

Kent Board of Finance
Minutes May 19, 2020 Special Meeting

Present: Jim Blackketter, Rufus de Rham, Ed Epstein, Fran Goodsell, Nancy O'Dea-Wyrick, Mark Sebetic.

Public and Invited Guests: Darlene Brady, Suzanne Charity, Melissa Cherniske, Debbie Devaux, Eric Epstein, Lynn Harrington, Donna Hayes, Barbara Herbst, Peter Jensen, Joyce Kearns, Rita Limbos, Martin Lindenmayer, Michelle Mott, Lynn Mellis Worthington, Patrica Oris, Rick Osborne, Jean Speck and any other members of the public.

Chairman Mark Sebetic called the special meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. via Zoom.

Minutes April 21, 2020 monthly meeting: Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2020 monthly meeting. Mr. Blackketter seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Reports: Tax Collector: Tax Collector Debbie Devaux said she does not have a report for this meeting and would be bringing the board a suspense report at the June meeting.

Board of Education: Board of Education chairman Marty Lindenmayer reported there would be some \$23,000 in savings on the school bus contract, which was renegotiated. There would be some additional savings due to no activities this spring. The Kent Center School window project is expected to start in June.

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

- **COVID-19:** Confirmed cases in Kent have remained flat since May 6, according to Torrington Area Health District. Bull's Bridge recreation area reopened last weekend which helped alleviate parking on the roads.
- **Streetscape:** The committee has been meeting and working to move the project along.
- **Memorial Day parade** has been canceled. The first selectman said she has been working with Mr. Lindenmayer to put an event in place that could include signs in Kent to recognize veterans.

Treasurer: Treasurer Barbara Herbst shared a written report (attached).

Old Business: Proposed Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Budget: Mr. Sebetic acknowledged receipt of responses from the budget survey monkey and responses from the Boards of Selectmen and Education (attached). Mr. Epstein commented that he feels the Board of Finance isn't abandoning any group, noting in particular the Kent Volunteer Fire Department, Swift House, Schaghticoke litigation and school safety, but is going to pass a budget with no increase in the mill rate. Mr. Epstein suggested increasing the Swift House repair line by \$5,000. Ms. Speck said the Board of Selectmen allocated funds to address the wildlife issue in the building and formed a

small committee to look at the building and come up with a proposed plan about what should be done to the building. Committee member Suzanne Charity said she hopes the committee could define best uses for the building. Mr. Epstein said he believes it is the oldest building in Town on the village plain and, for that reason alone, it should be preserved. Ms. Charity questioned why the proposed custodial cost is up 67% and the maintenance line reduced. Administrative Assistant Joyce Kearns said the increase in the custodial cost would make the line more equitable with the cost history of that line. Ms. Speck noted there was a \$92,000 grant in 2009-2010 for work at the Swift House. Mr. Epstein made a motion to take \$5,000 from the contingency line and add it to the Swift House repair line. Mr. Blackketter seconded the motion. Mr. Sebetic said he does not like the idea of taking funds from the contingency line. Mr. de Rham said he agrees. Mrs. Herbst noted the contingency line is proposed at \$10,000 which would leave that line at \$5,000. The board voted 0-6 on the motion, and the motion failed. Mr. Epstein made a motion to add \$5,000 to the Swift House repair line, line 513. Mr. Blackketter seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously. Resident Peter Jensen asked if the board is taking any comment from the public. Mr. Sebetic said Mr. Jensen could comment at the end of the meeting. Mr. Jensen commented he is leaving the meeting. Mr. Blackketter made a motion to approve the proposed Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Town of Kent budget of \$13,535,103, including a \$780,000 transfer from the unassigned fund, dated May 19, 2020 (attached) pursuant to Executive Order 7I, Section 13, Suspension of In-Person Adoption of Budget for Municipalities. Mr. Epstein seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously. Mr. de Rham made a motion to set the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 mill rate at 18.61. Mr. Blackketter seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Comments of Public and Invited Guests: Mr. Sebetic said he feels Mr. Jensen's comments were in the survey monkey and that he was heard. Mr. de Rham commented that Mr. Jensen was asking the board to cut taxes and lower the mill rate. Ms. Mellis Worthington questioned the intent of the survey monkey. Mr. Sebetic said he looks at the survey as acting as the budget hearing, saying he feels the board met the goal it wanted of keeping the mill rate the same. Mr. Sebetic added that he is satisfied with where the outcome, adding he feels the board acted accordingly. Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick said she agrees.

Mr. Blackketter made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 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.

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2020 MAY 21 A 9 55

BY

S. Broady
TOWN CLERK

Treasurer's Report

5/19/2020

<u>Webinars</u>	<u>Bos Meetings</u>	<u>BoF Meetings</u>	<u>K.A.H Public Hearing</u>
5/20/2020	4/22/2020 5/12/2020	4/21/2020	5/15/2020

	<u>March</u>		<u>April</u>	
A/P Checks Issued	71	\$120,343	72	\$149,611
Payroll	128	\$97,130	147	\$111,966
BoE Transactions	63	\$708,786	59	\$567,964
Deposits	20	\$601,996	8	\$342,139

- 3 OPM requests for information - projections and schedules
- 2 Moody's Issuer Comment review and modifications
- 2 hrs KAH Grant work / prepare for Public Hearing
- KAH grant administrator certification postponed until September
- Clerk working on procedure manual while off site.

	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>	<u>% of Budget</u>
Income	12,250,618	12,870,032.00	95.2%
A · General Government	1,165,151	1,340,391.00	86.3%
B · Public Safety	59,178	262,395.00	22.6%
C · Public Works	1,170,715	1,787,432.00	65.5%
D · Health and Welfare	97,303	118,709.00	82.0%
E · Recreation	152,736	192,156.00	79.5%
F · Sanitation	98,292	136,695.00	71.9%
G · Board of Education	5,874,828	7,207,438.00	81.5%
H · Debt Service	411,563	450,469.00	91.4%
I · Transfer to Capital	831,847	831,847.00	100.0%
J · Transfer to Dog Fund	7,500	7,500.00	100.0%
K · Current Year Capital Projects	535,000	535,000.00	100.0%
Total Expense	10,404,113	12,870,032	80.8%

Open comment period
4.22.20 - 5.6.20
via Survey Monkey
located at
<https://www.townofkentct.org>

Proposed Budget
FY 2020 - 2021 Town of Kent

BoF to set Mil Rate
5.19.20

	CURRENT BUDGET	PROPOSED BUDGET	%	Difference between FY 2019-2020 and FY 2020-2021
	2019-2020	2020-2021	CHANGE	
<u>EXPENSES</u>				
Board of Selectmen Operating Budget	\$3,837,778	\$3,905,151	1.76%	\$67,373
Transfer to Capital Fund (last page of packet)	831,847	952,847	14.55%	\$121,000
Transfer to Dog Fund	7,500	7,500		\$0
Appropriation - Schaghticoke Legal Adjustment	0	0		\$0
Subtotal	4,677,125	4,865,498	4.03%	\$188,373
Debt Service	411,563	393,663	-4.35%	-\$17,901
Firehouse	0	0		\$0
Maple Street Extension	38,906	38,906		
Appropriations for Current Capital Projects	535,000	945,000	76.64%	\$410,000
Subtotal	985,469	1,377,569	39.79%	
Board of Education Operating Budget	4,596,871	4,673,688	1.67%	\$76,817
Board of Education Adjustment	-25,000			
Region 1 Budget	2,610,567	2,618,349	0.30%	\$7,782
Subtotal	7,207,438	7,292,037	1.17%	\$84,599
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$12,870,032	\$13,535,103	5.17%	\$665,071
<u>REVENUES</u>				
Federal, State, and Local	\$920,946	\$893,969	-2.93%	-\$26,977
Transfer from Capital Fund (last page of packet)	535,000	945,000	76.64%	\$410,000
	0			
Transfer from Unassigned General Fund	515,000	780,000	51.46%	\$265,000
Net Property Taxes after Abatements	10,899,086	10,916,134	0.16%	\$17,048
TOTAL REVENUES	\$12,870,032	\$13,535,103	5.17%	\$665,071
Grand List	\$591,845,519	\$594,799,624	0.50%	\$2,954,105
Tax Collection Rate	99.0%	99.0%	0.00%	\$0
CURRENT AND ANTICIPATED MILL RATE	18.61	18.61	0.00%	0.00
	June 30, 2019 AUDITED	JUNE 30, 2020 ESTIMATED		
Restricted Capital Fund	\$ 2,837,030	\$ 3,060,408	7.87%	\$223,378
Committed Capital Fund	\$ -	\$ -		\$0
Nonspendable General Fund	\$ 56,379	\$ 56,379		\$0
Committed General Fund	\$ 592,874	\$ 840,854	41.83%	\$247,980
Unassigned General Fund	\$ 2,563,377	\$ 2,297,717	-10.36%	-\$265,660
	\$ 6,049,660	\$ 6,255,358	3.40%	\$205,698
GFOA recommendation ~ 2 months of reg operating expense	\$2,049,354	\$2,098,351		
GFOA recommended UDFB vs Estimated (available to Transfer)	\$514,023	\$979,366		
Difference between LY and Estimated GF Balance		-\$17,680		
Amount above recommended reserve after Transfer to balance budget		\$199,366		

I hope you will all distribute this as appropriate and to enter it in the official Town record.

John Milnes Baker, 76 Spooner Hill Road, South Kent 06785

■ *Tel: (860) 927-4262*

To: Jean Speck, Chris Garrity and Ed Matson, Board of Selectmen, and Lesley Ferris, Board of Finance Clerck (for distribution to the BoF)

Re: **SWIFT HOUSE**

I appreciate the opportunity to review the proposed Budget FY 2020-2021 and ask questions. In these stressful days it must be difficult for you all to decide what category is most deserving of the funds available and which are less so.

I am concerned that Swift House is in the "less deserving" category.

Why is the budget for Swift House Maintenance and Repair reduced?

Maintenance is reduced from \$600 to \$500.

More significantly,

Repairs is reduced from \$1,000 to \$750

Swift House deserves better.

- 1) It is the oldest building in the Kent Village District
- 2) It was the core of the 1973 15 acre investment when the property was purchased
- 3) It has been an asset to the town: The Fire House, The Tennis Courts, The Senior Center and the Senior Housing are all on the original 15 acres.

Over the years Swift House has served as the reception center for Kent and venue for many different organizations and individual groups.

Like most historic landmarks it is not in great shape and needs responsible stewardship to maintain it in proper condition. That means that Maintenance and Repairs are must be realistically budgeted.

I urge you all to reconsider the token amount presently in the proposed budget and increase the Maintenance from \$800 to \$1,000 and double the Repairs from \$1,000 to \$2,000.

Surely \$3,000 is a tiny percentage of the Town's overall budget. I don't think I will be the only resident of Kent who questions the large increases in the various pension funds when last year the salaries and proportional pensions were raised to comply with the CT State's standards for comparable towns.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John Milnes Baker

SUZANNE L. CHARITY

30 Brown Road South Kent CT 06785 • (860) 927-4147

4 May 2020

Dear Members of the Kent Board of Finance,

I am writing to bring your attention to the condition of Swift House, and to seek your willingness to join me in my mission to resurrect it from neglect and celebrate it as a community asset.

Please read this letter aloud at the next Board of Finance meeting and include it and the following attachment in its entirety as part of the meeting minutes.

As a unique, historic property, purchased by the Town in 1973 along with the surrounding 15 acres of land, Swift House resides in a key location as one enters the Town of Kent, adding charm to the character of the village center. But as often happens, the current and potential value of Swift House has been marginalized over time and now needs and deserves your attention and support.

Regrettably, Swift House has become infested with squirrels that have taken up residence in the walls of the first floor through gaping holes under the eaves of the west façade, and in the attic through access near the chimney. The infestation has also contributed to an unpleasant odor and stains on one of the living room walls, which will need mitigation once the animals have been removed in order to return the house to enjoyable community use. Some additional exterior work such as painting of exterior stair rails also needs addressing if the building's structure is to be properly protected through another winter season.

How will any of this work take place without an adequate budget? Specifically, I urge the Selectmen and the Board of Finance to:

- Increase (or at least restore) Swift House line items in the '20/'21 Town Budget for Maintenance and Repairs to a minimum of \$600+ and \$1,000+ respectively.**
- Explain why the Swift House Custodian line item was increased 66.67% when the building is currently underutilized for events, due to COVID and the house's current condition. Could some of the Custodian line be shifted to Repairs?**
- Provide Emergency Funds for Swift House's most urgent Maintenance & Repair needs if those budget lines cannot be adjusted significantly in this year's proposed Town Budget before a vote is taken.**

With regard to long-term planning:

- Kindly explain why there is no line item for Swift House in the Five Year Capital Plan – to my knowledge the only town-owned building without any provision for its long-term needs - and pledge to rectify that.**

In my effort to see the urgent needs of Swift House addressed, I have reached out to many of Kent's local organizations and commissions to gauge interest in the Swift House property, listen to their concerns, and elicit their support. Please see attachment incorporated as a part this letter listing organizations and commissions strongly encouraging enhanced support and planning for Swift House.

In addition to those on the list, there are many others such as businesses in the Swift House neighborhood that have expressed concern about the current condition of Swift House and worry about its future.

For those entities, and the many individuals who share their concerns and mine, I implore you to give Swift House the attention and funding it needs and deserves, and to empower a task force to begin work toward restoring it to the kind of vibrant, wide-ranging community use that was envisioned when the Town of Kent purchased the very special property years ago.

Please put Swift House on your agenda for timely, positive action!

With thanks for your consideration,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Zanne Charity".

Zanne Charity

Encl: Organizations & Commissions with an Interest in the Future of Swift House

Attachment to S. Charity Letter of 4 May 2020 to Board of Selectment and Board of Finance:

ORGANIZATIONS & COMMISSIONS
WITH AN INTEREST IN THE FUTURE OF
SWIFT HOUSE

- The Kent Chamber of Commerce (a current rental tenant, which also uses Swift House as a public starting point for Kent's well attended annual Champagne Stroll)
- The Kent Garden Club (which appreciates use of the building for meetings and storage of supplies in exchange for maintenance of gardens at Swift House, and attractive annual planting at the town monument, town hall, etc.)
- The Kent Historical Society (former tenant in the building, devoted to preserving and presenting the history of Kent, whose founder, Emily Hopson, helped to fund restoration to the building when it was acquired by the Town. KHS holds an annual community-wide holiday party at Swift House, as well as an occasional public exhibit on an historical topic, and uses the property for lessons on aspects of Kent's history for Kent Center School students)
- The Kent Architectural Review Board (responsible for setting architectural design standards for new structures and changes to existing ones to maintain continuity of character for Kent's Village District)
- The Kent Historic District Commission (whose mission is to research and protect historic properties that add to the character of the town, even though Swift House is not within the specific designated boundaries of the primary Historic District)
- The Kent Quilters (who meet at Swift House periodically, hold an annual event there, and donate products of their efforts to town entities, such as taking responsibility for providing face masks to all of Kent's frontline employees and workers during the COVID pandemic)
- Keepers of The Kent Veteran's Memorial (which resides prominently in the yard of Swift House, and is the site of an annual ceremony on Veteran's Day)

**Kent Historical Society
PO Box 651
Kent, CT 06757**

May 5, 2020

Dear members of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance,

We are writing to express our deep concern about the condition of the Swift House and the reduction in the proposed 2021 budget for its maintenance and repair. The Town of Kent purchased the Swift House and surrounding 15 acres in 1973, at which time the building was in dilapidated but structurally sound condition. Thanks in large part to the hard work and personal financial generosity of Kent Historical Society president Emily Hopson, the circa 1800 house was restored and opened to the public in time to celebrate the country's Bicentennial. It was welcomed by the townspeople as a place for family gatherings, club meetings, receptions and other uses. A residential apartment was created on the second floor to provide (a) monthly rental income and (b) a steady presence in the house. The KHS had use of rooms on both floors of the west side of the building.

Since that time, the Town has made efforts to properly maintain the Swift House. In 1981, needed repairs were done, with the cost being shared by the Town and private donations. The Town welcomed the private donations that time, but noted that the primary responsibility rested with the Town as owner of the building (Kent GTD Sept 4, 1981).

In 1994, Selectman Susi Williams pointed out that the town had ignored the building since then, and Board of Finance Chair Rufus deRham agreed that it should have a line item in the budget. In 1997 \$1,000 was allotted in the capital project budget for a new roof and porch repair; and \$2,000 was spent in 1998 for other repairs. A big boost came in 1999, when First Selectman Lorry Schiesel allotted \$10,000, saying that the money needed to be spent (over a period of a few years), since it was an asset to the town that should not be lost.

A structural survey done in 2006 by Hudson Valley Preservation Corp pointed out the need for another new roof (the 1997 roof having already deteriorated), chimney repair, a coat of paint, a poured cement floor to mitigate serious mold and mildew, repair to several windows, and a solution to bad drainage on the west and north sides of the building, and more. First Selectman Ruth Epstein worked with the KHS in 2008 to secure a STEAP grant of \$92,000 to address many of the issues in the survey. However, the roof was not replaced - with damaging results.

Since that time, little attention has been paid to the venerable old building which is suffering greatly from the neglect (See photos at the end of this letter). Squirrels have chewed their way in and water leaks in through many rotting components. The unpleasant result is that the rental use of the building has fallen off. Though the KHS had to leave when the opportunity came for us to buy the house adjacent to Seven Hearths several years ago, we still care very deeply about the

Swift House. We would like to work with the Town to ensure that the building can once again become an asset of which the Town can be proud. We are gathering the information needed to get it listed on the CT State Register of Historic Places, a designation that will help to leverage restoration funds from the State Historic Preservation Office and other restoration sources.

In the meantime, for this new budget cycle, we urge you to keep the level of repair and maintenance funding where it has been for the last three years.

Sincerely,

Patrice Galterio, Executive Director – director@kenthistoricalsociety.org

Jeffrey Morgan, Board President

Margaret Smith, Curator – curator@kenthistoricalsociety.org

Left: Rotting door sill at back patio.

Right: Squirrel hole chewed through siding on west wall by back patio.



Left: Peeling paint and rotting wood
at back entrance.

Right: Gunk leaking down west wall in
main room. Origin not clear, but
thought to be from roof leaks.



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2020 MAY 21 A 9 55

BY

[Signature]
TOWN CLERK