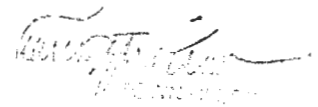


**Town of Stafford, Board of Finance
Special Meeting
Stafford Community Center
3 Buckley Highway, Stafford Connecticut
May 22, 2023 7:30 PM**

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1. Chairman Francis Moriarty called the meeting to order at 7:33 PM. Mr. Moriarty explained that the Board of Selectmen requested this meeting specifically to discuss the proposed FY 2023/2024 budget and mill rate.
2. Present were Chairman Moriarty, and members Steve Geryk, Matthew McKenney, Tony Pellegrino, Richard Shuck, and David Walsh. A quorum was established.

Also present were Board of Finance alternates Don Martinsen and Shelly West, First Selectman Sal Titus, Selectmen Rick Hartenstein and Kurt Vail, Interim Director of Finance Lynn Nenni, Superintendent of Schools Steve Moccio, Board of Education Chairman Laura Lybarger, Board of Education Director of Finance and Operations Charmaine Bradshaw-Hill, members of the Board of Education, and additional Town and School administrators and staff. There were approximately one hundred people in attendance.

3. Upon motion of Mr. Pellegrino and seconded by Mr. McKenney, the Board unanimously approved the minutes from the April 19, 2023 and May 16, 2023 meetings.
4. Chairman Moriarty invited First Selectman Titus to speak to the purpose of the meeting. Mr. Titus stated that at the May 18, 2023 Board of Selectmen meeting, the Selectmen discussed their concerns that a 2 mill increase would fail at the next Town budget referendum, and that a 1.5 mill rate increase would have a better chance of passing. Mr. Titus also discussed a potential end of fiscal year "cash crunch", saying the Town needs to get the tax bills out in June so there would be monies available to cover Town and Board of Education payrolls and accounts payable through the end of June. Ms. Nenni explained the low cash funds are primarily due to grants received by the Town that are fronted and paid at a later date.

First Selectman Titus spoke briefly to the \$417,800 reduction to the Board of Selectmen's budget, mandated at the May 16, 2023 Board of Finance meeting, The Selectmen approved the reductions at their May 18, 2023 meeting, which includes the elimination of a full time police officer, elimination of a DPW laborer, reduction of hours to the Animal Control Officer, reduction of hours to the (vacant) Finance Director position, road paving, and trash disposal.

Superintendent Moccio spoke next, and explained that the Board of Education met earlier in the evening to discuss the mandated \$835,600 Board of Education budget reduction from the Board of Finance May 16, 2023 meeting. While the Board of Education did not formally approve the cuts to their budget at their meeting today, Mr. Moccio stated there will be substantial cuts to staff, teachers, technology, building repairs, and programs including sports and drama.

Chairman Moriarty opened the floor to members of the audience for questions and statements concerning the budget. Several people, including parents of children in the Stafford school system, and a high school student, spoke passionately against making further cuts to the Board of Education budget, and asked that taxpayers be allowed the opportunity to vote on the 2 mil increase at the next budget referendum. The consensus of the speakers was that further reductions to the Board of Education would have a devastating and lasting effect on the school system. Audience members that voted NO at the first referendum now have a better understanding of the budgets and will encourage other parents and neighbors to support the budgets and vote YES.

The Board agreed not to take further action on the budget and thanked the audience for their input.

5. Upon motion of Mr. Geryk and seconded by Mr. McKenney, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 9:22 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,



Erin Kirenhoffer

Recording Secretary