

**BOARD OF FINANCE
BUDGET MEETING – MARCH 29, 2017
WILTON TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM B
7:30 P.M.**

**RECEIVED FOR RECORD
TOWN OF WILTON**

PRESENT

Board of Finance: Warren Serenbetz, Jeff Rutishauser, Richard Creeth, Peter Balderston, John Kalamarides, Walter Kress

Board of Selectmen: Lynne Vanderslice, Michael Kaelin, Lori Bufano, David Clune, Dick Dubow

Board of Education: Kevin Smith, Glenn Hemmerle

Others: Members of the public and press

2017 APR -4 P 12: 26

BY: *R. Serenbetz*

Chairman Jeff Rutishauser called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. He began by providing context from last year to this year. He noted that last year there was a mill rate increase of 2.27% and in the BOF budget meeting that was reduced by \$620,000, \$400,000 from the BOE and 213,000 from the BOS with the other \$6000 from the impact of Charter which drop the mill rate down to 1.89% increase over the previous year which was approved at the Town Meeting. The guidance for this year was to start with a 0% mill rate increase which led to a 1.25% decrease in operating budgets for both BOS and BOE. Coming in to tonight's meeting the Town is looking at 1.6% mill rate increase over last year approximately \$1.87 million more than what was asked for last year. Mr. Rutishauer noted of that that \$1.87 million includes a reduction of \$1.2 million of ECS (from \$1.2 million to zero), also includes almost a \$300,000 increase in debt service with not much help from the Grand List.

Mr. Rutishauser announced that each member of the Board would give an opening statement before deliberations and discussion of the mill rate with a continuation on March 30, 2017 for the resolutions. A brief summary of each Board of Finance member's comments follows.

John Kalamarides: Commended the BOE for coming in with a flat budget (0.0% increase). He noted that the BOS budget is very different from the BOE as the BOS are asking for an increase of 3.2%. After reading his statement, he concluded by stating that he would vote to support the proposed budgets (BoE & BoS) as is with a 1.6% mill rate increase.

Peter Balderston: BoF comes together each year to assess things based on three factors; How well the Town has spent its money in the past; How well it will spend in the future based on the budgets with an eye on maintaining excellent schools and essential Town services, all the while being mindful of the property tax burden that tax payers have. Mr. Balderston offered praise to BoE for examining budget savings. He stated, however, he sees areas for savings in the school budget which is approximately 70% of the Town Budget. After reading his statement, Mr. Balderston noted that he would wait to vote on the BoE until after he heard from the remaining board members. With regard to the BOS budget, he noted that the budget subsidy to Trackside needs to be looked at.

Walter Kress: Supports the budget as is for both the BoS and the BoE with some provisions; the BoE should think about a 0% rate increase for next years' budget as well. Thanked the boards for the tremendous amount of work done in preparing the budget

Richard Creeth: Both boards have done an excellent job in bringing realistic budgets. After commenting on both budgets, Mr. Creeth stated that he was comfortable with budgets as presented by the BoE and the BoS.

Warren Serenbetz: Was looking for a 0% mill rate increase and believes additional cuts can be made to accomplish that. Believes there is more room to look at shared services between the BOE & BOS to help get to the 0% mill rate increase. He noted that cuts be made to Trackage line item of the BoS budget.

Jeff Rutishauser: Complimented the BOS for dropping the budget last year and taking a risk the BoF would not raise it any further. He noted that two years ago the BOS had a certain level of expenditure and that last year the budget was lowered to a negative and that makes this year's budget looks as if it was a significant jump up. Agreed with other board members with suggestion of reduction on trackside line item in the BoS budget but is not in favor of cuts to the Library budget. Mr. Rutishauser noted a job well to done by the BoE to get to 0% increase.

Discussion of the Budgets

Grand List:

The Grand List is \$4.313 Billion.

Tax Collection Rate:

Warren Serenbetz asked for a motion to set the Tax Collection Rate at 99.4% on the Grand List subject to possible review March 30, 2017. John Kalamarides seconded and the motion carried 6-0. As a follow-up item, Richard Creeth asked to have the actual collection rate from the current year be researched to two decimal points, meaning one additional decimal past 99.4%.

Estimated Revenues:

\$4,745,854 based on Mill Rate model. Motion made by Richard Creeth to accept the numbers for estimated revenues. Peter Balderston seconded and the motion carried 6-0. Mr. Kress wanted to remind all that there is a top end threshold for the auto and that can't continue to go up and some point there is a hard stop.

Debt Service:

Debt service for the coming year is \$11,767,516 as per legal requirements to pay off bonds that are outstanding. Motion made by John Kalamarides to approve debt service. Peter Balderston seconded and the motion carried 6-0

Tax Relief for the Elderly and Disabled:

Tax relief for the elderly or disabled is estimated at \$1,100,000 and WVAC/Georgetown at \$20,750. Warren Serenbetz made a motion to approve these amounts. Walter Kress seconded and the motion carried 6-0.

Board of Selectmen Operating Budget:

Mr. Rutishauser asked for a motion that the Board of Selectmen's Operating Budget be \$32,059,470. Mr. Balderston asked for a motion that the BOS budget be reduced by \$75,000 for the Trackage Line Item (half of the subsidy to the Trackage to help wean trackside to be more of a private supported organization) seconded by Mr. Kress. A discussion ensued regarding reducing trackside line item of the budget. After discussion motion withdrawn by Mr. Balderston and a new motion was made by Mr. Balderston to reduce the trackside line item of the BOS budget by \$25,000 understanding that longer terms plan that will be more aggressive in successive years and contain it to FY2018. Motion seconded by Mr. Kress and carried 5-1 with Mr. Kalamarides opposed. Motion made by Mr. Creeth to set the BOS operating budget at \$32,034,470. Motion seconded by Mr. Balderston and carried 6-0.

Board of Selectmen Capital Budget:

Mr. Rutishauser asked for a motion that the Board of Selectmen's Capital Budget be \$1,174,406.

Motion made by Mr. Kress to accept the Capital Budget as stated. Motion seconded by Mr. Creeth and carried 6-0.

Board of Education Budget:

Mr. Rutishauser asked for a motion that the Board of Education budget be \$80,572,640. Motion made by Mr. Kress to accept the Board of Education as proposed. Motion seconded by Mr. Kalamarides. Mr. Balderston commented on the budget and a discussion ensued with Dr. Kevin Smith and BoE member Glenn Hemmerle weighing in on the comments from the BoF and encouraging the board to adopt the budget as is. After discussion motion was carried 5-1 with Mr. Serenbetz opposed.

Ending Fund Balance:

Mr. Serenbetz moved that ending fund balance be set to \$12,680,452. Mr. Creeth seconded and the motion passed 6-0.

The official Resolutions will be discussed at the March 30, 2017 meeting.

Mr. Rutishauser then called for an adjournment to the meeting and to reconvene on March 30, 2017 at 7:30PM when numbers have been updated and the resolutions ready to go. Motion moved by Mr. Kalamarides, seconded by Mr. Balderston and carried 6-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:08pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline Rochester
(from video recording)