FIFTEEN ROPE FERRY ROAD
WATERFORD, CT 06385-2886

Town of Waterford

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Board of Finance
Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 15, 2025
Town Hall Auditorium 7:00 p.m.

Present: Glenn Patterson, Robert Tuneski, Joseph Filippetti, Bill Sheehan, Ron Fedor, Josh Kelly, Michael Rocchetti

Elected: Rob Brule, First Selectman; Abbas Danesh, Treasurer

Staff: Kimberly Allen, Director of Finance; Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works; Marc Balestracci, Chief of Police; Jill Stevens, Director of Utilities; Jonathan Mullen, Director of Planning; Tom Dembek, RTM; Nick Kepple, Suisman Shapiro, Town Attorney; Rebecca Hall, Administrative Assistant Finance Office/BOF Recording Secretary

1. **Establishment of a quorum and call to order**
   A quorum was established and the Regular Meeting of the Board of Finance was called to order at 7:00 p.m. January 15, 2025.

2. **Public Comment:** Letter Submitted and read to the Board of Finance regarding the Fire Services in Waterford by Bryan Sayles, 54 Wintergreen Drive, Quaker Hill, CT

3. **Approval and acceptance of minutes:**
   Regular Meeting on December 11, 2024

   Motion by Bill Sheehan and **seconded** by Josh Kelly to approve the minutes of the December 11, 2024 Regular Meeting as presented.

   Vote: 6-0-1 (Abstain: Rocchetti) **Motion: Passed**

4. Election of Board of Finance member to Ad Hoc Energy Task Force replacing David Peabody for a Life Term.

   Motion by Bill Sheehan and **Seconded** by Joseph Filippetti to nominate Josh Kelly.

   Vote: 7-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

5. To consider and act on a request for a FY25 additional appropriation from the Chief of Police, Marc Balestracci, in the amount of **$62,757** for an employee payout, to **line #10129-51420 (Patrol)** and forward to the RTM if required.

Motion by Bill Sheehan and **seconded** by Ron Fedor to transfer **$62,757** from **Contingency** to **Patrol line #10129-51420.**

Vote: 7-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

6. To consider and act on a request for a FY25 appropriation from the Board of Education Director of Finance, Joseph Mancini, in the amount of **$243,335** for the second installment of the on bill financing for all five schools, **from Capital and Non-recurring designated line #20560-57891 (Energy Efficiency Program)** and forward to the RTM if required.

Motion by Bill Sheehan and **seconded** by Michael Rocchetti to appropriate **$243,335 from the Capital and Non-recurring designated line #20560-57891 (Energy Efficiency Program)** to accomplish the next phase of the program for all five schools, and forward to the RTM as required.

Vote: 7-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

7. To consider and act on a request for a FY25 additional appropriation from the Director of Public Works, Gary Schneider, in the amount of **$6,583** for the repointing of the chimney at the Jordan Park House **from line #31124-55913 (Jordan Park House Repairs)** and forward to the RTM if required.

Motion by Bill Sheehan and **seconded** by Joseph Filippetti to transfer **$6,583** from **Contingency** for the repointing of the chimney at the Jordan Park House **to line #31124-55913 (Jordan Park House Repairs).**

Ron Fedor asked Director Schneider why there was a 10% contingency needed for the chimney repair. Director Schneider responded stating the department wanted to be sure there was enough money to cover the potential cost of any additional brick needed for the project once started.

Vote: 7-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

8. To consider and act on a request for a FY25 appropriation from the Director of Utilities, Jill Stevens, in the amount of **$19,800** for an engineering study **from Capital and Non-recurring designated line #20531-57890 (Wiemes and Marilyn Ejector Replacements)** and forward to the RTM if required.

Motion by Ron Fedor and **seconded** by Bill Sheehan to appropriate **$19,800 from the Capital and Non-recurring designated line #20531-57890 (Wiemes and Marilyn Ejector Replacements)** for an engineering study, and forward to the RTM as required.

Vote: 7-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

9. To consider and act on a request for a FY25 appropriation from the Director of Planning, Jonathan Mullen, in the amount of **$12,500** for the stabilization of Alewife Cove Study **from Capital and Non-recurring designated line #20541-57328 (Alewife Cove)** and forward to the RTM if required.

Motion by Bill Sheehan and **seconded** by Josh Kelly to appropriate **$12,500 from the Capital and Non-recurring designated line #20541-57328 (Alewife Cove)** for the stabilization of Alewife Cove Study, and forward to the RTM as required.

Discussion opened by Glenn Patterson regarding Correspondence Item #13a. Nevins Cottage Project Update Report. The Chairman requested an update from Director Mullen regarding the Cottage project. Director Mullen stated that the windows on the cottage have been removed and are being refurbished. The colors of the window casings and building are being selected. The house will soon be "lifted" to pour concrete for the base structure. This must be done when the temperature is above freezing for proper setting of the concrete.
Ron Fedor asked why there was a 10% tax on the Labor portion. Director Mullen and Director of Finance, Kimberly Allen, responded clarifying that the 10% tax is on Labor which includes benefits. Mr. Fedor asked if the Friends of Nevins Cottage is fully insured in the event of a major catastrophe at the site (i.e. the building being damaged during the lift) to which Director Mullen replied yes.

Vote: 7-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

10. **Old Business:** None

11. **New Business:**

a. Director of Finance Report on proposed resolution

Director Allen opened the discussion by informing the BOF that several RTM members have approached her in the past three (3) years regarding the current approval process used by the Town of Waterford regarding funding and timely start for Capital Projects. She proposed to the BOF a pilot program where funding for capital projects is appropriated when the RTM approves the project (subsequent to BOF approval) the first time the project comes through the town Boards. She noted that the department heads will be required to have all information regarding their Capital Projects up front to present to the boards or risk denial of funding. Legal will be submitting a proposal to start the pilot program during the FY26 budget season.
Bill Sheehan spoke to indicate his opposition to this proposal. He stated that the current CNR process allows Department heads to give their best guess of a project's cost and add the project to the Capital and Non-Recurring Expenditure Fund (CNR). When fully prepared, they come back to the Boards for appropriation of their money.
Josh Kelly stated that he agrees with Director Allen's proposal and would like to see this happen in the Town of Waterford as he has seen that approval process work in other towns. He added that he likes the idea of the CIP and the CNR being combined. He believes the Town of Waterford is capable of managing this and that Rob Brule is doing a good job in keeping communication lines open between the departments and the Boards.

Ron Fedor stated he would not like to change the current approval process for Capital Projects. He doesn't think that Department heads will be able to gather the information needed to be properly funded. He is happy with how the process works now.
Glenn Patterson stated he would like to see the proposal in writing to further understand the newly suggested process and then vote on it in the future. Director Allen said that only the RTM would have the vote in whether or not to adopt the new process according to the Town's Attorney.
Mr. Sheehan added that changing the CNR project approval process would require changing an ordinance. Director Allen responded that she would follow up with the board but she understands that it would be a policy change and not require any modifications to the ordinance.
The Town's Attorney, Nick Kepple, recommended to the Board to query the department heads and get their feedback on the pilot program as this could be valuable information. He indicated that concerns have been expressed by department heads and he will confer with his associate, Rob Avena, and get back to the Board for further discussion.
Chairman Patterson added that he did not think that department heads would be prepared to initiate this pilot program in FY26 and thinks it best to wait until FY27 to roll it out.

b. To consider and act on a request for a FY25 additional appropriation from the **Oswegatchie Building Committee to line item# 20523-57792** to fund a revised architectural fee schedule for services from Silver Petrucelli & Associates, Inc. for the Oswegatchie Fire Station.

Motion by Bill Sheehan and **seconded** by Ron Fedor to transfer **$286,000** from the **Undesignated Fund Balance of the Capital Nonrecurring Expenditure Fund (line item #205-31520)** to the **line #20523-57792 Oswegatchie Building** and appropriating the funds for architectural and design services from Silver Petrucelli & Associated, Inc. for the Oswegatchie Fire Station, and forward to the RTM as required.

Robert Tuneski opened discussion of this request by explaining the backup documents provided to the Board. Mr. Tuneski explained that the committee would like to move payment to the architect earlier to keep the schedule of design coincident with the Town committee/board meeting schedules (i.e. Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, RTM) as to avoid any delays in completing the project design and receiving construction cost estimates. The committee asked the architect to modify a 2-Phase contract to a 3-Phase contract to fit the Town's funding approval schedule. The project fee remains the same. Mr. Kepple added that the contract change was approved by the Board of Selectmen.
Ron Fedor commended Robert Tuneski for looking ahead and planning as best as possible.
Josh Kelly spoke up to indicate his abstention from this vote as he does not feel he has done his due diligence in researching the project and would not like to hinder the schedule by his vote. He will be gathering more information and visiting the site before upcoming meetings to best form his opinions on the project.

Vote: 6-0-1 (Abstain: Kelly) **Motion: Passed**

12. Liaison Reports: None

13. Correspondence: No discussion

14. Adjournment

Motion by Bill Sheehan and **seconded** by Robert Tuneski to adjourn the Regular Meeting of the Board of Finance at 7:58pm.

Vote: 7-0-0 **Motion: Passed**

Respectfully submitted,

John (Bill) W. Sheehan,
Clerk of the Board of Finance

Rebecca L. Hall,
Recording Secretary

January 15, 2025

Board of Finance
15 Rope Ferry Road
Waterford, CT 06385

Dear Board of Finance,

Today, I ask you all to be vigilant against funding requests associated with a replacement of the Oswegatchie Fire House. If you were solely dependent upon the information coming out of two committees you would not be properly informed to make favorable decisions for any funding requests.

Four, if not all firehouses are perilously understaffed by professional firefighters. Given an official Facebook page depicting beautiful equipment parked in front of the Quaker Hill firehouse, you'd never know it is currently understaffed or altogether void of professional, on-site firefighters. It sits empty a majority of the time.

Since 2024, the Waterford Ambulance Service (WAS) moved out of each firehouse and into the old Carlin Construction building on route 1. You would never know it given the WAS website which gives the illusion that they still have a presence inside Waterford firehouses.

Failure of the **Long-Range Financial Planning Committee** these last three years. Minutes from the 2022 meeting were finally voted on last night yet, the town website is populated with bogus Agendas for meetings that never took place. There still is no mission statement for the group.

The Fire Services Review Special Committee was created by the RTM at a June 7, 2021, Meeting with the following charge: **Review issues including performance, policies, and staffing and present their findings/recommendations of any changes needed to enhance public safety, creating a steering document and strategic plan.** It failed to produce a report on findings or recommendations to enhance public safety. Residents are still largely left in the dark as to the seriousness of the staffing problems

The obvious neglect of the existing Oswegatchie Firehouse though, it remains in serviceable condition and should simply be fixed.

It is safe to assume that existing full-time firefighters are placed in unsafe conditions due to understaffing.

We remain out of compliance with standards set by OSHA and the National Fire protection association. Not even close.

In summary, through the failure of two (2) Committees and complete lack of follow up, it is not appropriate nor a priority to spend a minimum of eight million dollars ($8,000,000) building a new Oswegatchie Firehouse, while failing to providing sufficient staffing throughout all five (5) Waterford Firehouses. To do so would be irresponsible and extremely dangerous.

Sincerely,

Bryan Sayles
54 Wintergreen Drive
Quaker Hill, CT 06375