

Financial Advisory Council

Minutes

September 16, 2023

Attending: Art Bassin, Carol Falcetti, Ann Rader, Hugh Clark, Steve Olyha, Will Maitland Weiss -- by Zoom
Bonnie Hunt attending as an observer.

1. August Financial Reports and Year End Financial Projections

Financials are tracking as we would expect. Building Department fees are very strong. Collection of fines are soft. Sales tax is on target. We won't know about mortgage tax until mid-November when we receive the next check. Pool maintenance costs along with Town Clerk and Court Clerk training fees which are above budget will be paid from the General Fund at the next meeting.

Chips reimbursements of about \$195,000 have been received. This represented work the Highway Department completed during the first part of the year. So, of approximately \$300,000 invested in road maintenance, Chips has paid for approximately \$200,000.

Year-end cash projection is stable at \$1,100,000.

Steve Olyha mentioned that the presence of Bonnie Hundt, Town Board Member, constitutes a quorum of Town Board members. Hugh Clark explained that because Bonnie Hunt is observing, not participating, there is not a quorum.

Carol Falcetti asked if the Ancram email list receives notice of FAC meetings; Art Bassin replied that FAC members and the Town Board receive the notice, not the public. Carol Falcetti asked why the public isn't invited to observe the meetings. There was discussion and ultimately Art Bassin recommended waiting until after the election so the new Town Board can make the decision. Everyone agreed.

Steve Olyha asked about the origin of the FAC. It was introduced in the 2010 Comprehensive Plan to advise the Town Board on finances and has been meeting for the past fourteen years.

2. 2024 Draft Budget – First draft of Tentative Budget and major variances to 2023 Budget

The 2024 Draft Budget is dependent on things we are not yet confident about such as mortgage tax income, sales tax income, building department income, fines income, and the cost of health insurance for employees. As we are closer to the November budget deadline there will be more clarity on these things. Currently, costs are close to what they normally are.

By using fund balance and with the addition of the strength of the overall economy taxes have been kept flat. Actually, due to the strength of sales and mortgage taxes which have grown dramatically, taxes have come down since Art Bassin took office from approximately \$900,000 annually to around \$700,000.

This could change and Art Bassin reiterated that this is a time for caution.

Steve Olyha mentioned that the 3% salary increase for Town employees may not be fair given the level of inflation. Art Bassin agreed that this should be looked at and discussed by the Town Board.

Ed Ferrato will be compensated for increased hours if he chooses to work additional hours as the work is there for him.

2a. 2024-2028 Capital Plan and ARPA investments

Art Bassin is talking with Jim Miller regarding the possibility of deferring some of the capital investments in the Highway Department. We don't have a good fix on what grant opportunities may be there for the Highway Department and potentially for affordable housing.

Not funded in the financial projection are pool repair and a recreation center at Blass Park. We would need grants or borrow for these things.

ARPA funds have been spent or allocated with \$39,000 dedicated to paying for future food delivery for Neighbors Helping Neighbors over the next three years.

3. Investment opportunities – Housing, Water, Pavilion, Solar, Pool playground, Pool renovation

Will Maitland Weiss stated that visibility and inclusion in the community will be the central topic for the next meeting. In addition, the committee discussed sharing the hydrologist Steve Winkley's report with Ancram hamlet residents who participated in the water survey. Strategic Investment Committee may consider recommending that the town set aside a fund of \$20,000 or \$30,000 which would help home owners by paying a portion of their particular well water remediation. The precedence for this is the \$30,000 going to home owners in Boston Corner for broad band internet service in their area.

4. Highway

Jim Miller was not able to attend the meeting.

5. Revaluation

There are seven Article 7's and five Stars filed. Four of the five Stars will be heard next Thursday at the Columbia County courthouse. Regarding the Article 7's, the town's attorney is working with residents' attorneys to try to work out settlements and avoid going to court.

6. Economic Environment – Government shut down

The County is predicting a normal year during 2024 for sales tax. It is recommending that towns budget a three percent increase in sales tax. However, Art Bassin continues to strongly urge caution!

7. Other

There was no further discussion

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Rader