MINUTES of the regular meeting of the Board of Estimate and Taxation held on Monday, December 16, 2013 in the Town Hall Meeting Room, Greenwich, CT.

Chairman Michael Mason called the meeting to order at 6:35 P.M., after which the members pledged allegiance to the flag.

Board members in attendance:

Michael S. Mason, Chairman  
Arthur D. Norton, Vice Chairman  
Mary Lee A. Kiernan, Clerk  
Gregory Bedrosian  
Robert Brady  
William R. Finger  
Sean Goldrick  
Randall Huffman  
Marc V. Johnson  
Joseph L. Pellegrino  
Jeffrey S. Ramer  
Leslie L. Tarkington

Staff: Peter Mynarski, Comptroller; Roland Gieger, Budget Director; Lauren Elliott, Assessor; Robert Shipman, Assistant Assessor; John Crary, Town Administrator

Others: Peter Tesei, First Selectman; Drew Marzullo, Selectman; J. Wayne Fox, Town Attorney; Fred de Arango, Assistant Town Attorney; Anthony Johnson, Executive Director, Greenwich Housing Authority; Nancy Weissler and John Blankley, Incoming BET members

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

2. ROUTINE APPLICATIONS

ED-3 BOE – Transfer - $27,383.20

Transfer:
$27,383.20 to A620-53 52150 Professional Services/Data/Word
$27,383.20 from A620-53 51490 Profession & Other Special Service-NOC

Upon a motion by Ms. Kiernan, seconded by Mr. Pellegrino, the Board voted 12-0-0 to approve the application.

PD-3 Police Department - Approval to Use $20,000
Approval to Use:
$20,000 to F21310 54300 Maintenance/Sustainability
$20,000 from 2012 Regional DHS Port Security
Grant/Administered Via The City of Stamford, CT

Upon a motion by Ms. Kiernan, seconded by Mr. Pellegrino, the Board voted 12-0-0 to approve the application.

SE-3 First Selectman – Additional Appropriation – Up to and Including $200,000

Additional Appropriation:
$200,000 to P935-57350 Settlement - Ciara Smyth, et al. v. Kraig Gray & the Town of Greenwich
$200,000 from Risk Fund Balance

Upon a motion by Ms. Kiernan, seconded by Mr. Pellegrino, the Board voted 12-0-0 to approve the application in an amount up to and including $200,000.

NON-ROUTINE APPLICATIONS

GM-1 Greenwich Emergency Medical Service, Inc. (GEMS) – Release of Conditions - $2,031,300

Release of Conditions:
$2,031,300 to A440 57225 Contribution to GEMS

Mr. Pellegrino reported on the Budget Committee’s review of this application, highlighting GEMS’ realistic budget and GEMS’ financial performance versus budget in the last six months. The Budget Committee voted 4-0 in favor of this application. Mr. Goldrick stated that he would like to see how GEMS operates further. He asked that the Board address their operations during the upcoming February budget deliberations and suggested looking at alternative models.

Upon a motion by Mr. Pellegrino, seconded by Mr. Finger, the Board voted 12-0-0 to approve the application.

SE-2 First Selectman – Additional Appropriation – Up to and Including $100,000

Additional Appropriation:
$100,000 to P935-57350 Settlement – Diana Silonova v. Town of Greenwich
$100,000 from Risk Fund Balance

Upon a motion by Mr. Ramer, seconded by Mr. Finger, the Board voted 12-0-0 to go into Executive Session at 6:40 PM to discuss a pending legal matter.

Upon a motion by Mr. Ramer, seconded by Mr. Finger, the Board voted 12-0-0 to come out of Executive Session at 7:16 PM.

Mr. Pellegrino reported on the Budget Committee’s review of this matter. The Budget Committee voted 3-1 in favor of this application. Mr. Ramer reported on the Law Committee’s review of this matter. The Law Committee voted 2-0 in favor of this application.
Upon a motion by Mr. Norton, seconded by Ms. Kiernan, the Board voted 3-9-0 to increase the application to $120,000 (Mr. Mason, Mr. Pellegrino, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Bedrosian, Mr. Finger, Mr. Ramer, Mr. Huffman, Mr. Brady and Mr. Goldrick opposed). The motion failed.

Upon a motion by Mr. Ramer, seconded by Ms. Tarkington, the Board voted 6-6-0 to approve the application to spend up to and including $100,000 for the settlement of the Silonova v. Town of Greenwich claim (Mr. Mason, Mr. Pellegrino, Mr. Bedrosian, Mr. Brady, Mr. Huffman and Mr. Goldrick opposed). The motion failed.

3. ASSESSOR’S REPORT

Ms. Elliot reviewed the Department’s progress on the 2013 Grand List, motor vehicle assessments and the implementation of the Department’s new software.

Upon a motion by Ms. Tarkington, seconded by Mr. Finger, the Board voted 12-0-0 to accept the Assessor’s Report.

Upon a motion by Ms. Tarkington, seconded by Mr. Finger, the Board voted 12-0-0 to amend the Agenda and move up the consideration of the Assessor’s 2014-2015 Budget and Operational Plan.

Ms. Elliott noted that the Assessor’s budget for 2014-2015 was up 2.3%. Ms. Tarkington added that there was a multiyear capital request to fund the upcoming revaluation contained in this budget, which is the second year of this capital request.

Upon a motion by Ms. Tarkington, seconded by Mr. Finger, the Board voted 12-0-0 to accept the Assessor’s 2014-2015 Budget and Operational Plan.

4. COMPTROLLER’S REPORT

Mr. Mynarski presented the Comptroller’s Report, highlighting the upcoming capital project financing in January 2014 and the year-end closing for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. A discussion followed regarding the contracts with the three rating agencies and how the general obligation bond interest rates are reported in blended and non-blended formats.

Upon a motion by Mr. Norton, seconded by Mr. Ramer, the Board voted 12-0-0 to accept the Comptroller’s Report.

Upon a motion by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Pellegrino, the Board voted 12-0-0 to amend the Agenda and move up the consideration of the Finance Department’s 2014-2015 Budget and Operational Plan.

Mr. Mynarski noted that the Finance budget for 2014-2015 was up 2.0%. Mr. Mynarski also reviewed the funds budgeted for the BET and how these funds have been used previously.

Upon a motion by Mr. Ramer, seconded by Mr. Norton, the Board voted 12-0-0 to accept the Finance 2014-2015 Budget and Operational Plan.
5. ACCEPTANCE OF TREASURER'S REPORT SHOWING INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO ACTIVITY FOR THE PERIOD OF November 1, 2013 – November 30, 2013

Upon a motion by Mr. Norton, seconded by Mr. Pellegrino, the Board voted 12-0-0 to accept the Treasurer's Report.

6. BET Standing Committee Reports

There were no Standing Committee Reports.

7. BET Liaison Reports

There were no Liaison Reports.

8. BET Special Project Team Reports

800MHz Radio System Report – Mr. Brady provided highlights of the report contained in the Agenda packet. He noted solutions to areas of low transmission strength, including adding an antenna in Old Greenwich. He recommended that the full budgeted amount of $10.7 million, with an additional $1 million for the new antenna, be appropriated in FY 2014-2015 to gain contract negotiating leverage and equipment savings. Mr. Pellegrino asked about the useful life of the radio system and Mr. Brady noted that the useful life of this equipment was 10-15 years. Mr. Crary thanked Mr. Brady for his work on this project and on the phone system project.

GHS MISA/Remediation Report – Hard copies of these reports were distributed at the meeting and are attached to these minutes. Ms. Tarkington reported that MISA construction commenced July 1, 2013 and the project was currently 20% completed. Ms. Tarkington added that the project was 3-4 months behind schedule due to environmental testing and water infiltration problems. She commented that 28% of the Project Budget’s Contingency line item had been expended. The anticipated date for completion of the auditorium portion of the MISA project is December 2014. Ms. Tarkington added that there would be new information next month on a de-watering solution.

NEW BUSINESS

Approval of the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report – Mr. Norton reported on the Auditor’s presentation of the CAFR to the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee voted 3-0 to approve the CAFR with changes noted by Mr. Norton.

Upon a motion by Mr. Norton, seconded by Mr. Pellegrino, the Board voted 12-0-0 to accept the CAFR.

Approval of the Federal Single Audit – Mr. Norton reported on the Auditor’s presentation of the Federal Single Audit to the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee voted 3-0 to approve the Federal Single Audit.

Upon a motion by Mr. Norton, seconded by Mr. Pellegrino, the Board voted 12-0-0 to accept the Federal Single Audit.
Approval of the State Single Audit – Mr. Norton reported on the Auditor’s presentation of the State Single Audit to the Audit Committee. The Audit Committee voted 3-0 to approve the State Single Audit.

Upon a motion by Mr. Norton, seconded by Mr. Pellegrino, the Board voted 12-0-0 to accept the State Single Audit.

Approval of the Management Letter for the Year Ending June 30, 2013 – Mr. Norton reported on the Auditor’s presentation of the Management Letter to the Audit Committee and reviewed the six items highlighted by the Auditor. The Audit Committee voted 3-0 to approve the Management Letter.

Upon a motion by Mr. Norton, seconded by Mr. Pellegrino, the Board voted 12-0-0 to accept the Management Letter.

OLD BUSINESS

Greenwich Library Funding Budget Guidelines dated December 12, 2013 – Mr. Norton reported that the Audit Committee acts as the governance committee for the Board of Estimate and Taxation and in that capacity, it has worked since March, 2012 to prepare Funding Budget Guidelines for the Greenwich Library. These guidelines are needed to comply with Town of Greenwich Charter revisions implemented since the November, 1988 Stowell Memorandum was prepared. Because the Greenwich Library is a separate non-government entity providing a service to the Town by Special Acts of the Legislature, and the employees at the Library are Town of Greenwich employees, this document is necessary to have this Board exercise its fiduciary and budgetary responsibilities. The Greenwich Library Funding Budget Guidelines have four components. Three address the budget presentation and the fourth identifies the separate funding provided by the Peterson Agreement. The budget presentation sections clarify the process and they remove ambiguities inherent in the 1988 Memorandum. The three sections specify the process to itemize and to submit the budget requests by Major Object Codes; the second section specifies the capital costs expenditure for existing equipment; and the third section addresses the process for new programs and physical plan improvements proposed by the Library Board. The Audit Committee has approved these guidelines by a vote of 3-0-0, and recommends final approval by the full Board of Estimate and Taxation.

A discussion followed concerning the differences between the proposed Guidelines and the 1988 Stowell Memorandum. Mr. Goldrick questioned why the new Guidelines were needed. Mr. Mason explained the history of the Stowell Memorandum and the ambiguities contained therein. Mr. Norton and Mr. Brady noted how the new guidelines now clarify the process and responsibilities for major maintenance items. Mr. Finger noted that the Library’s Director and Board Chair have been involved with discussions and have endorsed the new Guidelines.

Upon a motion by Mr. Norton on behalf of the Audit Committee, the Board voted 10-1-1 to approve the Greenwich Library Funding Budget Guidelines dated December 12, 2013 (Mr. Goldrick opposed and Ms. Kiernan abstained).

Charter Revision – Resolution Postponed from November 18, 2013 BET Meeting – Mr. Finger reviewed the proposal contained in the Agenda packet and put forth at the last BET meeting as a first read. The proposal would revise the Charter provisions on the election of BET members pursuant to the home rule charter amendment authority contained in Charter Section
Mr. Finger explained that the proposal would increase voter choice and candidate competition, while maintaining balance on the BET Board by: 1) doubling the number of candidates per seat that may run from each of the two major parties (similar to the Board of Education), 2) lengthening terms from two to four years and 3) staggering the terms of BET members so that six seats, three for each major party, are filled every two years instead of the full twelve seats. The proposal is almost identical to a bi-partisan proposal made by BET members Walko and Krumeich in 2004. A discussion followed regarding intra-party competition, voter choice and accountability to voters, the success of the balanced board model, unbalanced boards in peer communities, the role of the minority party on the BET, the nomination of candidates by major parties, and the significance of the recent Board of Education election.

Upon a motion by Mr. Finger, seconded by Mr. Ramer, the Board voted 4-8-0 to approve the Charter Revision Resolution dated November 18, 2013 (Mr. Mason, Mr. Pellegrino, Mr. Norton, Ms. Tarkington, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Bedrosian, Mr. Goldrick and Mr. Huffman opposed). The motion failed.

Parsonage Cottage Working Group Report — Ms. Kiernan gave a progress report on the Working Group's efforts, noting that a detailed report was given at the November BET meeting. On November 25th, the Working Group sent a letter to the Housing Authority for the Town of Greenwich (HATG) recommending a refinancing of two Town loans to HATG and requesting a number of documents as part of the due diligence for the refinancing. On December 13, 2013, HATG sent a response letter that arrived too late for the BET Agenda packet and is attached to these minutes. Ms. Kiernan stated that the Working Group would seek additional analysis and advice from the Law Department regarding the HATG response letter, and the Working Group would identify next steps. Mr. Mason noted that this matter remains with the Working Group.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

BET Regular Meeting, November 18, 2013

Upon a motion by Ms. Kiernan, seconded by Mr. Ramer, the Board voted 12-0-0 to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of the BET from November 18, 2013.

CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

Mr. Mason thanked the three retiring Board members, Mr. Brady, Mr. Bedrosian and Mr. Pellegrino. Each of these Board members addressed the Board expressing their thanks to their fellow members and their satisfaction with serving the community.

Mr. Mason recognized that this was the final BET meeting of the term, and he thanked his fellow Board members and the Town staff for the quality of their work that enhanced the efforts of the BET during the last two years.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon a motion by Mr. Brady, seconded by Mr. Goldrick, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:50 P.M.
Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Sidor, Recording Secretary

Mary Lee A. Kiernan, Clerk of the Board

Michael S. Mason, Chairman