Preston Board of Finance
Special Meeting
Wednesday, June 10, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.
Teleconference Call

Call to Order – John Moulson called the meeting to order at 7:31 P.M.

1. Roll Call

   Members                                                                 Alternates
   John Moulson – Chairman                                                  Matthew Davis –
   Bob Congdon - Vice Chairman                                              Vacancy
   Stacey Becker - Clerk
   Andy Depta
   Denise Beale
   Zachary Maurice

   Also Present

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

John Moulson reviewed the Agenda and the purpose of the meeting to review the various budget and either accept them as proposed, increase, or decrease them as the Board of Finance sees fit.

Andy Depta objected to what Mr. Moulson said; stating that the Board of Finance can either maintain or reduce budgets at this point citing Executive Order 7HH. The Board does not have the ability to increase budgets at this meeting.

2. Public Comment

Melissa Lennon stated (referring to item # 3 of the Agenda) that a Board of Finance unseated alternate cannot make a motion and cannot participate in discussion. That the Board of Finance has 6 members and advised strongly against changing procedures that would go against state statues.

John Moulson objected to the statements made by Melissa Lennon.

Bob Congdon reminded everyone that this was Public Comment time and that the matter can be discussed when the Board reaches item #3.

Susan Strader spoke strongly in favor of the Board of Educations budget be reinstated to the full amount.
Heather Helwig, 22 Brown School Road, pointed out that this was not a Town Meeting as stated in the public notice. She also stated that these are intense times and that our children need our support more than ever. It’s important to support the Board of Education budget as it was presented.

Beth Bonosconi stated that just because a person works at the school shouldn’t mean that our voice isn’t just as important. The Board of Education needs all the support we can give them.

Deborah Good stated she was against any additional moneys added to the budgets.

Amanda Phelps asked that the Board of Education budget be restored.

Pat Biggins agreed with Andy Depta that the budgets shouldn’t be allowed to be increased. It was good that the Board of Finance takes comments from the public. It’s been suggested that we draw down our reserves; it’s important for the Board to take a conservative approach.

Vicki Spicer supports restoring the Board of Education budget.

Susan Theve, Old Jewett City Road, supports the budgets as they were proposed at the last meeting.

Susan Strader asked for clarification on the fact that this is a Board of Finance Special Meeting and not a Town Meeting and asked whether budgets could be increased or decreased.

Andrew Bilodeau agreed with Andy Depta that the Board can only maintain the budgets as they are now or decrease them. We need a 0% increase on both budgets in these economically hard times. He believed that Melissa Lennon is correct on the issue of Agenda item #3. And finally, the Legal Notice listed this meeting as a Virtual Town Meeting which is incorrect.

Heather Ballestrini asked that the Board of Education budget be increased to accommodate more staff that will be need when students return in the fall.

Christina Pappas asked that the Board of Education budget be restored.

At this point Stacey Becker addressed additional Public Comment e-mails that were sent to financeboard@preston-ct.org since the Public Hearing on 5/28/20 regarding the budget. She either provided a summary of the submitter’s comments regarding the budget or read them if they were brief.

Michael Clancy asked that the General Government and Board of Education keep the same budget they had last year.

Susan Theve asked that the Board of Finance stick to their proposed budgets.

Emily Campbell supported the Board of Education original budget.

Sharon Robbins asked that some funds be added back into the Board of Education’s budget.

MaryAnn O’Neil asked with the current economic climate how can we support a 14% raise in the school budget. Municipal Budget?
Nicole Eddy Ortiz supports the Board of Education’s budget.

Deborah Grabarek would like to see the BOE budget not be reduced further.

Nick Vegliente supports the Board of Education’s budget and no further cuts.

Gail Smith had a question on the Revenue budget; she wanted to know why the budget is based on only achieving 98% of Tax Revenue and not 100%. She supports keeping the Board of Education budget as it is.

Susan Strader reacted to an email that was read and pointed out that no one was getting a 14% raise.

3. Amend the Rules of Order to allow Alternate Members of the Board to participate in the discussion of motions after they have been seconded.

Bob Congdon stated that while alternates that are not seated can’t make a motion or vote that it is a disservice to not allow them to be part of the discussion. The more inclusion is better than less. He pointed out that several meeting ago others could speak who weren’t even Board members with a seconded motion on the table. It just isn’t right.

John Moulson stated that he felt that a legal opinion was needed before proceeding. We need to make sure we’re making legal decisions.

Bob Congdon restated that it is wrong to have others be allowed to be part of the discussion and not the alternates.

Stacey Becker pointed out that there is a legal precedent; that the Board of Finance has 6 members and that only 6 seated members can deliberate. She concurred with John Moulson that a legal opinion is needed before the Board moves on this.

Matt Davis referred to the August 9, 2016 meeting where Policies were adopted. He read Policy #2. Alternates can participate and debate any matter that comes before the Board.

Stacey Becker shared that while attending CCM meetings she was told point blank that as an alternate she could not participate in discussions. We need to clarify the policy.

Andy Depta stated that alternates cannot vote if not seated. He agrees with Melissa Lennon that once a motion has been seconded the discussion is for the 6 seated members to debate. He also pointed out that other Boards like the PRA and the Board of Education have rules that they follow.

Andy Depta motioned to defer the Rules of Order to a future meeting identified by the Chairman. Denise Beale seconded the motion. John Moulson, Bob Congdon, Stacey Becker, and Zach Maurice voted yes; while Denise Beale and Andy Depta voted no. The motion carried 4 to 2.

Bob Congdon amended the motion to state that once a motion is seconded no one other than a seated member of the Board can participate in the discussion. If more information is need then the
motion is to be withdrawn to permit further discussion. John Moulson seconded the motion. John Moulson, Bob Congdon, Stacey Becker, and Zach Maurice voted yes; while Denise Beale and Andy Depta voted no. The motion carried 4 to 2.

John Moulson stated I just want to make sure that we’re safe in what we’re doing.

Andy Depta felt that the amendment to his motion was not pertinent to the deferral of this topic.

Bob Congdon explained that it was very pertinent and gave several examples.

Denise Beale pointed out that to allow others part of our discussion may cause legal difficulties with our decision making. She also mentioned that it was odd that Bob Congdon stepped aside at a recent meeting.

John Moulson said it wasn’t that uncommon.

Denise Beale said she had seen that happen only when there is a conflict of interest.

Bob Congdon defended the move to allow Matt Davis the opportunity to have an active voice.

At this point John Moulson called for a vote on the Amendment to the original motion.

Matt Davis asked for clarification after the vote was taken. It was stated that prior to any motion being seconded he could speak.

4. Update on Estimated Surplus in FY19-20 General Government and Board of Education Budgets
   - John Spang

John Spang explained that as of June 4th it looks like that the General Government Budget will return $150,000 to the General Fund and that the Board of Education will return $158,000 to the General Fund; this is largely due to the lack of bus use in the past 3 months.

He also mentioned that as part of the FY20 budget $650,000 was designated to be used; however, that full amount won’t be used which is good news.

He pointed out that there will be additional Tax Revenue of $172,000 for a total surplus of $480,000 to the General Fund. He also mentioned an additional $45,000 in interest earned on the 2013 Bond Issue proceeds. This makes the potential return to the Unassigned Fund of $525,000. Which would mean that from the $650,000 from the Unassigned Fund designated to balance the budget for FY20, only $125,000 may be spent.

In summary, he stated with the present circumstances that the Board of Finance’s decision to use $690,000 for the FY21 budget is a sound decision.

Stacey Becker questioned to get the full accurate picture that we need to wait for the Dec. Audit Report. And then stated that it was better news that we won’t need to use all the budgeted funds from surplus.

Andy Depta asked how all this affected our Local Revenue.
Stacey Becker stated she hadn’t had time to look at that; but shared that we could review Sue Nylen’s report in 3 more agenda items.

John Spang also pointed out that Building Permits were starting to come in, which may bring in more revenue by the end of the month.

Bob Congdon pointed out that it’s prudent that we create our budget based on 98% of our Tax Revenue. There are some towns that create a budget on 100% of Tax Revenue, I would like to see that list. We can’t create our budget with smoke and mirrors.

John Moulson stated that the surplus would go down from last year.

5. To adopt the FY21 Board of Education Budget

Bob Congdon motioned to approve the General Government Budget as presented. Bob then withdrew his motion.

Andy Depta motioned to approve and adopted the Board of Education budget of $12,241,319. Denise Beale seconded the motion. Denise Beale, Andy Depta, and John Molson voted yes; while Bob Congdon, Stacey Becker, and Zach Maurice voted no. The vote was a tie, so the motion failed.

Stacey Becker said that she had questions for John Spang and the Board of Education.

Bob Congdon asked Andy Depta to withdrawal his motion, he refused. So, Bob suggested that the motion be voted down to allow the request for more information from those outside the Board.

After the vote, Stacey Becker wanted to know the impact of NFA’s tuition decision had on the Board of Education’s budget.

Roy Seitsinger stated that NFA’s freeze in tuition rate for the coming year is a $120,000 savings that is hoped that we can use to help with the unknown Covid costs. He further explained that NFA has 2 different payment tracks. Regular Education is paid a year behind; while Special Education is paid in the current year.

Stacey Becker asked what the Federal Covid Funds of $63,000 be used for.

Roy Seitsinger explained the need to maintain online learning, hiring staff to help students who have fallen behind, and that these funds need to be used while following Title 1 guidelines. That the funds must be used for items that go above and beyond the established budget.

Andy Depta clarified if NFA’s Special Education was adjusted.

Roy Seitsinger explained that it is but even though we have a tuition freeze the number of students changes. We’d like to use the savings to fill the gap.

Matt Davis clarified that the superintendent has said the biggest drivers of the budget are contracts, health care, tuition, and classes; but nowhere did we discuss COVID costs.
Roy Seitsinger explained that this is an ever-evolving situation that changes daily. We are discussing COVID, but there are no definitive numbers right now. Just the other day we were told COVID might add an additional $490 per student, and that’s with the information we have today. Tomorrow may be different. This budget was developed in March and so we are trying to keep up with the information that comes out and figure out where we’ll stand and at this point, we just don’t know.

Matt Davis asked how would the school deal with those costs?

Roy Seitsinger explained that we did the budget and now we must figure out how to pay for all of this. We are hoping to find more savings like the NFA tuition freeze. We must plan for 3 different openings – face to face, a combination of face to face and online, and online learning. He is hoping that we can get students and staff face to face.

Bob Congdon stated that we are building budgets on pre-COVID information and that’s all we can do tonight because the information is constantly changing and the cost of COVID on any of our budgets are unknown. The pre-COVID Board of Education budget is $12,241,319 and know that we will need to come back and deal with COVID in the fall.

Zach Maurice disagreed and felt that we need to give the funds they’ll need. They need to give notices by June 30th to staff that may be cut. We may be losing value resources that will be needed in the fall.

Andy Depta complimented the Superintendent of Schools and Finance Director for their candor and honesty about redirecting the $120,000 NFA tuitions savings to help support their budget.

Andy Depta motioned to approve and adopt a Board of Education budget of $12,241,319. Bob Congdon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

6. To adopt FY21 General Government Budget

Stacey Becker informed the group that there was a correction to be made before any motions could be made. The correction was on Line 177 TAR $199,539 is incorrect. It needs to be decreased by $264 and the new number for that Line item $199,275. The overall General Government budget has an increase of $264 over last year.

Bob Congdon motioned to approve and accept the General Government Budget of $3,858,869. Andy Depta seconded the motion. Bob Congdon, Andy Depta, Stacey Becker, Zach Maurice, and John Moulson voted yes. Denise Beale voted no. The motion carried 5 to 1.

7. To adopt the FY21 Revenue Budget and to set the Mil Rate

Bob Congdon motioned to accept the Revenue Budget as presented. Denise Beale seconded the motion. The motion was withdrawn to allow discussion.

Andy Depta asked for the bottom line to be repeated.
Stacey Becker said that Local Revenue was $342,916 without property tax. She reminded the group of Sue Nylen’s latest report received earlier in the day, and suggested that it be reviewed because it might lead to changes in the Local Revenue projections.

Bob Congdon said he felt that ant changes were minimal.

Zach Maurice shared that Bingo Revenues changed by $400.

Stacey Becker referring to Sue’s report pointed out that Line 4012 Interest & Lien Fees were budgeted at $40,000 and to date $57,392.78 had been collected. It was suggested that it be increased by $10,000. Bob Congdon concurred.

Property Taxes Prior Years was budgeted $60,000 collected to date $63,945.55. It was suggested to leave that item and Historic Documents with no changes, as well as MERS Fee. However, License & Permits we budgeted $2400 and it’s at $1520, it was suggested that it be lowered to show $2000.

Construction was budgeted at $45,000 and is at $52,976.83. It was suggested to increase that Line item by $5,000.

Bob Congdon suggested that Bingo Fees be left alone, with social distancing that really may be greatly affected.

Finally, Investments were looked at, this Line was budgeted for $20,000 and is at $24,122.35. Bob Congdon advised the group to be on the conservative side, with people possible not being able to pay their taxes as in the pass and leave it at $20,000.

Andy Depta asked where the Investment comes from.

Bob Congdon felt that it comes from the General Fund, when taxes are collected, and the funds sit in the account until they are used.

John Spang added that there is a 90-day deferral so it would be good to leave it at $20,000.

Stacey Becker continued to go over several other lines that were not changed.

**Bob Congdon motioned to approve the Local Revenue Budget at $357,516. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.**

**Bob Congdon motioned to approve the State Revenue Budget of $4,143,581 less TAR & LoCIP. Zach Maurice seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.**

John Moulson stated it was time to set the mil rate.

Andy Depta questioned Stacey about the most recent changes, if they had been calculated yet. Stacey said they had.

**Bob Congdon motioned to use $690,000 for the Undesignated Fund Balance to offset the budget and to set the mil rate at 26.90. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.**
Bob Congdon stated that this is a very aggressive move to get through the hard times we’re in now and responsible move to get the Town through the next 3 years to recovery.

Andy Depta stated that it is almost a flat mil rate and believes the taxpayers will be happy.

Bob Congdon stated we did a responsible job for the times we are in.

John Moulson asked the difference in mil rate from last year to this year.

Stacey Becker stated it was an increase of 0.47 mils.

8. Public Comment

Susan Strader disappointed with the decisions and it seem to her that the Board didn’t reflect on what citizens said. She also felt that every member of the Board should be set up to see the visuals offered during the discussions.

Jill Keith disagreed with Susan Strader and agreed with Bob Congdon that they approved a budget that is right for the times. Congratulations on a job well done.

Pat Biggins appreciated the time and thought the Board took to balance between the needs and the economic climate of today to come up with a budget.

Victoria Spicer echoed Susan Strader’s disappointment with the reductions to the board of Education’s budget.

Bob Congdon stated that he has listened and read the emails from the citizens and feels that the Board has given a responsible budget for the Town and Board of Education to work with.

Matt Davis stated to the public that if we have made decisions that go against what you want; that doesn’t mean we haven’t listened.

Melissa Lennon pointed out that this was Public Comment and is not a time for Board members to rebuttal, but to simply listen.

9. Adjournment

Stacey Becker motioned to adjourn at 10:14 P.M... Zach Maurice seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Lang
Recording Secretary
Good evening. This is Beth Bonosconi, 5 Tyler Drive, with a comment:

As a taxpaying resident of the town for 28 years, I would like to reiterate that public comments made of residents who happen to be employed by the BOE be given careful consideration and not discounted simply because of their employment. My voice has every right to heard and considered fully and respectfully.

I have great concerns that the BOE budget is underfunded and believe it will compound difficulties for the children of Preston given this challenging year. The schools need to be fully staffed in order for the best possible support for the students social-emotional well being and strong academic supports across the board. The Board of Education’s budget prudently invested and aligned itself with what would have the best possible impact on students’ experiences.

I would strongly urge the board to consider adding more money into the budget which could easily come from our very ample surplus.

Respectfully submitted.
From: michael clancy  
Sent: Thursday, June 4, 2020 4:02 PM  
To: Board of Finance  
Cc: Sandra Allyn Gauthier  
Subject: Comments on the 2020-2021 budget.

Good Evening, Thank you for accepting my public comments.

I realize this will be another challenging year especially with the covid19 virus and there will be no public open meetings to discuss the budget.

I would like the Board of Finance to consider keeping the same exact budget that was passed for the 2019-2020 budget year. i understand that due to some of the agreements that were made between the teachers and other employee groups that raises are to be considered.

I would request that the BOF reach out to these groups and ask if a hold on increases could be delayed until the next budget cycle. Any other increases that may occur during the year would be presented to the BOF and paid from the surplus or reserved funds.

These are unusual times and hopefully we can all work together to meet these challenges together. Respectfully submitted. L. Michael Clancy
From: Susan Theve  
Sent: Sunday, June 7, 2020 11:11 AM  
To: Board of Finance  
Subject:  

Dear Board of Finance Members,

Please do not reverse your decision on the BOE budget. Schools will not be returning to normal. Most likely there will be a combination of in-school days and distance learning days due to the necessity of reducing class sizes. This means that some folks will not be able to return to work because they will need to be home to attend to their children’s needs. With NFA not imposing an increase in tuition and Preston eligible for a grant for Covid-19 costs, I do not see the need to increase any currently proposed budget.

Sincerely;

Susan K. Theve
From: Emily Campbell
Sent: Monday, June 8, 2020 10:34:11 AM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Board of Finance
Subject: Preston Board of Education

To Those Whom are Involved:

As a Preston parent and an employee of the Preston Board of Education, I implore you to ensure our students, Tomorrows' Future, are given every possible opportunity. Giving our schools anything less than required to at least maintain our current capabilities is a tragedy. Upon the many difficulties that we have been fighting through this year we need to support our community. Our struggles have not ended and creating a budget that forces us to fight harder with less resources is counterproductive to society. Please think of our future and those who will be taking care of us in the years to come.

Thank you.

-Emily Campbell
Preston Resident
Paraprofessional at PVMS

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FW: budget

From: Board of Finance (financeboard@preston-ct.org)
To: sbeckerbof@yahoo.com; john.23@comcast.net; rcongdonbof@preston-ct.org; adepta235@comcast.net; matthew.davis7819@gmail.com; zacharymaurice@hotmail.com; dcbsharp@aol.com; dbealebof@preston-ct.org; rcongdonbof@preston-ct.org
Date: Monday, June 8, 2020, 12:42 PM EDT

From: Sharon
Sent: Monday, June 8, 2020 12:42:42 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Board of Finance
Subject: budget

To Board of Finance Members: 6/8/2020

Please consider adding back some of the money cut from the educational budget. This fall will require more staff, not less staff to deal with all the requirements set forth by the State of Connecticut educational and safety and health departments.

The transportation, maintenance, and educational departments are requiring more materials to maintain the virtual and in school program and to keep our students and staff safe during these trying times.

Thank you for all the time you put in for our town,

Sharon Robbins
78 River Road
Preston, Ct.

After completing 43 years in this district, I can say that this Spring has been the greatest challenge for all involved and the fall will be even more challenging for the staff.
From: Amanda Phelps  
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2020 7:19:16 AM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)  
To: Board of Finance  
Subject: Support for Board of Education Budget

Dear Board of Finance Members,

I am writing in support, once again, of restoring funds to the Board of Education Budget.

To this point, the majority of Public Comment and Public Emails have been in support of restoring funds and/or using our Town Fund Balance to support the BoE Budget. Please listen to the majority of your constituents. I appreciate the job of the BoF and I understand that you have quite the balancing act on your hands. However, in this year when you have asked for more community input please do not disregard more than half of the remarks.

Many solid arguments have been made about why tax-payers support education funding, and the Board of Education appeal has been transparent, frank, and factual. As explained at the BoE Meeting this week, even IF the Board of Education made all the cuts being suggested online (cutting the Social Worker position, asking teachers to have pay freezes, adjusting lawn care costs) they will likely not be able to adjust for the $363,000 cut to their proposal without having to eliminate staff and programs.

Our town has a healthy fund balance and Rainy Day fund. As a town, we are MORE THAN ABLE to support both the BoE and BoS budgets AS WELL as keep our mil rate from increasing to an unpleasant amount. We can, and should, support ALL Preston Residents to the fullest extent possible. That's why we set aside OUR surplus tax money.

Please reconsider your cuts to the BoE proposal and restore funds to the BoE Budget. And, I certainly DO NOT support any further cuts to the Board of Education Budget.

Thank you,  
Amanda Phelps  
361 Old Jewett City Rd.  
Preston, CT 06365
FW: Virtual Annual Town Meeting, 6/10/20

From: Board of Finance (financeboard@preston-ct.org)
To: sbockerbof@yahoo.com; john.23@comcast.net; rcongdonbof@preston-ct.org; adepta235@comcast.net; matthew.davis7819@gmail.com; zacharymaurice@hotmail.com; dbealebof@preston-ct.org; rcongdonbof@preston-ct.org
Date: Tuesday, June 9, 2020, 07:52 PM EDT

From: lvd99@juno.com
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2020 7:50:27 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Board of Finance
Subject: Virtual Annual Town Meeting, 6/10/20

Mr. Moulson and all other BoF members,

With all due respect, it appears your Board is rewriting history, standard process and protocol. This meeting scheduled for 6/10/20 was Advertised & Noticed (Legal) as a Virtual Town Meeting with Public Comment and Correspondence entered and discussed, prior to the business at hand - just like a Normal Annual Town Meeting (ATM) in normal times. One reason I’m bringing this up is; at a normal ATM, the public was allowed to make motions to potentially reduce specific line items. It appears that you’ve removed all Resident participation prior to adoption of the Budgets, Revenue and Mil Rate. Was this what the Governor intended? I think NOT!

As you can see below, this is what your agenda should’ve looked like. Call to Order 1. Roll Call Members John Moulson-Chairman, Robert Congdon-Vice Chairman, Stacey Becker-Clerk, Denise Beale, Andy Depta, Zachary Maurice, Alternate - Matthew Davis 2. Correspondence 3. Public Comment 4. Approval of Minutes......

In light of the preceding changes; As a Resident Taxpayer as well as a regular Registered Voter, I would like both budgets to be passed with absolutely no increase from last years adopted budgets. Upon review of all Revenues, any and all Give backs from NFA and any other funds earmarked for the Town or Schools due to this pandemic (FEMA, other Federal and State gifts) should be considered before just using our Cash Reserve. Some Towns, most Auditors recommend up to a 15% Contingency Fund, ours is at 9.5%. As well, I would like the use of any Cash Reserve, Surplus, Rainy Day, Undesignated funds to only be used, to maintain the Mil Rate below 27.

Lastly, any Capital not spent to date, should be frozen until we’re back to NORMAL and the public can weigh in effectively by a in person referendum or vote.

As with any ANNUAL Budget, the General Government and BoE can come back at any point in the Fiscal Year with substantiation to the BoF and ask for additional Funds for what is needed.

Thank you, to All BoF members. My Best, Stay Safe & Healthy,

Andrew Bilodeau
99 Lakeview Drive
Preston CT 06365
Dear Board of Finance members,

You have a difficult job to do in any budget cycle. However, this time you have the unknown of the historic worldwide pandemic coloring your decisions. I would ask that you continue to HEAR the comments by all residents, your responsibility as our elected officials are to listen and consider all Town voices. That means that you have an obligation to ensure the Board members do not negate public comment because of a resident’s profession. As elected officials, you should be supporting the economic recovery of our town, which would be helped by full employment by the largest employer in town, our schools.

The historic pandemic that we are all living through has been difficult, no doubt for all people. The strength and backbone of any town is its school system and ours is pretty darn great! Our children and yours have benefitted from the town’s very strong educational heritage. The educational landscape will be forever changed by this pandemic, and a fully-funded education budget will ensure the best possible support for our children as we navigate our new normal together. This reality should be a factor that clearly influences your decisions.

At the BOF meeting on May 20th and at the Public Hearing a week later, the majority of residents who spoke voiced support FOR the BOE budget as submitted, i.e., no cuts. The decision was made to cut $363,000 at the 5/20 BOF meeting. Then, at the Public Hearing a week later, a majority of the speakers again were FOR adding money back into the education budget. Those voices were effectively ignored. A decision was made to identify both the Town and BOE budgets as PROPOSED with the hope that residents would again voice their opinions about the budgets to help
finalize your decision on 6/10/20. We implore you to act on the majority opinions by adding money back into the BOE budget to make it whole. Use the ‘Rainy Day’ fund to offset that action, thus keeping our mil rate low. (one of the lowest in the state). I would characterize a worldwide pandemic as the exact reason to use this more than robust fund. It is our tax money and we want it utilized to support the aforementioned action.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan and Stephen Strader

463 Route
164
FW: Regarding the BoF Special meeting on June 10, 2020

From: Board of Finance (financeboard@preston-ct.org)
To: sbockerbof@yahoo.com; john.23@comcast.net; rcongdonbof@preston-ct.org; adepta235@comcast.net; matthew.davis7819@gmail.com; zacharymaurice@hotmail.com; rcongdonbof@preston-ct.org
Date: Wednesday, June 10, 2020, 06:38 AM EDT

From: Denise Beale
Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2020 6:38:26 AM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Board of Finance
Subject: Re: Regarding the BoF Special meeting on June 10, 2020

Thank you. I had hoped to serve while you were chair. You are very thorough and knowledgeable. I appreciate your input on this item.

Denise

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S8+, an AT&T 5G Evolution capable smartphone

From: Board of Finance <financeboard@preston-ct.org>
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2020 9:14:09 PM
To: Stacey Becker <sb BeckerBOF@yahoo.com>; john.23@comcast.net <john.23@comcast.net>; Bob Congdon <rcongdonBOF@preston-ct.org>; Andy Depta <adepta235@comcast.net>; Matthew Davis7819@gmail.com <Matthew.Davis7819@gmail.com>; zacharymaurice@hotmail.com <zacharymaurice@hotmail.com>; Denise Beale <dbealeBOF@preston-ct.org>; Bob Congdon <rcongdonBOF@preston-ct.org>
Subject: FW: Regarding the BoF Special meeting on June 10, 2020

From: Melissa Lennon
Sent: Tuesday, June 9, 2020 9:14:02 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Board of Finance
Subject: Regarding the BoF Special meeting on June 10, 2020

June 9, 2020

Dear Chairman Moulson and Members of the Board of Finance:

During the Public Hearing on May 28, 2020, the Preston Board of Finance members discussed the role of an alternate member and the possibility of adjusting the alternate’s role in participation during Board of Finance meetings. The discussion is scheduled to resume at the Board’s Special Meeting to be held on June 10, 2020. The agenda for the meeting states that the Alternate Members of the Board will be allowed to participate in the discussion of motions after they have been seconded.

I am strongly against increasing the role and responsibilities of any Preston Board of Finance Alternate Member and I will supply my reasoning behind my belief.
Preston Board of Finance Guidance –

At the October 4, 2018 Board of Finance Special Meeting, the Board made a motion to follow State Statute and The Handbook for Connecticut Boards of Finance (1992) as a guide to conduct official Board of Finance business and review this decision in 2020. The motion was approved unanimously.

State Statute & Handbook for Connecticut Boards of Finance –

The Preston Board of Finance is entitled to appoint or elect up to three alternate members according to State Statue. CGS 160 Sec. 7-340a and the Handbook for CT Boards of Finance both state the premise of a Board of Finance alternate similarly: Any town has the power to provide by ordinance for the appointment or election of not more than three alternate members to its board of finance. These appointments are subject to the provisions concerning minority representation of political parties. When seated, these alternate members have all the powers and duties set forth in the General Statutes, any special act or municipal charter. The alternate members must be electors and taxpayers of the town. If a regular member of the board is absent or disqualified, the absent or disqualified member shall designate an alternate to act on his behalf. In the event that an absent or disqualified regular member shall fail or refuse to designate an alternate, the majority of the regular members of the board of finance not absent, not disqualified, may designate an alternate subject to the provisions of Section 9-167A to act for the absent or disqualified regular member.

Past Meetings of Preston Board of Finance Regarding Alternates –

- December 1, 2015: The Board of Finance first discussed the option of adding alternates to the Board during its meeting while interviewing for a vacancy on the Board. The Board of Finance requested the Board of Selectmen to schedule a special town meeting on December 10, 2015 to change the ordinance for the Board of Finance to add two alternates.

- February 9, 2016: The Board of Finance requests two alternates for 2-year terms with the first alternates appointed by both the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance until the next municipal election. The new ordinance would be drafted by the town attorney.

- March 8, 2016: The Board of Finance was waiting on legal for the new ordinance.

- April 12, 2016: There will be a Special Town Meeting held on April 14, 2016 to approve the ordinance for two alternates to the Board of Finance.

- May 10, 2016: The Town Ordinance for two alternates to the Board of Finance was approved.

- June 30, 2016: Interviews were held jointly with both the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance for the first two alternates to the Board of Finance.

- July 12, 2016: The Board of Finance Alternate Policy was presented in draft form to the Board to review.

- August 9, 2016: The Board of Finance reviewed, revised, and approved the Alternate Policy unanimously.

- October 17, 2018: A new members binder was first discussed by the Board of Finance as a way to make sure new members knew or were aware of policies and State Statutes that dictate the Board of Finance. There also was mention of possibly having a buddy or mentor for new members.

- January 16, 2019: The Board of Finance was given a list of items included in the “New Member” folder located in the Board’s Drop Box. The folder contains documents and links that can be changed easily as time goes by.
Preston Board of Finance: Policy Concerning Participation by Alternate Members –

On August 9, 2016 the following policy was unanimously approved by the Board of Finance:

1. Meeting with all regular members present.
   a. Alternate members shall participate fully in discussion and debate on any and all matters that may come before the Board of Finance.
   b. For purposes of conducting the normal business of the Board, alternate members shall be non-voting members unless seated.

2. Meeting with vacancy.
   a. If a regular member of the Board is absent, he shall designate an alternate to act in his place by notifying the chairman prior to the start of the meeting.
   b. If an absent regular member fails to designate an alternate to act in his place, the majority of the regular members who are present shall designate an alternate to act in place of the absent member.
   c. When seating an alternate member, the Board will try to evenly rotate selection as much as possible.

3. If any part of this policy is contested, it shall be resolved by a majority of the regular members present and voting.

Discussion Leading up to the Approved Preston Board of Finance Policy Concerning Participation by Alternate Members –

One of the driving forces behind the Preston Board of Finance finally deciding to pursue the ordinance change in FY2016 that added alternates to the Board of Finance was the struggle with regular member attendance at meetings.

In the short-term, alternates would lessen the Board of Finance liability in not being able to meet quorum requirements at meetings.

In the long-term, by offering the alternate role as a two-year position, it would allow interested residents to learn about the roles and responsibilities of the Board of Finance without the longer six-year term of regular members. The underlying notion was that the alternate role would train or prepare interested residents for a regular membership role.

In many ways, the alternate role could be seen as a way to gain experience with less responsibility... and with the ultimate goal that the position would encourage more residents to run for election for a regular membership position on the Board of Finance in the future.

It is with these ideals in mind as well as best practices shared by CCM for running legal and effective meetings that the Preston Board of Finance drafted its Policy Concerning Participation of Alternate Members.

The discussion was that alternate members could participate fully in all aspects of the meeting with the exception of voting, which includes making a motion, discussing a motion, and voting on a motion, unless the alternate was seated in the absence of a regular member. The reasoning behind this directive was respect the formality of Board business, which is shown through actions (motions and voting). If an alternate is not seated, then the alternate cannot participate in that formal aspect of Board business (motion
through voting process) because it exceeds the six-member Board established by State Statute. The Board was highly sensitive to the needs of the alternate role and respected the benefit of an alternate being present at all meetings so that the alternate was fully informed and able to serve in the absence of a regular member by encouraging an alternate in the Policy to be able to ask questions, provide suggestions, and join in discussions that were not a part of the formal actions (motion to voting process).

The Handbook for Connecticut Boards of Finance –

With regard to the concept of party affiliation on the Preston Board of Finance, the Handbook clearly reminds Boards of Finance the requirement to always meet minority representation:

No more than four members of a six-member board of finance may represent the same political party. For the purpose of determining party membership under this requirement, persons are deemed members of the political party on whose enrollment list their name appears on the date of their nomination for elective office. However, persons who are solely candidates of a party other than the one in which they are enrolled are considered members of the party in which they are candidates (S.9-167a)

Personal Recommendation –

Based on the reasons why Alternates were added to the Board of Finance in FY2016 and the purpose of their role: to be an informed and educated alternate member of the Board who can fill-in during official Board business when a regular member is unable, I do not believe extending the alternate role to include allowing alternates to participate in discussion after a motion has been made and seconded is appropriate. By allowing an alternate to participate in discussion after a motion is on the floor violates CT State Statutes, which authorizes a Board of Finance with six regular members, because a motion followed through with a vote is considered formal action by the Board of Finance.

Simply put, an unseated alternate cannot make motions, join in discussion after a motion is made, nor vote on the motion.

If an alternate who is not seated joins the discuss after a motion is on the floor, that alternate member interrupts the process and increases the number of people “acting” on the motion. By speaking, the unseated alternate has the opportunity to sway votes even if the unseated member does not vote ultimately. Again, this action upsets potentially minority representation as well as the number of Board of Finance members allowed by CT State Statutes.

I would recommend that the Board of Finance reword its policy to reflect this clarification in order to avoid confusion moving forward. I respect the fact that alternates would like to be involved in meetings. There are many places for an alternate to be involved and active in meetings, but the role of an alternate is to fill-in when a regular member is unavailable... much like an understudy in a play learns the role of a lead character, but only performs in front of an audience when the lead character is unable.

Second, I would recommend that the Board of Finance reword its policy to clarify that alternates are seated alternately if possible, but always while following the rules of minority representation. When the policy was originally drafted, the Board membership was such that minority representation rules did not apply. Therefore, the policy may have lacked foresight in clarifying this stipulation or assumed that minority representation was implied. As time has passed four years later, it has become apparent that clarification is required.
Lastly, it has been the Board of Finance’s practice since the implementation of the alternates for the Chair to choose the alternate if seated although the policy does not state that process. The original standing Board agreed upon that method utilizing part 3 of the policy. Moving forward, it may be wise to make that policy with the caveat that the full board can question an alternate being seated by a majority vote if there is concern of impropriety. I mention it solely for the purpose of discussion if the policy is going to be reviewed and amended anyway.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,

Melissa Lennon
With jobs being cut, and loss of salaries in the real world (including Preston, CT), how do you justify 14% raises in school budget? Municipal budget?
FW: Question to BOF

From: Board of Finance (financeboard@preston-ct.org)
To: sbeckerbof@yahoo.com; john.23@comcast.net; rcongonbof@preston-ct.org; adepta235@comcast.net; matthew.davis7819@gmail.com; zacharymaurice@hotmail.com; dbealebof@preston-ct.org; rcongonbof@preston-ct.org
Date: Wednesday, June 10, 2020, 10:57 AM EDT

From: Gail Smith
Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2020 10:57:43 AM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Board of Finance
Subject: Question to BOF

Hello,
I listened to the BOE meeting the other night, and heard a couple of things I would like to ask about. I may not be correct in my understanding of what was shared at the meeting and I apologize if this is incorrect. Is it true that 98% of our tax revenue is used for the Town and Board of Ed budgets? If this is correct, where is the 2% going? Is the 2% for our surplus account? If that is true, why? This is a very difficult time for everyone and I understand why people do not want our mill rate increased. It seems to me that there is a way to keep the BOE budget as is, and not raise the mill rate by using the surplus money. However, if it is true that we not using 100% of collected taxes, I would like to know why this is being done. Is it possible that we are being overtaxed? Could you please explain?

Thank you for your time and all you do for the town. It is greatly appreciated.
Gail Smith
Brown School Road
Preston
Good morning from a fellow tax paying Preston resident and concerned parent. I have lived in Preston my entire life minus college and a short period following. Preston’s School District has provided me with the tools to become a successful professional and integral part of our society. Upon planning a family, my husband and I spoke fondly of the education and support I received from Preston schools and our town in order to ensure success. We felt it was very important to live in a town that would provide the same for our children. I am saddened over the years at how much we have to fight to pass the education budget and advocate for the children and their future.

This upcoming school year I will have two children enrolled at PVMS. In my opinion education needs to be of highest importance and priority. Now of all times that we have recently fought for the budget, these children have lost so much and need our support. They have not received proper education in months despite teachers wonderful attempts to make the best of the current home situation. There is nothing like being in school, a true academic center and striving. Speak nothing of the children who don’t have the home support and guidance. We picked up lunch one day at school to see what they offered and I was brought to tears when I held up the Friday bag of food, knowing that was all that some children would have for 3 whole days to eat and drink. It reminded me of the lack of support, love and guidance some children do not get at home and relied on from school. I am interested to see globally the numbers of abuse/neglect/educational decline/poverty etc after this pandemic. We need to support these children, now more than ever.

I understand we have a surplus “rainy day” fund. I am quite certain there is not too much larger of a “rainy day” then a pandemic. These children with safety in mind need to get back to traditional learning/schooling. There is no way this can be achieved with a lower or zero budget increase.

Their education (which includes socialization and extracurricular actives) is not only their future, but also YOUR future! In years to come they will migrate back to this community after furthering their education and be here for the exact people that are voting no for them.

Please understand our fight to further the children’s education instead of freezing or decreasing.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Nicole Eddy Ortiz
Sent from my iPhone
Good afternoon,
My name is Heather Ballestrini and I live at 1 Quinebaug Drive. I am requesting that money be added back to the education budget and no further cuts be made. When school re-opens I feel that more staff will need to be added to address the many changes in school that will be required by the State of Connecticut. Thank you.
FW: Board of Education Budget

From: Board of Finance (financeboard@preston-ct.org)
To: sbeckerbof@yahoo.com; john.23@comcast.net; rcongonbof@preston-ct.org; adepta235@comcast.net; matthew.davis7819@gmail.com; zacharymaurice@hotmail.com; dbealebof@preston-ct.org; rcongonbof@preston-ct.org
Date: Wednesday, June 10, 2020, 03:38 PM EDT

From: Deborah Grabarek
Sent: Wednesday, June 10, 2020 3:37:49 PM (UTC-05:00) Eastern Time (US & Canada)
To: Board of Finance
Subject: Board of Education Budget

June 10, 2020

Good day.
As a longtime Preston resident and Board of Education member, I implore the Board of Finance to NOT further reduce the proposed Board of Education budget. The Covid-19 pandemic has turned our previous educational world upside down.

For example, in order to meet forthcoming state requirements, Preston may be forced to reduce class size and increase transportation services according to social distancing guidelines translating into cost increases. Every aspect of our school system is going to be impacted. We need Board of Finance support to offer safe and top quality educational services for our students.

Sincerely,
Deborah Burke-Grabarek
Dear members of the Preston Board of Finance

I am writing with respect to the recent cuts made to the Board of Education’s budget and asking that no further cuts be made. Unfortunately, due to a scheduling conflict I will likely be unable to attend tonight’s virtual town meeting.

First, I want to thank the members of both the Board of Finance and Board of Education for spending their time serving our town and dealing with a myriad of unforeseeable issues.

Although I did not speak, I listened intently during the budget public hearing to the questions and comments raised by my neighbors. I understand that these are truly extraordinary times which merit a reevaluation of our shared priorities and responsibilities. Townspeople are rightfully fearful for what the future may hold for them and their families. Therefore, regardless of one’s opinion on the issue, I think to what extent spending should be constrained as a reaction to this uncertainty is a legitimate debate. However, I fear that some are being opportunistic and using the pandemic as a pretext to advance a pre-existing agenda: to lower the floor of our town’s educational spending.

A free public education is a cornerstone of a free society and a constitutionally guaranteed right in the State of Connecticut. Cuts to education should be viewed through that lens - they are restrictions (reasonable or not) to a constitutionally guaranteed right. The importance of having as good of an educational system as we can reasonably afford and the ills occasioned by being perceived as a town which does not value and invest in education should be apparent to any who take the time to view the issue dispassionately. I appreciate that our town’s education system is funded by our townspeople’s hard earned dollars. I remind myself to be grateful for what that provides me and our town. I hope to never forget the opportunities a public education has given me and the opportunities it will hopefully provide for my and my neighbors’ children.

Better days are ahead, although when those days will get here is uncertain. Many who support the cuts are understandably concerned for
what the future holds for them, their families and their neighbors. When those better days are here I hope that they will again reevaluate where we stand and what our shared priorities and responsibilities are.

Best wishes to each of you and your families in these trying times.
Nick Vegliante