

**ASHFORD BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Thursday July 14, 2022 / Held Virtually via Zoom / Ashford, Connecticut
7:00 P.M.**

Present

Judith Austin, Chairman, Paul Varga, Clerk, Christina Davis, Angela DeSanto, John Kopec, Hugh MacKenzie, William Falletti, First Selectman, Ex-Officio Member

Documents supplied to members prior to the meeting:

2022 STEAP Grant for BOS, Christine K. Abikoff, Ashford Selectman's Office Administrator, 1p. [n.d.]
Ashford Open Space Summary, 1p. [n.d.]

1. Call to Order

Ms. Austin called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call and Seating of Alternates

A roll call was carried out. Mr. MacKenzie was seated for Mr. Burnham and Ms. Davis was seated for Mr. Bean.

3. Communications

The Chair noted that King, King and Assoc. have begun their audit. The Chair is still interested in having a BOF member present during school contract meetings, especially considering all the changes in the school administrative staff. The former Principal, Troy Hopkins, left for the superintendent position in North Stonington, CT as reported in the *Ashford Citizen* June 1, 2022. Cynthia Ford is now the acting Ashford School Superintendent. A new Vice Principal has been hired per Mr. Kopec.

4. Public Comments – none

5. Approve Minutes of Meeting Thursday June 23, 2022

**MR. VARGA MOVED AND MS. DESANTO SECONDED A MOTION TO APPROVE
THE MINUTES OF THE BOF REGULAR MEETING JUNE 23, 2022 AS CORRECTED.
MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION BY MS. DAVIS.**

corrections: p. 1, 6.b. line 2, comma instead of period before date / p.2. 6, c, motion no. 3
discharged

6. New Business

a. Selectman's Update

The unintended tax collection is reported as a total of \$262,000. Detectives have located a Utah couple in their 60s who are responsible for the vandalism at the Pumpkin Hill cemetery. They apparently have been doing this across the country and posted their feats on the internet. \$30,000 in damages have been estimated, and the insurance carrier has been notified; no decision yet on pressing charges. The ARPA public hearing was cancelled and will be scheduled for Monday August 8, 2022. The Memorial Day town celebration, parade and open houses were a success with about 100 participating and the same number attending. Anyone interested in working on the committee planning for next year should contact the Selectman's office.

The old fire truck has been sold for \$12,500 to a town in West Virginia and will be picked up this weekend; those dollars go into the General Fund.

No applications have been received as yet for the Treasurer's position. Currently there is a part time employee helping with basic financial matters. Ms. Davis will send suggestions for places to extend the advertising to Mr. Falletti.

b. Discussion and Action on Request by Board of Selectmen for STEAP Grant Funding

Mr. Falletti explained the situation as expressed in his document sent to the members before the meeting. The cutoff date for applying for the grant is 8/15/2022; action is need quickly. In order to apply

for \$500,000, the town needs to appropriate new funds in the amount of \$100,000; if the grant is not received then the \$100,000 is returned to the town. The funds are for shovel ready projects; in our case the funds would be to repave Southworth Drive. If a road is left untended/repaved for several years it can get so damaged that a more costly and extensive repair is required. Southworth Dr. has been needing repaving for quite a long time.

A discussion followed concerning the Undesignated Fund balance and keeping it at the desired 10-15% of the General Fund operating budget. Taking \$100,000 out and moving it to the CNR fund used for onetime expenditures, will reduce the desired percentage.

[See "Financial Management Policy 2020-2021" p,1 under Fund Balance. "The undesignated fund balance should be approximately ten to fifteen (10-15) percent of the general fund operating budget. Fund balance in excess of the goal shall be transferred to the CNR Fund and used for one-time expenditures." See p.2 "Unanticipated capital improvements will be funded from CNR to the extent available."]

The school roof and tank expenditures were also a concern.

Without advice from a Treasurer, the BOF Chair thought action quite risky. Mr. Falletti noted that no funds have been taken from the CNR as it stands now, in answer to a question by Ms. Davis.

The tank replacement for the school is to be funded by \$135,000 from the Capital Improvement Fund plus \$135,000 from the BOE totaling enough for the \$270,000 cost. The state's reimbursement for this project unfortunately has been reduced from 72-74% down to 64%. This expenditure cannot be avoided.

A meeting next week, noted by Mr. Falletti, will help all involved be better informed on this school expenditure.

MR. VARGA MOVED AND MR. MACKENZIE SECONDED A MOTION THAT THE BOF AUTHORIZE THE BOS TO CALL A SPECIAL TOWN MEETING TO APPROVE \$100,000, FROM THE UNASSIGNED FUND, FOR A MUNICIPAL MATCH, IN ORDER TO APPLY FOR THE STEAP GRANT OF \$500,000 TO REPAVE SOUTHWORTH DRIVE. IF THE TOWN IS NOT AWARDED THE GRANT THE \$100,000 WOULD BE RETURNED TO THE GENERAL FUND. MOTION PASSED WITH 5 YES (VARGA, AUSTIN, MCKENSIE, DESANTO, KOPEC) AND ONE NO VOTE (DAVIS).

7. Old Business

a. Discussion and Possible Action Regarding Open Space Fund

Considering no one present from the Conservation Commission, but having a letter from Ms. Wrobel containing requested data, the BOF members felt that the reported 4,084.49 acres or 16% secure, permanent open space in Ashford (total acres reported as 25,280) was quite good. The exact amount of the Yale donation (about \$8000) was not stated in earlier meetings, and this coupled with the fact that the town has no professional treasurer to consult for that figure or for advice led the members to decide to put off this decision until a treasurer was in place and had gained knowledge about the town funds, etc.

b. FY 2020-2021 Annual Report Update

There was no report as Mr. Burnham was not present.

c. FY 2021-2022 Audit Update

This was discussed under 3. Communications.

8. Agenda items for next Meeting

FY 2021-2022 Annual Report Update

Report on school tank cost, installation, state reimbursement, etc.

9. Remarks for the Good of the Board

Thanks to all from Chairman Austin.

10. Adjournment

MS. DESANTO MOVED AND MR. VARGA SECONDED A MOTION TO ADJOURN. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY AT 8:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted by, Valerie B. Oliver, Recording Secretary, 7/14/2022