

**CHAPLIN BOARD OF FINANCE**  
**Chaplin Town Hall**  
**Chaplin, Connecticut**  
**Special Meeting Minutes**  
**July 29, 2024**

**Chair Dick Weingart called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM. Present were Board members Link Diwan, Linda Caron, Jeremiah Rufini, Victor Boomer; Alternate Peter Haines. Others present were First Selectman Juan Roman, Finance Manager Val Garrison, and numerous members of the audience. Absent were Board members Bill Jenkins; Alternate Matt Foster and Alternate Izzy Alvarez.**

**3. SEATING OF ALTERNATES:** Alternate Peter Haines seated for Bill Jenkins.

**4. FIRST AUDIENCE FOR CITIZENS:**

- Senior Center Director Lisa Kegler presented details about the Senior Center that plays a huge role in the well-being of seniors with 407 members - about 100 active members (served 460 meals in July - few delivered to shut-ins). Activities include: Fit & Fun Exercise, Pickleball, Yoga, Memoir Group, Mahjong, Bingo, Mexican Train, Line Dancing, haircuts, massage therapy, many special activities, informational seminars, musical entertainment, field trips (ball game, boat ride to Indian Ranch) - paid for by Special Revenue (funds raised through fundraising, dues, donations). Lisa and her husband volunteer a lot of their own time with Saturday morning Walking Group, Chili Challenge, Plant Sale, Plant & Grinder Sale and a group of great volunteers who help with fundraising spent on building maintenance (painting, new electrical outlets), landscaping, shampooing carpets. (Important to preserve services of the Senior Center, Library and Rec Commission).
- Ryan Perry asked the Board to reconsider sending the same budget back to the town without any reductions – majority voted the budget down and want more cuts (small number of voters may not represent town’s opinion – goal for this meeting is to find where to cut for further savings).
- Ann Lewis spoke about the many great programs and services in the town with great staff, expressed concerns about loss of staff or services with any more cuts (might decrease quality of the town), and portion of the budget spent on education (town and elementary school budget combined less than previous year).
- Eric asked if dollar amount in the tax bill would be correct with the reval and proposed budget (tax bill is correct with the reval and budget defeated at referendum) and has difficulty understanding why his tax bill went up 25% or more.
- Randy Godaire expressed concerns about the huge increase to his tax bill with nothing done to his house in years, loss of the trooper – paying substantially more in taxes with less services, and suggested looking very carefully at the budget (tax increase not just from reval – also from bigger share of Parish Hill assessment and commercial shift in real estate).
- Ann Lewis asked how much the budget has decreased from last year to this year (will look at later on the agenda, bulk of personal property from Eversource and Algonquin).

**5. GUESTS:** None

**6. ADDITIONS OR CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:** None

**7. REPORTS**

- a. Board Member Reports:** No Report
- b. Staff Reports:** No Report

**8. APPROVAL OF MINUTES - Special meeting(s): July 22, 2024:**

***Motion to approve July 22, 2024 special meeting minutes, made by Link Diwan, seconded by Victor Boomer and carried with one abstention by Jeremiah Rufini.***

**9. CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**10. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS:**

**a. Develop reduced budget scenario and calculate the impact on median tax bill:**

***Motion to rescind motion approved last week to send the same budget back to the town, made by Jeremiah Rufini, seconded by Dick Weingart.***

Dick Weingart identified about \$60,000 that could be reduced from the budget with no loss of services. Link Diwan would like to evaluate some reduced scenarios before returning to the motion to rescind.

***Motion to table the above motion to rescind budget currently submitted until review of different scenarios, made by Link Diwan, seconded by Linda Caron and carried with the following vote:***

***YES: Link Diwan, Peter Haines, Victor Boomer, Linda Caron.***

***NO: Jeremiah Rufini.***

- Reviewed Grand List comparison charts (real estate - 61% for 2022, 71% for 2023 after the reval putting a larger burden on taxes – tax bills would increase a minimum of 15% with the same budget).
- Reviewed the budget compared to the previous year – town (\$138,000 less), CES (\$108,000 higher), Parish Hill (about \$284,000 higher).
- Dick Weingart presented proposed reductions: General Government (Town Insurance - \$7,600), Employee Benefits (Annuity - \$10,000, Health Insurance - \$16,000), Public Works (Bus Fuel - \$20,000, Equipment Fuel - \$5,500), Sanitation (BOF reduction - \$2,000), Tax Collector (Fees - \$5,000), Transfer Station (BOF reduction - \$3,000), Contingency (\$2,500) for a total of \$71,000 (would reduce mill rate from 29.95 to 29.65 – still be paying way more in taxes).

Discussed new proposed reductions: Linda asked about bus fuel (buses will buy their fuel elsewhere), people not happy with tax increase – will not change if budget sent back without reductions, consider cutting \$7,000 for books in Library budget with \$10,000 donation in Special Revenue for books (Victor noted to be spent on children's books only, Val noted last donation can be used for any books), look at reducing CES budget (need to watch out for MBR), allow agencies including the school to come in for input before making cuts, decide on reductions with input and take revised budget to the public in September, resubmit budget with new cuts, look at other scenarios for comparison, Juan expressed concerns about a lot of the reductions being from Town Hall and Public Works (should talk to everyone as a whole – doesn't want to lose staff that makes the town run), look at Special Revenue accounts.

Link Diwan presented different scenarios with impact on taxes for the median homeowner:

- Initial Agency requests with a 31.50 mill rate - 31.17% tax increase.
- Recently defeated budget with 29.95 mill rate - 20.78% tax increase (\$68 decrease).
- New proposed reductions (\$71,000) with 29.65 mill rate - 19.27% tax increase (\$72 decrease).
- Consider reducing IT Coordinator to 4 days a week for CES (\$16,000) with 29.54 mill rate - 19.23% tax increase (\$76 decrease).
- Drastic cuts such as road maintenance or reducing number of days open for the Library/Senior Center would have minimal impact to taxes.

Discussed scenarios: identify target amount to cut with the impact, get feedback before making drastic cuts, need to send back a budget that will pass – look at CES reduction scenarios (\$107,000 reduction with 29.50 mill rate - 19.06% tax increase (\$81 in total tax savings) – flat CES budget plus \$71,000 in reductions with 29.3 mill rate - 18.26% tax increase and tax savings of \$118), consider tax increase

scenario with least impact to taxes, bring this level of discussion to a town meeting to show people the different scenarios, get input before making any cuts (First Selectman, Town agencies, school), Dick asked the audience if they could tell their friends and neighbors about tax saving scenarios presented this evening and to vote on the budget - Scott Paggioli commented on his friends and neighbors concerns about tax bills going up so much and suggested asking people amount of increase they would be willing to accept.

Link called the tabled motion back to the table.

***Motion to rescind motion approved last week to send the same budget back to the town, made by Jeremiah Rufini, seconded by Dick Weingart and carried with the following vote:***

***YES: Jeremiah Rufini, Link Diwan, Peter Haines, Victor Boomer. NO: Linda Caron.***

- Linda Caron asked about savings with recycling (educate the public on clean recycling for cost savings).
- Dick Weingart asked about IT contract (not signing without an approved budget).
- Link Diwan suggested reaching out to people for maximum outreach on where to save money.
- Peter Haines suggested for the next meeting to look at input for \$71,000 in reductions and come up with a budget the Board can support.
- Jeremiah Rufini suggested doing research on Special Revenue accounts to see if they can be used to offset expenses.

Tabled the remainder of the budget.

**b. Develop simplified explanation of budget reductions already taken and the potential impact on town services of further budget reductions**

**c. Consider and act on Board of Education/CES budget**

**d. Consider and act on Town Government budget**

**e. Consider and act on combined Town Government, Board of Education, RSD11 budget for FY 2024-25**

**f. Develop notice to all town agencies to minimize spending until budget is approved. FY 2023-24 budget is continued until FY 2024-25 budget is approved**

**g. Review of BOF budget calendar & schedule**

**h. Other budget issues for consideration**

**i. Consider and act on funds transfers and budget line-item additions/adjustments as requested**

## **11. SECOND AUDIENCE FOR CITIZENS**

The Board will reconvene the Budget Workshop on August 5<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.

## **12. AGENDA SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT REGULAR/SPECIAL MEETING:**

- a. Regular meeting(s): Standard meeting agenda and pertinent tasks from Annual Activity/Project Calendar

## **13. TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT REGULAR/SPECIAL MEETINGS:**

- a. Monday, August 12, 2024: Regular Meeting @7pm (Town Hall)
- b. August 2024 (TBD): Town Meeting and Budget Referendum
- c. Monday, Sept. 9, 2024: Regular Meeting @7pm (Town Hall)

## **14. ADJOURN:**

***Motion to adjourn (8:43 PM) made by Link Diwan, seconded by Peter Haines and carried unanimously.***

***Respectfully submitted by Kathleen Scott  
Recording Clerk***