

These Minutes Have Not Yet Been Approved

BOARD OF FINANCE

Town of Essex
29 West Avenue
Essex, CT 06426
Via Remote & In Person- 7:00 p.m.
Conference Room A

MINUTES

Thursday January 20, 2022

In Attendance: Brian Weinstein, Mary-Louise Polo, Keith Crehan, Campbell Hudson

Others in Attendance: Tracey Celentano- Finance Director
Norman Needleman- First Selectman
Kelly Sterner

Absent: Ethan Goller, Vincent Pacileo III

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM by Chairman Keith Crehan

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

Mary-Louise Polo moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Brian Weinstein. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:

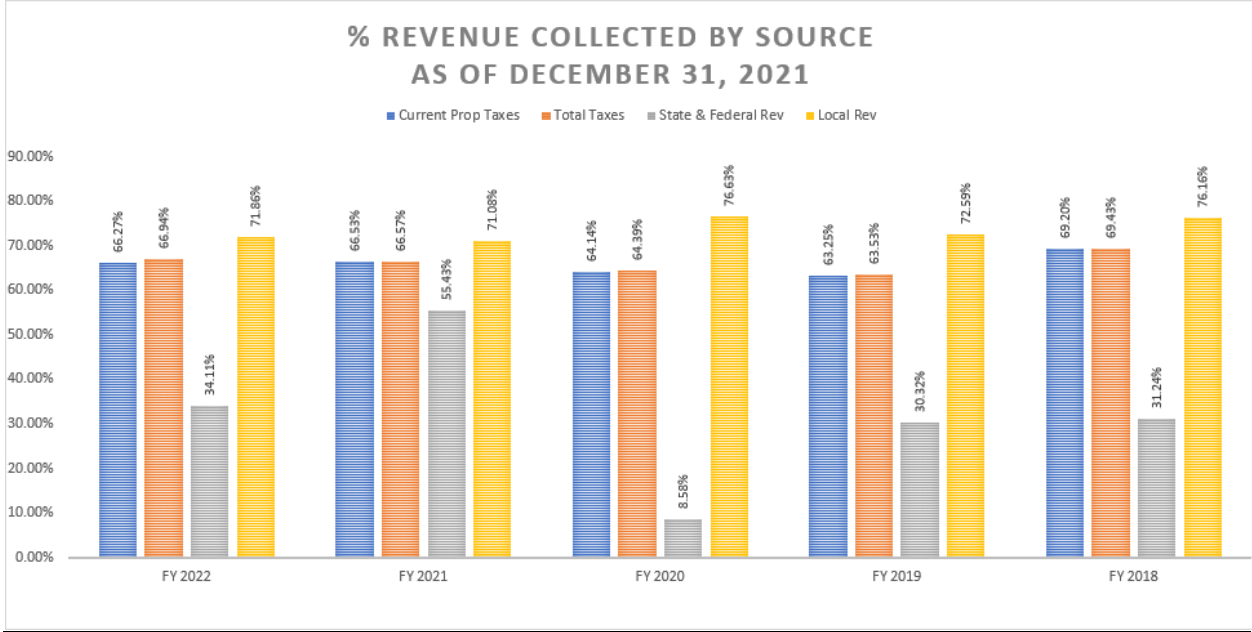
Campbell Hudson made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 16, 2021 meeting, seconded by Brian Weinstein. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

FINANCIAL REPORTS:

ESTIMATED DECEMBER YTD UPDATE

REVENUES

Current property tax collections totaled \$2.1 million for December 2021 which compares favorably to December 2020. This brings the collection rate to 66,270/o which also compares favorably to historical rates, Prior years' collections and interest and liens accounted for \$67.3K.



As of December month-end, the YTD total tax collections were \$16,232,958 or 66.94% of the fiscal year total compared to 66.57% as of December 2020 and 64.39% as of December 2019. State Revenue in December consisted of \$2.4K for Veterans Tax Relief funds. State and Federal grant revenue is favorable to prior years as last fiscal year included one-time COVID related grants totaling \$69.4K. Local revenues totaled \$63K in December and \$433.5K (71.86% collected) YTD, which are comparable to prior years. Interest income continues to remain low while Town Clerk Fees and Conveyance Taxes continue to trend positively. As of the end of December, Conveyance Tax Fees has exceeded the full budget amount by \$50K (145%). Town Clerk Fees collected are at 67.64% of budget in December. Both Conveyance and Town Clerk Fees are expected to level off as there are only nineteen real estate listings available. Total revenues collected year to-date came in at 65.64% of budget versus 66.02% for December 2020 and 63.30% for December 2019 month end. These totals reflect the budgeted deficit amount of \$290,794

EXPENDITURES

Expenditures for the month of December totaled \$1,470,335 bringing spending YTD to \$14,470,359 or 56.41% of budget. Selectmen's budget expenditures made up \$616,213 of the total spending. As of December month-end, the Selectmen's budget spending YTD is \$5,295,326 or 60% of budget compared to 57.1% as of December 2020 and 59.6% at December 2019 month-end. December expenditures include restoration of the Hubbard Park field (\$9.8K), Fire Department allocation (\$173.2K), Workers Comp and Insurance Premiums (\$40.6K) as well as \$30.2K for 911 services. There are no new items of note/concern which have come to our attention at this point.

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Motion to accept treasurer's report made by Campbell Hudson, seconded by Mary-Louise Polo. Pass unanimously. Motion carried.

FY21 AUDIT UPDATE

Tracey Celentano reports a clean audit with no issues or findings. The firm of Mahoney Sabol was great to work with for both the audit and as a resource for ARPA funding.

ARPA SUMMARY

Tracey reports that all ARPA funding requests previously approved by the Board of Finance have been approved through Town Meeting (Tri-Town Youth services, fire rescue vehicle, and fire marshal's vehicle). She said there is a revenue loss calculation that can be done to apply capital purchases. Throughout trainings and attended webinars for the police vehicle and fire marshal's vehicle are going to be classified through revenue loss because it is a capital project. This is a much more secure way of having it be ARPA eligible.

She went on to say that a federal audit will be required for FY22-23 if the federal expenditures exceed \$750K. We were not required to have a federal audit for FY20-21.

We have the DEEP grant and pump-out boat grant which is \$170,000. The schools have several federal grants

Campbell Hudson commented that the Tri-town Youth Services funds are contingent on other towns participating. He had heard that Chester had approved it and he was assuming the Deep River had as well. Tracey said that in speaking with Tri-Town, not all Towns had approved funding and the approval would be revisited the end of the month.

Tracey said that the other item contingent on the other towns participation is the Shoreline Soup Kitchen and the requirement of eight towns participating has yet to be met.

She reports that since the ARPA Summary Report was prepared, an additional check for \$44,000 was processed for the Fire Marshal's vehicle.

SELECTMEN'S REPORT:

Norman Needleman thinks that we are over the COVID hurdle with one person out today (all asymptomatic). He says that distribution of tests has been a challenge but Lisa and all involved with the distribution have done a spectacular job.

Norman said the one topic he is still wrestling with is the ARPA pandemic pay. Specifically authorized in the funds from ARPA is pandemic pay for those employees who worked in-

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person. This topic has been discussed with Kelly & Tracey and different cost scenarios have been calculated.

Norman met with Bob Doane, Ryan, and Tracey today to review long term capital projects for grant funding and the next upcoming bond cycle. We are 3 to 4 years out from going into the next bonding cycle as the 2013 Elementary School Bond will be dropping off.

Proposed capital projects include the bridge over Falls River as well as the River Road bridge. He went on to say that the Connectivity grant is still live, and we are still live on the federal local bridge program. The rapid replacement of that bridge is \$2.5 to \$2.6 million. With the rapid replacement option, the bridge would be closed for only 2 weeks which is important for public safety purposes. We are looking into whether the 50% funding would be available for the more rapid bridge replacement option.

We are going to be putting together a capital plan from 2024-2035. As part of this plan, Norman would like to propose creating a public safety complex to include Essex Fire, Ambulance and Police in one location. In a longer-range plan, we would talk to Judy see if the Essex Ambulance Association would want to move down and we would have Fire, EMS, Emergency Management, and Police all on one property. The estimate for these capital projects totals about \$4-5 million dollars, with adding the Public Safety complex, \$6-\$7 million.

The grand list was set the other day with a 2.01% over what it was last year which is good. Real Estate was 0.48% higher and Motor Vehicles increased close to 25% due to the spike in car values due to the various supply, chip, pandemic factors. This is not unique to Essex.

Norman does not know what is to be expected of the FY22-23 Board of Ed budget. Norman has talked to the Finance Director about breaking down the elementary school's expenses in terms of the fixed and variable costs to identify the cost per student each year.

For the Selectmen's budget, proposals include the following: police are adding a fourth part timer as well as extra night shifts and boat shifts; and a part time health inspector.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

None

COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE:

None

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PUBLIC COMMENT:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

Campbell Hudson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 PM, seconded by Keith Crehan. Passed unanimously. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Danielle Sanso".

Danielle Sanso
Recording Clerk