

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
FINANCIAL MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 3, 2024**

Present: Ryan Curley-First Selectman, John Dillon, Michael Hernandez, Robert Hetrick, Jr., Shaun Manning, Michael Pelton, Jim Tripp

Others Present: Tom Robinson (Finance Director), Supt. Charles Britton, Members of the Public and Media

1. FIRST SELECTMAN CALL MEETING TO ORDER

First Selectman Ryan Curley called the Financial Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Buck-Foreman Community Room located at 265 Main Street, Portland, Connecticut.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. ACCEPT AGENDA

Ryan made the following changes to the agenda: Under Item 5, Approve Minutes, delete "March 27, 2024." Under Item 6, add Jobs Pond Discussion. Add a new Item 13, "2024 Neighborhood Assistance Act (NAA) – Program Participation." Shaun made a motion to accept the amended agenda, seconded by John Dillon. Vote unanimous, motion carried.

4. ADOPTION OF FY 2024-2025 BUDGET

Discussion: Regarding the tennis courts, Shaun Manning said before the season started, they realized the courts couldn't be played on. Last week's discussion bounced around regarding the repair and replacement and what we needed to do for maintenance. Then on Friday, they found \$19,000 even when there was a deficit.

Michael Hernandez expressed disappointment that there wasn't a deliberation workshop on the 27th. He read a letter expressing his concerns about the budget. Ryan Curley reminded everyone that they voted not to have the deliberation meeting on the 27th. He told what the process is for budget adoption. Mike Hernandez asked that next year there be some additional time between the deliberation and the vote.

John Dillon read the resolution and made a motion to accept the proposed FY 2024-2025 budget, seconded by Jim Tripp. Michael Hernandez was opposed, the six others were in favor, no abstentions, motion carried.

**RESOLUTION
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Town of Portland, Connecticut
APRIL 3, 2024**

ADOPTION OF THE PROPOSED 2024-2025 FISCAL YEAR BUDGET

RESOLVED, that the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Portland hereby adopts the proposed Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Budget, in the amount of \$40,050,813 detailed as follows:

Town General Government.....	<u>\$15,307,292</u>
Board of Education.....	<u>\$24,743,521</u>

5. APPROVE MINUTES: (Regular) March 20, 2024; (BW) March 19, 2024; March 26, 2024

Shaun Manning made a motion to approve the Regular March 20, 2024 minutes, seconded by John Dillon, all were in favor, motion carried.

Jim Tripp made a motion to approve the Budget Workshop March 19, 2024 minutes, seconded by John Dillon, all were in favor, motion carried.

John Dillon made a motion to approve the March 26, 2024 Budget Workshop minutes, seconded by Shaun Manning, all were in favor, motion carried.

6. COMMUNICATIONS/CORRESPONDENCE

PRESENTATION OF FISCAL YEAR 2023 AUDIT RESULTS

A presentation was made by Michael VanDeventer, Partner at Mahoney Sabol, on the Fiscal Year 2023 Audit Results.

Ryan thanked Tom Robinson, Michael and Heather Siepmann for their work.

JOBS POND FLOODING

Ryan said the water level was quite high at Jobs Pond. It is a kettle hole and tied into the ancient riverbed. Ryan has been in touch with State agencies and together they are working on what options are available for correction. This happened back in 1984 as well. Ryan did research and included some minutes from 1984. Back then, the town worked with the State to pump it out and into the CT River. He's not sure if we could do it today. He has received an email from Josh Cingranelli, Emergency Management Area Coordinator, which was read into the record. Four homes are not habitable at this time. Eversource was out today monitoring the situation. The water level isn't as high as 1984 but it continues to rise. He will continue to keep the public aware of the situation. Jim Tripp asked if any

owners were displaced and stressed the importance of monitoring and getting assistance of emergency management if necessary.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Andrea Alfano, 3 Plumrose Court, spoke on behalf of the Democratic Town Committee and read a statement regarding vacancies on commissions and committees. There were times when vacancies were not known to all, including the chairs, so some candidates may not have been considered. The process needs to be refined. Also, the town website does not include all the members of the commissions, as well as vacancies, and this needs to be updated.

April Graves, 7 Freestone Avenue, told of the need for various repairs and expressed concern as to how financial decisions are made for supplies and repairs. She sees the need for a Finance Board to manage the budget especially with the upcoming major projects.

Ben Srb, West Cotton Hill Road, commented on Jobs Pond and offered to work with them on it. He thinks maintenance should be taken out of the BOE budget. Regarding Brainerd Place, the town is in a dangerous position. Back in 2022, they did an amendment that changed the commercial requirement. Now we are there again. From a zoning perspective, we have no more teeth. We must put it back to 2-phase to protect the town. BOS must work with the developer but do what is right for the community. Brainerd is clearly in default in performance. Breach of contract isn't included in the contract. That doesn't take the teeth out of it. If two phases are taken out of the document, the document doesn't function. BOS needs to really understand it in order to save the town. We need to get to a 2-phase project.

Mike Agogliati, 4 Victoria Road, said he is not in favor of the budget. There should have been another deliberation and discussion. He was shocked that it was done so fast. Everything is going up, including the water and sewer and taxes. Regarding the Brainerd Place tax abatement, he doesn't understand why we're giving any breaks for residential. It makes no sense. He agrees with April.

Dave Murphy, 40 Carousel Drive, expressed concern about some capital improvements that have been ignored and the need for an increase on the revenue side.

Jen Witschy, 21 Cote Lane, as a teacher and parent expressed disappointment in some disparaging statements that have been made about the BOE budget and the repeated deficit. It appears there is a lack of effort to understand it. She applauded the BOE. The BOS should understand how the BOE budget is built and some of their creative solutions. She told how the unplanned student outplacement can impact the budget beyond their control.

8. DISCUSSION ON BRAINERD PLACE TAX AGREEMENT

Ryan gave background of the project. The project is now well underway. He believes it is important to address some questions from a prior mtg. He, along with the town attorney, reviewed some of the questions raised as follows:

What is the benefit to amend this agreement? It is a tool that the town can use to incentivize business to attract business and economic development.

The property was vacant and falling apart for many years. The tax abatement continues to incentivize the restoration of the buildings. This new agreement included the restoration of the Hart Jarvis house that wasn't previously included. Based on the projection from the assessor, we are not incentivizing additional apartments over the 240 that were approved earlier. Ryan told of the benefits to the town and said that we don't want a half-finished project.

Regarding a question on affordable housing, no affordable housing is included in this project. The agreement was reviewed and there is no bias or negative inference to the town. It doesn't matter who drafted it. Regarding a phasing question, the current agreement mentions phasing in the site plan and is spelled out. The project was scheduled to be completed by 2027. Realistically add two years for the completion in 2029.

The commercial square footage is spelled out in Schedule A. Commercial is a hot button in the negotiations. Ryan read what a completed building means from the agreement.

Pete Willsie, Building Official, (via zoom) added what a completed building is. To get a CO (Certificate of Occupancy), you must have lighting, electricity, water. Items such as painting walls and carpeting is not considered a requirement to get a CO. Ryan highlighted the zoning regulations to be met. It is spelled out under 23B which the town attorney read in the meeting. He encouraged the public to pass good suggestions on to Ryan. Ryan added that there's too much misinformation floating around. Ryan read a letter from the town assessor.

Mike Hernandez asked if they have a right to appeal the assessment? The attorney will get the answer.

Ryan stressed the fact that the BOS has no control over what P&Z does. Robert Hetrick asked if Building B could have residential apartments. The attorney will add to the agreement that Building B will have no residential apartments.

9. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS.

Shaun Manning read the resolution and made a motion to accept it, seconded by John Dillon, all were in favor, none opposed, no abstentions, motion carried.

RESOLUTION
BOARD OF SELECTMENT
Town of Portland, Connecticut

April 3, 2024
APPOINTMENT OF THE AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

RESOLVED, that pursuant to Section 407 of the Portland Town Charter, the Board of Selectmen hereby appoints the firm of Mahoney Sabol of 180 Glastonbury Boulevard, Suite 400, Glastonbury, Connecticut 06033 to audit the books and records of the Town for the fiscal period July 1,2023 through June 30, 2024.

10. MONTHLY BUDGET REPORT

Tom Robinson presented the monthly budget report pointing out accounts that would be watched.

11. TAX SUSPENSE LIST: \$30,982.62 [Personal Property: \$9,062.41; MV \$21,920.21.55]

Ryan read the letter of Cindy Gotta, the Collector of Revenue, dated April 1, 2024, into the record. Shaun Manning made a motion to accept the Tax Suspense List, seconded by Michael Pelton, all were in favor, none opposed, no abstentions, motion carried.

12. PICKLEBALL LINE PAINTING -PHS TENNIS COURTS

Ryan has received a number of requests regarding pickle ball courts. Bob Shea said he could paint the lines but rather than doing that, he thinks he can use tape and it will cost only about \$100. Bob will work with the grounds crew to get it done. There has been some concern about noise during pickle ball games. Before we paint them, we will see how it goes and then they could be painted at a later date. The tape will be more cost-effective.

13. 2024 NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE ACT (NAA) - PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Jim Tripp read the resolution and made a motion to approve it, seconded by John Dillon, all were in favor, none opposed, no abstentions, motion carried.

RESOLUTION
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Town of Portland, Connecticut
APRIL 3, 2024

2024 NEIGHBORHOOD ASSISTANCE ACT (NAA) - PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

WHEREAS, the State of Connecticut Department of Revenue Services is providing the Town of Portland the opportunity to participate in the 2024 Neighborhood Assistance Act, thus allowing interested non-profit organizations within the municipality to submit applications; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the State of Connecticut Department of Revenue Services, the Board of Selectmen shall hold a public hearing on all programs and the governing body of the municipality must vote to approve these programs; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town of Portland Board of Selectmen does hereby designate the First Selectman, Ryan J. Curley, as liaison to handle all Neighborhood Assistance Act matters.

14. APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS - None

15. REFUNDS OF EXCESS PAYMENTS

Robert Hetrick made a motion, seconded by Michael Pelton, to reimburse Maloney, James P [\$576.98], all were in favor; none opposed; no abstentions, motion carried.

16. STATUS REPORTS

Ryan shared the following:

- Ribbon cutting for the new track will take place on April 23rd at 3:30 p.m.
- Brush pickup will start on April 22nd. It is done on the even years. The transfer station will accept brush for two weeks.
- He reminded all of the upcoming Pancake Breakfast sponsored by the Fire Department.
- He congratulated Savvy Swap on their 10th anniversary.
- EDC presented Gotta's Farm Market with the Business of the Quarter award.

Shaun Manning told of the Library's approval of the Room Policy and their participation in the Quarry Day celebration.

John Dillon read from the BOE minutes telling of their activities. He concluded by telling of a joint meeting of the BOE and BOS starting at 6:30 on April 17. He asked that the agenda for April 17 be kept lighter because of this meeting.

Robert Hetrick told of the P&Z upcoming public hearings, two of which will be on Brainerd Place.

17. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ben Srb again stressed the importance of having the proper ratio between residential and commercial at Brainerd Place to keep it a mixed-use development. We need the commercial space and the BOS is in the driver's seat. If residential, there will be no opportunity for a grocery store or maybe a hotel on the site. He asked the BOS to be very careful, this needs to be well balanced. Ben clarified that the Hart Jarvis House which was going to be moved will now remain on the site where it is. Ryan mentioned \$3 million in potential revenue. He would like to see Tom Robinson being commissioned to come up with an expenditure side of that. He spoke of the cost if the new apartments generate more children for the school district. He suggests calling the biggest landlord in town and ask his

experience with the number of children per bedroom. Most important with the third residential tower, we lose the ability to get commercial in there such as Trader Joe's or a motel. His concern is with more apartments, we will lose the ratio and it will not be mixed use. BOS is in the driver's seat and they need to get it right.

18. BOARD OF SELECTMEN GENERAL INFORMAL DISCUSSION

Robert Hetrick asked about the status of the MAC firetruck and turning the ownership over to the members. Ryan assured him he hadn't forgotten about it.

Jim Tripp clarified the \$15,000-\$19,000 per student from an earlier discussion. Adding students in the complex would not add costs at the rate of \$15,000 per student. It would be whatever the incremental cost is for that student whether it be books, equipment and whatever they need and then if you got a certain number of students and you hit a trigger on class size. He wants to make sure there's not confusion between the average number of costs per student which includes fixed assets that do not necessarily change with adding 5 or 10 or whatever the number is vs. the incremental cost of adding those students. It's a very different number if you use the number of students times the average fixed costs; it is a scary number. He wants to make sure there's no confusion about it. Ryan said more will be discussed about this in the April 17 joint meeting.

19. FOLLOW-UP ITEM

- Review Policy on Fixing Real Property Assessments
- Review Town Charter
- Ethics Ordinance

20. ADJOURN MEETING

Shaun Manning made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Michael Pelton, all were in favor; the meeting was adjourned at 9:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Hoy, Board Clerk