisdiction and some questions presented to us have been more policy/procedure of government as opposed to Board that we should not discuss or answer. What is the goal we have to change the way we are doing what we are doing in relation to where public comment comes in; to him makes sense at end of meeting. Pattie DeHuff stated her concern on public comment at end as we take vote without benefit of

public's voice. Discussion held. Chairman Cook stated he hears desire to get public input before we vote on something, we can always motion to allow and have never stopped anyone from giving input. Being concerned we will not get public comment or it not being allowed, there are other ways besides allowing continuous comment in the process.

Jim Zalot stated agreement with Peter, have sign in list per topic on agenda and if someone in public wants to discuss we can bring individual up, they can speak, we take info received and that way all considerations are taken into account.

**MOTION:** To add public comment to this agenda item by Dan Murray; second Pattie DeHuff and the vote unanimous.

Melanie Church, 328 Main Street, Terryville, CT 06786; 2 minutes or 3 minutes and does not think anybody has ever been long winded on any topic brought up and if someone has someone to say and you limit time and it is distracting to speaker and distracting for people listening. Good example is Board of Education as they more watch time than hear. Disagree wholeheartedly, have read Roberts Rules of Order and large version and encourages debate and the only thing it doesn't want is for something to get out of hand and don't believe there should be a time limit. As last time in audience chairman of WPCA has a place for public comments on non agenda items and able to comment throughout the meeting. Same as council.

Jim Deutsch, 34 Orchard Street, Terryville – Chairman of wetlands for almost 6 years and find more specific you get on public comment the more complicated it gets; did have meetings that ran several hours and had a lot of people to speak; however, for public hearing of which they have several, sometimes 30-50 people in hearing and at that point would not ever set time limit and comes down to common sense and at some point people want to state what they have to do and do not shut down at 3 minutes but do make rule if start repeating they will give respectful warning and he uses own judgment. Also, in both paragraphs, public can speak during regular meetings and also allow public to speak at special meetings and times the public will want to speak there. Noticed people who get up to speak expect answer in public comment and does not believe you need to provide answer and may want to state that. He is on WPCA, not a land use board, and do have a public comment section at end but does allow public to speak on every agenda item.

Chris Simo-Kinzer – 52 Old Farm Road – agree with what was said and these meetings seem to be more focused than other boards; allowing public comment throughout meeting especially on important items is important. Does not want to listen to someone go on for 20 minutes.

Chairman Cook stated the time to speak is up to board and is discretion item. Public comment is public comment and not question and answer.

**MOTION:** To accept Version 1 changing word from “regular” meeting to “board” meeting by Dan Murray; second Vicky Carey. Discussion: Pattie DeHuff stated this sends a bad signal to the public that we don't want them to participate on every item and opposed to this. Vote: Mike Drozdick, no; Pattie DeHuff, no; Jim Zalot, yes; Vicky Carey, yes; Dan Murray, yes. Motion carries. Chairman Cook stated he will write officially, give date and revisit every 2 years.

8. Public Comment

- a. Chris Simo-Kinzer, 52 Old Farm Road – comment tax collector made in regards to safety guards in tax collectors office and made reference to discussion with police officer and concern on what implying and urge everyone to keep ear out to what that means and expects to be agenda item; concerned on implication. Chairman Cook asked Dave Bertnagel to have the Tax Collector speak with the Mayor if he has not already done so, and if the Board needs to talk in executive session they will.
- b. Jim Deutsch, 34 Orchard Street, tax collector stated an issue about bills being mailed is something to consider at some point as there are a lot of people internet billing or paper statement, and should be looked at. Even the library has taken on electronic capability in a few years as he can do a lot on their website and opportunity out there and based on secure website and it is there if payments can be made.
- c. Melanie Church, 328 Main Street, disappointed in vote but there is another way if you want to make a point stand out with a sign and people can see it. Maybe she just won't say nothing and maybe raises not happy with and she will stand out with sign and maybe you will hear other people complain.
- d. Jim Deutsch, 34 Orchard Street – said thank you to Pattie as he could not get to Monday's meeting and her tape recorder posted audio on face book and was able to get a chance to listen and provided him opportunity to semi attend meeting.
- e. Michael Kennedy, 11 Overlook Terrace Road – disappointed on vote taken on line item 7. As a taxpayer he is the boss and pays the bills and you are elected officials, public servants, and sooner or later the public servants become the master and you have never shut them down and only fair to participate in every line item on agenda especially when taxpayer revenue.

9. Correspondence - none

10. Board Member Comments

- a. Mike Drozdick spoke with Plymouth Library and okay with amount we are giving; did get their financials and will make copies; disappointed that they gave their columns for 3 previous years and gave figures up to February.
- b. Pattie DeHuff – thanked Peter for putting the policy on agenda and very disappointed with vote and concerned that message sent to the public is we don't want to hear what you want to say. Asked that when make agenda the next item you move public comment to the beginning after approval of minutes so they are aware of topic and can express opinion of how you might vote on agenda item. Appeal to those who voted in favor of 1 that you make a motion to reconsider your vote.
- c. Chairman Cook stated Monday is BOE in the Community Room and if any questions please get them to him. Pattie DeHuff stated she wants class sizes for every single class in every single grade; would like what has been financial impact of common core on Plymouth; trip to Harvard, bought electronic device for each individual student, testing costs, everything. Chairman Cook asked Dave Bertnagel to put together a memo to the Superintendent.

11. Adjournment

**MOTION:** To adjourn by Pattie DeHuff; second Mike Drozdick and the vote unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Gudeczauskas  
Recording Secretary