

MIDDLEFIELD BOARD OF FINANCE
405 Main Street
Middlefield, Connecticut 06455

Minutes of the July 11, 2019 Regular Meeting

Jim Irish called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Attendance:

Members

Others

X	Irish, Jim	A	Bailey, Ed
X	Kowal, Melissa		
X	Lowry, David		
A	Malcolm, Alice		
X	Nick, Joel		
X	Wolak, Mary	X	Rusilowicz, Al

A=Absent

X=Present

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of the Agenda

Mary Wolak made a motion, seconded by Joel Nick, to approve the agenda, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Review and Approval of Minutes from 6/13/19 Meeting

Melissa Kowal made a motion, seconded by Joel Nick, to approve the minutes from 6/13/19, as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Review of Preliminary FY19 Full-Year Spending, Variance Analysis and Estimated Year-End Surplus/Deficit - Al Rusilowicz

Al Rusilowicz explained that the Town is now looking at just over \$500,000 in surplus for the year and should be about \$550,000 by the end of the year, with Town Clerk, Building and Land Use and Summer Camp money still not received. On the expense side, there will be about \$10,000 in additional expenses.

Mr. Rusilowicz explained that this is pure surplus, for the year only. Jim Irish noted that this bring the undesignated fund much higher than expected.

Al Rusilowicz reviewed that the major contributors to the surplus were tax collections (\$265,000 over budget) and the ECS grant (\$156,000 over budget). He also noted that the expected ECS this year is about \$101,000 more than what was budgeted. On the expense side, professional services was under budget by \$31,901, health insurance was under budget by about \$30,000, renters' rebate never came to fruition, Public Works was under budget by \$56,000, with some other items still encumbered. The State Trooper payroll was also under budget by almost \$50,000 and overtime was under budget by about \$35,000. Unused contingency is at \$55,000 at this point.

Mary Wolak felt that this would be a good time to move forward with the LED lighting project since there is such a surplus. Al Rusilowicz agreed and felt that the town will be looking to budget tax revenue a little more aggressively and a little more realistically. Jim Irish mentioned that Durham waits until the governor's budget is complete before setting the mill rate and the result of that is greater accuracy. Melissa Kowal stated that every town has to get the Grand List in to have the bills printed for July 1st. She felt that the Board is very fiscally responsible while still allowing the Tax Collector time to get her work done. Al Rusilowicz stated that he believed Killingworth also waited until the governor's budget passed before setting their mill rate. Jim Irish also noted that the ECS funding should be locked in for next year. Discussion continued about savings that were realized this year. Dave Lowry felt that what Durham and Killingworth do is a calculated gamble and Joel Nick agreed with what Al Rusilowicz suggested about the tax collection projections and felt that was a good starting point.

Dave Lowry asked about the proposed \$360,000 police budget and Melissa Kowal reviewed that the troopers are now at a lower rate of pay than the previous troopers. Al Rusilowicz explained that the town is given that number by the Department of Public Safety. Discussion continued about the State Trooper budget and what is included, as well as worker's compensation issues.

Jim Irish suggested that the Board look back at year-end variances over several years which may or may not justify reductions in individual line items. Al Rusilowicz noted that there are people who take the prior year's budget plus 5 percent, but Middlefield tries to be a little more scientific than that. It was also generally agreed that most departments don't feel it's necessary to spend their entire budget.

Jim Irish also announced that Peter Parker is retiring from the Public Works Department next Monday and a card is available in Judi Rand's office.

Al Rusilowicz reviewed that the salary line item in Public Works is also substantially under budget.

Mr. Rusilowicz felt that final numbers should be available for the August meeting and the Board thanked him for his efforts.

Old Business

- A. Discussion regarding acquisition of LED street lights and motion to recommend financing to BOS and subsequent town meeting

Jim Irish reviewed that a formal quote was received dated June 18, 2019 for 349 lights and the price includes installation, the cost of the hardware as well as the purchase of some hardware (poles) from Eversource. The

recycling of the light heads is included in the quote. Dave Lowry asked about the contingency that is included and Jim Irish explained that that is there for installation. The total will be \$243,203.30 and will be paid back within five years from energy savings. Mr. Irish felt that this funding is easily available out of the extended surplus.

Jim Irish made a motion, seconded by David Lowry, to endorse the LED lighting project as represented by the proposal from Tanko Streetlighting and to recommend funding the project with (not to exceed) \$243,205 to be transferred from the town's Undesignated Fund to the Capital and Nonrecurring Fund, item 9284: LED Street Light Assessment, upon approval by qualified voters at a town meeting to be scheduled by the Board of Selectmen. Motion carried unanimously.

Jim Irish noted that Ed Bailey had hoped to have the town meeting within the month of July and Al Rusilowicz thought that the project is planned to be completed by October.

Dave Lowry added that his wife will be nominated to serve on the Finance Committee of the Board of Education at the town meeting.

B. Other

Jim Irish explained that they also need to transfer money regarding the Health District that will have to go to the town meeting. Lee Vito had offered to help the town until the contract was in place with the Health District.

Mary Wolak made a motion, seconded by Melissa Kowal, to transfer \$24,152 from line item 01-30-7020 "Regional Health District" and \$4,48 from line item 01-72-9000 "Operational Contingency" for a total of \$28,700 to line item 01-30-7003 "Sanitarian." The transfer is necessary to cover the transitional costs related to joining the Plainville-Southington Regional Health District. Motion carried unanimously.

Al Rusilowicz explained that these transfers do not reflect the receipt of \$7,566 for the Plainville-Southington Regional Health District for sanitarian costs incurred January 1, 2019 through March 31, 2019 which is under Revenue. Jim Irish stated that this motion will also be forwarded to the Board of Selectmen to add to the town meeting charge.

New Business

Jim Irish stated that Bob Yamartino has once again mentioned the possibility of the town joining with the school district to revitalize the tennis courts at Memorial School. He also hoped that lines could be painted for pickleball. Mary Wolak thought that they had left that to Hannah Malcolm to explore and Dave Lowry stated that it had been lightly discussed at Park & Rec, but no serious numbers are available.

Mr. Irish stated that resurfacing a tennis court could go as high as \$8,000 each, with four of them at Memorial. Mary Wolak asked who owns the courts and it was felt that they belonged to the school district. Dave Lowry wondered if the town would even be allowed to put money into those courts if the district owns them. Mary Wolak stated that the district has not maintained these courts, but do maintain the courts in Durham because that's where the tennis team plays. She would not be opposed to doing a joint effort or maintaining them if the town owns them. The town does use the area for summer camp. Melissa Kowal wondered why the district is not maintaining the courts since the town pays them. She felt that the town should have some control over being sure the district maintains existing facilities. Mary Wolak felt that

this is another statement and rallying cry with the district's plan to close Lyman and not even maintaining this area. She stated that Middlefield feels like they are ignored as everything is in Durham and Melissa Kowal added that money is being spent over there.

Melissa Kowal felt that the cracks in the courts should have been repaired quickly and she wondered why it has been ignored. Mary Wolak felt it makes a statement about how the district views Middlefield's only building and facilities. Joel Nick agreed that it was an unused and unmaintained resource. Jim Irish felt that repair of the courts may have been challenged in the capital plan just as funding for facilities that are actually used were challenged. Discussion continued about what would happen if the town invested money there if the district owns the property.

Jim Irish noted that signs on the tennis courts state that residents of Middlefield and Durham are both welcome to use them. He felt that there would be no way to know where people would come from to play pickleball. It was also mentioned that the town could gain revenue from pickleball leagues and Melissa Kowal brought up having pickle ball courts at the park. Mr. Irish asked if the board wanted to continue to have Park & Rec sort out the tennis court issue or should the Board of Finance take it on. Mary Wolak felt that the Board could go to the district to ask if they are going to maintain them or if they want to give them up to the town. Mrs. Kowal would be willing to have the Board of Finance explore this issue with the Board of Education, but did feel that they should find out if the interest and support is even there. Mary Wolak agreed, but also felt it was an eyesore. Dave Lowry didn't understand why the district wouldn't want to do something with the courts and also mentioned that the grass isn't maintained as well at Memorial as it is in Durham.

Melissa Kowal felt that the outward appearance is that the Durham facilities are maintained better than Memorial and she would like to know what the district's plan is for the outdoor components of the Memorial facility. Mary Wolak mentioned that Bob Yamartino is interested in this and also serves on the Board of Education. Jim Irish stated that the school district is looking for feedback from the townspeople on a variety of issues through surveys and that maybe this could be included.

Melissa Kowal stated that she would like to see pickleball at the park and under the jurisdiction of Park & Rec because it could be closely monitored, but Mary Wolak wondered where it could fit. Ms. Kowal suggested maybe it could fit behind the pavilion. Jim Irish explained that it would be smaller than a tennis court, but not significantly smaller. He also mentioned that building a tennis court from scratch could be as much as \$50,000.

Jim Irish also stated that the fencing at the tennis courts is in very good shape and the nets aren't too bad, but he did not know if the lighting is working. Joel Nick summarized that it would be less expensive to use the existing footprint. Al Rusilowicz felt that, with tennis courts, 50 percent utilization would be a lot.

Mary Wolak felt that things would have to be worked out before the town could invest money into the facilities. Al Rusilowicz noted that Killingworth just built two tennis courts in their park which were partially funded by a grant from the US Tennis Association.

Joel Nick agreed that it is a wasted resource and Melissa Kowal wondered why it wasn't being used. Dave Lowry also mentioned the football field and that it could have been lined to be used for other sports as well. It was agreed that this was an asset utilization problem and that the Board of Education should be asked what their intentions are for the property. Jim Irish suggested that this issue be brought to the

Utilization Committee in September. Mary Wolak suggested that a survey still be sent out to the townspeople to see if there is interest for tennis and/or pickleball.

Mary Wolak asked Al Rusilowicz if the road survey will increase the Professional Services line item next year and Dave Lowry felt that that would be from a different line item. Jim Irish felt that there was no cost estimate as of now. Al Rusilowicz will ask Ed Bailey is numbers are available for the road survey.

Adjournment

Melissa Kowal made a motion, seconded by Mary Wolak, to adjourn the meeting. Motion was carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First