



Town of Ridgefield

Unapproved Board of Finance Meeting Minutes Tri-Board Meeting with Board of Selectpersons and Board of Education

Tuesday November 19, 2024

Draft FINAL

I. Call to order

Dave Ulmer called the Tri-Board meeting to order at 6:30 PM on November 19, 2024 in the Town Hall Annex Conference Room. Board Members Dave Ulmer, Mike Rettger, Joe Shapiro, Greg Kabasakalian and Andrew Okrongly present.

Others Present:

Board of Selectpersons: Rudy Marconi, First Selectman; Sean Connelly, Barbara Manners, Chris Murray.

Town Officials: Kevin Redmond, Controller.

BOE Members: Tina Malhotra, BOE Chair; Sean McEvoy, Jonathan Paradiso, Christine More.

RPS Staff: Dr. Susie DaSilva, Superintendent; Jill Browne, Director of Finance; other RPS staff Karen Dewing, Cory Gillette. Joe Morits, Elizabeth Hanaway.

II. BOF FY26 Financial Overview

Mr. Ulmer reviewed the financial outlook for the upcoming 2025-26 fiscal year budget. He noted that the current year may provide a small surplus, but it will likely be substantially smaller than the last several years. He noted several areas of costs and revenues where significant changes are expected relative to the current fiscal year, including projected lower income from investments and real estate fees and projected higher BOE health insurance and combined debt service costs.

Mr. Okrongly and Mr. Rettger presented an overview model of the town budget outlook and resulting mill rate indication, assuming the same rates of budget increase as the current year and known or expected changes in several revenue and cost areas. They also demonstrated and discussed the sensitivity of the projected results to changes in assumptions for budget growth and investment income.

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III. Public Comments

Andrea Beebe, 378 Main Street, and member of the Commission on Aging thanked all board members for their hard work and support. She stated that senior citizen residents are concerned about future tax and mill rate increases that will result from the proposed new school building and the PD and FD building

IV. FY26 Budget Overview

Mr. Marconi reviewed the town's outlook for the FY2025-26 budget. Hiring is planned to be stable, with no new positions being added. The town is pleased with the new milling and resurfacing process that has been tested on several roads last year, and is planning to continue use in the future. The new process allows the town to extend the life of many roads and to increase the mileage of roads that can be redone with the existing roads budget. He also noted that there is a task force that is looking at changes to the senior property tax credit.

Mr. Marconi distributed information about the proposed Public Safety Building Project, and discussed the status of options for the Alternative High School and Transition Education programs, reporting that the latter will be a topic at the Board of Selectpersons' meeting the following evening. Recognizing concerns about the growth in the capital budget, the town will be extending its planning horizon from 5 to 10 years.

Ms. Malhotra provided an overview of key budget drivers for the school district. The BOE has approved the recently negotiated extension of the teachers' contract, which includes a 13.69% increase in teachers' salaries over the three-year term. Health insurance claims have increased, resulting in an expected increase in premiums next year, and the BOE is not expecting a premium refund this current fiscal year. Areas of concern are space for the alternative high school and 18-22 transition program, elementary school space, aging facilities, and long term planning.

Dr. Da Silva commented on the budget areas discussed by Ms. Malhotra as well as others, including limited pre-school space to handle anticipated enrollment growth, desired renovations to the RHS auditorium, aging building roofs and boilers, and generally aging facilities across the district. Ms. Browne noted that between the new teachers' contract and the expected changes with health insurance premiums, the district starts its budget planning process around a 3.4% budget increase expected, before any other cost or program changes are factored in.

The members of all three boards responded to questions and added their comments to the remarks that had been presented.

V. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 8:05 p.m. by Mr. Rettger, seconded by Mr. Okrongly. All in favor.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Mia Belanger

NOTE: This meeting was broadcast over the Town's live stream facility. A video copy of the full meeting can be accessed at the Meeting Videos page on the Town web site ridgefieldct.gov.