

**DRAFT
BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 7, 2007**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Robert DiPanni
Susan LaPerla
Roger Smith

Robert Spangler
C. Daniel Ward

Judy Neville, Chairman

MEMBERS ABSENT: Mary Davis Cody, Kathleen Corbet, John Laird.

ALSO PRESENT: George Maranis, Administrative Officer; Gary Conrad, Chief Financial Officer; Mike Handler, New Canaan Ambulance Corps; Bruce Pauley, Pauley Tree Service; David Abbey, Superintendent of Schools; Mike Lagas, Business Manager, New Canaan Public Schools; Seth Pensa, New Canaan Advertiser.

Ms. Neville convened the meeting at 8:05 p.m. She called the roll and noted the absence of Ms. Cody, Ms. Corbet and Mr. Laird.

On the motion of Mr. Ward and second of Mr. Spangler, the minutes of Regular Meeting of July 10, 2007 were approved unanimously, Ms. LaPerla and Mr. DiPanni abstaining because of absence.

The Board discussed Item 3 on the agenda, **Request from the New Canaan Ambulance Corps to keep current fly car in addition to the new fly car.** Mr. Conrad said that the additional cost for insurance for this would be approximately \$1,500 per year, and maintenance costs would also run \$1,500 per year. The new vehicle has been ordered and is expected to arrive within a month. Mr. Handler explained that the old fly car has 44,000 miles on it and can be equipped with the necessary items. He said that it can be used as a backup vehicle when the other vehicle is being serviced, and he presented other reasons why the old fly car should be retained, including access to the Merritt Parkway, four-wheel drive capability and enhanced response time to emergency calls. On the motion of Mr. Ward and second of Mr. DiPanni, the Board voted unanimously to authorize the New Canaan Ambulance Corps to maintain the Chevy Tahoe fly car as a backup vehicle to the new fly car.

The Board then heard Item 4, **Discussion of part time position of Tree Warden.**

The position of part time Tree Warden was posted at 5 hours per week and got one response, that from a current full time employee. Mr. Pauley addressed the Board and explained that the position of Tree Warden should be filled by a licensed arborist. He opined that, although licensing is not a State requirement, it would be desirable in the case of the Town's Tree Warden. Tree Wardens typically own their own tree service company, and are knowledgeable in providing emergency service. Mr. Pauley said that proactive tree work is important, and that if healthy trees are properly maintained and pruned on a regular basis, the chance of damage due to wind or storms diminishes over time.

Mr. Pauley suggested a three part approach:

1) A Tree Board: This program is sponsored by the National Arbor Day Foundation. The program provides for the adoption of a Tree Ordinance by the Town Council, and the appointment of a Board of 5 members, each serving three year terms without compensation. The Tree Board would have the responsibility of overseeing Town trees and would be charged with the care of existing trees and the planting and selection of new trees.

2) A Tree Alliance: A group of volunteers trained on tree identification and the general health and condition of trees. The Alliance would assist the Tree Warden in doing the initial tree survey and inventory of all Town-owned trees.

3) A Tree Warden: The Tree Warden would be charged with the management of the tree inventory. The Warden would make recommendations to the Tree Board regarding preventive maintenance. The position would require less than 20 hours per week, and as little as 10 if proper preventive maintenance is performed. The Tree Warden would perform regularly scheduled inspections, and generally drive a proactive program to ensure healthier and safer trees.

Mr. Pauley volunteered his efforts in forming a Tree Board and a Tree Alliance, and the Board unanimously endorsed moving the matter to the Town Council for adoption of a Tree Ordinance and related measures.

The Board next addressed Item 5, **Presentation by the Board of Education of an agreement with Safir Rosetti for an amount not to exceed \$330,682 to competitively bid and complete the installation of a “Video Intercomm” system and “Exterior (surveillance) Cameras” at Saxe Middle School and the three elementary schools and “Interior (surveillance) Cameras” at Saxe.** Mr. Lagas and Dr. Abbey presented information to the Board with regard to a surveillance camera system at the schools. Mr. Lagas began with an update on the activities of the School Security Committee and the work already done at the elementary schools in the replacement of doors and locks. He then described the surveillance systems, explaining that the surveillance cameras would serve a two fold purpose - both preventative and re-creative. The cameras serve as a preventative measure since students behave differently if they know they are being videotaped, and they provide a permanent record of activity in the event an incident has to be recreated. This was presented to the Board of Selectmen, and a request was approved by that Board to move forward with an expenditure not to exceed \$330,682 to retain Safir Rosetti to manage the project, including the solicitation of bids and the installation of the systems. A remaining effort is the identification of “at risk” students, but before the approximately \$279,000 balance of the original \$1 million is expended, the Board would like to see a plan as to how this effort would be accomplished.

On the motion of Mr. Ward and second of Mr. Spangler, the Board unanimously approved the release of an amount not to exceed \$721,000 of the \$1 million included in the FY2007-08 budget, to be expended for locks and hardware for doors, surveillance equipment and consulting fees.

The Board then addressed Item 6, **Approval of year-end capital carryovers from the FY2006-2007 to FY2007-2008.** Mr. Conrad had previously sent a schedule of the carry-over items to the Board members for review. After some limited discussion, the Board, on the motion of Mr. Smith and second of Mr. DiPanni, unanimously approved year-end capital carryovers of \$1,269,778 from FY2006-2007 to FY2007-2008.

The Board next addressed Item 7, **Discussion of proposed equalization of the post-retirement health benefits for non-bargaining employees with the post-retirement health benefits of the Town’s union employees.** Mr. Conrad explained that the agreements with the three Town unions provided for extended health care benefits at the time of retirement that were not available to non-bargaining employees at this time. The present value of equalizing the post-retirement health benefits for the 67 non-bargaining employees would approximate a charge of \$2.5 million to the pension plan. Although it was the original intent that the Board of Finance would only discuss this matter at this meeting, on the motion of Mr. DiPanni and second of Mr. Ward, the Board voted unanimously to change the word “Discussion” to the word “Approval” in agenda Item 7. On the motion of Mr. DiPanni and second of Mr. Smith, the Board voted unanimously to approve the equalization of the post-retirement health benefits for non-bargaining employees with the post-retirement health benefits of the Town’s union employees. After further discussion, it was determined that more specificity was required with respect to the definition of “union employees.” On the motion of Mr. DiPanni and second of Mr. Smith, the Board voted unanimously to amend Mr. DiPanni’s prior motion to read as follows: “The Board voted unanimously to approve the proposed equalization of the post-retirement health benefits for non-bargaining Town employees with the post-retirement health benefits of the Town’s Public Works union employees.” On the motion of Mr. DiPanni and second of Mr. Smith, the Board unanimously voted to approve the amended motion. Subsequent to this vote, certain members of the Board expressed some reservations about tying the benefits of the non-union employees to those of the Public Works Union only, and Mr. Conrad was asked to present to the members at the next regular meeting of the Board in September a revised plan to achieve an equitable equalization of the post-retirement health benefits of non-union employees.

Finally, the Board discussed Item 8, **Discussion of certain implications of the recently enacted option allowing non-bargaining employees to “opt-out” of the Town’s health insurance program.** Ms. Neville explained that, as originally approved by the Board of Finance, an employee had to be currently enrolled in the benefits program as of July 1, 2007 in order to opt-out of the program and be paid \$3,000 annually. Questions were raised as to the equity of this requirement as it relates to employees who had been employed for a number of years who had never enrolled in the Town’s plan because they had coverage under their spouses’ health insurance policies. Mr. Conrad pointed out that the current cost to the Town for an employee plus spouse is \$14,237 per year, and for family coverage, \$19,976 per year. Given the significant cost savings to the Town with respect to an employee opting out, the question was raised whether an employee who had been employed for at least one year as of July 1, 2007 should be eligible for the opt-out award of \$3,000 irrespective of whether he or she were enrolled in the plan as of that

date. Mr. Ward suggested that Mr. Maranis and Mr. Conrad draft a document that clearly states the Town's policy and present it to the Board for action at its next meeting.

After a brief FAA update by Ms. Neville, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 10:17 pm on the motion of Mr. DiPanni and second of Mr. Ward.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert DiPanni, Secretary