Board of Selectmen
On-Line Via Zoom and YouTube Live
January 11, 2021
Special Meeting Minutes
Tri-Board Meeting

In attendance:

Board of Selectmen Members: Robert Smith, First Selectman; Theresa Govert; Carleen Quinn

Board of Finance Members: William DiCristofaro, Chairman; Bruce Dutch, Secretary; Joseph Corbett; Todd Gelston; Tracey Gionta; Harvey Thomas

Board of Education Members: Marc Pisciotti, Chairman; Karin Blaschik, Secretary; Erik Anderson; Tracy Delventhal; Nicole Hendry; Bryan Perry; Patricia Stricker; Michael Werner; Laurel White

Also Present: Brian Reas, Superintendent of Schools; Cindy Varricchio, Finance Director; Leslie Zoll, BlumShapiro; Linda Zemienieski, Executive Assistant to the Board of Selectmen

1. Call to Order:

   Mr. DiCristofaro called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:00 pm. and welcomed those watching. Mr. DiCristofaro introduced the members of the Board of Finance.

   Mr. Smith called the Board of Selectmen meeting to order at 7:00 pm and recognized the members of the Board of Selectmen.
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   Mr. Pisciotti called the Board of Education meeting to order at 7:00 pm. and recognized the members of the Board of Education.

   The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and recording devices started.

2. Tri-Board Meeting, 2021-2022 Proposed Budget-Boards of Finance, Education and Selectmen

   A. Review and Discussion

      Mr. DiCristofaro noted that this is the first virtual Tri-Board meeting and that the goal of the meeting is to explain the process, address challenges and initiatives and invite feedback. Mr. DiCristofaro highlighted both achievements and goals of the prior year.

      Mr. Smith reviewed our current state of affairs. These included challenges associated with widespread tree devastation, tropical storms and bridge degradation. The East Haddam Free Public Library has finally been conveyed to the Town; he noted that grant opportunities are being utilized to the towns advantage.

      The Town is presently reviewing and evaluating a proposal for the former town office property. New cloud-based software, ClearGov, is being utilized for the budget process.

Transfer Station improvements are being made, with more to come, the age of the facility was noted. Proposed elimination of the road west of the green and expansion of the Town Green are projects being pursued via grant. Eversource is working well with the Town at this time. Mr. Smith anticipated COVID to continue to bring challenges for the Town into the foreseeable future.

Mr. Pisciotti noted the challenges COVID has had on education. He introduced Superintendent Reas to present. Mr. Reas noted the strategic plan is a template that the District follows. He noted that the strategies in the plan are a fantastic manual, a pandemic was not in it.

Mr. Reas outlined academic growth and participation increases. He focused on strides made for special needs students and construction improvements. Lastly, Superintendent Reas praised staff which courageously conquered digital learning.

Mr. Reas reviewed the following challenges for 2021-2022:

Health Insurance costs have held well for the past few years, he anticipated a large increase for this year. He also noted challenges with transportation, many COVID related. He stated that the Board is starting a new contract, which will involve an increase of $93,000 to the budget.

Superintendent Reas emphasized the need for Kindergarten students to enter school with certain benchmarks so that they may start learning. Accordingly, he will be making a proposal for pre-kindergarten at tomorrow night's board meeting. He also noted that he will request additional services and support for special education students.

Capital priorities remain the same as last year. They include the elementary school envelope project (exterior windows, doors and masonry); high school athletic complex (track, support structure, soccer field irrigation) air conditioning for the schools, air conditioning for school gymnasiums and irrigation of remaining fields.

Mr. DiCristofaro encouraged questions and comments to be forwarded in.

Mr. Smith noted that he was hopeful that the Grand List will demonstrate enough growth to offset some of the increases in costs anticipated. Ms. Govert noted that there are always challenges in a budget year, COVID adds a new level of difficulty. Mrs. Quinn echoed the sentiment.

Board of Education observations:

Patty Stricker thanked staff, administrators and parents for their collaborative effort. It has been a tough year. She noted that she is very proud of the meal service program the town was able to provide over the summer and the ability to keep COVID expenses in line.

B. Guests and Audience Comments

A question was received via email with regard to the high school athletics complex and the process and timeline for bringing to referendum. Mr. Reas stated that an RFQ for the track has been sent out. The financial piece is being worked on; he was uncertain about the time frame. Bill DiCristofaro stated that the timeline will be a function of when we receive information about what the costs will be as a result of the RFQ. Right now, we do not have a dollar amount. Once

that is done, we need to establish how we would address the financing. Financing can come from a variety of sources, increase taxes, bonding, grants, once that is set, we can go to referendum with a proposal for approval or rejection.

The second question received via email was noted to be more of a statement of concern than a question. He noted that the ad hoc committee will be making a recommendation regarding special education at tomorrow's Board of Education meeting. He further noted that there has been, and will continue to be, more professional development to help staff.

Mr. DiCristofaro noted that once the other Boards adjourn, the Board of Finance will resume its regular meeting.

3. Adjournment

Motion was made by Mr. Smith, seconded by Ms. Govert, to adjourn the Board of Selectmen meeting at 7:34 pm. Unanimous aye.

Motion was made by Mrs. Stricker, seconded by Ms. White, to adjourn the Board of Education meeting at 7:35 pm. Unanimous aye.

Respectfully submitted,
Theresa Govert, Secretary