

Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
November 15, 2012
Meeting Room A
Essex Town Hall

Present: James Francis, Keith Crehan, Campbell Hudson, Frederick Vollono, Lee Rowley

Absent: Jeffrey Woods

Others Present: Norman Needleman, First Selectman
Kelly Sterner, Finance Director
Yvonne Roziak, Recording Secretary
Lon Seidman, Chairman, Essex Elementary Board of Education

James Francis called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

James Francis reported that First Selectman Norman Needleman has requested that the "Selectmen's Report" be moved to after Approval of Agenda along with a request to go into Executive Session to discuss Pending Litigation. Additionally, Mr. Needleman asked to add an item to discuss the Amendment to the Ordinance Providing Tax Relief for the Elderly.

The motion was made by Keith Crehan to approve the agenda with these recommended changes. Campbell Hudson seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

SELECTMEN'S REPORT:

Norman Needleman distributed the Amendment and Extension of The Ordinance Providing Tax Relief For Elderly or Disabled Homeowners and asked the Board of Finance to read and discuss anything that needs clarification, changing etc. This original tax relief program was put into place in 2004, and re-authorized a few years ago. The amendment would freeze taxes until the house was sold. The deferral would be secured by a lien filed in the land records. The plan is to have this in place by January 1st. The proposed Amendment has been reviewed by the Town Attorney. Campbell Hudson recommended several changes which will be reviewed with the Town Attorney and an updated version of the amendment will be provided to members for the next meeting.

Norman Needleman indicated that the Board of Finance need only to approve the concept of the deferral program as an amendment (to the original). Kelly Sterner indicated that once approved at a Town meeting, the amendment becomes effective 15 days from when it is printed in the newspaper.

Motion was made by James Francis to approve the concept of the elderly tax deferral program and recommend to Town meeting the proposed amendment contingent upon review and approval of the revised amendment at the next Board of Finance meeting. Keith Crehan seconded the motion. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

Norman Needleman also discussed the recent storm and that the EOC was well run during and after the storm. He reported that there was weakness in communications to John Winthrop Jr. High School. Radio's communication reached Ivoryton but could not reach John Winthrop. Proper Storm shutters are also needed in the EOC. A list of more items that came out of this storm will be developed. Discussion about the need for a generator at the library surfaced as that building was closed due to the storm for over a week. Mr. Needleman also reported that the Town has been awarded a STEAP grant of \$471,000 for improvements to the civic campus (playscape, tennis courts, connectivity with Library and parking lot). The grant may not include the needed repairs to the entrance and a few other items. We're hoping everything we want to do can be done on this grant.

A motion was made to go into Executive Session by James Francis at 7:45 p.m. Kelly Sterner & Norman Needleman were invited to attend. The motion seconded by Keith Crehan. Passed unanimously. Motion carried. Executive Session ended at 8:00 p.m.

A motion was made by Keith Crehan to transfer \$9,900 from the Board of Finance Contingency (10409 – 508400) to Employee Benefits (10494 – 501500) for a pending litigation settlement. The motion was seconded by Lee Rowley and unanimously approved. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Keith Crehan to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of 10/18/12 with the following changes:

Treasurer's report: Page 2 - First paragraph, last sentence "Robert Dixon also indicated that the audit will be done this week and it is expected to be a clean opinion (added)".

Selectmen's Report: Page 2 – Fourth paragraph "Mr. Needleman reported that "the" (added) vendor for the Town web site has been chosen...

Last sentence – Next step is to update our property database platform “which will” (added), delete “to” eliminate all non-communicative software.

Fifth Paragraph – Town owned cell phones will go on one common plan and “the Town” (added) will considering offering.....

*The motion was seconded by Campbell Hudson and it was unanimously approved.
Motion carried.*

TREASURER’S REPORT:

Kelly Sterner, Finance Director reported that YTD revenues reflect continued healthy collections. The current property tax collection rate is slightly ahead of the same period last year at 54.1% vs. 53.6%. Conveyance tax and Town clerk fees are ahead of prior year while building permits and sanitary waste fees are approximately the same at this point compared to the prior fiscal year. Costs are on track based on expenses recorded as of October month end. However, we should see the cost impact of the storm by the end of the calendar year. This will include overtime, tree removal expense, increased grinding costs at the transfer station and some slight equipment damage (antenna). If Middlesex county meets the threshold for costs related to the Hurricane, then we will be eligible for some FEMA funding/reimbursement.

A motion was made by Keith Crehan to accept the Treasurer’s Report. Fred Vollono seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS:

Kelly Sterner reminded the Board that the dedication will be held on November 19, 2012 at 11:00 a.m.

NEW BUSINESS:

Kelly Sterner distributed copies of the proposed 2013 Board of Finance Calendar. Changes being made are: Board of Selectmen’s Budget 2013-2014 “or” Board of Education Budget 2013-2014 will be held on March 21, 2013 and the same for March 28, 2013 – adding “Recommend budget to Public Hearing”. Second change, The April 18, 2013 – “Following the Public Hearing Meeting” will be moved to April 22, 2013 in the Auditorium. Kelly will distribute an updated calendar.

A motion was made by James Francis to approve 2013 BOF Calendar, seconded by Campbell Hudson. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

ESSEX BOARD OF EDUCATION:

Lon Seidman, Chairman, Essex Elementary Board of Education reported a currently estimated deficit of approximately \$60,000 to the Board of Finance. The reason for the deficit is due to unanticipated special education costs. James Francis responded that the Board of Finance will continue to track this and see if any of the deficit can be made up before year end rather than making a supplemental appropriation now. Lon Seidman also reported that the new Principal and the Board of Education are deeply involved in the budget process and BOE workshops begin next month. Factors impacting that budget will be declining student population and the new teacher's contract that was recently ratified. Lon reported that the Common Core of Education is being revamped especially in the field of critical thinking in curriculum. He also stated that the Evaluation Program is also being revamped based on new State mandates.

The Board of Finance members thanked Mr. Seidman for his report. Campbell Hudson recommended that the Essex representatives to the Region 4 Board be requested to provide a similar interim report to the Board of Finance.

COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE: None

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

Motion was made by Keith Crehan to adjourn at 8:55 p.m. Lee Rowley seconded the motion and it was passed unanimously. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Yvonne M. Roziak