

**Ashford, Connecticut**  
**ASHFORD BOARD OF FINANCE**  
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**  
**Thursday June 13, 2024, 7:00 p.m.**  
Hybrid Meeting / In-Person - Ashford Town Hall and Zoom

Link to documents discussed during this meeting: <https://bit.ly/3XjHjM6>

The June 13, 2024 Regular BOF Meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the Chairman, Ms. Christina Davis. Other members present were: Judith Austin, Keith Lipker, Tim Rhodes (via Zoom), Pamela Summers, and Cathryn Silver-Smith 1<sup>st</sup> Selectman, Ex-Officio Member (via Zoom).

Guests: Jane Urban, Bd. of Education Chairman (via Zoom), Rob Chernak

**1-2. Roll call and Seating of Alternates:** Roll call was taken, and Mr. Rhodes was seated for Ms. DeSanto.

**3. Communications:** Jennifer Miller, Dir. Ashford Housing Authority, reported the bridge grant for \$10,000 was authorized so a van can be purchased. Request for reimbursement was made on 5/31/2024. The state grant is expected to be approved within 30 days of the request.

**4. Approve Minutes:**

**Ms. Summers moved and Mr. Lipker seconded a motion to approve the Minutes of the May 7, 2024 Regular Meeting of the Board of Finance. Motion passed unanimously.**

**5. Public Comment:** none

**6. New Business:**

**a. Selectman's Update:** The School roof project will begin next week; because of loud banging noises she will be speaking directly with neighbors. Bonding will be sought for \$4 million rather than the initial estimate of \$5 million. Meetings are ongoing with the School Roof Committee and other involved parties; the work is expected to be completed in ten weeks.

The Fire Station roof funds have been approved at Town Meeting as well as funds for removal and replacement of solar panels. The town attorney is being consulted about possibly seeking compensation from the company that did the original solar roof work as it was a major factor in the resulting damage to the roof.

Much work has been done to correct building issues at the Senior Center. Since the building is 30 years old much of the corrective work is understandable (air-conditioning & heating units, new kitchen counters, stove repair, bathroom repairs, furnace area water leak repair, bottom of wall moldings redone and repainted, etc.). The Senior Center has spent \$12,000 over budget including \$3,500 spent to hire a substitute leader while the current director was on sick leave. There will be a celebratory picnic to commemorate the Center's 30<sup>th</sup> year on June 18<sup>th</sup>, cost \$12/person.

The Parks & Rec. Dept. is working to provide programs that will increase income. Ideally the program income should match the Park & Rec. Director's salary. Ashford Memorial Park has had its pavilion repainted and a small wall barrier placed near the port-a-potty. The basketball courts have been resurfaced and lines repainted; higher use of the courts has been noticed. The refinishing of the courts was covered by federal ARPA funds.

Our Social/Youth Services Dir. Melissa McDonough has given her notice. Jane Urban, Ashford's BOE Chairman, noted that both her work with the School and the Town will continue with any new hire. Ms. Urban praised her work, as did the 1<sup>st</sup> Selectman. Ms. Silver-Smith left the meeting after her update to attend other town business.

**b. Audit kickoff update and guidance on capital projects close out:** Ms. Davis noted that her meeting with the auditors, School Business Manager and Ashford Treasurer resulted in agreement on a schedule outlining various actions. It was recommended that closing out of Capital Projects be done in August/September.

**c. Update on search for new business manager at Ashford School:** Although the School Business Manager has unfortunately given her notice, the School is happy that Mr. Robert (Bob) Carroll has accepted an offer for the position.

**d. Discuss impact of new law regarding Board of Education Nonlapsing Fund:** The Chairman put the new law on the screen. The BOE's budget of approximately \$8 million may result in some funds not spent. According to state law, this money, up to 2% of their budget, can then be moved to the BOE's Nonlapsing Fund (BOENL). In the past, state law required the Board of Finance to authorize the transfer of the funds to the BOENL. The new law does not require the BOF's approval, but funds are still to be used for educational purposes. This law applies to regional educational budgets as well.

In Ashford's case some of these funds are being used to help the town fund the school roof work as that is such an expensive undertaking. Ms. Urban wanted to make sure that she and the BOE fully understand how that Nonlapsing Fund can be used in the future, under the new law. Ms. Davis and Ms. Austin both were concerned that it was a Capital Fund and that further discussions and understandings would be necessary. Ms. Davis noted she had contacted the Conn. Conference of Municipalities about this concern and was told to talk to the town attorney.

Ms. Urban said the BOE would work with their attorney on a new policy that reflects the new law and then discuss with the BOF. Ms. Austin suggested that a document be created to provide the historical record of this financial issue by including the current town policy regarding the BOE Nonlapsing Fund, the new law, our revised/or cancelled policy and related documents. Our policy should not be cancelled until the future discussions have taken place. Ms. Davis also noted that she will ask Treasurer Sherri Soucy who can authorize expenditures from the BOENL.

**e. Discuss chair's memo regarding transfers from Unassigned Fund Balance to Capital Nonrecurring Fund:** Ms. Davis put her "Memorandum" on the screen. The 3-page document provided: Background, Review of Relevant State Statutes, Background on the Town of Ashford's Practices, and Recommendations (five) on Moving Forward. She then reviewed each section. She consulted several town policies especially Brookfield where she used to live. She used their policy as an example for what Ashford might consider better, more transparent and clear. Ms. Austin wondered about verbiage in our ballots. Ms. Davis thought our town meeting notice is adequate. Ms. Austin also asked about the \$12,000 Sen. Ctr. budget overage. It will be handled at the end-of-year transfers as it includes individual expenditures that are less than \$20,000, per the Chairman.

The Chair's recommendations listed more fully in her "Memorandum" of 6/13/2024 are:

1. "During budget process" the "BOF can vote on transferring money from the unassigned fund balance to the CNR Fund." /
2. "The amount that the BOF approves would also be reflected in the proposed budget expenditures on line item 110.92000.59960.000." /
3. "The BOF "should approve two motions" (examples provided) to "make it clear that the transfer is part of what is considered at the Town Meeting and it also spells out the funding sources" /
4. "The town meeting for the budget could remain the same and continue to include the amount of the capital improvement budget in the question about the general government budget." This "town meeting packet should also continue to have an explanation of the CIP budget and a breakdown of the specific projects." /
5. "If at any time the BOF wants to move additional dollars to the CNR Fund that go above and beyond the amount included in the CIP Budget, it could do a separate vote and call for a separate town meeting."

The attending BOF members had no objections to these recommendations. The BOF chair will look into getting the new procedure reviewed by the Town Attorney, as suggested by the auditor at Hoyt, Filippetti & Malaghan.

**f. Revised state funding amounts:** The state funding was \$31,638 more than what our budget projected for FY25.

**g. General Fund FY 23-24 Expenditures Expenses to Date 5-22-24:** The Chair noted 84% of the budget has been spent as of 5/22/24.

**h. Update on the 22-23 Annual Report: suggestions on who to highlight in the dedication:** Members were asked to send their recommendations to the Chair. Input from the public was also considered. A few reports are still due.

**7. New Business:**

**Agenda items for the next meeting:** There will be no July meeting unless an issue requires the BOF's attention.

**8. Remarks for the Good of the Board:**

The Chair provided "Keep It Civil", a booklet on "Key strategies for Success in Public Meetings." The effort is an initiative of the Governor M. Jodi Rell Center for Public Service at the Univ. of Hartford. She also noted that our meetings within the BOF have been and continue to be very civil.

Ms. Austin thanked the Chair for all the research she had done to prepare her recommendations for how to better handle transferring the unassigned fund balance of the Gen. Fund to the Capital Nonrecurring Fund.

**9. Adjournment:**

**Ms. Austin moved and Mr. Lipker seconded a motion to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously at 8:00 p.m.**

*Respectfully submitted by,  
Valerie B. Oliver, Recording Secretary  
6/14/2024*