

1. School/Town Bond Hearing Minutes

Documents:

[DRAFT MINUTES FEB 5, 2024.PDF](#)

ATTENTION HARTFORD VOTERS
Bond and Charter Informational Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 5, 2024 @ 6:00 PM
Hartford Career and Technical Center
1 Gifford Road, BEST Room
In-Person at HACTC and Online (Zoom) Meeting
<https://zoom.us/j/97430755984> , meeting ID 974 3075 5984

The Hartford School Board and the Hartford SelectBoard will hold a Bond and Charter Informational Night to explain the bond initiatives, answer voter questions and solicit public input on the school and town bond proposals and charter changes.

AGENDA

Superintendent Tom DeBalsi opened the meeting at 6:00 PM. He welcomed the audience to the BEST room at HACTC. He offered the wifi code. There will be presentations with a question period following. He announced he would be monitoring the zoom attendees.

1. School District Facilities Improvement Bond

- Proposed \$21,000,000 General Obligation Bond for School District Infrastructure, Repairs, and Improvements, Presenters: Sara Campbell, School Board Member and Jonathan Garthwaite, Director of Buildings and Grounds

Sara Campbell reviewed a slide show showing the need for the bond for the district's aging facilities and infrastructure as well as future planning for programmatic needs. The priority at the beginning includes life safety and regulatory items. The focus will be on facilities planning enlisting professionals to study the current buildings. A catchment study will be done to study the growth in the district and how the buildings are currently used.

Jacob Vezina, Director of Finance, addressed the bond financing structure, including about \$9M in interest payments, giving a total of about \$30M. The interest payments will begin in the FY25 budget.

Jonathan Garthwaite addressed the state of the buildings, we're at a critical point but not at a crisis point. All buildings are in working order but do need attention.

Sara Campbell spoke about the arts, athletics, and academic programs. The studies will include our aspirations and moving our programs forward.

Questions from audience and zoom attendees, answered by district leaders

- bond process for the Wilder School, attracts tuition students, TD- proud of the Wilder School, nice facility for the two programs that are there, big need, new building supports students
- debt service payment, what happens if we don't do the bond, what minimal requirements are there, what's the difference, PM- not in position to take a big hit to fix all required this year, would qualify for tax rate assistance from Montpelier
- auditorium project, lighting board?, when will work be done, if it doesn't pass will the work in the projection happen? JG-sprinklers in HHS, lighting upgrades that meet code, timing will be done at once depending on sequencing of other projects, within the next 2

years, theater will not be shut down for two years, will meet program needs, life safety stuff comes first

- auditorium flooring, JG- addressed the flooring needs last spring, stage structure is fine, floor was repainted, are using it now
- What happens if the bond doesn't pass? JG- life safety and regulatory items come first, other items will be slowed down
- HHS band room water leak/manhole, JG- stormwater system for whole facility, runs under the high school, goes under the football field and exits by the interstate, all is included in the engineering study for the drainage system, have addressed with air exchanged system, carpet dryers
- maintenance needs haven't just crept up, we had a settlement from the roofs, how was the roof settlement money spent, PM- decisions were made at the time with the roof settlement money, TD- COVID money expenditures are listed on the board page, PM- govt has specific guidelines for expense, JV- will be preparing an informational page about the COVID relief money
- study committees, SC- will be a lot of stakeholder meetings
- new development in town, why the developers don't have to pay for the studies about how schools are used, taxpayers shouldn't have to take all of this on, PM- explained the user impact fee system for developers until about 2008 when development stopped, in an attempt to try to reduce the restrictions the school board removed the impact fees
- last year's budget, JV- warrant amount and the general fund difference, general fund increased \$4M, will post on the website
- stormwater project,
- RTU, JG-roof top units, replacements needed, part of the heating and ventilation system for the high school
- \$350,000 galvanized water replacement, JG- last time water supply lines were replaced with galvanized pipes, will be replaced before they start to fail, still getting water from the pipes
- additional 1% tax from town allocated to schools?, TD- money can't cross between the two entities, PM- state process for funding
- projects from 2017, roof repair, accomplished parking lot repair, storm water in parking lot then, rain gardens, engineering work RFPs for what we need and included in the bond, property taxes in VT to increase, dropping CLA numbers, ACT 127, JG- drainage project was limited to the parking lot and out to route 5, absolutely related but that project did not address current issue, research and engineering will be put out with an RFP, PM- revenue raising process worked moderately well without inflation, system is not designed to handle rising costs, state now negotiates health care representing a 16% increase in premiums this year, equity of grand lists within the state caused everything to go out of whack, tried hard to make sure the per pupil cost stayed under ten percent, basically it's a mess
- development fees are impact fees
- would it be helpful to host walk throughs in the buildings, JG-absolutely, email- bondquestions@hartfordschools.net, please email me with questions and comments

Mr. DeBalis thanked the staff, board members, zoom attendees, and the audience for attending.

2. Renovation of Fire Station No. 2

- Proposed \$1,300,000 General Obligation Bond for Design/Renovation of Fire Station No. 2 - Presenter: Scott Cooney, Hartford Fire Chief

Chief Cooney presented the warrant article language. About 25% of the emergency calls are coming from Quechee and West Hartford, about 70% are medical calls. He explained the staffing at both town stations. The fire station was dedicated in 1982, basically a garage that held some equipment. In 2021 a rental trailer was added to house the fire fighters now covering the station 24 hours. Planning has been done to convert the garage to include living quarters. This will also include space for the police department. He reviewed the bond payment schedule.

3. Proposed Uses of Local Option Taxes

- Ambulance (\$200,000) - Presenter Scott Cooney, Hartford Fire Chief

Chief Cooney shared the warrant article language of using some on the LOT funds. The estimated cost is \$315,000, trade in value of \$10,000, use some reserve and LOT funding.

Questions:

*How many ambulances? SC, own three ambulances, rotate through stations, replace them about 8-10 years, takes about 3 years to get it, this one was ordered May 2022, hasn't been started, do have a reserve account to use, reserve account will continue to build if we can use some LOT money, next oldest ambulance is 2019

*ways to make the building more environmentally efficient, any changes would affect the cost, SC-carport could use PV, system would have to be utilized to support the building couldn't be sold to the grid, it's intended to do as many energy efficient projects

- Improvements to Lyman Point Park (\$225,000), Presenter Scott Hausler, Director of Parks and Recreation

Mr. Hausler reviewed the warrant language. This does meet the Parks and Rec vision and mission statements, improvement project of \$325,000, will use \$100,000 reserve funds, asking to use \$225,000 from LOT funds, includes: handicap access, covered picnic tables, pedestrian pathway, inclusive playground feature, fencing, river overlook, seating, relocation of existing of performance stage, will pursue grants that are available for these projects, the LOT is from existing tax not any potential increased tax, ongoing stakeholder meetings, reviewing RFPs from five vendors, will use the existing funds to start the project,

Questions:

*stakeholder meetings, how is this happening, SH- park and rec commission have invited a few members and groups, part of the RFP will be use of the stakeholder meetings

*Can LOT funds support all projects? SH- yes, no competition for funds

- Beautification of Town Villages (\$30,000), Presenter Scott Hausler, Director of Parks and Recreation

Mr. Hausler reviewed the warrant language, requesting \$30,000 of LOT funds, some near-term and long term potential projects, plants in village centers, implement of planters, design a long term plan for work, own/contract/volunteers out for service, new signage, business sponsors, utilizes existing LOT not potential increased tax, develop a beautification action plan, banner programs, hometown hero project

Questions:

*Friends of Hartford Gardens, work with this group or two separate groups? SH- assuming we would work together

*sustainability, using LOT, will you ask for the same next year?SH- feels confident that a grant program or business sponsors to support this to make it happen financially, good use of the funds from restaurants and hotel use, our goal is to find other ways to support it other than Park & Rec budget, seed money to purchase the equipment

*Having done the planters at the dog park, RFP with companies with experience? past summer's rain, need to research appropriate plants, SH- working with a landscaper who did the planters in WRJ, will seek right support

4. Town/School Charter Revisions

- Review and Discussion of the proposed town and school charter changes,

Presenter: Michael Hoyt, Hartford Selectboard Chair

Mr. Hoyt reviewed the Charter changes, presented at Jan informational meeting, had a public hearing last week and will have a second at Selectboard meeting tomorrow, all changes are underlined in the document, strikeouts are to be deleted,

1. local option tax- adds a sales tax to current rooms, meals, and alcoholic beverages tax, additional 1%, 6% state tax plus 1% town, would add sales tax
2. Town meeting committee, adds warrant informational night meeting
3. warnings for town and school district meetings will be posted on social media
4. town/school moderator term will increase to three year seat
5. collection of delinquent taxes will be assumed by the town manager's office
6. town treasurer may appoint an assistant town treasurer in his/her absence

There are a couple procedural changes and an additional LOT increase.

Questions:

*future discussion of short term rentals

*explanation of Town Charter- MH- town follows state statutes, state laws reigns supreme, some abilities to enact changes in town, can't freely run our own republic, there are limits

*clarification of voting language, MH- 1% of the LOT will be its own warrant article, the other language changes will be together in another warrant article, if this passes it goes to Montpelier for legislative action

*supports the 1% sales tax, referenced the projects LOT supported in the past, most are necessities that need to be funded, hasn't affected restaurant industry, hasn't heard any business owners speaking out against it, asked the selectboard to support it, MH- correct, items help defray the local budget, need for services remains, he supports it

*what's the amount of money you expect to receive from the parking meters, Town Manager, John Haverstock, be very careful about the estimates, \$200,000-250,000, some of which have to be put back into enforcement

Mr. DeBalsi thanked the audience for attending, both boards wanted to do this for informational purposes for the town.

The meeting ended at 7:51 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Cherrie Torrey

Hartford School Board Recorder