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Board of Finance

Town of Essex
29 West Avenue
Essex, CT 06426
Via Remote & In Person- 7:00 PM

MINUTES

Thursday October 19, 2023

Members in Attendance:	Campbell Hudson, Chairman
	Terry Stewart
	Mary-Louise Polo (Via Zoom)
	Ethan Goller
	Brian Weinstein
Others in Attendance:	Norman Needleman, First Selectman
	Jim Francis, Treasurer
	Bruce Glowac, Selectman
	Tracey Celentano, Finance Director
	Kelly Sterner
	Danielle Schumacher, Board Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Chairman Campbell Hudson.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION made by Terry Stewart to approve the agenda as submitted. SECONDED by Brian Weinstein. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 21, 2023

MOTION made by Ethan Goller to approve the minutes from the September 21, 2023 Board of Finance meeting as submitted. SECONDED by Brian Weinstein. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

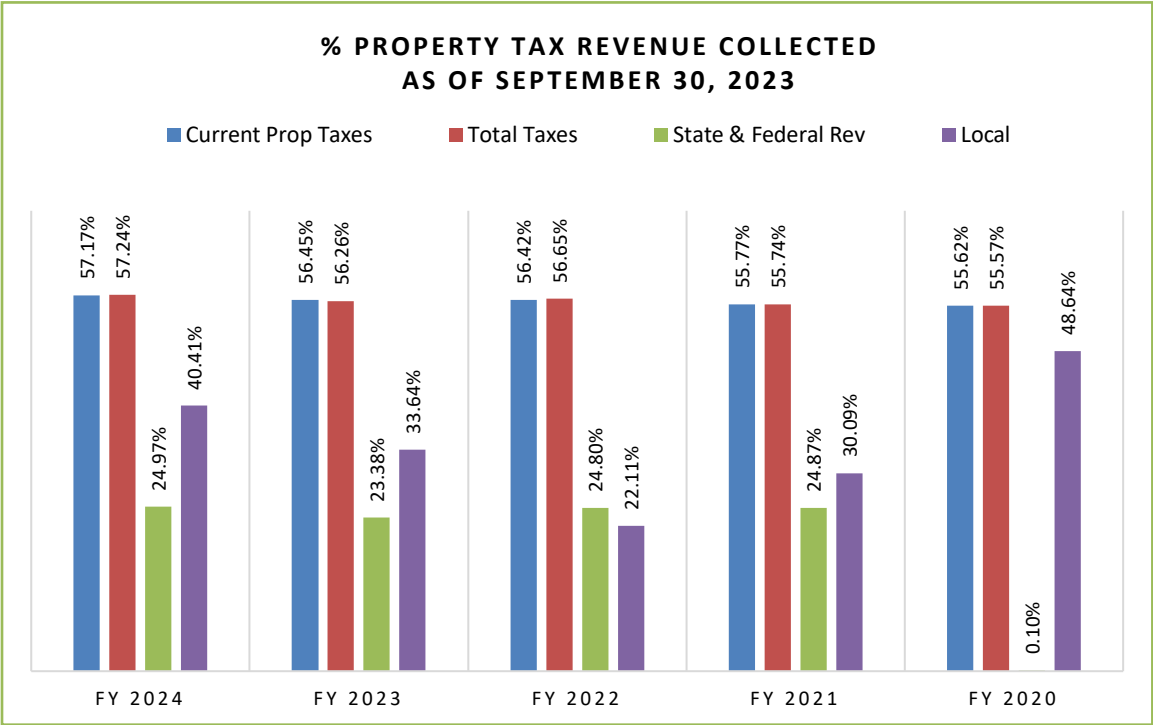
4. FINANCIAL REPORT

a. SEPTEMBER 2023 FINANCIAL REPORT

REVENUES

Overall tax revenue is trending slightly higher than historical collection rates. Total tax collections for the month were \$180.8K with current property taxes accounting for \$122.2K of the total.

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As of September month-end, the YTD total tax collections were \$14,464,056 or 57.24% of the fiscal year total compared to 56.26% as of September 2022 and 56.65% as of September 2021. State revenue is at 24.97% collected, which is comparable to prior years at this same time. State PILOT payment totaling \$10,393 was the only State and Federal Revenue received in September. Local revenues are slightly above prior years with \$221,525 or 40.41% of the fiscal year collected year-to-date. Conveyance taxes collected total \$56.1K or 62.28%, Town Clerk Fees total \$20.9K or 24.59% and Building Permits total \$78.9K or 63.10% of the budgeted fiscal year. Overall total revenues collected are at 55.82% of budget versus 54.65% for September 2022 and 54.56% for September 2021 month end. This includes the budgeted deficit of \$226,580.

EXPENDITURES

Expenditures for the month of September totaled \$2,403,614 bringing spending YTD to \$8,316,867 or 31.36% of budget. Selectmen’s budget expenditures made up \$1,066,982 of the total September spending. As of September month-end, the Selectmen’s budget spending YTD is \$3,528,912 or 37.84% of budget compared to 41.36% as of September 2022 and 40.96% at September 2021 month end. September payroll and benefits accounted for \$290.4K of the monthly spending and debt service payments totaled \$407K for the month. Quarterly payments made included insurance and the libraries.

MOTION made by Terry Stewart to approve the financial report as submitted. SECONDED by Brian Weinstein. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

b. AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT SUMMARY

Tracey Celentano said that the ARPA report included in the meeting packet is up to date for everything that has been paid. The only item that is new is the second line, which is an addendum for Thatchbed Island.

5. SELECTMEN'S REPORT

First Selectman, Norman Needleman reported that the Board of Education is taking a very methodical and cautious approach remediating the mold issue at John Winthrop . He thinks that the sooner the kids can move back, the better and he predicts that it can be done by the end of the Christmas break.

Mr. Needleman went on to say that the town was awarded an additional STEAP grant totaling \$444,000 for Ferry Street Improvements to mitigate the flooding on Ferry Street. He believes that we can probably mitigate it 80% of the time by raising it almost a foot.

Terry Stewart asked about the item on the ballot for the security system at the school. Mr. Needleman responded that it is important that we get people out to vote and get this security system underway. It is more expensive than they had originally planned.

An ongoing problem has been the Animal Control Officer (ACO) position. The Town has been piecing it together for the past 7 or 8 years. Deep River and Chester First Selectman are 100% on board, splitting the cost of a Full Time ACO. Essex currently has money in the Dog Fund as well as money appropriated for a vehicle. They are estimating the cost for the ACO, maintaining the dog pound, and benefits would be an aggregate cost of about \$120,000 (which would be split 3 ways). This is a position that really needs to be professionalized and would include outreach and training.

There will also be a line item in the next budget for a registrar of voters. Due to early voting, The FY24-25 Budget is expected to double.

4. OLD BUSINESS

None

5. NEW BUSINESS

a. ARPA REQUEST - THATCHBED ISLAND

The town is trying to complete the restoration project for Thatchbed Island. The goal is to make it a spoils island. The Board of Selectmen formed a Thatchbed committee because it was such a huge undertaking. They are dealing with DEEP and the Army Corp of Engineers. The first step is the removal of the rock piles on the south end, which they will use to define the end of the island once the reclamation is done. The original estimate for the work was \$5,000 but it quickly rose to \$38,000. They are asking for an amount not to exceed \$40,000.

Campbell Hudson said that this has not be formally approved by the Board of Selectman, but we have two of the three Board members present here with no objection.

***MOTION made by Ethan Goller to approve and recommend to Board of Selectman and Town meeting an additional appropriation in the amount not to exceed \$40,000 to be allocated from the American Rescue Plan Act Funds for the protection and restoration of Thatchbed Island.
SECONDED by Mary-Louise Polo. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.***

b. BOF 2024 MEETINGS/BUDGET 2024 CALENDAR

Finance Director Tracey Celentano said that there are two dates that need to be addressed. The Board of Education wants to bring the budget forward on Wednesday April 3rd. In October, several Thursdays in October are Jewish holidays so the meeting would have to be on the 10th or 31st.

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Ethan Goller proposed to move the October meeting to the 10th.

MOTION made by Terry Stewart to approve the Board of Finance Calendar for 2023 as well as the Town of Essex Calendar of Budget Meetings for the 2024-2025 Budget. SECONED by Ethan Goller. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

6. **COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

Terry Stewart said that he had received positive feedback from both the Land Trust and the Historical Society on the annual report. Monday November 20th is the town meeting for the dedication.

7. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

none

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION made by Terry Stewart to adjourn the meeting at 7:36 PM. SECONDED by Ethan Goller. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle Schumacher". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

Recording Clerk