

**Preston Board of Finance
Regular Meeting
Wednesday September 15, 2021
Cafeteria - Preston Plains Middle School**

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

1. Roll Call

Members

John Moulson - Chairman
Robert Congdon - Vice Chairman seated at 7:43 pm.
Stacey Becker - Clerk
Denise Beale - absent
Andy Depta
Zachary Maurice

Alternates

Andrew Sawyer - seated until 7:43 P.M.
Vacancy

Also Present

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier - Selectman
John Spang - Financial Director
Sue Nylén - Treasurer
Roy Seitsinger - Superintendent of Schools
Jim Corley - Public Works Director
Kayla Thompson – DTC candidate for BOF
alternate vacancy

2. Public Comment - None

3. Correspondence

- August 19, 2021 -Patrick McCormack - email: weekly Uncas Health District COVID 19 report
- August 19, 2021 - John Spang - email: latest version of Treasurer's job description
- August 24, 2021 - Nicholas P. Vegliante, Chair of Preston Democratic Town Committee - letter: regarding Board of Finance vacancy
- August 25, 2021 - Sandra Allyn-Gauthier - email: regarding John Spang's resignation
- September 1, 2021 - Nancy Musa - email: Preston Public Library and Hartford Healthcare will host a vaccination clinic Sept. 2nd and 23rd.

4. Approval of Minutes

a. BoF Regular Meeting of August 18, 2021

Andy Depta motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of August 18, 2021. Andrew Sawyer seconded the motion. John Moulson, Andy Depta, Zachary Maurice, and Andrew Sawyer voted in favor of the motion, while Stacey Becker abstained. The motion carried.

5. Candidates for Alternate

Kayla Thompson introduced herself and shared that she has lived in Preston for 4 years and has 2 children. She owns and operates a bridal shop in Westerly, RI. She has been active in the DTC for several months and is looking to get more involved in town matters. She sees the town growing and wants to be an active part of that growth.

Zachary Maurice motioned to accept Kayla Thompson as the Board of Finance Alternate. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

6. Town Revenue and Status Report -

John Spang stated that the usual report was unavailable and handed out a 3 page summary of the status of revenues. He shared that this year is more “normal” than last year and in the first two months of this fiscal year \$6,868,713 in taxes were collected. Previous years taxes collected were \$43,127.49 and that Interest & Fees had collected \$18,218.03.

Andrew Sawyer asked the status of the \$400,000 from the state. Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated that there was no answer yet and concluded that it’s probably not going to be issued.

Sue Nylen shared that there would be a traditional report next month.

7. Board of Education Report

John Spang reported that even though the school year has started with unforeseen expenses such as additional Pre-K and Kindergarten positions; that there are already significant savings. Looking at the four largest expenses - salaries, NFA, health care insurance, and Special Education - the first two areas are set. However, healthcare even with new staff being added, there is a \$57,000 savings and Special Education is showing a \$56,000 savings. At this point if areas hold that’s a \$113,000 savings to the Education budget.

The Board of Education has also begun to look at and start preparing Capital Projects that will need to be done and are hopeful to present those to the Board of Finance in November.

Roy Seitsinger added that after 2 weeks of face-to-face learning that things seem to be running smoothly. He also shared that remote learning is not an option this year per legislation. There are different rules this school year regarding that. Instruction would be provided for students if they are out quarantining. What that will look like depends on the situation, a few students vs. a whole class will look very different; but there will be educational instruction in either case.

He also stated that the school is running very tight, but because of federal funds it will look like there is an excess of funds. The priorities for the federal monies are building safety, air quality, technology, and small class sizes where possible. The school will receive \$1.1 million over the course of three years. A good amount will be spent to pay for summer school for all students.

a. BoE Liaison Report

Zach Maurice stated the Board of Education lacked a quorum at their scheduled August meeting.

8. Board of Selectmen Financial Report

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated that the town is doing well with only two months of the year done. She explained that there will be an expected savings when the permanent Trooper is assigned this Friday. The new Trooper is at a lower pay step than what was budgeted. The Board of Selectmen are also looking at Capital Project items. One pressing item is bridge repairs through the town. It is hoped that a completed description of and cost of bridge repair is ready to present at the November meeting.

Jim Corley, Public Works Director, reported that they are working on an overall maintenance plan for bridges and large culverts. The primary concern is the Lincoln Park Bridge. The projects will be handled in two parts - engineering and construction. The engineering part of the project will cover the surveying, design, and bidding process, while the construction will deal with the repairs. There are 6 bridges and 1 cross culvert included in the plan. Both state standards and inspection comments from the DOT will be considered when making decisions as the project moves forward.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier briefly discussed possible ways to pay for such a project. It was hoped not to completely deplete LoCIP and potentially use capital non-recurring funds as a possibility. When asked why start a new cycle of Capital Projects earlier than expected, Sandra Allyn-Gauthier pointed out that interest rates are very low at this time and bridge repairs need to be done before something catastrophic happens. Lincoln Park Bridge is the only way in or out of that area, it would be dangerous if that became impassable.

9. Old Business -

a. Plan of Action - Audit Findings - John Spang

John Spang shared the progress of the Action Plan. He showed that account statements were being reviewed, initialed, and dated. He shared that Journal Entries are being done. He also explained that Rosemary Rohm has been helpful in assisting Sue Nylén preparing audit information and the transition process. It has been decided to pay her \$2,500 to complete the asset inventory and \$2,500 as Deputy Assistant Treasurer. Sue Nylén added with the increasing duty demands of the Treasurer, it should be a department rather than just a Treasurer.

Andy Depta asked the low end \$\$ threshold for the inventory. John Spang stated that was to be set by the BOF.

Bob Congdon motioned to approve \$2,500 to pay Rosemary Rohm to complete the asset inventory and \$2,500 for assisting the Treasurer. The \$5,000 will come from the Undesignated Fund. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

b. FY 2019-2020 Annual Report - Update

Stacey Becker stated that last she spoke to Denise Beale all the articles requested had been received and Denise was at the stage of incorporating them into the FY20 Annual report. Since it is already September, work needs to begin soon on the FY21 report. We need to determine where Denise is on FY19 as soon as possible. It was decided that Chairman John Moulson will contact her to find out the progress of the Report.

c. Position description for Town Treasurer

The Board reviewed the job description on pages 32-33 of the packet and were told by Selectwoman Sandra Allyn-Gauthier that the job description in their packet was not the most updated version. The updated version is posted online, Suggestions and comments that were sent to Sandra and John Spang were incorporated into the online version.

Stacey Becker requested that part of the responsibility of the Treasurer should clearly state that monthly reports for the BOF be provided on time as requested since the Town Revenue and Expense report is a critical report that the BOF reviews. Bob Congdon requested that only the BOS and BOF are allowed to officially request reports from the Treasurer. This would limit the number of requests that the Treasurer would receive.

d. Other Old Business

Stacey Becker asked about the actions/steps to complete the posting of the Budget Summary on the town website. John Spang stated that that would be completed before he leaves.

10. New Business -

a. Interim Director of Finance and School Business Operations Plan

Roy Seitsinger and Sandra Allyn-Gauthier explained that Finance Directors are in high demand. They have posted the position, but so far haven't found anyone. One interested applicant withdrew their application. Hiring an interim Finance Planner is cost prohibitive. So the solution is that three people working together will fill the void through the end of December. It's hoped that by then a new Finance Director will be hired.

The Board was told that there is a diminishing interest among Finance Directors to be shared between the Board of Education and the Board of Selectmen which may make it difficult to find a permanent replacement.

Andy shared his concern with both the Treasurer and the Finance Director about to retire/leave within 2 months - what happens to the ongoing audit.

Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated that it would be completed between Sept. 24-30th and that both Sue Nylen and John Spang will complete the audit before leaving.

b. Finance Director Request for \$5,000 for capital asset inventory and assisting in corrective action plan re: FY19-20 audit.

See # 9a.

c. Ten-year reval funding set aside

John Spang pointed out that every 5-years a statistical reval is done at a cost of about \$50,000 and that every 10-years a full blown reval is done at a cost of about \$113,000. He suggested that as the next budget is planned that the BOF start setting aside funds over the next 5 years so that when it's time for the 10-year complete reval the town has the funds available.

It was asked how much the town would be receiving from the federal government COVID relief

fund. Sandra Allyn-Gauthier stated \$685,000. She explained that there is a Regional Coordinator that will ensure that towns are spending the funds correctly. The funds will be appropriated in December of 2024 and must be spent by December 2026. Now there are no set plans for the funds that must be spent on broadband, water, sewer, or fire. One possibility is to spend funds on a firefighter for 3 years and open space uses. These funds cannot be used to offset taxes.

11. Public Comment - There was none.

12. Adjournment -

Andy Depta motioned to adjourn at 9:00 P.M. Stacey Becker seconded the motion. The motion was carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Lang

Recording Secretary