

Town of Andover
Board of Finance
Sunday, May 23rd, 2021 at 1:00 P.M.
Virtual via Zoom Platform

Special Meeting Budget Workshop Minutes

1. Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Marc Brinker called the Special Meeting to order at 1:00 P.M.

Members: Chair Marc Brinker, Vice Chair Diane Choquette, Louise Goodwin, Curt Dowling, David Hewett, Robert England, Linda Fish.

Town Administrator: Eric Anderson, Board Clerk/Admin Assistant: Amanda Gibson.

Andover Elementary School Superintendent: Valerie Bruneau.

Board of Selectmen: Jeff Maguire, Adrian Mandeville, Paula King, Scott Person.

Board of Education: Gerry Crème, Shannon Loudon, Celeste Willard.

Public Present: Kimberly Person, Mike Palazzi, Cathy Palazzi, Marcie Miner, Celeste Willard, Leigh Ann Hutchinson, Liz Lokiec, Kelly Haggerty.

Marc Brinker introduced the budget process and explained public speak procedures.

2. Public Speak

Gerry Crème thanked the Board of Finance and supported the Andover Elementary School (AES) budget.

Joanne Hebert: *See included.

Chris Bernard thanked the Board of Finance and supported the AES budget.

Celeste Willard thanked the Board of Finance and supported the AES budget.

Adrian Mandeville thanked the Board of Finance and expressed frustrations with AES budget.

Leigh Ann Hutchinson thanked the Board of Finance.

Shannon Loudon thanked the Board of Finance and supported the AES budget.

Marcie Miner expressed frustrations with the budget process.

Amanda Gibson announced that any Public Speak comments may be submitted to adminassistant@andoverct.org in a timely manner during or directly following the meeting.

Marc Brinker thanked everyone for their participation.

3. Budget Workshop

a. Discuss and act upon the Proposed FY 2021-22 Budget

Members discussed various items including but not limited to potential line items to cut, revenue relief funds, capital projects, Resident State Trooper, town's operational budget, etc.

Diane Choquette MOVED to reduce the Andover Elementary School budget by \$138k.

Curt Dowling SECONDED

Discussion: Members discussed various reasoning behind the budget cut.

Superintendent Valerie Bruneau shared information in support of the AES budget.

MOTION CARRIED 5:1:1

Curt Dowling, Diane Choquette, Linda Fish, David Hewett and Louise Goodwin voted in favor of. Rob England voted not in favor of. Marc Brinker abstained.

David Hewett MOVED to have 4 yes or no questions added to the Referendum ballot:

1. Is the Andover Elementary School budget too high?
2. Should the Resident State Trooper be cut to lower the town budget?
3. Should the town cut services to lower the budget?
4. Should capital be reduced to lower the town budget?

Curt Dowling SECONDED

Discussion: Members discussed the responses being helpful whether the Referendum does or does not pass.

MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0

Rob England MOVED to remove the Resident State Trooper line item of \$176k.

MOTION NOT SECONDED

Curt Dowling MOVED to reduce the capital Road Improvement Fund by \$25k.

Rob England SECONDED

Discussion: Members discussed the ramifications of the capital fund reduction.

MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0

Louise Goodwin MOVED to recommend the revised proposed town budget.

Diane Choquette SECONDED

MOTION CARRIED 6:0:1 Rob England abstained.

The estimated proposed mil rate is 36.41 with a 2.24% increase. The revised proposed town budget will be available on the town website and in the Town Clerk's Office following the meeting.

4. Public Speak

Gerry Crème thanked the Board of Finance.

Valerie Bruneau expressed disappointment in the town's refusal to utilize COVID relief funding and no discussion on the town's surplus funds.

Dianne Grenier thanked the Board of Finance.

Cathy Palazzi thanked the Board of Finance and spoke not in favor of cutting the Resident State Trooper position or the road improvement fund.

Chris Bernard thanked the Board of Finance.

Shannon Loudon expressed disappointment in the Board of Finance vote to reduce the AES budget.

Marcie Miner suggested receiving feedback from residents to receive their input.

Joanne Hebert: *See included.

Kelly Haggerty thanked the Board of Finance and concluded that the town has work to be done that was put off

Marc Brinker thanked everyone for their participation.

5. Adjournment

Curt Dowling MOVED to adjourn the Special Meeting.

Louise Goodwin SECONDED

MOTION CARRIED 7:0:0

Marc Brinker adjourned the Special Meeting at 3:22 P.M.

*Please visit our town website at www.andoverct.org for upcoming VIRTUAL meetings with instructions on how to join. The following boards/commission Zoom Video Recordings are posted to the NEW Town of Andover, CT YouTube Channel: Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, Board of Assessment Appeals, Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals. Like our www.facebook.com/townofandoverct page for community updates! Helpfully submitted by the Board Clerk/Administrative Assistant, Amanda Gibson. *Amanda Gibson*

Amanda Gibson

Please see the minutes of subsequent meetings for the approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.

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PUBLIC SPEAK

Public Speak #1:

I would like to make a couple of important points before this meeting starts, I will be brief, but also since we are taking time out to be present, I appreciate the opportunity to speak. My hope is that the current BOF members have arrived here today ready to do the hard work after the proposed budget failed at referendum. The BOF is elected based on the town residents putting their faith in them to make these hard, tough decisions. It is clear that the current 6.7% taxation increase is too much for the tax payers to take on due to the reduced revenue and less surplus funds used this year. This will be an ongoing situation, so it needs to be looked at now. I have advocated from the beginning, followed by tons of facts, that the AES budget should be reduced to a zero increase due to decreasing enrollment and cost comparison with multiple other surrounding Towns, as well as research I have done on Towns all over CT. Many attempts have been made by the BOF to the BOE for possible scenarios for cuts of varying amounts. To this date, nothing has been submitted. I have called this a strategy by them in order to not show their cards to the Town. I want to make it clear that the word strategy is not a bad word at all. I often use strategies in certain situations. So, now it is up to the BOF to make those cuts themselves. I attended the last BOE meeting, which referenced a \$138,000 surplus or funds that were left. I would like to see that money used to purchase some items from this proposed budget like they did with leftover money last year. It would be a big help. Overall, I would like to see a \$200,000 cut to this proposed Town budget, which would then leave the taxpayers with a 4.5% tax increase and not the current 6.7% increase. I think it can be done.

Lastly, to parents out there listening. Please don't equate money with a good education. You hold a very big key to your child's success when you partner with your school system. If you send well

behaved, respectful children to school ready to learn, their teacher will teach them without constant interruptions to the day to correct behavior issues in class. I raised three children in Town, who have

all went on to graduate with degrees from college and are doing quite well. They had classes of at least 20 students in them in elementary school. Again, we are not looking to cut millions from the budget,

just approximately \$200,000 in my opinion to lower the cost to taxpayers. There are many schools in CT that have much higher enrollment and their budget is much lower than AES. I also support

a good education for our students and I work in a school. Thank you and good luck!

Public Speak #2

I am very pleased with the job that the BOF did today in this meeting. I think these cuts were necessary. My target cut dollar amount was \$200,000, so we did not achieve that, but we made good progress.

I think everyone present at the meeting is invested in the outcome and only wants the best for our Town moving forward. It is never easy, but I think it is very important to keep emotion out of the equation and

truly look logically at this situation. I am at a point to be able to do that and hope everyone else can too. I also wanted to mention the relief grant that was talked about today. I think getting answers to how

that can be used should be at the top of the list so that hopefully some of the Town's culvert or other needs can be taken care of. If the Town can't use it or figure it out, perhaps the school has something

they can use it for and reduce their budget further. Thank you.

Joanne Hebert

Town Resident