

Board of Finance  
Regular Meeting - March 16, 2010  
MINUTES

Attending:

Board of Finance Members: Jim Meinhold, Lynne Vanderslice, Warren Serenbetz, Gail Lavielle, Al Alper and Andy Pforzheimer

Others: Sandy Dennies (CFO), Marilyn Gould (P&Z), Sarah Taffel (HR), Christian Camerota (Wilton Patch), Joan Lownds (Wilton Bulletin) and Milton Pohl (Wilton citizen)

Call to Order:

Chairman Warren Serenbetz called the meeting to order at 7:34pm

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Al Alper to approve the minutes of the 2/23/10 regular meeting. Motion seconded by Gail Lavielle and approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Jim Meinhold to approve, as amended, the minutes from the 2/23/10 BoF-BoE work session. Motion seconded by Al Alper. The amended wording states Jim Saxe, BoE member, attended the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously.

Budget Update- BoE:

Unfortunately Ken Post, CFO of the Board of Education, was unable to attend the meeting, however provided a detailed handout. Mr. Serenbetz suggested BoF members send any questions to Gil Bray who will answer or forward them to Ken Post.

Mrs. Vanderslice commented she's heard from citizens the details in the newspapers are not as in depth as in previous years stressing the importance of people attending the public hearings to get the details. Mr. Serenbetz agreed with this statement.

In reviewing the information provided by Ken Post, there was some confusion regarding the Excess Cost Grant's impact on FY10 estimated expenses. The Excess Cost Grant is Wilton's special education reimbursement from the State. Ms. Dennies acknowledged this is also an area of concern for her from an accounting standpoint and she will speak directly with Ken Post to clarify how this revenue is budgeted and related timing issues when it's actually received.

#### Budget Update - BoS :

Ms. Dennies reported as of 3/12/10 there were no significant changes to the BoS budget. Her biggest areas of concern remain the licenses & permit fees and interest income. Both these areas of revenue are well below budget at this time. It is hopeful the spring market will see a rise in permits and conveyance taxes but this area is market driven and can't be predicted. The town believes the building projects are out there, just smaller in size, not fewer in number.

Interest income is off by about \$600,000. It was determined the 2010 budget for this item was indeed set correctly at the time as interest rates didn't start dropping until after the budget was set in 2009. It will be important to look at this line item carefully when setting next year's budget.

The good news is as of now there has been no need to tap the Charter Authority for emergency funding. Ms. Dennies expressed all town departments' expenses were within their budgets.

Mr. Serenbetz inquired about the upcoming Bond refunding. The pricing will be set by Moody's on 3/31/10. While our target savings is around \$420,000 it is important to note the rate set on a specific day determines the savings of each bond issue. If we are not happy with the pricing we can wait until the market changes and try another day for a better rate. As of now we are looking to refund \$15 million in bonds. The biggest savings of the bond refunding will be seen only in the first year, the following years will show minimal savings.

#### FY 2011 BoF Budget:

The BoF Budget for FY 2011 initially indicated an increase over the 2010 Budget by \$4,500 due to funding the television broadcasting of the meetings

and the inclusion of the Recording Secretary. Both of these items were previously budgeted within the BoS misc. contractual services. These two cost areas are now properly budgeted within the BoF budget and include more meetings than last year. In order to keep the 2011 budget flat with 2010 at slightly over \$66,000, Mr. Pforzheimer suggested re-bidding the audit contract. Mr. Pforzheimer made a motion to reduce by \$4,500 the BoF budget in an effort to keep it flat for 2011. The motion was seconded by Mr. Meinhold and approved by unanimous consent.

#### Miscellaneous Discussions:

It was determined there was no need for the additional work session meeting with the BoE scheduled for 3/23 and the BoS scheduled for 3/18. Mr. Pforzheimer indicated he would like to have these meetings if there was an indication from either board they had a lower budget number, which is not the case. Mr. Alper made a motion to remove these two meetings from the calendar. Mrs. Lavielle seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

In preparation for the upcoming public hearings Mrs. Vanderslice suggested, based on questions and comments from citizens, the BoF present the risks and opportunities associated with the proposed budget. Mr. Serenbetz agreed and stated that he planned to do that. Ms. Vanderslice emphasized that the bottom line is that it's important to show the town there are no major surprises associated with this budget. The purpose of the public hearing is to hear what the public thinks of the numbers and the budget as presented. Both Boards have already been told their numbers are too high therefore a request to cut their budgets should not come as a surprise. Mr. Pforzheimer stressed the importance of communicating, even over communicating, with the public throughout the budget process.

#### Other Business:

Mr. Serenbetz suggested the BoF follow Darien regarding a statement on House Bill # 5425. This bill seeks to move the burden of proof to the parents regarding litigation for special education cases brought forth by the parents. CT is currently the only state still requiring the school district carries the burden of proof. This results in excessive costs to the town.

Mrs. Lavielle inquired about the BoE's position on the proposed Bill and the response was it fully supports the change as well as a related BoF statement.

Mr. Meinhold stated he was in favor of supporting the Bill due to the legal precedent as it's clearly the right thing to do rather than supporting it just because it saves money. Lively discussion followed as many BoF members disagreed, others partially agreed with Mr. Meinhold. In the end, the agreement was the BoF is about costs and properly managing money. It is mandated to control spending therefore has the responsibility to respond to an unfunded mandate like this one that would clearly impact the town. It doesn't mean every unfunded mandate deserves a BoF response. A motion was made by Jim Meinhold to approve a Wilton version of the Darien statement to send to Hartford before the 3/24 deadline. This motion includes routing a document by e-mail for all BoF members to see in advance and approve once drafted, before releasing the document for distribution. Motion seconded by Al Alper and approved unanimously.

Mrs. Lavielle introduced 5 additional unfunded mandates under consideration in the CT legislature. One covers delaying in-school suspensions, which was to be effective in 2010 and has been postponed once already. Mr. Serenbetz will be in touch with Gil Bray at the BoE to determine the financial impact to Wilton and a possible BoF statement.

Senate Bill # 198, if passed, will require a 2/3 vote to enact an unfunded mandate. All BoF members were in agreement with this Bill. A motion was made by Mr. Pforzheimer for Mrs. Lavielle to draft a letter on behalf of the BoF in favor of this Bill. This motion includes routing the draft document via e-mail for all BoF members to see in advance and approve, before releasing the document for distribution. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Lavielle.

Mr. Meinhold stated there were 5 public letters to be entered into the minutes.

#### Public Comments:

Marilyn Gould questioned some budget numbers found in the local papers. She asked the BoF members to consider that the easiest way to keep taxes in check and not cut services is to allow for no increase in wages for town employees. She believes the proposed 5.1% tax increase is unfair. Mr.

Serenbetz responded the issue has already been raised with each Board and apparently the Teachers Union has turned down the request from the BoE to discuss salary freezes.

Both Mrs. Gould and Mr. Serenbetz encourage all Wilton citizens come to the public hearing to truly reflect how Wilton feels.

Milton Pohl, another Wilton citizen stated appreciation for the televised BoF meetings. He believes a 5.1% increase is obscene and thinks productivity of town employees should be increased instead.

His suggestions for possible cost cutting areas were Tracksides, Ambler Farm, Wilton Commons and the Wilton Library. He suggested the library work with other towns as part of the regionalization effort and maybe each local library closes one day a week to save costs and its' citizens can use the neighboring libraries on that day. Several BoF members commented positively on this suggestion. Mr. Serenbetz thanked both Ms. Gould and Mr. Pohl for their comments.

Final issues included Mrs. Vanderslice confirming the head count report from the BoS is forthcoming and Mr. Alper stated there are still some outstanding questions from the BoE to be answered. Mr. Serenbetz indicated that those questions had been answered and could be picked-up at Police headquarters.

Adjournment:

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 9:18pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy Roberts  
Recording Secretary