

Ashford, Connecticut
ASHFORD BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Thursday January 11, 2024, 7:00 p.m.
Hybrid Meeting / In-Person - Ashford Town Hall, and Zoom

1. Call to Order was at 7:03 p.m. by Chairman Christina Davis; other members present were: Keith Lipker, Pamm Summers, Paul Varga. Tim Rhodes
Guest: Cathryn Silver Smith, 1st Selectman and Ex-Officio Member

2. Roll Call and Seating of Alternates: The roll call was taken, and Mr. Rhodes was seated for Ms. DeSanto.

3. Communications: The agenda for tonight's BOE meeting was forwarded to BOF members. The audit will not be presented tonight, awaiting more data. Ms. Davis and Mr. Lipker attended a December meeting of R19 where budgetary items were discussed especially the state budget. R19 is currently in the second year of a two-year budget; but it will be a tight budget year. The impact on town budgets as the numbers of students attending E.O. Smith change was noted; however, the total out of town attendees has continued to drop per Ms. Silver-Smith.

4. Public Comments: none

5. Approve Minutes of:

a. Regular Meeting Thursday, Dec. 7, 2023

Ms. Summers moved and Mr. Lipker seconded a motion to approve the Minutes of the Regular BOF Meeting Dec. 7, 2023. Motion passed unanimously.

b. Special Meeting Thursday Dec. 7, 2023

Ms. Summers moved and Mr. Varga seconded a motion to approve the Minutes of the BOF Special Meeting. Dec. 7, 2023. Motion passed with one abstention from Mr. Lipker.

6. New Business:

a. Selectman's Update:

Ms. Silver-Smith reported that the architect's plan for the school roof was approved and signed. A clerk of works and construction company will need to be secured. The BOS has been working with their financial advisor on the bonding for this roof project. When bonding is secured then that debt will be recorded, probably in April or May. A \$23,000 payment has been made to the architect firm; this is one half of the total payment due. The lack of an audit report (normally expected prior to January) puts pressure on town employees due to the busy budget season. Capital Improvement planning is next week; amount of funds not known as yet for this planning. Recent heavy rain storms have caused road washouts, resulting in higher costs.

The scheduling of a special town meeting to fill a Board of Finance alternate position will be discussed at the upcoming meeting of the BOS next Tuesday.

b. Review and discussion of most recent General Fund Expenditure Report:

The expenditures reflect the period from July 1– Dec. 13, 2023. Mr. Varga wondered why some salaries had such high overage fund numbers? The First Selectman noted that that was probably because union contracts had not been finalized until after the budget was approved. Plans for this type of occurrence is usually covered by contingency funds. Union contract pay is retroactive back to July 1st. She will get confirmation/answers from the Treasurer.

Mr. Lipker asked why zero spending was noted on p.10 under Zoning Board of Appeals? The First Selectman thought it might be due to auditing adjustments. Mr. Lipker will send her his concern details, and she will contact the Treasurer to get the answer to his question.

Mr. Lipker noted that he had not received any auditor notifications. Ms. Silver-Smith will look into this.

c. Annual Report update, including status of 22-23 Board of Finance Report

A final edited version of the Ashford annual report was discovered (at this meeting) to have an error to be corrected; once this is done the town annual report for 2021-2022 will be complete. Pages that required corrections earlier were p. 3, 10, 20 and 28.

Mr. Lipker moved and Mr. Varga seconded a motion to approve the Ashford Annual Report, 2021-2022 as amended. Motion passed unanimously.

The Chair thanked both Mr. Burnham, formerly on this Board, and Ms. Amanda Robinson for their work to have the report edited and completed. Ms. Davis has completed reviewing the major highlights of the Board of Finance for 2022-2023 so that our Annual Report has been completed as expected in a timely manner.

d. Update on the Audit for FY 2022-2023, possible presentation from the auditors King, King & Associates: possible adoption of the audit by the Board. No report presented at this meeting.

e. Review of BOF Budget for FY 22-23

The audit has been the largest expense so far. We currently have a one-year contract with King, King & Assoc. In the past the audit cost was shared one-year with the Board of Education. Ms. Silver-Smith cautioned the BOF that if we are to hire a new auditing firm they should be in place by May. The BOF budget is ready to be submitted.

f. Status on budget submittals and annual reports (FY 22-23) from town departments (due to treasurer on Jan. 12)

The First Selectman expects other department budgets to be coming in soon; she will keep on top of the situation.

g. Review and possible adoption of the updated Board of Finance Procedures

1. Financial Management Policy

The Undesignated Fund might be changed in future to 16% per the First Selectman.

Mr. Rhodes moved and Mr. Varga seconded a motion to approve use of the current Ashford Board of Finance's "Financial Management Policy." Motion passed unanimously.

2. Budget Policies for FY 24-25

This document required revising all dates to reflect the BOF budget schedule for 2024. That job was completed by the Chairman. The BOF has the responsibility for getting the town budget approved, so setting a date for completion was not necessary per the First Selectman.

Mr. Rhodes moved and Ms. Summers seconded a motion to approve the Budget Policies for FY 24-25 as revised with dates from the BOF budget schedule for 2024. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Agenda items for next meeting

Audit presentation

Various budget presentations to begin during future meetings

8. Remarks for the good of the Board

The Chairman thanked all for their time and efforts, and she stated "We are moving in the right direction," but we need our audit done.

9. Adjournment

Mr. Rhodes moved and Mr. Varga seconded a motion to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously at 7:31 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by,
Valerie B. Oliver, Recording Secretary
1/11/2024*