

**Preston Board of Finance
Special Meeting
Thursday, May 20, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.
Preston Pains Middle School**

Call to Order – John Moulson called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M.

1. Roll Call

Members

John Moulson – Chairman
Bob Congdon - Vice Chairman -7:50 P.M.
Stacey Becker - Clerk
Andy Depta
Denise Beale
Zachary Maurice

Alternates

Vacancy
Vacancy

Also Present

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier – First Selectwoman
Ken Zachem – Selectman
Jerry Grabarek - Selectman
John Spang – Financial Director
Dr. Seitsinger – Superintendent of Schools
19 other members of the public

- 2. Recess Special Meeting to conduct Public Hearing to present Fiscal Year 2022 Budget as proposed by the Board of Finance**
- 3. Public Hearing – see Minutes**
- 4. Reconvene BoF Special Meeting**

The Board of Finance Special Meeting reconvened at 8:17 P.M...

5. Discussion of Public Comments and Questions from Public Hearing

There were no comments to reduce or increase the budget. Only one comment to move the proposed budgets as presented tonight to a Town Meeting.

6. Act on proposed FY2022 Board of Education Budget

Bob Congdon motioned to send the Board of Education Budget as presented to a Town Meeting. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Act on proposed FY2022 General Government Budget

Bob Congdon motioned to send the General Government Budget as presented to a Town Meeting. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Act on FY2022 Revenue Budget

Bob Congdon motioned to send the proposed Revenue Budget to a Town Meeting. Denise Beale seconded the motion.

Stacey Becker stated that now that the April Revenues are available, she would like to propose several changes.

Stacey Becker motioned to amend the Local Revenue Budget by increasing Property Taxes Prior Years from \$100,000 to \$110,000. Zach Maurice seconded the motion carried unanimously.

Stacey Becker motioned to amend the Local Revenue Budget by increasing the Construction Permit Fees from \$50,000 to \$55,000, and to increase Town Clerk Fees from \$60,000 to \$70,000. Bob Congdon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Bob Congdon motioned to send the proposed Revenue Budget with an amended Local Revenue Budget of \$422,516 to a Town Meeting. Denise Beale seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Public Comment - none

10. Adjournment

Bob Congdon motioned to adjourn at 8:30 P.M... Zach Maurice seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Lang

Recording Secretary

Preston Board of Finance
Public Hearing
Thursday, May 20, 2021 at 7:30 P.M.
Preston Pains Middle School

Call to Order – John Moulson called the meeting to order at 7:32 P.M.

1. Roll Call

Members

John Moulson – Chairman
Bob Congdon - Vice Chairman -7:50 P.M.
Stacey Becker - Clerk
Andy Depta
Denise Beale
Zachary Maurice

Alternates

Vacancy
Vacancy

Also Present

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier – First Selectwoman
Ken Zachem – Selectman
Jerry Grabarek - Selectman
John Spang – Financial Director
Dr. Seitsinger – Superintendent of Schools
19 other members of the public

John Moulson called the Public Hearing to order, and Jill Keith, Town Clerk, read the Legal Notice into the record.

John Moulson then briefly reviewed the budget process the Board of Finance followed to determine the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget that is being presented to the Town. He explained that the Board of Education Budget was proposed at \$12,602,057 a 2.95% increase and that the Board of Finance reduced that budget by \$120,000 a 0.98% reduction. The budget being presented tonight is \$12,482,057 a 1.97% increase.

The proposed General Government Budget was \$4,025,036 and the Board of Finance reduced that budget by \$3,900. The budget being presented tonight is \$4,021,136.

Dr. Roy Seitsinger presented the board of Education Budget to the audience. He explained that the Board of Education is pursuing several priorities. Out of the stress and anxiety of the past year the

mental health and social emotional learning has become a priority. Although the pandemic and restrictions are ending the school district like many other will not return to normal come September, but we will be normalizing education as best we can while meeting the needs of our students and staff. One area that needs improvement is virtual learning, while it was done this past year there is a need to improve areas of it. Technology in pre-pandemic years was an option in education, now it's a requirement that needs to be funded and addressed.

There are three areas that make up 88% of the budget: salaries, health care, and secondary tuition. A priority that we are hoping federal money will help pay for is creating safe and healthy buildings for our students and staff, the major focus being air quality.

Dr. Seitsinger then reviewed state and federal funds that the district will be receiving over the next 3 years in response to the pandemic.

- Sept. 30, 2022 - \$63,582
- Sept. 30, 2023 - \$281,674
- Sept. 30, 2024 - \$589,916
- Title 1 - \$94,442
- IDEA - \$124,094

He explained that all these funds are outside the regular budget to enhance and enrich the educational programs offered at the Preston schools. With those funds the district will be providing a Summer School open to all students to offered extended learning. An increase in the Social Workers hours to 0.4 FTE, and to deal with equity for all students, federal money will be purchasing Chromebooks and iPads.

The Board of Education is presenting an operational budget of \$12,482,057.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier then presented the General Government Budget. She stated that January 2021 began a year of uncertainties, but after looking at each department and watching the spending these past months the Board of Selectmen feel that they have brought forth the best possible budget to the Town.

She explained that 42% of the over all budget increases came from salaries, health care, MERS (pension), part-time staff, and Public Works. Salaries have a 1.5% increase; while health care had a 3% increase. To help offset the cost employees' contribution has increase from 5 to 6%. Part-time staff increases are due to the need for additional training on Infinite Vision, the new software the town is using. Also, staff needs additional hours to realign and restructure systems to meet today's business demands.

Public Works is showing a 46% increase this is to restore cuts from previous years, and to develop and carry out a road management plan so that Preston has good, safe roads.

Technology is in need of software upgrades, laptops, and a new Hardware server.

Legal Fees is showing an increase to restore cut from prior years, and this year we've seen a number of Executive Orders and with no HR person we've needed an increase in legal advice.

CIRMA Insurance has a 3% increase. She also noted that this is the last year of locked in fees.

The Fire Department has a 1.5% increase. To provide better services to the public they are looking at hiring 1 full-time person at a cost of \$72,250 that would cover 260 additional shifts; or \$50,000 per diem that would cover an additional 330 shifts. They are working to increase their volunteers, but that is proving to be difficult. They are hoping that some of these costs can be covered by state and federal aid.

The overall budget is a 4.21% increase She stated that the Town can't keep doing more with less. On a positive note she shared that the grand List is up 2.7% which has produced \$366,000 in revenues.

Stacey Becker explained that the General Government Budget was reduced by Board of Finance by \$3,900, and what was being presented tonight was a General Government Budget of \$4,025,036. Ms. Becker then shared:

- the Grand List is showing a 2.8% increase, which is \$12,501,719.
- Long term debt, which are outstanding Bonds from 2013, 2013, and 2018 come to \$777,868.
- Based on current trends, there is \$55,000 in revenues to offset the budget
- Preston has been designated as a Distressed Municipality which has given the Town more aid.

Questions & Comments

Gentleman asked what's happening with the hospital.

Sandra Allyn- Gauthier explained that the Town is working with the state, DEEP, to finalize the last stages of the project.

Susan Strader, 463 Route 164, stated that she would like to see both the Education and General Government Budget go to a Town Meeting as they were present with no additional cuts.

With no other comments or questions, John Moulson closed the Public Hearing at 8:15 P.M...

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Lang

Recording Secretary