

Board of Finance  
Minutes, Dec. 15, 2020 Meeting

**Present:** Jim Blackketter, Rufus de Rham, Ed Epstein, Tegan Gawel, Fran Goodsell, Nancy O'Dea-Wyrick.

**Public and Invited Guests:** Eric Epstein, Alan Gawel, Donna Hayes, Barbara Herbst, Marty Lindenmayer, Mike Petrone, Art Romano, Jean Speck, Mary Ann VanValenburg.

Board chairman Nancy O'Dea-Wyrick called the meeting to order via Zoom at 7:04 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Agenda:** Mr. Blackketter made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. de Rham seconded the motion. Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick asked for a friendly amendment to add discussion of auditor's contract to New Business. The revised agenda was approved unanimously. Mr. Lindenmayer then asked to move the KCS Entryway Project under Reports BOE. Mr. de Rham made a motion to amend the agenda as requested. Mrs. Gawel seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

**Minutes of Nov. 17, 2020 monthly meeting:** Mr. de Rham made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Blackketter seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

**Correspondence:** There was no correspondence.

**Reports: Tax Collector:** Debbie Devaux is unable to attend the meeting and did not provide a report.

**Board of Education:** Mr. Lindenmayer reported the following:

- The KCS Entryway project was on the Board of Selectmen's December meeting.
- The project will be part of a January 12, 2021 Town hearing where Mr. Lindenmayer said he would update the Town on the project.
- The vote will be at the January 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Town Meeting.
- There will be a pre-bid conference for the project on January 19 to start the process. The pre-bid could be canceled anytime.
- The school board has been working with Wendy Murphy of the Conservation Commission to explore the solar potential of Kent Center School through Greenbank Co. municipal solar program. Mr. de Rham said he is a big fan of Greenbank and the work it has done in the state.
- One kindergarten class has moved to distance learning after a confirmed COVID case.

**Board of Selectmen:** First Selectman Jean Speck reported:

- Kent has been designated as a COVID-19 regular testing site Mondays, 3-7 p.m. at the Transfer Station. This is a state-sponsored and state-run testing site and the only one in the northwest corner of the state. One hundred sixty people were tested December 14, the first day the site opened.
- There will be a vaccine advisory group working with the unified command (together with Torrington Area Health District) to make decisions about getting information about the COVID-19 vaccine out to those in the community.
- The selectmen are talking about the possibility of an organics composting program. The selectmen are looking at potential grant monies.
- Cell Tower: The Siting Council voted in favor 4-3 to approve the proposed cell tower application for Richards Road. Ms. Speck said the attorneys are reviewing the findings and what the next step might be. Ms. Speck said defending the applications was expensive.
- The state has changed the financial threshold to \$2,000 for the fire department tax abatement. The tax collector is looking at historical data for Kent's abatement program.
- Food Trucks: Planning and Zoning has told the Board of Selectmen that permits for food trucks do not come under its purview. Ms. Speck said food truck permits would not be issued until the public emergency is over.
- Cyber-Security: There will be a walk-through of Town Hall regarding Town Hall and Town Government cyber-security as part of an emergency management federal program.
- Ms. Speck graduated from CCM's (Connecticut Conference of Municipalities) Unified Program.
- Streetscape: The project is moving forward. The selectmen broke the project into two phases - the TAP grant only can be used on new projects - to keep clean the deliverables for each grant. The project should begin in late spring. Ms. Speck confirmed the grant applications outline concrete as the sidewalk material.

Mr. Ed Epstein noted the recent passing of John Kaminsky, a long-time transfer station employee. Mr. Epstein recognized Mr. Kaminsky's many contributions.

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer Barbara shared a written report (attached). She also reported:

- She successfully completed the course work for the CDBG grant administrator certification course, and the Town did receive the grant.
- She informed the board the litigation budget line would need a budget transfer as the line is

overspent, primarily due to the cell tower application legal fees. The Town has overspent by some \$39,000 to date with bills expected for October and November. Also, the Schaghticoke line will need an appropriation or budget transfer as bills are coming in and only \$5,000 is left.

- The town received \$10,566 in state COVID relief funds. The remainder of the funds will be disbursed based on population because the process was so cumbersome. The Town has the potential to receive \$45,000-\$50,000 additional reimbursement.
- KVFD Boat grant is \$30,900, of which \$30,790 is being spent to purchase the boat.
- A Safe Polls Grant helped to offset the cost of the November election.
- The clerk position remains open in the treasurer's office. The treasurer offered the job to four or five people, who for various reasons, were unable to accept the position.
- The budget packets are going out at the end of the week.
- Building construction value is up 72% over last fiscal year to date (attached).

**New Business: Annual Town Report:** the board clerk is waiting on a few more reports.

**2021 Meeting Calendar:** Mr. Blacketter made a motion to approve the 2021 meeting calendar as presented (attached). Mr. Epstein seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

**Five-Year Capital Plan:** Mrs. Herbst shared the proposed plan (attached), saying the selectmen did make a few modifications on it but did not vote on it yet. The selectmen voted to remove a fire department request for emergency funding over three years to replace turnout gear. The selectmen referred the department to the Board of Finance since the request was submitted in current five years of the plan, which is not allowed. The Five-Year Capital Request form needs to be corrected because it allows departments to submit requests for current years instead of only the years following the current fifth year.

Mr. de Rham commented that he is not convinced there is a real need for funding for the Swift House, saying he is curious the Town is paying for its renovation when other Town buildings could use this funding. Mr. de Rham said he feels it would be helpful for the Finance Board to know how decisions are made, asking if the fire department keeps a depreciation schedule for its equipment. Mr. Gawel stated the department does and that the life expectancy of its trucks is 20-25 years.

**Auditor's Contract:** The auditor's contract has expired. Ms. O'Dea-Wyrick said typically the contract would go out to bid after five years. Mrs. Herbst said she reached out to auditor Sandra Welwood offered to extend her contract by three years. Mr. Epstein made a motion to extend

auditor Sandra Welwood's contract for three years, through June 2023. Mrs. Goodsell seconded the motion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

**Old Business: KVFD EMS Financing Contract Staffing Process Update:** Mrs. Herbst said she believes the Board of Finance has to vote on the funding for the proposal to contract for paid EMTs before the Annual Town Meeting. Mr. de Rham said he thinks the board should recommend the funding to the Town. Mr. Blackketter said he believes the board did that at its last meeting. The board chairman and board clerk will put something together that supports the request before the hearing.

**FY2022 Budget Calendar Update:** Mrs. Herbst shared the calendar (attached).

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

Mr. Blackketter made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

Lesly Ferris  
Board Clerk

*Minutes are not considered final until approved . Please check ensuing meeting for any changes/corrections.*