

MINUTES
Town of Guilford, CT
Board of Selectmen
Board of Selectmen Meeting
Monday, December 16, 2024, 8:30 am
Town Hall and Via Zoom:

First Selectman Matthew Hoey called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

Present: Board Members: Matthew Hoey, Charles Havrda, Susan Renner, Sandra Ruoff and Louis Federici

Town Officials: Finance Director Maryjane Malavasi, Purchasing Manager Darlene Minore, Assistant Fire Chief Mike Shove, Town Attorney Peter Barrett, Executive Assistant Karen, Human Resources Director Mitch Goldblatt, BOE Director of Operations Cliff Gurnham, Library Director Rob McCoolle, Elderly Tax Relief Review Committee Member Robert Hartmann, Assessor Becky Zychowski, Economic Development Coordinator John Tarutis, and Clerk Traci Brinkman

Others: Debbie DeMuis

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Havrda led the pledge.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Mr. Federici and seconded by Mr. Federici and seconded by Ms. Ruoff, the board voted unanimously to add to the agenda the purchase of a Chevy Tahoe for the Fire Department as item 6a.

Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None

Motion: Upon a motion made by Ms. Ruoff and seconded by Ms. Renner, the board voted unanimously to add to the agenda an Update from the Economic Development John Tarutis as item 7a.

Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None

Motion: Upon a motion made by Ms. Renner and seconded by Mr. Federici, the board voted unanimously to add to the agenda the appointment of Mark Russo as an alternate to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term to expire February 28, 2025 as item 8.6.

Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None

2. Public Forum (Limited to 3 minutes on agenda items)

None

3. Approve minutes of:

1. December 2, 2024 - Regular Meeting

Motion: Upon a motion made by Ms. Renner and seconded by Ms. Ruoff, the board voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the December 2, 2024 Regular Meeting as presented.

Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None

4. Finance Director (Maryjane Malavasi):

1. Receive monthly report from Finance Director.

Revenues

Ms. Malavasi said they have received 54.3% of revenues at about 42% through the year and are approximately where they are every year at this time. Interest income is still coming in on track and they are over half way there at this point. Tax collection is doing well and where they expect it to be with half the taxes received. She noted that Y&FS did increase their budget this year and based on that they are almost right where they should be at this point.

Expenditures

Ms. Malavasi said they are about where they should be at 44% spent and 42% through the year. The Town Clerk's office and Registrar are higher because they had the election with early voting and absentee ballots. She noted that they did apply the \$10,500 grant from the state to the Registrar budget. They did expect

that budget to be over. Library is a little higher, but that is the timing of transfers her office sends to the library. Public Works appears high, but it is really just large encumbrances that are out at the moment. The Fire Department is doing very well, replacement costs are at 53%, but it is much lower than prior years. Operating supplies is bringing the percentage up as well, but this is also due to large purchase orders that are out. Building maintenance is a little high, but overall they are trending well this year.

It was noted that the ARPA funds that have been used to offset costs in the fire department as well as other departments will stop at the end of December. Mr. Hoey asked how much they are allocating from ARPA monthly for the fire department. Ms. Malavasi said she didn't have the number in front of her, but would get back to him.

Medical

Ms. Malavasi said the medical fund is trending at a deficit of \$1 million so far. Claims are extremely high this fiscal year. If they take out the receivable for catastrophic claims, they are 30% higher in November 2024 versus November 2023. They are having a joint meeting January 28 with the BOE, BOF and BOS to review the medical fund. The working committee that handles the budget every year already met and felt it was prudent to have the consultant speak to all three boards to explain where they are today and moving forward for next year.

There was discussion on ARPA and the sunset of funds. Ms. Malavasi said they have over allocated the amount of the award which includes interest on the money and the reason they have done that is just in case a purchase order comes in under the expenditure they will still have the full amount of the ARPA award and not have to give any funding back. There are a couple of larger items they are still working on; one is the Library carpeting and the three planting project through Kevin Magee's office. Those are the two main outstanding projects they are looking to put purchase orders out for, everything else is small. She is confident at that point that they should not have any money to give back on the ARPA funds.

5. BOE Director of Operations/Facilities (Cliff Gurnham):

1. Consider and take possible action to purchase an Ultimax 1900 Orbital Scrubber under Omnia Contract #: R211201 for 595 New England Road.

Mr. Gurnham said they are winding down on the 595 New England Road project and are looking at buying some equipment so they can maintain the space appropriately. He brought this request to the Standing Building Committee to purchase a large battery powered machine that puts water down, scrubs the floor

and then sucks the water back up. They are looking to purchase from Imperial Dade through the Omnia Contract in the amount of \$9,275.65.

Mr. Hoey asked if there was any other use for this equipment besides the 595 building. Mr. Gurnham said they could use it at other schools, however transporting equipment like this could damage it. Normally they have one per building that is used throughout that building. He added that that they are looking to purchase a walk behind machine, which is less expensive than the stand on, sit down or even a robot machine. It fits in the elevator and will keep the building cleaner and presentable

Ms. Wallace said they have \$50,000 left on bond and she did read in the SBC minutes about a potential problem with the HVAC on the building. She asked if it might be prudent to save this \$10,000 just in case. Mr. Gurnham said they still have another \$75,000 in contingency on top of that \$50,000 so there is more than enough funding if they have to replace the air handling unit.

Ms. Renner said when they are asked to approve a purchase and a reason is to make things more efficient, that translates to how it effects taxpayers. If it is more efficient that maybe they can reduce staffing that is different that if it is saving a little time for the person that has that shift or doesn't have to work as hard or as fast, but that is really not part of a cost benefit analysis.

Mr. Gurnham explained that this is one person cleaning a 20,000 square foot building each night in four hours. They will not have time to be sitting down enjoying a long coffee break or dinner. They are getting this so that person can get through the entire building during the entire shifts. If they didn't have this equipment it just wouldn't get cleaned on a regular basis.

Mr. Hoey said he recently read an article about the state allocating more money for HVAC issues and nobody is going after it, so maybe Guilford can be the first in line. He said he would share the article with Mr. Gurnham.

Mr. Federici asked where the last location was where they bought something similar. Mr. Gurnham said they purchase these with large renovations. They did the entire carpet at Cox two years ago and bought a chariot style machine that will sweep the entire school to maintain the carpet. During the floor replacement project at Baldwin they bought a large sit on machine because of the greater square footage. They equipment helps them maintain the school in a healthy standard and allows them to clean it on nightly basis.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Ms. Renner and seconded by Mr. Federici, the board voted unanimously to approve the purchase of an Ultimax 1900 Orbital Scrubber from Imperial Dad under the Omnia Contract #R211201 for 595 New England Road in the amount of \$9,275.65.

Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None

6. Library Director (Rob McCoole):

1. Discuss and take possible action to contract with BCI (Bartholomew Contract Interiors) off State Contract #20PSX008 for Carpet Replacement at the Library.

Mr. McCoole said the carpet budget is already funded and they decided go with BCI under the state contract. They are splitting up the installation so there is the least amount of inconvenience to library services.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Ms. Ruoff and seconded by Ms. Renner, the board voted unanimously to contract with BCI (Bartholomew Contract Interiors) off State Contract #20PSX008 for Carpet Replacement at the Library as presented at the meeting.

Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None

a. Consider and take possible action on the purchase of a Chevy Tahoe from Colonial Municipal Group for the Fire Department.

Mr. Shove said this is in their capital budget. The vehicle they are replacing is a 2006 expedition that has 18 years on it. It is one of the staff vehicles that in the last couple of months has had to come off the road. It has frame rot and is at the end of its service life. It would be disposed of through the auction process.

Mr. Federici raised a question about the immediate availability fee. Mr. Shove said it's a hot commodity and car buying is still very competitive. It just became available within the last month.

Ms. Renner is surprised that they are permitted to do this when pricing within a station contract. Mr. Shove explained that it is part of a consortium and Ms. Minore spoke with them.

Ms. Renner asked if that \$1,250 fee is permitted or if it is unavoidable. Mr. Shove said they can follow back up with them on that.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Mr. Federici and seconded by Ms. Renner, the board voted unanimously to approve the purchase of a Chevy Tahoe for the Fire Department from the Colonial Municipal Group in the amount of \$54,481.60.

Vote: *In Favor:* Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
 Opposed: None
 Abstaining: None

7. Receive recommendations from the Elderly Tax Relief Review Committee.

Mr. Hartmann said their committee was requested to look at the Elderly Tax Relief Program since they had been bumping against the limit and more appeals have been coming. The program hadn't been reviewed since 2008. At time limits were put in based on household income and they haven't moved since then. There are 587 applicants in program, with two-thirds single and the rest couples so a total of over 700 individuals in program the program, which is 10% of the population over 65.

Mr. Hartmann went over the various things the committee looked at including programs in other towns, the possibility of overhauling the program and making it more of a deferment program for new participants. The end result is they are recommending continuing with the original plan with the following recommendations:

- The Board of Finance increase the program cap to \$1.1 million from \$1 million.
- Increase each tier of the income limits by 5% in year one, and by an additional 5% in year two, unless the Board of Selectmen votes otherwise.
- Any person aggrieved by the action of the Assessor in determining the amount of relief or disapproving any such application is allowed a one-time “no excuse” exemption. If that same person exceeds the income limit for a second time, their benefit will be reduced to an average of their last five years of savings. If that person exceeds the income limit third time, they will automatically be disqualified from the program.
- The phrase “long-term citizens” should be struck from the ordinance and replaced with “Guilford residents” to clarify that an applicant needs to be a resident and own real property in Guilford. The years of residence are cumulative. Lastly the committee recommends that the Elderly Tax Relief program be considered separate from other tax benefit programs in Guilford.

Mr. Federici, a member of the committee as well, explained that there was discussion on doing a 10% increase all at once or two 5% bumps. If the first 5% bump helps they don't need to do the second one in 2026.

Mr. Hoey said he liked the idea of having a year's worth of data to evaluate and adjust if necessary.

There was discussion about an asset test. The committee did discuss this and other members do look at assets or the evaluation of the house, however, the town has such large numbers that it would be too time consuming for staff.

The Elderly Tax Relief Review Committee members were named: Jeff Ambroziak, Bill Bloss, Alan Durnin, Louis Federici, Robert Hartmann, Brian McGlone and Linda Vigorito. The board decided to have a public hearing on the ordinance changes so this can be in place for the upcoming program application period as long as Mr. Barrett can draft the changes by then.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Mr. Federici and seconded by Ms. Ruoff, the board voted unanimously to approve the recommendations from the Elderly Tax Relief Review Committee as outlined and set a public hearing date of January 6, 2024, 8:30 a.m. at the Town Hall and Via Zoom on the ordinance changes.

*Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None*

a. Update from Economic Development Coordinator

Mr. Tarutis said Anytime Fitness, which will be located next to The Place has demolished the current building there and will be starting construction soon. New businesses coming: Target continues their work; Old Navy continues their work. TJ Maxx hasn't started work, but has leased the Guilford Commons. Char and Lemon will open sometime after the new year. There is buzz around the Ballou's location and something might develop there shortly. With Girls Night Out around the Green and the tree lighting the merchants were very busy. They have been working with REX and H2O Farm on grant proposals. There is new technology they will be bringing in from overseas.

Mr. Hoey said tomorrow land use departments having a site plan review for the Gatehouse West property. It is anticipated to be mixed use in front and the back housing.

8. Appointments and Resignations:

1. Act on resignation received from Kit Wilcox from the Zoning Board of Appeals and Hazard Mitigation Committee effective January 1, 2025.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Mr. Federici and seconded by Ms. Ruoff, the board voted unanimously to accept with regret and appreciation the resignation from Kit Wilcox from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

*Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None*

2. Act on resignation received from Alexander Hoffman from the Human Rights Commission.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Mr. Hoey and seconded by Ms. Ruoff, the board voted unanimously to accept with regret and appreciation the resignation from Alexander Hoffman from the Human Rights Commission.

*Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None*

3. Act on a recommendation to appoint Joan Leonard to the Human Rights Commission to fill a vacancy for a term to expire on June 30, 2025.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Ms. Ruoff and seconded by Mr. Federici, the board voted unanimously to appoint Joan Leonard to the Human Rights Commission to fill a vacancy for a term to expire on June 30, 2025.

*Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None*

4. Act on a recommendation to move Jim Goodridge from alternate to regular member on the Zoning Board of Appeals to fill a vacancy for a term to expire on February 28, 2025, effective January 1.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Ms. Ruoff and seconded by Mr. Federici, the board voted unanimously to move Jim Goodridge from alternate to regular member on the Zoning Board of Appeals to fill a vacancy for a term to expire on February 28, 2025, effective January 1, 2025.

*Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None*

5. Act on a recommendation to move Lee Sander from alternate to regular member of the Economic Development Commission for a term to expire on November 30, 2028.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Mr. Federici and seconded by Ms. Ruoff, the board voted unanimously to move Lee Sander from alternate to regular member on the Economic Development Commission for a term to expire on November 30, 2028.

*Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None*

6. Act on the recommendation to appoint Mark Russo as an alternate to the Zoning Board of Appeals to fill a vacancy for a term to expire on February 28, 2025.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Ms. Renner and seconded by Ms. Ruoff, the board voted unanimously to appoint Mark Russo as an alternate to the Zoning Board of Appeals to fill a vacancy for a term to expire on February 28, 2025.

*Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None*

9. Committee Reports

Ms. Ruoff said they now have a full Affordable Housing Commission and have some strong and energetic people on that commission.

10. Correspondence

1. Public Works Report

Received without comment

2. Building Report

Received without comment

3. Letter from Mulberry Point Roads Committee

Mr. Hoey said he referred this to Ms. Plaziak to see if anything would be consistent for a waiver like the previous applicant. He met with the gentleman and indicated that there needed to be rationale consistent with what the board approved before. Mr. Barrett will weigh in as well.

11. Old Business

None

12. New Business

None

13. Public Forum (Limited to 3 minutes on any issue)

Deb DeMusis reminded people about the public hearing on the ordinance banning retail cannabis sales, which is on Wednesday, 7 p.m., at Community Center and Via Zoom. She said it would be great if people did have opinion and sent emails to the board. She hoped the keep in mind the quality of health of the youth. As stated before people can always go to a neighboring town. She noted that there is no test for people using cannabis and driving like there is for alcohol. She also has a petition if people wanted to sign it in support of the ban. Use should also be restricted on public places and noted that THC is now being put into beverages and that is not regulated.

Nobody else wished to speak.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Ms. Renner and seconded by Ms. Ruoff, the board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:01 a.m.

*Vote: In Favor: Hoey, Havrda, Renner, Federici and Ruoff
Opposed: None
Abstaining: None*

Respectfully submitted,

Traci K. Brinkman
Clerk
Board of Selectmen