

**Preston Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, May 20, 2020 at 7:00 P.M.
Teleconference Call**

Call to Order – John Moulson called the meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

1. Roll Call

Members

John Moulson – Chairman
Bob Congdon - Vice Chairman -arrived later
Stacey Becker - Clerk
Andy Depta
Denise Beale
Zachary Maurice

Alternates

Matthew Davis – seated for Bob Congdon
Vacancy

Also Present

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier – 1st Selectperson
Jerry Grabarek – Selectman
Ken Zachem – Selectman
John Spang – Financial Director
Sean Nugent – Chair of the Board of Education
Dr. Roy Seitsinger – School Superintendent
33 other members of the public

2. Correspondence –

John Moulson referred members to the packet in order to save time due to the anticipated length of the meeting. In the Board's packet were the following:

- April 29, 2020 – John Spang – email: follow up to question asked at the April 22nd meeting about distant learning – he explained that staff is communicating with students in a variety of ways and individual work is not posted on the school website
- May 7, 2020 – John Foley – Letter: disappointed at the BoE budget in these fiscally difficult times
- May 8, 2020 – Amanda Phelps – email: Support of the BoE budget as presented
- May 8, 2020 – Amanda Phelps – letter: opposed the passage of any budget without voter input
- May 9, 2020 – Lori Rossier – email: encouraging a 0% increase budget
- May 9, 2020 – George and Elaine Leon – email: oppose an increase in the BoE budget
- May 10, 2020 – Beth Bonosconi – email: support of the BoE 4.8% increase
- May 10, 2020 – Heather Ballestrini – email: support of the BoE budget and opposes a 0% increase budget
- May 11, 2020 – Hey You – email: request for a no increase budgets
- May 11, 2020 – Pat Biggins – email: requesting a zero-based budget for this year
- May 11, 2020 – Jill Keith – email: request that the 2020-2021 budget be zero increase until taxpayers can publicly review, analyze, and debate and meet
- May 11, 2020 – John Foley: email: addressing concerns with the ever-changing situation of our area, Foxwood to layoff workers at the end of May and the impact of that on the town

- May 11, 2020 – Gloria Homiski – email: support of the 4.8% increase of the BoE budget
- May 11, 2020 – Linda Jancewicz – email: support of the 4.8% increase of the BoE budget
- May 11, 2020 – Thomas Turner – email: encourage BoE proceed with a budget that does no harm to the present curriculum, staffing, and other logistic to the learning experience
- May 11, 2020 – Stephen Strader – email: support of the current BoE budget
- May 12, 2020 – Lauren LaBelle – email: support of the BoE budget as presented
- May 12, 2020 – Cara Sawyer – Letter: support of the BoE budget
- May 12, 2020 – Sarah Burton – email: support of the BoE budget as presented
- May 12, 2020 – Susan Theve – email: requesting intense scrutiny of the BoE budget in these fiscally hard times
- May 13, 2020 – Susan and Stephen Strader – Letter: support of the BoE budget
- May 13, 2020 – Joshua Sweeney – email: he felt a middle ground needed to be found in the BoE budget
- May 13, 2020 – Camille Bray – email: support of the BoE budget as presented
- May 13, 2020 – CCM Connecticut Conference of Municipalities – email: Direct fiscal relief from CCM – one-time equity distribution of 50% of annual dues
- May 14, 2020 – Denielle Sandoval – email: support of the BoE budget

3. Public Comment -

Susan Strader read her email in favor of the Board of Education’s budget.

Andrew Bilideau commented that both budgets should stay at 0% increase. Both budgets were adequate for this year and should be enough for 2020 until we can sit through a Town Meeting.

Ian Stammel cautioned a reduction in the Board of Education budget might open up renegotiation of contracts which would result in legal fees that would make the reduction a moot point.

Jill Keith – referred to her email that was sent and felt that the Board needed to look at the economic impact that is occurring when making their decisions tonight.

Doreen Matress asked about savings with the online learning, and the need to look at the hardships in town. She requested a 0% increased budget Because of Covid-19.

Debbie Good spoke about the loss of 2 months of casino money and that even though they are opening it is only a soft opening. She suggested looking at the budget realizing that those funds can’t be made up.

Mariah Hornsby supports the Board of Education’s budget.

Susan Strader stated that waiting until we can meet face to face will hold up the budget process so we can’t wait. We need to follow the procedures that have been given to us accurately.

Jill Keith thank the Board of Finance for protecting the taxpayer’s rights with this meeting and a chance to speak. She also stated that she was disappointed with Roy Seitsinger’s pleas to parents to support the Board of Education budget in order to maintain programs.

Pat Biggins referred to her email sent to the Board, she stated that these are extraordinary times and need to keep that in mind while either waiting to pass the budget or having it remain at 0%.

4. Approval of Minutes

A. April 22, 2020 Regular Meeting

Kim Lang pointed out a correction of Kenneth Zachman to Ken Zchem and Gerry Grabarek to Jerry Grabarek.

Andy Depta motion to approve the amended Regular Meeting Minutes of April 22, 2020. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

B. May 13, 2020 Special Meeting

Kim Lang pointed out a correction of Kenneth Zachman to Ken Zchem.

Andy Depta motion to approve the amended Special Meeting Minutes of May 13, 2020. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

C. May 14, 2020 Special Meeting

Kim Lang pointed out the omission of the Board of Selectmen names Sandra Allyn-Gauthier, Jerry Grabarek, and Ken Zchem who all attended the meeting.

Andy Depta motion to approve the amended Special Meeting Minutes of May 14, 2020. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

At this point it was noted that Bob Congdon had arrived, and Matthew Davis was unseated. John Moulson stated that he was moving down to Item 10 a. on the agenda for discussion.

10. Old Business

a. Budget Review, Questions, Motions, and Future Schedule

Andy Depta stated that the Board of Selectmen were to develop a Resolution that has not been done. He felt that there wasn't enough information and that to move forward at this point we'd be acting blindly.

Bob Congdon stated that he felt that the General Government Budget is reasonable and responsible. The Board of Education is impossible to approve a budget when we have no idea what September will be like. We should go with a 0% increase budget until we know what reality is.

Stacey Becker suggested to go through the information we have now and to wait - but wait how long? She further stated we can look at the numbers and move forward.

Bob Congdon stated that we must pass a budget.

Andy Depta asked about a presentation at a Town Meeting.

Bob Congdon stated that we have enough information to pass a Board of Selectmen budget, but not enough to do the Board of Education.

John Moulson stated that we'll move forward with the Board of Selectmen budget.

Andy Depta restated his concern to move forward without a Resolution.

Sandra Allyn- Gauthier pointed out in order to form the Resolution the Board of Selectmen need the timeline set by the Board of Finance so that it was imperative for them to move forward with the information that they have.

Bob Congdon motioned that the Board of Finance hold a Public Hearing to review the BoS Budget, BoE Budget, and the projected Town Revenue on May 28, 2020 at 7:30 P.M. and June 10, 2020 at 7:30 P.M. to present a final Budget to the Town. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Andy Depta suggested Line item 1-102-3220-5212-0337 Health Insurance Consultant be reduced by \$6,000.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier explained that fee pays for a broker to search for the best possible health insurance packages for the town.

Bob Congdon stated that the town does not have an HR to provide legal advice on things like family leave, and in my 24 years as Selectman this is one of the biggest bargains we have have.

Andy Depta motioned to reduce Line item 1-102-3220-5212-0337 Health Insurance Consultant by \$6,000. John Moulson seconded the motion. Andy Depta voted yes. John Moulson, Bob Congdon, Stacey Becker, Denise Beale, and Zach Maurice all voted no. The motion failed.

Andy Depta suggested that Line item 1-102-3240-5410-0336 Legal Fees – Local be reduced by 1209.30 to 14, 990.70.

Andy Depta motioned that Line item 1-102-3240-5410-0336 Legal Fees – Local be reduced by 1209.30. Bob Congdon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Andy Depta next suggested that Line item 1-102-3320-5450-0218 Technology Services.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier explained that was a quoted amount given by the company (Star Computers) for a full year of services.

Bob Congdon stated that Tech Consulting is going to be bigger than ever going forward.

Matthew Davis agreed with Bob.

Andy Depta motioned that Line item 1-102-3320-5450-0218 Tech Consulting be reduced by \$ 2233. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. Andy Depta voted yes. John Moulson, Bob Congdon, Stacey Becker, Denise Beale, and Zach Maurice voted no. The motion failed.

Andy Depta suggested Line item 1-102-3530-5307-0150 Highway Salt be reduced by \$10,000.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated we live in New England; while we had a mild winter this year that's no guarantee that we'll have a mild winter this coming year. A reduction of \$3,000 would be more reasonable.

Andy Depta motioned that Line item 1-102-3530-5307-0150 Highway Salt be reduced by \$3,000. Denise Beale seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Andy Depta suggested that Line item 1-102-3530-5441-0151 Highway – Chip/Seal be reduced by \$40,000 from \$90,000 to \$50,000.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated that this Line should be renamed Paving/Resurfacing and to cut this Line, the resurfacing improvements that are needed will be put on pause. The reduction would eliminate any improvements.

Bob Congdon stated that there are 53 miles of town roads and we tend to improve 7-8 miles a year. Reducing this would set us back. I am opposed to the cut, but approve the name change for the Line.

Matthew Davis should we consider this because we don't know the Aid package we'll get from the state and because of the current climate.

Bob Congdon stated that we have Town Road Aid funds from this year, and even if they are accepting bids the work won't be done until Aug. or Sept. He then suggested that the TRA funds of \$84,325.00 be encumbered until after July 1st that would give that Line item roughly \$130,000 for improving town roads. If that stipulation could be made to Andy's motion, he would support the motion.

Andy Depta motioned that Line item 1-102-3530-5344-0151 Highway – Chip/Seal be reduced by \$40,000 with the stipulation that the TRA funds of \$84,325 from this year be encumbered until after July 1, 2020. John Moulson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Stacey Becker suggested that Line item 1-102-3090-5103-0184 Administration Miscellaneous Secretary be reduced to \$20,000.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated the only change would happen with the new data being use more hours might be logged.

Stacey Becker motioned that Line item 1-102-3090-5103-0184 Administration Miscellaneous Secretary be reduced to \$20,000. Denise Beale seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Stacey Becker motioned that Line item 1-102-3530-5101-0151 Highway Engineer Contract be reduced by \$2,000. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Before this was voted Sandra Allyn-Gauthier felt that they could work with a reduction from \$6,000 to \$4,000.

Stacey Becker motioned that Line item 1-102-3530-5315-0000 be reduced by \$1,000. Denise Beale seconded the motion. John Moulson, Stacey Becker, Denise Beale, Andy Depta, and Zach Maurice voted yes; and Bob Congdon voted no. The motion carried 5 to 1.

John Moulson asked to look at Line item 1-102-3260-5410-0000 Legal Notices. He suggested a cut of \$1,000. He asked if applicants are now paying for legal notices.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated that we do spend close to \$16,000 even though applicants pay for their notices.

Bob Congdon felt that the \$1,000 is a reasonable one.

John Moulson motioned that Line item 1-102-3260-5410-0000 Legal Notices be reduced by \$1,000. Bob Congdon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Matthew Davis asked the group to consider Line item 1-102-3560-5324-0000 Gas and Diesel to be reduced by \$2,000. He reasoned that prices have gone down drastically and perhaps we could take advantage of that.

Bob Congdon agreed that prices for both have gone down, however he thought that the price had been locked into.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated fuel prices have gone down but the town lock into a price in March, however a \$2,000 reduction is something the town could work with.

John Moulson motioned that Line item 1-102-3560-5324-0000 Gas and Diesel be reduced by \$2,000. Zach Maurice seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier pointed out that Line item 1-102-3520-5101-0016 Landfill Personnel could be reduced by \$6,800 to show \$54,944. She stated that the reduction in hours was the cause for the savings.

Bob Congdon motioned that Line item 1-102-3520-5101-0016 Landfill Personnel be reduced by \$6,800. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Denise Beale asked the group to look at the 2% raises and asked for a 0% raise. She justified this request due to the atmosphere and uncertainties of the current situation is causing.

Matthew Davis asked about Health Insurance if all or a specific part could be reduced.

John Moulson asked if the numbers seen are projected or real?

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated they were real that New London County had a 4.5% increase in medical and a 6% increase in dental.

Bob Congdon pointed out that the BoS didn't receive an increase this year. A reduction in the 2% raise is unreasonable. He agreed with Matt Davis that we need to look a Health Insurance alternative.

Andy Depta opposed a blanket across the board reductions because not every salary has a 2% increase.

Denise motioned for the elimination of 2% raise for town employees. There was no second to this motion.

Bob Congdon pointed out that that currently Preston employees currently pay 5% copay for their health insurance, the the BoE pays 13% and EB employees pay 18%. This needs to be increase. He suggested that Line be increased by \$3,000.

Andy Depta asked how that percentage is negotiated.

Bob Congdon stated that it's been at 5% forever, the suggested increase would be less than 6%. We need to bring this more in line with other employers.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier agreed that this needs to be increased, but later. We don't need to be corporate America. Our employees don't have a higher wage and this increase would hurt morale.

John Moulson asked Sandra for a commitment to look at an increase for next year.

Bob Congdon stated that the proposal was reasonable.

Bob Congdon motioned that Line item 1-102-3220-5212-0333 Health Insurance Copay be increased by \$3,000. John Moulson seconded the motion. Bob Congdon, Denise Beale, and Andy Depta voted yes; while John Moulson, Stacey Becker, and Zach Maurice voted no. The motion failed.

Bob Congdon asked for the bottom line.

Andy Depta asked for the percentage.

John Moulson stated that it was less than a tenth of a percent decrease.

Stacey Becker said it was very tiny.

Bob Congdon motioned to send the Board of Selectmen's Budget of \$3,858,604.82 to the town. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Bob Congdon commended the Board for their efforts

The Board moved on to review the Local Revenue Budget.

Bob Congdon cautioned that the present climate should be considered when making changes.

Stacey Becker suggested that Line item 2-102-4000-4013 be cut in half from \$120,000 to \$60,000.

Bob Congdon motioned that Line item 2-102-4000-4013 be reduced by 50% to \$60,000. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Stacey Becker motioned that Line item 2-102-4000-4012 Interest & Lien Fees be reduced by 50% to \$40,000. Bob Congdon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Stacey Becker motioned that Line item 2-102-4000-4030 Town Clerk Fees – Other be reduced to \$50,000. Bob Congdon seconded the motion. John Moulson, Bob Congdon, Stacey Becker, Denise Beale, and Zach Maurice voted yes. Andy Depta voted no. The motion carried 5 to 1.

Stacey Becker motioned that the following Lines should be reduced for FY21:

- **Historic Documents to \$1,000**
- **Farmland Preservation Fees to \$500**
- **Bingo Permits to \$250**
- **Investment Income to \$20,000**

for a total reduction in the Local Revenue Budget of 125,550 over last year; setting the local Revenue Budget at \$342,916 not including Property Tax.

Bob Congdon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Andy Depta asked about the revenue that Parks and Recreation fees that are collected for their programs and why they aren't considered revenue.

Bob Congdon said they don't because they have a separate account.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier explained that they use their profits to upkeep and improve recreational areas in town.

Andy Depta stated that they should answer to the Board of Finance.

Bob Congdon stated that their programs operate outside of the General Budget because Little League and Softball operate independently.

Andy Depta reiterated that the BoF should investigate Parks & Rec.

Bob Congdon stated that they had a clean audit last year.

Next the group looked at State Aid Revenue that Sandra Allyn-Gauthier provided.

It was stated that the Education Cost Sharing of \$2,969,168 was a real number. The CCM has verified the State Aid numbers.

John Spang asked for clarification on the TAR number.

Stacey Becker motioned to approve the State Aid Revenue Budget of \$4,387,482 less TAR & LoCIP. Bob Congdon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

At this point the Board turned to the Board of Education Budget. Stacey Becker reminded the group that they could not reduce particular line items only the total amount.

Bob Congdon requested to step down from this portion of discussion.

John Moulson seated Matt Davis.

Andy Depta motioned to reduce the Board of Education budget by \$363,000. John Moulson seconded the motion.

Andy reasoned due to the economic climate to give over a \$500,000 increase is too much.

Matt Davis stated that a 1.7% increase was reasonable but couldn't justify going to a full 0% increase like the General Budget.

Andy Depta agreed that staff and program are important, it is a dilemma, but it needs to be lowered to the same degree as the General Budget.

Matt Davis pointed out that about half of the emails the board received were from BoE members, employees of the school, or those who benefit by the increase.

Andy Depta pointed out that they too are taxpayers.

Matt Davis just wanted to point out the pattern.

Stacey Becker shared that at the Public Hearing we will hear a lot more.

Matt Davis asked about the \$20,000 fertilizer line.

Roy Seitsinger explained that was to maintain sports fields and playgrounds and the general upkeep of the grounds around each school.

Zachary Maurice stated he was in full support of the Board of Education Budget as presented.

Roy Seitsinger asked if he could speak and was given permission to address the Board. He clarified that 95% of the budget are fixed costs. There are 3 costs that will not go away or shift – contracts, tuitions, and health insurance. Then there will be the added cost of when school opens in Sept. The needs of the students are going to go up. We have to increase technology hardware, software, IT, and training because online learning isn't going away and it needs to be equitable for all students.

Bob Congdon stated that he didn't step down lightly and that Roy shouldn't have been allowed to make a speech with a motion on the floor.

Matt Davis asked if schools continued digitally could there be a reduction in staff.

Roy Seitsinger stated that all staff are engaged with the students. Elimination of staff would mean elimination of programs.

Andy Depta motioned to reduce the Board of Education budget by \$363,000. John Moulson seconded the motion. John Moulson, Andy Depta, Matt Davis, Denise Beale voted yes. Stacey Becker and Zach Maurice voted no. The motion carried 4 to 2.

Andy Depta motioned at this time to defer the remainder of the agenda. Zach Maurice seconded the motion. The Motion carried unanimously.

5. Public Comment

Susan Strader stated that emails are from parents, residents, and it's important to remember the students. We need to be prepared to deal with the trauma that this has caused to the students, staff, and community. The reduction proposed is detrimental and I'm disappointed there wasn't more discussion.

Jill Keith stated that the work the Board has completed thus far is commendable especially with the present challenges. She also reminds people that children have proven throughout history to be incredibly resilient if the adults around them model calm and confidence.

Pat Biggins stated that she felt that the cuts to the Board of Education budget were not dramatic in such tough times.

Amanda Phelps stated that she has 2 students in the school system and was disappointed that the Board of Finance cut an arbitrary amount from the budget.

Matt Davis read a question from the Chat feature in GoToMeeting from Vicki Rabovsky – She asked why Matt Davis couldn't vote to break the tie of a split vote.

Stacey Becker answered the question – if a member is not seated they can't vote.

Andrew Bilodeau thanked the Board of Finance for their efforts.

6. Adjournment -

Andy Depta motioned to adjourn at 10:56 P.M. Matthew Davis seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Lang

Recording Secretary

MOTIONS FOR MAY 20 MEETING

Andy Depta motion to approve the amended Regular Meeting Minutes of April 22, 2020. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Andy Depta motion to approve the amended Special Meeting Minutes of May 13, 2020. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

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