

***Town of New Fairfield***  
**4 Brush Hill Road**  
**New Fairfield, CT 06812**

**MINUTES**

**Board of Selectman/Board of Education Joint Meeting**  
**Tuesday, March 28, 2023**  
**7:00 PM**  
**Via Zoom**

<b><u>Board of Selectmen members present:</u></b> Pat Del Monaco, First Selectman Lori-Ann Beninson, Selectman Khris Hall, Selectman <b><u>Board of Education members present:</u></b> Dominic Cipollone, BOE Chairman Tim Blair Kathy Baker Greg Flanagan Amy Johnson Kimberly LaTourette Samantha Mannion Stephanie Strazza <b><u>Board of Education members not present:</u></b> Ed Sbordone	<b><u>Other Town officials and Educators present:</u></b> Dr. Ken Craw, Superintendent of Schools Julie Luby, Ass't Superintendent of Schools Carrie DePuy, Director of Business and Operations Wes Marsh, BOF Chairman Thora Perkins, BOF member Cheryl Reedy, BOF member Claudia Willard, BOF member James D'Amico, High School Principal Scott Rohwedder, High School Ass't Principal Karen Gruetzner, Middle School Principal Allyson Story, Elementary School Principal Steve Groccia, Elementary School Ass't Principal Jennifer Hilderbrand, Elementary School Ass't Principal Katherine Matz, Pupil Personnel Director Melissa Busnel, Special Education Supervisor Paul Gouveia, Director of Technology Mark Ottusch, Athletic Director Bruce Taylor, Fire Chief
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Director of Technology Paul Gouveia gave a brief description of the of the rules and regulations for virtual meetings.

**Call To Order**

First Selectman Pat Del Monaco called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Discussion of the 2023-2024 budget**

First Selectman Pat Del Monaco noted that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss potential cuts and their impact to the 2023-2024 budget. She noted that no specific number has been given by the BOF, but it is possible that the cuts will be significant to both the BOS and the BOE. BOE Chairman Dominic Cipollone asked the BOF to look at the budget with an open mind.

Pat Del Monaco spoke of the increase from last year's budget and noted that debt service and medical account for approximately 60% of the total increase. The proposed increase is 13.15% over last year and

it was noted that a 1% reduction is equal to \$550,000. In order to bring the budget down to a 7% increase, a cut of \$3,300,000 would be necessary. A cut of \$3,850,000 is needed for a 6% increase and a cut of \$4,400,000 is needed for a 5% increase over last year's budget.

Dominic Cipollone noted that the BOE increase is predominantly due to fixed costs such as salary increases, transportation and special education evaluations. He spoke of positions added during COVID that were funded through ESSER funds that now need to be funded through the operating budget. Mr. Cipollone spoke of reductions made to the budget and how they will affect staffing.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ken Craw spoke of the impact of staffing reductions and how they could affect class sizes and could cause reductions of course offerings and extracurricular activities.

Pat Del Monaco spoke of the pressures and challenges to the municipal budget and how it is impacted by inflation. Utilities and contracted services have increased significantly. She spoke of municipal staffing and noted that many positions are required by State Statute.

Dominic Cipollone spoke of budget mitigation strategies including ways to reduce funding to the Medical Fund, applying bond premium to reduce the debt service and identifying non-tax revenue.

BOF Chairman Wes Marsh spoke of the following potential budget reduction scenario which would reduce the increase from 13.15% to 7.90%.

Projected Budget Increase			13.15%
	Reduction Strategy	Revenue	
Debt Service (apply available bond premium)	(\$1,500,000)		10.4%
Medical (update to claims and contributions)	(\$500,000)		9.51%
Projected Interest Income/Revenue		\$425,000	8.74%
BOS Operating	(\$100,000)		8.56%
BOE Operating	(\$360,000)		7.90%

Selectman Lori Beninson asked if there are other ways to support students in the district besides using paraprofessionals. She suggested have a three-year paramedic contract instead of a one-year contract.

Director of Pupil Personnel Katherine Matz clarified the reason for providing paraprofessionals for special education students.

BOE member Kimberly LaTourette spoke of the impact of losing employees and encouraged residents to speak at the BOF meeting on March 29<sup>th</sup>.

Selectman Khris Hall spoke in support of the Town employees.

### **Public Comment**

Approximately 17 members of the public spoke in support of the budget and spoke against any cuts to the operating budgets. They encouraged everyone to speak at the March 29<sup>th</sup> BOF meeting.

One resident questioned the need to replace the dump truck and transportation van and asked if money can be saved by not replacing them at this time.

### **Closing Comments**

BOE Chairman Dominic Cipollone noted that he appreciates public comments and encouraged everyone to speak out at the BOF meetings.

BOF Chairman Wes Marsh thanked everyone that spoke at tonight's meeting and noted that the BOF wants to hear comments.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Ken Craw noted that the budget document for tonight's meeting will be posted to the district website.

First Selectman Pat Del Monaco thanked everyone for coming and encouraged participation at the BOF meetings.

### **Adjournment**

Pat Del Monaco made a motion to adjourn for the BOS at 8:38 pm. Khris Hall seconded the motion.  
**All in favor**

Dominic Cipollone made a motion to adjourn for the BOE at 8:38 pm. Greg Flanagan seconded the motion- **All in favor**