

**TOWN OF CROMWELL
BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2015
CROMWELL TOWN HALL 7:00 p.m. Room 224/225**

MINUTES

Present: Chairman Jack Henehan, Vice Chairman Julius Neto, Joe Corlis, Amanda Drew, Ed Wenners, and alternate Dan Delisle

Absent: Bob Milardo and alternate Dan Kelly

Also Present: Finance Director Marianne Sylvester, Acting Town Manager Anthony Salvatore, Mayor Enzo Faienza

A. CALL TO ORDER – Chairman Henehan called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

B. APPROVAL OF AGENDA – Amended agenda approved unanimously as posted.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

1. Regular Meeting, February 26, 2015: Revision to the Board of Education Liaison Report (Item J) was recommended by BOE Business Manager Karen Clancy (attached). Mr. Henehan stated that the recommended changes appear credible. Mr. Henehan also clarified the Chairman's Comments (Item K) to state that he was requesting input from the Board of Finance members regarding recommendations to the BOE on P.A.13-60.

A **motion** was made by Julius Neto and seconded by Joe Corlis to approve the minutes of February 26, 2015, as amended to clarify section J and the Chairman's Comments. Motion approved unanimously.

D. CITIZENS COMMENTS - none

E. REPORT OF THE TOWN MANAGER

Acting Town Manager Salvatore stated that Town Council's budget for 2015-16 would be presented at the Public Hearing on March 31st. Bids to improve County Line Road came in under the engineer's estimate and will be awarded after CIRMA reviews the contract for appropriate insurance language.

The 2014-15 budget is tight in the overtime lines for Public Works and also Police, however the bottom line of the budget looks ok. A discussion ensued regarding the impact of the winter on road repairs. Public Works crews are fixing roads now with cold patch. More permanent repairs need to wait for the ground to settle and mash plants to open. Some more extensive repairs may need to wait until the new fiscal year.

F. BUDGET REPORT

Marianne Sylvester stated revenue collections for 2014-15 are on target. Budgetary deficits in various public works departments will be reviewed and inter-department transfers will be processed as necessary, with approval by the Town Council and Board of Finance. Karen Clancy updated the Board of Finance on the BOE budget. Ms. Clancy stated that picture is slightly less bleak due to a slightly higher excess cost reimbursement from the State on special education expenditures.

G. REPORT OF THE TAX COLLECTOR – Mr. Sienna was unable to attend the meeting. Ms. Sylvester informed the Board that tax collections are on target and should meet 100% of budget by fiscal year end, however the February report did not include \$44,000 in tax refunds that need to be processed.

H. OLD BUSINESS -- none

I. NEW BUSINESS

1. A **motion** was made by Ed Wenners and seconded by Amanda Drew to appropriate \$35,000 within the Town Improvement Fund for playground improvements based on the risk assessment review done by CIRMA on January 21, 2015. Public Works Director Lou Spina presented the information. Mr. Spina informed the Board about the assessment of the playgrounds done by CIRMA, which found a few deficiencies at both Pierson and Watrous Parks. Depending on weather, Mr. Spina estimated work would be completed within 30-45 days. Motion was approved unanimously.
2. A **motion** was made by Julius Neto and seconded by Joe Corlis to appropriate \$22,000 within the CNR fund for a 2015 JAG grant, which is 100% reimbursable. Captain Denise LaMontagne informed the Board of Finance that these grant funds would be used to obtain a license plate reader and two body cams. Captain LaMontagne discussed the purpose and intended use of the equipment. Motion was approved unanimously.
3. A **motion** was made by Julius Neto and seconded by Amanda Drew to appropriate \$23,800 within the CNR fund for a 2015 Distracted Driver High Visibility Enforcement Grant, which is 75% reimbursable. Captain LaMontagne explained the grant was to strictly enforce the Distracted Driver law. Motion was approved unanimously.
4. Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Paula Talty, introduced Special Services Director Jerry Fine for a discussion on Special Education costs and services. Mr. Fine informed the Board that Cromwell has 228 students in Pre-K through Grade 12 receiving services. The Board of Education is required to offer these services to students from 3 years old to 21 years old. One of the biggest variables impacting the budget is the outplacements for services. The budget is based on what is known at the time the budget is developed. During the school year, students move into and out of the district causing deviations from the budget. Mr. Fine elaborated on the

reasons for outplacement of students. A discussion followed regarding how district responsibility is determined and special education evaluations and programs.

5. School Business Manager Karen Clancy addressed P.A.13-60 Consolidation of Non-Educational Services. Ms. Clancy handed out a spreadsheet outlining action on areas for potential consolidation between the Town and the BOE. (attached) Steve Rose, School Facilities Manager, spoke regarding the possibility of working with the Town Public Works Department through Mr. Spina for paving projects. Mr. Henehan recognized the high degree of collaboration already and the need to maintain this. Mr. Neto commented that the intention was not to create more work for the BOE or Town but to help the taxpayers.

No action necessary.

J. BOARD OF EDUCATION- LIASON REPORT

Mr. Corlis attended Board of Education meetings on March 10th and March 24th. Mr. Corlis stated that the BOE was discussing options to encourage retention in the Cromwell Public School system as opposed to other public and private schools. Dr. Talty provided additional clarification on this discussion.

- K. CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS – Mr. Henehan reminded the Board of Finance about the Public Hearing on Tuesday, March 31st.

- L. VICE CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS – Mr. Neto expressed appreciation on the presentation and information provided by the Board of Education at this meeting.

- M. GOOD AND WELFARE -- none

- N. ADJOURNMENT -- A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 8:41 pm by Julius Neto and seconded by Joe Corlis. All in Favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Sylvester
Acting Clerk

Board of Finance Meeting Minutes (February 26, 2015)

I. New Business

1. “Updates on Public Act 13-60.....within 10 days. Karen” stated that communication between the Board of Finance and the Board of Education has been positive. There is a lot of collaboration between the two groups.

Next page....”Karen also responded.....”

Marianne stated that technology is an area that was reviewed to see if there can be savings in this area.

“Dan Kelly requested.....” This is OK.

J. Board of Education – Liaison Report

This whole section should be replaced.

Joe Corlis reported that the Board of Education held three meetings since the last Board of Finance meeting. State agencies dictate where a DCF child is placed within the state causing potential budget deficits to school districts. He also reported that illegal alien children are placed in the bigger cities such as Bridgeport and New Haven within the state, not in towns.

On February 10th, the Superintendent of Schools proposed a budget increase of 4.46% over current year. The Board of Education requested the Superintendent to come back with a 4.00% increase to see what that would look like. On February 24th, the Superintendent provided a list of reductions that brought the budget to a 3.96% increase. The Board of Education discussed the reductions and ultimately approved a 4.21% increase (\$28,468,503).

It was noted that approximately 2% of the overall increase is related to special education costs.

Ed Wenners asked what the cost is for special education student outplacements. Mrs. Clancy responded that students are outplaced in facilities based on their needs at a cost ranging on average from \$40,000-\$150,000.

Ed Wenners also asked if people move to Cromwell as a result of the special education program. Mrs. Clancy stated that Cromwell has a strong school system which certainly attracts families but she cannot definitively state that families move to Cromwell specifically for the special education program.

Mrs. Clancy stated that they are always looking at ways to save money. She said that the special education director is currently looking at the possibility of developing an in-house program for 18-21 year old students with special needs. The school district is responsible for educating these students until they are age 21. Having an in-house program could save the district money. Mr. Wenners asked where

these students currently attend school. Mrs. Clancy stated that they attend Middlesex Transition Academy at a cost of approximately \$50,000 per student per year.

Mrs. Clancy also stated that the increase in special education costs is not unique to Cromwell. Other school districts are experiencing the same issues.

Julius Neto stated that there are group homes located in Cromwell. He asked if any of the students in these group homes attend Cromwell Public Schools. Mrs. Clancy stated that she does not have this information.

Dan Delisle asked what the dollar amount is that is associated with the 2% increase. Mrs. Clancy stated that it is approximately \$438,000.

Mr. Henehan asked Mrs. Clancy how the 2014-15 budget is running based on the special education issues. Mrs. Clancy stated that they are continuing to manage the budget covering the special education costs through the budget freeze and savings in hiring.