

## LIBRARY, MUSEUM & ARTS & FINANCE JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

### EARTHPLACE BUDGET

April 29, 2024 6:30 PM - Location: Room 201 – Town Hall

#### LMA COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kristin Mott Purcell – Chair  
Candace Banks  
Brandi Briggs  
Dick Lowenstein  
Karen Kramer  
Wendy Batteau  
Julie Whamond  
Michael Perry  
Melissa Levy  
David Rosenwaks

#### FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT

Seth Braunstein, Chair  
Ari Benmosche  
Rachel Cohn  
Nancy Kail  
Melissa Levy  
Lynn Hogan  
Don O'Day  
David Rosenwaks

#### PRESENTING:

Tony MacDowell – Executive Director, Earthplace

Tony provided a brief update on Earthplace and a review of this year's budget request of \$105,000 for Fiscal year 2024/2025.

#### Key points reviewed/discussed:

- Earthplace has been growing and doing very well.
- The \$105,000 from the Town represents 2.5% of Earthplace's budget and is a very meaningful component of their overall funding.
- Earthplace is 56 years old and has been running nature and educational program ever since.
- 1956 Earthplace was founded as the first nature-based childcare facility
- In the 1960s, Earthplace
- Have 62 acres, 84 acres if you include the Partick Wetlands that were recently added all with
- Harborwatch is a 38 year-old asset of Earthplace which adds tremendous value to Westport and the surrounding towns.
- 50-60 people on staff. Have part-time half full-time – People assets are key to our success
- We have expanded our special needs services for kids and adults.

- Our Urban Youth Initiative saw 1,500 kids from Bridgeport come through this year, 1,500 from Norwalk in addition to 1,500 from Westport
- Our annual budget is \$3.5 million and we recently grew our cash reserves to one-year operating budget, so \$3.5million. Earthplace has benefitted from Trust bequests from key supporters of Earthplace over the years.
- Focus going forward is our 65 year-old infrastructure – Cash reserves will help us update our facilities.
- Earthplace provides significant value to the Town of Westport
  - Earthplaces delivers access to nature to Westport and the surrounding towns
  - 10-15,000 people per year use Earthplace’s nature trails
- HarborWatch
  - HarborWatch provides \$47,000 in value of monitoring Westport waterways and Saugatuck River funded by Earthplace
  - 7 Towns also support HarbourWatch and utilize their water monitoring services
- Financials
  - We treat bequests as non-recurring
  - Earthplace does not have an endowment
  - Grants are harder to forecast
  - We know how much we can get from day care, summer camp, etc each year.

Questions:

Talk about staffing – Staffing is tough. Had to raise salaries to retain staff last year. Salary as a line item went down due to eliminating two staff heavy programs including Little Wreckers and some other staffing shifts.

How is the pre-school doing? Program is going great. Significant waiting list with lots of new Westport families.

\$1M in closing costs on a loan. What loans have fees? A small car loan and another small loan.

Talk about your earned income revenue stream. Earned income is summer camp and pre-school tuition. Harborwatch has standing contracts with seven towns for water monitoring which creates a small revenue stream.

How do you look at depreciation? Reserved money for future Cap-Ex

How do HarborWatch and Sustainable Westport relate to the Earthplace budget? HarborWatch is a key component of Earthplace. Sustainable Westport used Earthplace as a fiscal sponsor to get established and are now an independent entity.

Voting

For Finance, Melissa Levy motioned and Rachel Cohn seconded the motioned to approve the Earthplace budget of \$105,000 for FY '24/25. The motion passed Finance unanimously.

For LMA, Candace Banks motioned and Karen Kramer seconded to approve the Earthplace budget for \$105,000for FY '24/25. The motion passed LMA unanimously.

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