Minutes
Town Council Finance Committee Meeting
February 11, 2019
Town Hall Conference Room B

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.
   Present: Carolyn Arabolos, Lisa Conant (arrived 7:06 PM), Joan Lewis (seated until arrival of Lisa Conant)
   Also present: John Elsesser, Town Manager; Amanda Backhaus, Finance Director

2. Acceptance of Minutes:
   Joan Lewis moved to accept the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting on January 14, 2019,
   seconded by Carolyn Arabolos. The following correction was requested: Page 6, third bullet,
   third line: change “adequate” to “inadequate.” The motion to accept the minutes as corrected
   carried on unanimous vote.

3. Reports:
   A. Committee Chair – Carolyn Arabolos:
      a. A Coventry resident has a dog competing in the Westminster dog show today and
         tomorrow. Carolyn wanted to mention it because it is town related and will happen
         before the next Council meeting. The dog is Mazsi and the owner is Erica Kiss.
      b. Carolyn shared an article from the Journal Inquirer about Coventry students learning
         about the impact of texting and driving (attached to minutes).

   B. Members:
   John Elsesser shared information from the CT School Finance project that allows people to
   develop their own charts regarding school spending. The information is available on the State
   Board of Education website also. He ran a comparison to surrounding towns of per student
   spending (attached to minutes). Tolland has plummeted over the last couple of years. However,
   the chart doesn’t include debt service. Coventry was very cost effective with our building
   projects so our debt service didn’t get too far out of line. John will send a link to the Finance
   Committee.

   Lisa Conant arrived at 7:06 PM.

   C. Finance Director Report – Amanda Backhaus:
      • Tax collection is at 97.62%, which is up over a full percent from last year. We are pleased.
      • General fund revenue is at 86.4%, which is also up. We received the second ECS payment on
        time at the end of January.
      • Expenditures and encumbrances are at 67.7%. This is up a bit from last year but not
        significant. Last year encumbrances were slower. The Board of Education is at 53%
        compared to 50% from the prior year. There is nothing significant to note.
      • A couple of line items are over expended. Amanda has communicated with departments to
        cover these and some transfers may be needed. Repairs to Mill Brook Place and the Visitors
        Center were unanticipated but we have funds in contingency. John Elsesser said theoretically
        we can just spend out of contingency but that makes it more difficult to track. We would
        prefer to do it as a transfer so you can see it.
      • COVRRRA is at 85% of collections which is down from last year. Budgets last year were out
        of proportion and we feel comfortable with where we are.
• The Tax Collector will begin to focus on a date for the tax sale. They did supplemental and real estate collections, and 127 real estate bills were sent as a courtesy to new homeowners. This is a new initiative and we think it will be useful. Fifteen personal property tax warrants were turned over.

• Recreation is doing well. They are where we expect them to be. They are trying to reinvest funds into some repairs.

• The Assessor signed the grand list on 1/31/19. It is up 1.24%. Letters were mailed for elderly assistance. There have been no Board of Assessment appeals but people have until the 20th. They are getting ready to do the data mailers for revaluation.

• The Finance office received requests for proposals for insurance brokers. The current vendor is much lower but we would like to see their service improve. We are working on budget and an RFP for banking services is pending.

D. Review/Discussion: Financial Reports:
Joan Lewis asked about the professional affiliations line item on the monthly report. She is concerned about the value we are getting with CCM - who seems to be favoring cities, and membership in the Tolland Chamber of Commerce vs. the Windham Chamber. She feels that the Windham Chamber is better. John Elsesser replied that he doesn’t feel we can quit CCM - we get a lot of value from their organizational efforts and they haven’t raised their dues in 8 years. We could have a person come out from CCM to meet with the Council for a discussion. Carolyn said she went to a CCM training on Sustainability and did a tour of the Tannery in Glastonbury. It was magnificent. The transformation was incredible and they achieved 90% occupancy in 10 months. It was a worthwhile training session. John said we also have the prescription drug discount program through CCM as well as our electricity purchasing, and all of the research we can tap into. Carolyn said they offer a number of training sessions for free. John said we can discuss this more at budget time. He will get pricing on the Windham Chamber.

Joan Lewis asked about the South Street fire station and why the bill is higher. Amanda said it turned out that all the phone line bills are going through there. We are working to correct that so the bill goes to the correct place. We are also closing a few lines that are not needed.

Joan Lewis asked about the Animal Control budget – it seems like we are doing well for what we spend. John replied that costs haven’t gone up in 10 years through our relationship with the Vernon kennel. We hope we are not forced into a further regionalization that will drive up costs. Also, we lose $2 per dog on licensing just in the Town Clerk’s office. They spend a lot of time on licensing and 40% of the revenue goes to the State. We do 1400 licenses, collect the money and send it to the State. Basically we are a collection agency for the State. There are vendors that do it but they are not allowed in Connecticut. The cost to switch money back and forth is so time-consuming, but nobody wants to talk about it. The cost to write a check and do postage is senseless. No business would run this way but these are the rules the State has imposed on us.

E. Board of Education Reports:
Amanda Backhaus reported that School Finance Director Bob Carroll emailed her in response to an inquiry about transfers, and communicated that he has not done year-end transfers for several years. The only formal one that was done last year was communicated to the Council. Amanda said you will see some items at the end of the year where line items are negative or positive but as long as the bottom line is ok he doesn’t adjust it. The policy says the superintendent “may” transfer funds but it doesn’t specify that you have to. John Elsesser said there was one year where there were pages of Board of Education transfers, and then if another bill came in they had to do it all over again. It was a lot of work. Amanda monitors our expenditures throughout the year so
we don’t have to do a lot of transfer work at the end of the year. We want to know where we are. We track budget to budget not budget to spent. The information is there but that’s not how we report. Carolyn Arabolos asked if it’s a good accounting practice, what would be the reason not to do it? John replied it is a lot of work. He doesn’t believe the Board of Education budget is wasteful. Amanda noted that the monthly tracking report that she prepares was not included with the agenda packet. Amanda will distribute it to the Finance Committee tomorrow.

4. MOA with Board Of Education For Non-Resident Tuition-Paying Students:
Carolyn Arabolos reviewed the questions submitted by Council Member O’Brien on the approved Memorandum of Understanding for non-resident tuition-paying students. She stated that she had a conversation on the questions prior to the meeting with Council Chair Joan Lewis and Board Chair Jen Beausoleil. She recapped the major points.

Carolyn said that Jen Beausoleil stated that there were no MBR issues even though the student count of tuition students would be counted by the State. Amanda Backhaus was asked to confer with the State Department of Education on this issue to confirm. It was noted that MBR applies only if the school budget is being reduced year to year (with some allowable exceptions) and the amount of tuition money expected to be received will be minor. Amanda will confirm with the State and get back to the committee.

The Finance Committee felt that the remaining questions from Council Member O’Brien involve matters which are in the purview of the duly-elected school officials operating under the powers given to them by State statutes. If detailed answers are needed, the Board of Education can be asked directly by any citizen. The committee agreed that asking additional questions after months of discussion, and after a vote, is diverting time from more urgent Council matters and Town Council goals.

5. Consideration/Possible Action: Draft Update, Purchasing Policy:
Carolyn Arabolos made suggested edits to the draft purchasing policy, which were distributed and discussed. The modified document will be forwarded to the full Council for approval at their next meeting.

6. Adjournment:
The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM on a motion by Lisa Conant, seconded by Carolyn Arabolos and unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Stone
Town Council Clerk
TEXTING AND DRIVING

Coventry High School junior Sarah Parzych discovers how checking text messages on a cellphone while driving can lead to a crash on her turn on a simulator during a distracted driving course Tuesday at the school. More photos, Page 3.
Eyes on the phone, not on the road

Coventry High School sophomore Alec Freschlin tries his hand at driving on a simulator while reading a text message that was just sent to him during an interactive distracted driving course Tuesday at the school. At left, students watch on a large screen as a fellow student tries to drive safely while using a cellphone.
The chart below displays the 2017-18 per-student spending for each of Connecticut's local and regional public school districts. Use the list of districts on the left to select and compare per-student spending between districts. To view the most recent per-student revenue by source (i.e. local, state, federal, or tuition/other) data for each local school district, use the chart selector on the right and choose Estimated 2016 Per-student Revenue by Source.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>Net Current Expenditures per Pupil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tolland School District</td>
<td>$15,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry School District</td>
<td>$16,103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester School District</td>
<td>$16,356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebron School District</td>
<td>$16,554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernon School District</td>
<td>$16,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolton School District</td>
<td>$17,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia School District</td>
<td>$17,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willington School District</td>
<td>$18,658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Windham School District</td>
<td>$18,668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andover School District</td>
<td>$19,273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford School District</td>
<td>$19,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon School District</td>
<td>$19,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mansfield School District</td>
<td>$20,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland School District</td>
<td>$22,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaplin School District</td>
<td>$22,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampton School District</td>
<td>$25,027</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2015-16 revenue by source data is unavailable for Hartford Public Schools.
