

Board of Finance Special Meeting Minutes  
April 7, 2020 at 7:30pm  
Held via Conference Call

**In attendance:** Board of Finance (BOF) Chairman Steve Ezzes, Board of Finance Members: Dick Bochinski, Allan Grauber, Jeff Farr, Greg Murphy, Amy Gare, Rone Baldwin, Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz, Finance Director Rick Darling, First Selectman Chris Spaulding, Board of Education Chairman Tony Pesco, Board of Education Members: Taffy Miller, Victor Escandon, Hillary Koyner, WPS Assistant Superintendant Mike Rizzo, Superintendent Bill McKersie, members of the press and Weston Residents.

- 1- The Budget process was discussed amongst BOF Members. BOF members would prefer to wait to officially adopt a budget and set a mill rate until after they receive public comments at the upcoming Public Hearing. Mr. Luiz and Chairman Ezzes explained how the virtual public hearing would occur, including how the Town will communicate news of the public hearing. Chairman Ezzes also spoke about the impact Covid-19 has had and will have on our community such as tax collection, Social Services, Emergency Services supplies Mr. Baldwin expressed concern with state revenue.
- 2- **Discussion/decision regarding Board of Selectmen's requested operating budget for FY 2020-21.** Mr. Luiz presented the following operating reductions to the Board of Selectmen's Operating Budget: 1) A \$20,000 reduction in parks and recreation due to the pond being closed this summer; 2) A \$10,000 reduction in pension funding due to the State providing updated contribution figures; 3) A \$10,000 reduction in the Town's contribution to the OPEB trust fund; 4) A \$35,000 reduction in the health district line item in consideration of Easton expecting to join the Health District; and 5) A reduction of the Transfer Station sticker price increase for next fiscal year from \$5.50 to \$4.00 in consideration of the Town of Weston likely joining the Housatonic Resources Recovery Authority effective July 1, 2020. Board of Finance expressed unanimous support to include these reductions in the proposed Board of Selectmen operating budget. With the exception of Mr. Grauber and Ms. Gare, Board members spoke in support of keeping the road resurfacing funding in next year's Public Works budget the same as this year's budget. Rick Darling suggested that investment income be budgeted at \$275,000 for FY '21 due to interest rates recently decreasing. Board of Finance members agreed.
- 3- **Discussion/decision regarding the Board of Education's requested operating budget for FY 2020-21.** Tony Pesco spoke about the latest spending reductions proposed by the BOE that would result in the BOE budget increase going from 2.89% to 2.28%. Phil Cross and Superintendent McKersie reviewed reductions, including items such as software and staffing. Superintendent McKersie stressed the latest reductions do not impact students. Ms. Gare asked for some clarification on distance learning costs and a math department reduction. Superintendent McKersie stated we are in good shape for distance learning and software, and that the District has enough Chromebooks. Mr. Cross stated they have not

incurred any significant expenses due to distance learning. Mr. Rizzo spoke about special education related costs. Mr. Grauberd asked if we are saving money now on food costs. Dr. McKersie explained costs and savings are a wash Mr. Baldwin stated he is going to have trouble approving a special appropriation to cover the District's projected deficit. Mr. Bochinski congratulated the BOE on how they have handled the latest additional reductions in their budget. Dr. McKersie spoke about possible impacts the current situation will have on the rest of the year and graduation requirements. Mr. Ezzes asked if consideration has been given to utilizing part-time town employees to facilitate special education transportation. Mr. Rizzo said he would put some thought into that.

**4- Discussion/decision regarding BOS and BOE requested capital budget for FY 2020-21.** Mr. Luiz responded to questions about proposed expenditures on the DPW Mason Dump Truck and improvements to the area near the Onion Barn.

**5- Discussion/decision regarding debt and interest budget for FY 2020-21.** No discussion

Mr. Bochinski asked if unspent road resurfacing funds in the present fiscal year would roll over into the next fiscal year. Mr. Darling answered no.

Mr. Darling explained that based on the latest spending decreases and the latest decrease in investment income, the proposed budget now stands at a mill rate increase of 1.39%.

Mr. Farr asked how much we would need to reduce the budget by in order to have a mill rate increase of 0%. Mr. Darling responded around \$1 million. Mr. Farr feels all three boards should work together to try to get to a 0% mill rate increase. Mr. Grauberd asked how much of a spending reduction is necessary to get the mill rate increase to 1%. Mr. Darling responded around \$250,000.

Mr. Murphy proposed a flat budget. Mr. Baldwin suggested that for planning purposes a \$1 million spending reduction be split \$200,000 to the BOS operating budget and \$800,000 to the BOE operating budget. Mr. Bochinski expressed that while he is not presently advocating for further cuts, all options should be considered. Board of Finance members expressed support for the BOS and BOE to draft budget possible reductions of \$200,000 and \$800,000 respectively.

The Board of Finance reached consensus that it should put forth for public consideration a proposed budget that features a 1.39% Mill Rate increase.

**6- Discussion/decision regarding approval of minutes from the March 19th and March 26th meetings.** Mr. Bochinski moved, Mr. Grauberd seconded, motion passed unanimously.

**7- Adjournment.** Mr. Farr moved to adjourn at 9:15pm. Mr. Murphy seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Minutes submitted by: Randi Derene, Administrative Assistant

Minutes approved: May 7, 2020