

**TOWN OF WILTON
BOARD OF FINANCE SPECIAL MEETING
Mill Rate Meeting
April 3, 2012, Meeting Room B, Town Hall**

PRESENT: Warren Serenbetz, Lynne Vanderslice, Al Alper, James Meinhold, Gail Lavielle, Andy Pforzheimer

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman Bill Brennan, Sandra Dennies (CFO), Richard Dubow (Selectman), Bruce Likly (BOE Chairman), Karen Birck (BOE member), Sarah Taffel (HR), Richard McCardle (Controller)

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

Tax Collection Rate

There was a consensus that the Tax Collection Rate be set at 99.3%. A final vote will be taken at tomorrow's meeting.

Tax Relief for the Elderly and Disabled

Last year, the amount for relief was set at \$875,000 in the budget. When applications came in much higher, the balance was funded from Charter Authority. There was discussion whether to fund \$975,000 in the budget and make a Charter Authority decision after applications are received, or funding now at \$1.1 million, which was last year's total.

Ms. Vanderslice moved to set the amount for Elderly and Disabled Tax Relief at \$1.1 million. Motion seconded and carried: 4 YES (Serenbetz, Vanderslice, Meinhold, Lavielle) – 2 NO (Alper, Pforzheimer).

Estimated Revenues

Ms. Vanderslice pointed out that the mill rate model she had prepared reflects \$100,000 favorability from the current fiscal year budget. The BOE has estimated \$500,000 from the ECS Grant, which may be optimistic since this year only \$338,000 was received. This will be voted on tomorrow evening.

Debt Service

First Selectman Bill Brennan advised that last night, the Board of Selectmen learned that we have \$815,000 from previous capital projects bonding that was "leftover" or not used. The recent audit recommends the funds be used for current debt service or be re-allocated to other already approved capital projects. The Selectmen voted to recommend that \$150,000 be appropriated for the Middlebrook School Roof and \$250,000 for the Miller Driscoll Siding and Roof Engineering project, both of which were approved by the Town Meeting in 2010. That remaining \$415,000 could then be used to pay down debt service.

Ms. Dennies advised that some of these “leftover” funds go all the way back to 1998 projects. This will go to a vote at the next meeting.

Board of Education

Mr. Meinhold feels that the Board did a good job in keeping expenses down, but he is still concerned about enrollment decreasing and staffing costs rising. He would recommend reducing staffing costs by \$100,000. In Technology, he does not feel that everything is critical right now and would recommend a \$25,000 reduction. The athletic budget seems to be climbing out or proportion to the rest of the non-athletic portions and he would recommend a \$10,000 reduction – for a total BOE reduction of \$135,000.

Ms. Vanderslice is concerned about increases over the next few years not being sustainable.

Ms. Lavielle reminded that this year there was some room in the education budget made possible by the recent teacher negotiations, but that won't be available every year.

Mr. Alper agreed that there was a very positive outcome with arbitration this year – and we should be looking at the causes that drove that decision, i.e. people in this town are hurting. We are investing money in the business of education that must be predicated on measurable benefits.

Mr. Pforzheimer – the BOE will be spending all of their “savings” in one year. The favorability realized from health insurance savings and the outcome of arbitration will not be available the year after, but that is their decision to make.

Mr. Serenbetz moved to reduce the BOE Budget to 1.75% over FY 2012. Motion seconded and carried: 5 YES (Serenbetz, Vanderslice, Lavielle, Meinhold, Pforzheimer) – 1 NO (Alper).

Board of Selectmen – Operating Capital

There was a lengthy discussion, with some BOF members feeling that the budget is being artificially reduced by removing the \$650,000 for road repairs. Although all agree that the road recovery program is needed and most do not object to bonding the program.

Mr. Serenbetz moved to decrease the BOS Operating Capital request to 1.75%, in the aggregate, over the FY 12 Budget. Motion seconded and carried: 5 YES (Serenbetz, Lavielle, Alper, Pforzheimer, Meinhold) – 1 NO (Vanderslice).

Fund Balance

Mr. Serenbetz reminded that the objective is to “smooth” tax rate changes from year to year and that will be more difficult next year unless we put some money into the General Fund to be available in FY 14. If the mill rate increase this year is just under 1%, then it would be 2.4% next year. And if the mill rate increase this year is 1.5%, then next year it would be 2.0%.

Mr. Meinhold moved to set the FY 13 mill rate increase at 1.5%. Motion seconded and failed: 4 NO (Serenbetz, Vanderslice, Alper, Lavielle) – 2 YES (Meinhold, Pforzheimer).

Ms. Vanderslice moved to set the FY 13 mill rate increase at .995%. Motion seconded and failed: 4 NO (Meinhold, Pforzheimer, Serenbetz, Lavielle) – 2 YES (Vanderslice, Alper).

Mr. Meinhold moved to set the FY 13 mill rate increase at 1.25%. Motion failed for lack of a second.

Ms. Vanderslice again moved to set the FY 13 mill rate increase at .995%. Motion seconded and carried: 4 YES (Vanderslice, Alper, Lavielle, Pforzheimer) – 2 NO (Serenbetz, Meinhold).

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Jan Andras
Clerk Pro Tem
Minutes taken from video