

Board of Finance

Minutes

Public Hearing

**Monday, March 30, 2015 at 7:00pm
Seymour Middle School Auditorium**

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DATE:
TIME: 2:20 PM
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

Members Present: David Bitso, Rich Grudzias, Beverly Kennedy, Heather McDaniel, Bill Sawicki, John Stelma, Ed Wasikowski; Jim Cretella and Jake Holly (alternates)

Members Absent: None

Item #1 – Call Meeting to order

Chairman Bill Sawicki called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Item #2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone saluted the Flag and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item #3 – Discussion of Budget

First Selectman Kurt Miller discussed the Town's municipal budget and his goals to improve the Town's finances.

- Thanked the Board of Finance for their efforts and hard work with this year's budget
- Budget Process – First Selectman does not create budget, but does a continuous review of our current and future needs; lets the Board of Finance know the direction he would like to go in with the budget.
- The Board of Finance then creates the budget, maintains budget.
- Finalized budget presented to Board of Selectmen on April 7th.
- Our current rating with S & P is "AA+" – we have improved over the last few years
- First Selectman determines how much money there is to spend and then determine how to allocate
- Revenues – 3 main sources – local taxes, state revenue, fees, assessments & interest - the revenues from the state is uncertain at this time; not much increase in amount from state in previous years. We are working to stabilize taxes, although this does not mean that the mill rate won't increase.
- Fund Balance goal is 10% of Operating Budget – the Fund Balance should not be used for recurring expenses as was done in the past. Basically, this is the Town's savings account. In 2007 was 9.13%; In 2010 was 5.91%; In 2014 was 8.7%. Still working towards the 10%.
- Debt Service – amount the Town borrows; If Debt Ratio is 6-8% is OK; If Debt Ratio is over 9% considered "Tough"; currently at 8.94% - Better than last year; of this number, 7.13% is for the Town and 1.81% is WPCA debt; of the 7.13%, 77% is for the School Purpose Bond due to our new school buildings; positives: schools are new, WPCA debt is separate; negatives: roads are in bad shape, town buildings are in bad shape, infrastructure is in bad shape; we are improving with setting aside money for big ticket items. Building Committee has been formed to assess the Town Buildings.
- Capital – 5 year Long Term Capital Plan – we need to be proactive; Selectmen control the Capital Account, not the Board of Finance

- Big changes this year: retiree health insurance is up \$80,000, workers comp insurance is up \$25,000, proactive road account is up \$50,000, regular health insurance is down \$343,000, residential garbage cost is down \$100,000
- Municipal increases: \$480,962. Includes: vacuum truck \$100,000 (need due to new legislation, did receive grant for part of cost, sharing cost with four towns), new DPW truck (many of current vehicles are very old), increase in legal fees line due to pending lawsuit, increase in road account

Board of Education Chairman Yashu Putorti discussed the Board of Education Budget

- ½ of spending is the salaries
- Our job is to service our students
- Other large cost items are: transportation \$1,630,455, tuition \$1,156,228, and supplies \$1,777,785
- Most of the change from last year are contractual obligations and known cost adjustments; to provide services to the students drives nearly all changes to school budget
- 34 of 73 line items had either zero increase or a decrease
- There are many cost savings and savings initiatives
- Increase in Special Education related expenses this year
- We spend \$13,097 per student which is less than the state average
- Originally requested a 3.2% increase (\$1,016,718) but the Board of Finance cut \$66,718 so the increase is only 2.99%

Item #4 – Public Comment

Richard Rossik – 34 Roberts Street – was concerned that the Police Chief would be retiring this year and this was not included in budget; felt that the Deputy Police Chief position was not needed; recommended not cutting the purchase of new trucks. First Selectman Miller said that the Police Chief does not need to retire until age 70 so this is not an issue. Deputy Police Chief position is needed. Hopefully we will not need to cut the purchase of the trucks.

Trisha Danka – 203 Pearl Street – under “Other Purchased Services - Revaluation” cut of \$33,000; strongly recommend that this amount be reinstated. First Selectman Miller said that the revaluation cost is \$100,000 per year and we have been putting \$33,000 per year towards this but we currently had a credit for this year. Next year will be reinstated.

Cindy Dion – 18 Carriage Drive - feels that the Town is separated, not working together; there is not enough information out there to the taxpayers and parents; felt that the elected officials, Board of Finance are responsible to do this.

Nathaniel Alapatt – 104 Bungay Road – agreed that the information on town meetings, activities and budget information was not well distributed; not many newspapers any more.

Bob Koskelowski – Pearl Street – thanked the Board of Education, Board of Finance, Board of Selectmen members and the First Selectman for their hard work on the difficult task of the budget and for looking toward the future of our Town and reducing the Debt Service. Hopefully it will pass on the first try. First Selectman Miller said that we have tried using social media and Code Red announcements to inform the public on our important activities. He asked if anyone as any ideas or suggestions to please let him know.

David Barker – South Main Street – suggested that maybe a newsletter be mailed with important events to let the public know; there are not many newspapers with this information in them.

Kristen Harmeling – 27 Patrick Drive – agreed that the mailing of a newsletter to residents would be an excellent idea; also, maybe if we could have a set time of month for the Town Budget Hearing and Referendums this would help people to always know when they are, like the first Tuesday in November is always Election Day.

Stefan Behuniak – 77 Grand Street – suggested that it would be good if there were a way to communicate the direct benefits of the approval of the budget passing throughout the year, not just at budget time.

Item #5 – Adjournment

Motion to adjourn

Motion: Rich Grudzias

Yes: 7

Second: Heather McDaniel

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.

Submitted by:

Monica Dimon

Recording Secretary