

**Board of Finance
Special Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 24, 2014
7:00pm Clifford B. Green Memorial Center**

Present: Gene Michael Deary, Jeffery Otto, Andrew Dionne, Kenneth Dykstra, and April Blymiller; Recording Secretary

Late Arrival: Sandra Brodeur (7:10pm) and Kim Conroy (7:15pm)

Also Present: Rick Ives, Joe Voccio, Robert Kelleher, Sherri Soucy, WINY, and Public

- 1) **Call to Order:** Gene Michael Deary called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.
- 2) **Public Comment:** None
- 3) **Approve Minutes:** Jeffrey Otto motion to a motion to approve the minutes of August 20, 2014. Andrew Dionne seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion passed 4-0.
- 4) **2013-2014 Budget Discussion:** The line item transfers are a means of balancing budget lines, accounting for items that were over spent and under spent. Discussed transfers. The insurance was incorrectly budgeted in the beginning the of year. The highway garage had payroll issue from prior years, last minute repairs, and asphalt bills which caused the over spending. The Board is also concerned about the increase in the budget for the fire marshal. Rick Ives stated that the fire marshal's contract is specific in how much he gets paid for going out on a call.
- 5) **Approve Year End Transfers:** Andrew Dionne made a motion to accept the year end transfers. Jeffrey Otto seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion passed 4-0.
- 6) **2014-2015 Budget Discussion:**
 - Rick Ives is concerned about amount spent on attorney fees.
 - CVSs around the country are appealing every assessment of every building they are in. The bill for CVS was reduced by 14% after extensive research into court proceedings and judgments. The Town settled on the 14% themselves, which saved a little on attorney fees.
- 7) **Discussion/Action on Putnam Tech Park:**

In a 2-1 vote, the Board of Selectmen voted to bring the question of whether or not Brooklyn should invest in the Putnam Tech Park to the townspeople to vote.

Jeffrey Otto asked about the modifications that have been made. Rick Ives answered that the Park declined to change the harmless agreement. A better understanding of how to pay; up front or a payment plan is to be determined at later time. One of the selectman want to have some kind of wording in the agreement that if the Town and the Park can not agree on a payment plan, that the contract would be voided. They are still waiting on specific wording that will be brought to the Town Meeting. There are no extra costs if the Town pays off the payment plan early. The maintenance fee only applies to taxable revenue and the sale of a property.

For the advisory board, Putnam has three votes and each town has two votes. The advisory board controls the approval process if the Park decides to have tax abetments.

Robert Kelleher stated if Brooklyn walked away in ten years, the Town would not have to pay the rest of the fees/money due and could sell its interest to other towns.

Rick Ives said that no more marketing has been done on the Putnam Tech Park's part nor does he feel like there will be any more done. He questioned if the lots can be sold and for how much. He also wonders what will be put on the property and how much revenue the business will create. Some realtors believe that this will work and it is a great thing, but other realtors are not quite as sure.

- The Board members voiced their thoughts and questions on the Tech Park:
 - Sandra Brodeur voiced a concern of the cost of doing business in Connecticut and that people leaving because it's too costly. Can business be brought in?
 - Kenneth Dykstra is struggling with investing tax money, but he thinks it's important to support the Park.
 - Andrew Dionne mentioned that some towns are waiting to join, but will still be able to reap the benefits if it works due to an increase of people and businesses.
 - Kim Conroy has no issues with investing tax money, but is uncomfortable with data and response times from the Park and that the marketing plan has not being updated since 2011.
 - Gene Michael Deary feels that it's the Board of Finance responsibly to bring the decision to the taxpayers. He feels like municipalities should not be in the investing business, but if the Town supports regional business, it could help with getting business back. There will be more success if more people invest. He questions if the Park can get enough people to sell the lots or will they outsource the selling part.
 - Jeffrey Otto felt that the topic should be brought to the people and the Selectmen need to make sure they give enough factual information so the public can make its decision. He was disappointed when Putnam went away from the 40 year USDA financing payment plan to a 20 year plan.
- Gene Michael Deary stated that the presentation is not a sales pitch, but information to help the public make their decision.
 - ◆ Some of the Board of Selectmen would like the topic to go to referendum, but Rick Ives feels that it does not and to stay with the Town Meeting format. The Board of Selectmen voted to go to Town Meeting. The vote could always be done with a paper ballot during the Town Meeting if someone makes a motion for a closed ballot vote.
- Jeffrey Otto made a motion that for purposes of allowing this question to go to a Town Meeting vote that the Board of Finance approves of the cost associated with the investment into Putnam Tech Park. Andrew Dionne seconded the motion. Discussion. Rick Ives stated that the call of the meeting has not yet been put together. It is going to give the First Selectman the right to negotiate the interest rate and other items. Vote passed 6-0.

8) **Liaison Reports:**

- Jeffrey Otto had nothing to report from the Board of Fire Commissions meeting.
 - He left at 7:40pm to go to the Board of Education meeting.
- Sandra Brodeur was not able to make the meeting.

- Kenneth Dykstra had nothing to report from the Housing Authority, but Joe Voccio mentioned the tax credits, Historic Tax Credit and the Small City Grant for the Housing Authority. If one person/business buys all the tax credits, they would own 99.9% of Tiffany Place. The Housing Authority should look into a land lease so that they would own the land under the buildings no matter who owns the tax credits. Discussion ensued.
 - Kenneth Dykstra will try to get the Housing Authority to come to a Board of Finance or Board of Selectmen meeting so that the Board knows their intentions towards the Tax Credits.
- Andrew Dionne had nothing to report because the committee has not met.
- Kim Conroy – Parks and Recreation Commission
 - The park maintenance crew is now fully staffed after a hire of one full time and one part time staff have been hired. The Teen Center should open around November 1st and the director has been hired. Advertisements went out this week for the Teen Center and they are going directly to the high schools and middle school. The Before and After School Program is completely full and there are fifty students on the waiting list. The Program would need more staff first in order to see about having another room for the program. Volunteers are needed for Spooky Nights (October 17th and 18th). Sunday the 19th is the rain date; if it rains that whole weekend, the weekend after (October 24th and 25th) is the rain date. They also need someone to build the pumpkin bonfire.
 - Kim Conroy brought up that the part time maintenance worker that was hired to work between April 1 and November 30 will qualify for unemployment benefits during the months that they are not working for the Town. Kim Conroy wanted to make sure the Board of Finance knew about the unemployment benefits.
- Gene Michael Deary was not able to make the last Board of Selectmen's meeting, but did read the minutes. He reported that the Board of Selectmen are getting ready to hire the Finance Director. He wanted to thank Kenny, Mae, Joe, Dr. Berry, and Rick for their help with the interview process.

9) Return to 2013-2014 Budget Discussion:

- Rick Ives stated that there is money coming back to the town from last year's budget.
 - \$21,889,672 was the actual amount of revenue that came into the Town. \$21,686,926 was the actual amount of expenses. \$474,313 is the total funds that were leftover from the 2013-2014 budget year. \$271,566 of the \$474,313 was taken from reserves to balance the budget and will be returned to the reserves. This means that there is \$202,746 more revenue than expenses.
 - This has happened two years in a row; because the reserve never got as low as they thought it was going to get. Also because some funds were restricted and then became unrestricted.

- Rick Ives asked the Board if they should we consider returning the money back to the taxpayers, keep it in the budget for any unexpected costs, and/or to offset the budget for next year?
 - Discussion ensued. One option would be to give a refund, but it would not change the mill rate. Sandra Brodeur and Gene Michael Deary feel like it is too early to make refunds to the townspeople because they are not sure what is going to happen for the rest of this budget year. There is going to be over 14% is in reserves. Gene Michael Deary feels like Board of Finance should keep the money until end of the fiscal year. The Board of Selectmen feel like there might be a robust Capital bill coming up. There are too many unknowns for what is going to happen for the Board to really agree of what to do with the money.

10) Public Comment:

- Marion Kervin requested that for the next budget, the Board of Finance look at the budget to make sure the numbers are correct and accurate and have more workshops, in regard to the extra money from the 2013-2014 budget. Gene Michael Deary responded to Marion Kervin and said that it was not oversights that cause the extra money or a lack of workshops; the Board could explain each over fee and under spending.
 - Marion Kervin still felt that the Board should look at the budget more closely so that this excess would not be so much. Sandra Brodeur compared the Town's budget to a home budget; you set a budget using the prices that you have available at the time and how you can not predict how cold the winter will be and how much oil you would use to heat your home during winter. Marion Kervin does not want a tax refund, rather that the Town use it to help the mill rate for next year or for other projects. Her main concern and opinion of the budgets is that the Board needs to be a little more careful.
 - She is against the Putnam Tech Park. She does not understand how it can go to a Town vote when documents are not in order. She also questioned how many houses are in foreclosure and the number of businesses that have left the Town. Gene Michael Deary responded that they are bringing it to a vote so that the public can make their own discussion. She was also concerned about not having a referendum, but wanted to make sure that there would at least be a ballet vote. Rick Ives said that he will make a motion during the Town Meeting to have a ballet vote and the public in attendance will vote on it to decide if that is the way they want to vote. The Town Attorney will be at the meeting.
- Theresa Lazure questioned why, if the language is still not clear for the Putnam Tech Park, how can it go to vote? Gene Michael Deary answered that he wants to give the public the option to vote on it, whether the language is clear or not. Theresa felt that the vote should still go to referendum, since not enough people go to Town Meetings. Also she felt that the money should go to Brooklyn, rather than the Putnam Tech Park.

11) Adjourn Meeting: Andrew Dionne made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:25pm.