

Board of Finance  
Regular Meeting – November 16, 2010  
Minutes

**Attending:**

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

Others: Sandy Dennies, (CFO), Tom Thurkettle (DPW), Joan Lownds (Wilton Bulletin), John Savarese (Town of Wilton), Lisa Bogan (ANCC), Dave Lisowski (Assessor), Christian Camerota (Wilton Patch), Heather Borden Herve (Parent/Wilton Patch), Maria Wilcox( parent), Priscilla Thors( parent), Tyler Thors( parent), Summer Downey( parent), Kathleen Rubin( parent), Kate Filaski (parent), Sarah Gioffre (parent), Carolina Corrigan( parent), Jennifer Iannuzzi ( parent), Vickie Mathews (parent), Eric Cameron (citizen), Amanda van Heyst (parent), David Etzback (parent), Milton Pohl (citizen), Gail Latone( parent), Vivian McVey(parent).

**Call to Order:**

Chairman Warren Serenbetz called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.

**Approval of Minutes:**

A motion was made by Andy Pforzheimer to approve the minutes for the October 19, 2010 regular meeting. It was seconded by Lynne Vanderslice and approved unanimously.

**Brief Discussion of the meeting with BOE on October 25 :**

There was a brief discussion on the special meeting with the BOE on Oct. 25<sup>th</sup>. No recording was done from that meeting, no minutes taken and it was not on TV. BOF members discussed the possibility of having it on TV in the future. An action report of the meeting will be posted on the website.

**Bald Hill Road Bridge Replacement Project:**

Tom Thurkettle of the DPW reported the cost estimate for the project is \$817,700.

The town has received approval for a grant of \$654,160 from DOT. That is 80% of the total cost estimate. Tom Thurkettle requested an appropriation of \$163,540 from the Charter Authority. The original estimate for the project was \$520,000. If the project comes in over \$817,700, further approval must be obtained.

Lynn Vanderslice asked if the original \$520,000 estimate is still accurate. Tom Thurkettle said he's very confident it is.

A motion was made by Gail Lavielle to approve the request for an appropriation of \$163,540 from the Charter Authority to proceed with the Bald Hill Road Bridge project. Lynne Vanderslice seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

### **STEAP Grant:**

Tom Thirkettle opened the discussion about accepting the STEAP grant from DECD (Department of Economic and Community Development). Originally a grant of \$500,000 was requested. A grant of \$200,000 was approved. The grant money will be used for the cost of materials. The costs for labor and equipment will come from the Public Works Department. Tom Thirkettle said the original project cost was split half for labor and half for materials. Warren Serenbetz asked if the labor on the project would come out of overtime. Tom Thirkettle said it would not. Mr. Thirkettle was also asked if there was \$200,000 in the budget for the town's half of the cost. He said it would be there when the work starts next March as part of the roads program. There was much discussion on concerns about further costs to the town for the project. Tom Thirkettle reported that DPW can accommodate the costs between this and next year's budget.

Warren Serenbetz summarized that the STEAP grant for \$200,000 is for materials and that labor comes from DPW and not from outside laborers. No estimate was given for how much needs to be budgeted for this in the DPW budget. More discussion followed on how the DPW can absorb the costs since it asked for \$500,000 but only received \$200,000. Tom Thirkettle reiterated that the grant money covers the total materials cost, and that the road program still has money for other costs. He added that some of the labor for installing the curbing in the Town Center will fall in the FY2012 budget.

A motion was made by Al Alper to approve the acceptance of the STEAP grant for \$200,000. Gail Lavielle seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

### **Grant Application - Comprehensive Enforcement Program Grant:**

Sandy Dennies opened the discussion stating that there are actually two grants:

The first one is the typical DUI grant allocation for \$41,000 which goes toward the DUI process throughout the year. This is done every year. Last year the amount was \$40,000.

The second grant is from the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security. It provides for \$5,000 per month for an officer assigned to working with the state on the Connecticut Intelligence Center involved with Homeland Security. The \$5,000 is salary. Sandy said overtime wouldn't be an issue.

Regarding the DUI grant, Alper asked if additional costs for fuel, wear and tear on car, etc. will be an issue for Wilton. Sandy Dennies stated the grant covers the officer's time only. Wilton picks up the rest. Sandy Dennies said that since vehicles picking up DUI's are usually idling or shut off completely, there is usually little wear and tear on vehicles. She added that she would clarify further costs with Chief Lombardo.

Andy Pforzheimer asked Sandy Dennies what would happen if we didn't take the Homeland Security grant. Sandy said the program is optional, but that Wilton would lose out on security. Al Alper was still concerned with unforeseen costs. Gail Lavielle said there had been no substantial change for years.

A motion was made by Gail Lavielle to approve the application for the Comprehensive DUI grant of \$41,000. Al Alper seconded it and it was approved unanimously.

A motion was then made by Lynne Vanderslice to approve the grant from the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security for \$60,000. Gail Lavielle seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

#### **Area Nine Cable Council:**

John Savarese and Lisa Bogan asked for grant money to replace aging equipment, etc for broadcasts. Lynne Vanderslice asked if other providers like ATT would carry government channels. There was further discussion about whether Cablevision would want equipment back in the event another provider came into the area. The Area Nine Cable Council was created under a former agreement with Cablevision. Changes have been made with new licensing agreement which has led to some grey areas. A case was made that if there was more programming done, then it would be harder for Cablevision to take away its support. A request was made for 2 separate \$2,000 grants totaling \$4,000.

A motion was made by Gail Lavielle to approve \$4,000 for two Area Nine Cable Grants. Lynne Vanderslice seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

#### **Town of Wilton Financial Report:**

Sandy Dennies began the discussion. She stated the town was on target with tax collections going well. She noted that Intergovernmental Assistance was lagging but not a concern. Revenue and expenses are tracking as expected. Education cost sharing is on target. Licenses, permits and fees are also tracking as expected. She reported that \$71,459 in miscellaneous revenue had not been counted on from the state. Avalon has been skewing the early collection of fees for building permits, but the \$350,000 budget estimate is still correct.

David Lisowski was there to discuss the issue of appeals on assessments. Currently the town is addressing assessment appeals from 2007, 2008, and 2009. There was a discussion about taking money out of the undesignated fund balance to be set aside for any assessment money that needs to be refunded. David Lisowski reported that 18 appeals were open. Several of these have been settled leaving nine appeals of concern, and two appeals, one pending settlement. Liability on those two could amount to \$70,000. The other seven appeals could have liability of \$306,000. For all nine cases, the maximum liability would be \$376,000. One of the major appeals on a single commercial property could have a \$200,000 liability. That is not in the budget. That case could go to trial. There was a brief discussion on budgeting for legal fees and interest charges.

Warren Serenbetz thought undesignated funds should be moved to a designated fund to allow for reassessment liabilities. There was a discussion on how Moody's would look at this situation, and the risks associated with moving the money versus not moving the money. Sandy Dennies advised setting aside the total amount of \$376,326.18. This would still leave a 10% undesignated fund balance to secure the triple A rating. David Lisowski advised that the court is backlogged and working on 2007 cases as quickly as possible.

A motion was made by Lynne Vanderslice to move \$376,000 from the undesignated fund balance to a designated fund balance for the potential liabilities of reassessment refunds. Al Alper seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

### **Bond Refunding Status:**

Sandy Dennies reported there's no good news on that issue. Market timing has not worked well and the recent Moody's rating expires at the end of November. She is hoping for better results early next year. She indicated the Town is looking to generate a savings of approximately \$400,000.

### **Budget Discussion:**

Warren Serenbetz opened with a discussion on making changes to the Board of Finance calendar. Right now there is a meeting with the Board of Ed scheduled for Feb. 23, 2011 which falls in the middle of the school holiday. He suggested moving that meeting to Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>. In April, a meeting is needed to discuss the capital item requests with the BOS. There is a BOF meeting scheduled on April 12<sup>th</sup> which could be used to review capital requests. An agreement was reached to move the Feb. 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting with the BOE to February 15<sup>th</sup> (after the BOF Regular Meeting at 6:00 PM) and after the BOF Regular Meeting on April 12<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM, to hold another meeting with the BOS at 7:30 PM.

Lynne Vanderslice requested feedback on the special meeting with the BOE on October 25<sup>th</sup>. Warren Serenbetz reported that at that meeting there was much discussion on keeping the mill rate at 3%. Ideas were discussed for holding down costs including hiring a consultant but no real conclusions were drawn. Gary felt an increase of only \$562,330 was drastic. BOF members tried to convey the idea to BOE members that the .8% increase was just a starting point in the conversation. The BOF explained the model that led to the .8% number. BOF members felt that constituents would be better served if they had more information on the whole budget process. Constituents include seniors, PTA members, etc. There was a discussion on asking constituents if they wanted their taxes raised, or more fees imposed for school items as possibilities for addressing school costs. Board members discussed possibilities of having informational meetings at the library and other public locations to inform the public more about the budget process. The origin of the 3% mill rate model was discussed again. Variables included in the model were operating expenses at the schools and selectmen, the debt servicing, and the use of reserves from the undesignated funds. Al Alper made the point that taxes are on an unsustainable climb if we can't bend the cost curve down.

Many attendees in the audience made requests to keep the quality of our schools high. Audience members also expressed frustration at not understanding the budget process better.

### **Committee Reports:**

Warren Serenbetz reported on the Investment Committee and OPEB Trust. The Investment Committee is comfortable with the asset allocation they currently have after moving the REIT allocation to 5%. The OPEB Trust approved this move. Jim Meinhold reported the Pension Trust also approved the REIT change to its asset allocation.

Lynne Vanderslice reported on the Cost Sharing Project. There is already good progress on shared purchases, and a report will be coming out in January. These cost sharing efforts include intra and inter town sharing.

**Other Business:**

There is a WAESCA meeting on Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>. Jim Meinhold will represent the BoF as an observer on the negotiating team.

The Board reviewed the BoF meeting schedule for 2011. A motion was made to move the February 23, 2011 meeting to February 15<sup>th</sup>. It was approved unanimously.

**Public Comments:**

Milton Pohl was concerned about Wilton Commons.

Carolina Corrigan would like better communication from and between the BOE and the BOF.

Tyler Thors would like to see institutional costs like teachers' union costs brought down.

Gail Latone would like to see taxes raised to keep the quality of our school system.

**Adjournment:**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25pm

Respectfully submitted,

Liz Elliott  
Recording Secretary