Kent Board of Finance

Minutes June 16, 2020 Monthly Meeting

**Present:** Jim Blackketter, Rufus de Rham, Fran Goodsell, Nancy O’Dea-Wyrick, Mark Sebetic.

**Public and Invited Guests:** Melissa Cherniske, Debbie Devaux, Lynn

Harrington, Barbara Herbst, Lynn Mellis Worthington, Rick Osborne, Jean Speck and any other members of the public.

Co-Chairman Nancy O’Dea-Wyrick called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m. via Zoom due to the delayed arrival of the board chairman.

**Minutes May 19, 2020 special meeting:** Mr. Blackketter made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2020 special meeting. Ms. Goodsell seconded the motion, and the motion was

approved unanimously.

The board clerk asked the board to add correspondence to the agenda. Mr. de Rham made a

motion to add correspondence to the agenda. Mr. Blackketter seconded the motion, and the

motion was approved unanimously.

**Correspondence:** The board acknowledged receipt of a letter from Kent resident Peter Jensen, addressed to the Boards of Selectmen and Finance, which was provided to the board prior to the meeting (attached). Mr. de Rham said he feels the board addressed Mr. Jensen’s concerns about the budget process at the May 19 special meeting, adding that Mr. Jensen was asking the board to lower taxes which Mr. de Rham said he feels the board was not realistically able to do. Ms. O’Dea-Wyrick said she feels the board made a good faith effort in a most unusual situation.

**Reports: Tax Collector:** Tax Collector Debbie Devaux provided the board with the suspense

report, dated May 27, 2020 (attached). Mr. Blackketter made a motion to approve the Suspense Report (99 accounts totaling $8780.30) as submitted. Ms. Goodsell seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously. Ms. Devaux also provided the board with a monthly report (attached) and noted a 98.6% tax collection rate as of June 17, 2020, adding the collection rate probably isn’t going to go much above that. This represents a shortfall of $66,222 of the 99% budgeted collection rate. Ms. Devaux added the governor has said tax sales may not proceed

until 30 days after the end of the pandemic. Mr. de Rham commented he feels the 98.6%

collection rate still is pretty good.

**Board of Education:** Board of Education chairman Marty Lindenmayer had notified the

chairman prior to the meeting to say he does not have a report and would not be attending the meeting.

**Board of Selectmen:** First Selectmen Jean Speck reported the following:

* COVID-19: Confirmed cases in Kent still total 8, according to data from the Torrington Area Health District. Ms. Speck said emergency management continues to be active.

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* Town Hall: The Town Hall building will remain closed to the public until September 1. Staff continue to deliver services, and there are weekly department head meetings. There is a plan in place whereby employees could use the large meeting room if needed for a face-to-face meeting with the public. There now is a red drop-box outside the front door for tax payments only.
* Pedestrian safety: Your speed signs are posted in Town, and Ms. Speck said she hopes to be able to pull the data and have a monthly report at the Board of Selectmen meetings. The Town is working on the striping on either side of the crosswalks and crosswalk signs.
* Streetscape: Ms. Speck said the committee has been meeting and working on completing

survey of property lines for the whole project which then has to be submitted to DOT. Ms. Speck said the committee is aware of and working to get the project started before the

extension on the one grant funding deadline.

* Cell Tower: Documents are posted on the Siting Council website. Hearings will be held in

July; the format is still to be determined (in-person or Zoom or both). Ms. Speck said the Town is working with its attorney on next steps.

**Treasurer:** Treasurer Barbara Herbst shared a written report (attached). She said her office would be transitioning to a virtual platform for time cards for hourly employees in the new fiscal year. Ms. Herbst said she would have budget transfers for the July board meeting. She noted three areas where budget transfers would be needed: cost share of the Lake Waramaug boat that should have been included in the 2020-21 budget and wasn’t, building department and the legal line.

**New Business:** There was no new business discussed.

**Old Business:** Ms. Speck noted the Board of Selectmen had made an offer during its budget

discussion to forgo its salary increases for 2020-21 although the increases are in the approved budget. Mr. Sebetic said he does not feel the board should accept the offer and that the Selectmen should be treated the same has other Town employees. There was consensus among the other board members with this position. Mrs. Herbst noted the total cost of the selectmen’s salary

increases is $1,608.

**Comments of Public and Invited Guests:** There were no comments.

Mr. Blackketter made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 p.m.

Lesly Ferris

Board Clerk

*Minutes are not considered final until approved. Refer to the minutes of the ensuing meeting for any changes/corrections.*