

Operations Planning Committee

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

11:00 a.m.

Mazza Room

APPROVED MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 11:04 a.m.

a. Attendance:

- a. First Selectman Fred Camillo – Present
- b. Town Administrator/Chief Operating Officer Ben Branyan – Present
- c. RTM Moderator Alexis Voulgaris – Present
- d. Board of Education Chair Joe Kelly - Present
- e. Board of Estimate & Taxation Chair Dan Ozizmir – Absent
- f. Planning & Zoning Commission Chair Margarita T. Alban – Present
- g. Selectwoman Lauren Rabin – Absent
- h. Selectperson Janet Stone McGuigan - Present
- i. Committee recording secretary Ken Borsuk – Present

2. Approval of minutes.

Upon a motion by Ms. Alban and a second by Mr. Kelly, the minutes were approved unanimously.

3. Discussion of matters related to:

Ms. Voulgaris reported on “the big issue” which was the upcoming vote at the March 13 RTM meeting on whether to rescind approval of grant money for the Registrar of Voters at the January RTM meeting after some members said their votes were not counted by the new electronic voting system. Voulgaris said she had spent some time in the archives to determine how many times the RTM had done motions to rescind and said she could only find two instances starting in 1907, once in 1934 and another in 1940. She discussed the idea of whether the motion to rescind would “open up some sort of procedural Pandora’s box” where when people didn’t like the outcome of a vote and moved to rescind it. She said she researched what other bodies had done about this and reported some municipalities had set things so the ability to make motions to rescind would sunset after six months from the initial vote. Voulgaris worried about the impact of activist groups making motions to rescind from votes taken 20 years ago and the chaos that could potentially cause. Voulgaris said that the practice had always been that both Robert’s Rules of Order and RTM rules codified that once a vote is announced it is final and you could not redo votes. She said the people in favor of the motion to rescind wanted to redo the vote “under the auspices that the voting system was broken” but there was no evidence that the voting system was broken as the

system's vendor found no evidence that anything was broken. She said they believed what happened was user error with the new electronic system and that the motion "sort of speaks to the heart and soul of the RTM."

Ms. Stone McGuigan raised the idea of training for RTM members when doing interviews with candidates for Town boards and commissions. She noted the recent withdrawal of two candidates for the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency after their dissatisfaction with how the evaluation of their candidacy had been handled by some members of the RTM but said it was a bigger issue than that. Ms. Alban said the Town should consider broader training for interviewing candidates beyond the RTM to appointing authorities. Including boards and commissions that hire Town Hall employees, to make sure questions asked are appropriate and not out of line. Branyan noted that there were Human Resources representatives required to be at meetings for hiring of any Town employees to make sure questions were proper. Ms. Voulgaris agreed that having a protocol in place, starting with the Appointments Committee, about what can and can't be asked would be good.

Mr. Camillo spoke about the Americans with Disabilities grievance filed over the RTM's rejection of municipal improvement status for the Greenwich Avenue intersection improvement at Arch/Havemeyer. Camillo said as a result the state grant money that would have gone to the project has been allocated to other municipalities and the Town would likely have to pick up the cost for the project now. He said he had requested the Department of Public Works give him a "full accounting" of what needs to be done there for ADA compliance and noted "votes have consequences" as he mentioned how there was misinformation around the project. Camillo also spoke about the ongoing discussion about funding for Old Greenwich School's improvements and said things had gotten out of control in the discussion about it. He noted how much money the Town was spending on capital projects and that the OGS Building Committee knew that they would never be able to do both OGS and Central Middle School's full construction projects both at the same time. Camillo said all the projects would be funded but there had to be priorities.

Mr. Kelly stated for the record that "our schools are awesome." Responding to Mr. Camillo's comments about priorities with capital spending he said the Board of Education knew there were limited resources and noted that the board, previous to his tenure, had put together a list of the order school capital projects should go in. He said Julian Curtiss was top of the list with Old Greenwich School next and Riverside School third. Then the BET told the Board of Ed to reorganize ed specs for Julian Curtiss and every time the Board of Ed did that, it kept getting sent back to them by the BET. Then the district discovered the issues with Central Middle School and requested funding for a study which was rejected by the BET. He said Superintendent of Schools Toni Jones found the money elsewhere to fund the study and it was discovered the extent of the work needed had to move Central to the top of the list followed by Old Greenwich due to the BET not approving its requests for funding for Julian Curtiss. He said the ed specs for Central were based on what they thought the students needed as well as their fiduciary responsibilities

as board members. He said the Board of Education was now dealing with “very unsettling comments” from the BET about those ed specs and he was not sure how to react to them given the politics he saw on the BET. He said he would meet with Mr. Camillo and the other Board of Education members to discuss how to respond. Mr. Kelly expressed frustration over the number of two to two votes on the BET Budget Committee along partisan lines, especially when it came to funding for Old Greenwich School.

Ms. Alban said the discussion before the Planning and Zoning Commission about the safety improvements on Delevan Avenue in Byram, which include bumpouts, went “super well” with everyone expressing support for the project. She gave a quick update about planned work at the Homestead Inn. She said the place is being “restored” and they planned to add covered parking for the cars that are staying there. Alban said the plan was for it to be converted to a time share basis and there were concerns from the neighbors over a more intense use of the place. She said the meeting about it was very civil, though. Alban also reported the Town is increasing its percentage of affordable housing to get closer to the 10 percent requirement in the State’s 8-30g law over the last year. Alban said the number is close to 5.67 percent now and Stone McGuigan said that was good because the State would be able to see progress was being made.

4. Adjournment

At 12:48 p.m., the meeting was adjourned.

Prepared by Ken Borsuk
Recording Secretary