

Kim Healy-Budget Questions

General:

- 1) Is there any analysis of the expected grand list growth over the next 3-5 years? The October 1, 2023 grand list will be revalued. Any attempt to estimate that change in value would be guess work.
 - a. Residential homes and condos will be revalued with consideration of sales for the 18 months prior to October 1, 2023 (March 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023). We know overall home values are up, but as we saw in the October 1, 2017 revaluation, not all price points may have changed at the same rate. The 2017 revaluation reflected further decreases in the high end of the residential market, including as high as 30% in the highest, and increases in value for the lower end. The mid-range was relatively flat or +/- small percentage changes.
 - b. Apartment building valuations consider net leasing income. Based on recent rent increases, apartment buildings are expected to increase.
 - c. Commercial office building values are down and that segment of the grand list is expected to continue to be down as of October 1, 2023. Recent sales were at approximately 60% of market value. Each commercial office building is valued individually using more than one available method.
 - d. If a commercial office building is purchased for redevelopment, the building itself could be torn down as of October 1, 2023, as was the case with 141 Danbury Road, meaning the value for any such property could be less than the October 1, 2022 grand list.
 - e. The method of valuation of vehicles is changing to depreciated value. That is expected to reduce the vehicle grand list more than the large increase in value experienced last year due to high used car prices.
 - f. Overall the revalued October 1, 2023 grand list, before any new grand list growth or budget growth, is expected to increase. As such, the mill rate before new growth or budget is expected to decrease. At this point, that revaluation isn't expected to favorably impact most residential homeowners as the loss in value in the other aspects of the grand list mean residential homeowners and residential apartment building owners will likely assume a greater share of the tax burden.
 - g. New grand list growth for October 1, 2023 should include ongoing expansion at ASML's 77 Danbury Road facility and the apartment building at 141 Danbury Road. ASML is making improvements to 20 Westport Road. That property, which was 100% vacant at the time of sale, is one of the commercial office buildings that sold at a substantial discount versus the 2017 valuation. It is hard to know what the valuation of that property will be as of October 1, 2023.

The application for the multi-family project at 12 Godfrey Place is expected to be voted on at the next P&Z meeting. The developer has stated they will file under 8-30-g if denied. The WPCA recently denied applications submitted by a developer for 19 Cannon Road. That developer has filed an appeal with the court.

Longer-term, multi-family at the Kimco property is still being discussed. Scope and timing unknown. That project will include demolition of an existing taxed building. Representatives for the SSND property have held discussions with neighbors about their plans for redevelopment. Once that property is sold, the developer would be expected to tear down the existing buildings. The timing for that sale is uncertain.

Based on confidential conversations, there are other properties in play, the timing of which is uncertain.

- 2) Police Dept staffing- 44/45 full time officers. Is this number state mandated based on population? **The State does not mandate police staffing.**
- 3) Concerns of rising costs due to expected recession **Yes. Budget reflects known and anticipated.**
- 4) Wilton population changes- I believe we were relatively flat between 2010 and 2020. **The 2020 Census population increased by 441 or 2.4%. The makeup of the population changed, including a more than 10% decline in the non-adult population. What is the forecast expected to be for 2030, if any? The CT Data Center and UCONN released projections just prior to 2015. They were built on a bad base and have Wilton's 2020 population understated by approximately 2,000. CTData.org**
- 5) Closure of the Norwalk Transit District. Norwalk's Senator Duff has been publicly reporting on it saying that it is being closed and the state will take it over. Can we get more information on this? Why would we ever assume that the state will do a better job? Other areas of state are now totally free so 100% burden on tax dollars. **The assumption by Senator Duff and others that support this proposal is that absorption by CT Transit will result in a lower cost to operate and integration in statewide transit mapping. In other areas, CT Transit uses subcontractors for transportation for the disabled known as para transport. At this point we don't know and if what subcontractor would be used. That is an open question we have asked. A subcontractor would need vehicles, a garage and drivers. We have addressed concerns about para transport with both Keith Denning and Ceci Maher. We asked Ceci to speak directly with Francis Pickering. I am waiting to hear back.**
- 6) OPEB is overfunded. Why would we need to make any payments into the plan? **We are waiting for the OPEB valuation. The required contribution is expected to be lower, but without information and the relatively small size of the prior year contribution, we budgeted flat. The actuarial valuation for both the OPEB and DB Pension Plan is based on a series of assumptions to arrive at the funding level. The valuation report for the DB Pension Plan required a contribution for police and fire, but none for all other covered town employees.**
- 7) Can I request an updated ARPA funds spending schedule? **Yes. It will be part of the package for the 2/15/23 meeting. The agenda includes a contract for the Schenck's parking lot, which is being funded from ARPA funds.**
- 8) Does WestCOG or the like, review availability of local units for sale or rent? **WestCOG has performed a number of analyses on housing. [Housing & Demographics | Western Connecticut Council of Governments \(westcog.org\)](http://Housing & Demographics | Western Connecticut Council of Governments (westcog.org)) I keep hearing from certain legislators that we do not have enough inventory for the ASML expansion of employees. Is this true? **Based on discussions with representatives from ASML, affordability of housing is a major issue. Many of the new employees are coming from different parts of the country where housing is less costly. What is the makeup of the expanded new employees? Are they professionals or minimum wage earners? **Primarily professionals with an average age of approximately 28. How many units were built right over the border in Norwalk near DMV? **Approximately 700 and another 1300 under the recently approved master plan. Some are subject to the completion of the proposed new intersection at the end of the RT 7 extension. To meet ASML's needs and those of current residents seeking to downsize in Wilton, there is a need for single-family homes on smaller lots, townhomes and apartments of varying sizes, not just those of 1,500 sq. ft or less.********
- 9) Early voting- could be up to 2 weeks? We know that towns like Wilton are likely to not be reimbursed for all the costs of man power or the new machines needed. **We have no details on early voting, but the Town Clerk and the Registrars each budgeted additional costs in anticipation of such.**

- 10) What is the average cost of Group insurances per employee? Is this health insurance? This is medical, dental and life. Medical is most of the cost. Premiums for the State Partnership Plan are on their website, scroll down. [The CT Partnership Plan 2.0](#)
- 11) Average cost per telephone? I assume an evaluation of cost/services/ data have been done to get best service/value. The bulk of the telephone cost is a shared VOIP telephone system with the BOE, the selection and approval of which pre-dates anyone on the current BOS. It was installed in FY2016. Cell phones service is through Verizon. Cell phone-eligible employees is limited.
- 12) Medical exams-I think we have discussed this already- but just so I remember correctly- we cannot have the employee's health insurance to cover the exam. It needs to be paid for by the town. No. Medical exams are required by contract.
- 13) Vacant town properties. House at the corner of New Street and RT 7, currently being considered for low density affordable housing by the housing committee at the instruction of the BOS. Yellow House at Ambler.
- 14) Has there been any discussion on when/if prices may revert back to pre-inflationary time? If you read the Wall Street Journal, there doesn't seem to be a concession on inflation.

Public Works: Cost of trim trees- confirming that we coordinate with Utilities to save time/resources. Eversource trims trees for resiliency and presents that plan in advance for review with DPW. They also address any trees or branches on their wires. The Town removes diseased or dead trees on town-owned property.

Paramedic/Ambulance- Town reimbursed by resident's insurance plans? Do we take most insurances? Paramedic services are provided by Wilton Weston Advanced Life Services and managed for the towns by the Wilton and Weston Volunteer Ambulance Corps. Wilton is responsible for 65% of the cost, Weston 35%. WVAC handles the billings. Residents are responsible for the cost of the service, whether through private insurance, Medicare or private pay. The alternate to WWALS is paramedics dispatched out of Norwalk Hospital, which would be a much longer response time.

CCM- Cost of belong? \$11,514. Should we reconsider belonging? We will discuss at our meeting on the 15th. Matt is our representative. It appears to me that many of their goals do not align with Wilton's or Fairfield County towns? Hartford was just named the 48th worst capital in the US by WalletHub. Chair of CCM was mayor of Hartford and husband to Desegregate CT leader. The last two chairs were from cities, Waterbury and Hartford. The current chair is from a mid-sized municipality.

Current year Registrar of Voters temp help line- will this be needed? 30k. There are 4 potential elections (municipal primary, municipal elections, Presidential primary and ATM) plus early voting. This year we will spend about \$23,000 for the primary, November election and ATM.

Police- might there be any added costs with the disruption during the new police build? no
Police- Any added costs to review new school security cameras? no

Paramedic Service Advanced Life Support Fund- 100k what is this for? WWALS described above. This is the budgeted share of revenues to offset our costs detailed on 177 and 178.

Capital:

Tabulators- is this to replace what we have as they have passed their useful life or is this to cover new machines that should be paid for by the state to accommodate the early voting? **Replacement of old equipment. Not part of any Secretary of State initiative.**

Before the end of the year, can we review what we budgeted for capital expenditures for 23 to what we have approved to date? **Dawn can include a more detailed report on operating capital expenditures and bonded capital projects in her January or February operating results report.**

Ross Tartell Budget Questions

Overall comment – Many of the departments are making training available to town employees. I support providing training resources to town employees. It builds their competence and ability to serve the public, and shows Wilton cares about their professional development. However, I did not see investment in development in support of the Town administrator succession planning objective/priority. **See the answer to your question below.**

Suggestion: It would be useful to have a town government organizational chart with a list of the Department Heads after the introductory summary pages (it would minimize the back-and-forth into the town website). **These are being prepared and emailed.**

BOS

p.21 Town Administrator – there is a bullet point for succession planning. Succession planning usually includes the creation of developmental plans for all individuals, or at least for individuals in key positions. While funding is not necessary, - people can learn by doing the job, coaching/mentoring or taking publicly available course (i.e., LinkedIn training through the Wilton Library or courses provided by CCM, etc.) there is usually some resources allocated/identified in the budget. **As a small town, many of the departments under the supervision of the Town Administrator have a nonunion department head and union employees. The exceptions are Finance and DPW. Succession planning is developed based on the unique situation within each department. The following are two examples of succession planning specific to the departments:**

There is and has been a growing shortage of certified assessors and tax collectors. As part of the succession planning for both departments, we seek candidates for Assessor and Tax Collector vacancies, who have the capabilities and the willingness to obtain additional certification as either an Assessor or a Tax Collector so they can service in either role. That occurred with Sarah (Sacco) Carey. The Tax Collector recommended for appointment at the February 15th meeting will take the necessary classes to obtain Assessor Certification.

When Tom Thurkettle retired, we sought a DPW Director with previous Director experience, who could grow and develop a Deputy to be the next DPW Director. When we initially interviewed Frank Smeriglio for a position other than the Deputy position, we immediately identified Frank's talents, the value he could bring to Wilton and his ability to become the DPW Director if given the opportunity to obtain the required supervisory experience. Earlier in career, his Chris Burney had oversight of DPW for the City of New Haven. His responsibilities were temporarily expanded from Facilities Director to include the DPW Director position. Frank was hired as the Deputy Director. Frank was given supervisory responsibility and Chris provided the necessary mentoring. Frank was subsequently promoted to the DPW Director position with the additional responsibility of Facilities, as he hired a Deputy with vast facilities experience.

Free training or nearly free training is provided by many of the municipal associations, CIRMA, CCM, COST and a number of other nonprofit organizations for management, technical, safety, certification, licensing requirements and other areas.

For example, certification classes for Assessors and Tax Collectors are provided by the state association for both at a minimal cost. The transition to online training has meant there are no longer associated transportation and lodging costs for either. Experienced association members mentor newer members. Berchem Moses is another source for training, the cost of which is covered in the legal budget.

p.24 There is a \$100K lump sum for sick leave – this is for the annual funding of the reserve. With the town’s full participation in the State medical insurance plan, is funding the reserve necessary? This is not related to medical insurance. Under union contracts, employees are allowed to carryover unused sick days. Same for nonunion. Upon retirement, employees are paid a lump sum amount for unused sick days based on their union contract or the policy documented in the Handbook for nonunion employees. This \$100,000 per year is to fund a reserve from which payments are made. Prior to FY2017, the Town didn’t budget a reserve. Actual payouts were expensed at the time of disbursement creating year-to-year volatility in expenses. This annual reserve funding serves to eliminate that volatility and to strengthen the balance sheet. As an FYI, the total liability for sick pay out and other uncompensated benefits for town and the schools is accounted for a disclosed in our audited financials because they are presented on a GAAP basis, not a budgetary basis.

p.27 – The BOF increasingly creates a survey and then uses it as a significant input into their decision-making process. Can funds be reserved to support the survey process with some professional help? The BOF members make the decision as to what type of survey process they use and whether to request funding for professional help.

p.38 – Human Resources notes training as a key objective for 2024 – the funding increased from \$500 to \$1,000. What was the content of the extra training (this is a low priority question). The objective refers to ensuring and overseeing training for town employees, not training within the department itself. For example, the HR department is responsible for organizing sexual harassment training that all town employees were required to attend and is require under the law. Employee-wide training was provided in the last year or so by a lawyer from Berchem Moses. Training for new employees is online.

Finance, Tax Collector, Assessor

p.49 - \$10 K for training. (I support developmental investments) What was the training for? The training for the finance department is primarily financial software training. The tax collector’s budget includes assessor certification training, as discussed above.

Information Systems

No questions

Land Use

p.59 - Complete Community Health Assessment – does this include mental health (see note in social services). P.62 I did not see any funds allocated to support this objective. Yes, mental health is a component. Additional temporary employee support for the Assessment and the related Improvement Plan is included in part-time wages.

p.79 - Medical Turn in – is that done in the lobby of the Police Department? Should there be more publicity/communication regarding this benefit? In the past the police dept has issued press releases and shared information through social media. The First Selectwoman’s office has issued e-alerts, though not every year, which was oversight. Other departments have shared through their next work or social media.

p.85 - What is the community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan? The is the first year the Health Department is performing the Assessment and developing the Plan. As described by Health Director Barry Bogle, “*The Community Health Assessment (CHA) for the Town of Wilton to determine the health status of our community specifically; what are our assets, deficiencies, and what is need to improve our community health.*”

The follow up Community Health Improvement Plan will outline how best to improve our health status based on the elimination and, or mitigation of the negative factors/barriers that confront us as a community.” “This is one of the 10 Essential Services that as a health department we are required to do, so that we can assess, monitor and solve our community health problems.

Below is an explanation in part of what the 10 Essential Public Health Services are – per CDC...

Essential Public Health Services (Revised, 2020)

The 10 Essential Public Health Services provide a framework for public health to protect and promote the health of all people in all communities. To achieve equity, the Essential Public Health Services actively promote policies, systems, and overall community conditions that enable optimal health for all and seek to remove systemic and structural barriers that have resulted in health inequities. Such barriers include poverty, racism, gender discrimination, ableism, and other forms of oppression. Everyone should have a fair and just opportunity to achieve optimal health and well-being.

1. Assess and monitor population health status, factors that influence health, and community needs and assets
2. Investigate, diagnose, and address health problems and hazards affecting the population
3. Communicate effectively to inform and educate people about health, factors that influence it, and how to improve it
4. Strengthen, support, and mobilize communities and partnerships to improve health
5. Create, champion, and implement policies, plans, and laws that impact health
6. Utilize legal and regulatory actions designed to improve and protect the public’s health
7. Assure an effective system that enables equitable access to the individual services and care needed to be healthy
8. Build and support a diverse and skilled public health workforce
9. Improve and innovate public health functions through ongoing evaluation, research, and continuous quality improvement
10. Build and maintain a strong organizational infrastructure for public health”

p.73 - The P&Z Amenities Task force is continuing to do their work and likely will have a report during fiscal year 2024. Many of the current amenities in Wilton are managed/supported by environmental Affairs. I am concerned that there are inadequate funds available to support the publicity budget and follow through in support of the committee’s findings. **Through the ARPA grant funds and our own Infrastructure Improvement Fund, the Board of Selectmen has authorized spending for EEA initiatives that will take them into FY2024. Recommendations are expected to be multi-year. At this point, we have no idea if and what the Amenities Subcommittee might recommend and therefore have no basis on which to budget any funds for any recommendations. One of the reasons for the 1% reserve, 25% of which is assigned to BOS to authorize, is to fund expenditure in a current year that were not budgeted. They were not budgeted because the need was not known at the time of budgeting.**

Department of Public Works

p.95 - Computer Software - \$15,000 is that for maintenance agreements/purchase of software? Should the use/implementation of these programs link to a department goal regarding automation, and in turn link to the town FY2024 budget goals regarding increased use of technology? **No. This is for existing software. The automation of manual processes has already occurred.**

Social Services: (p.161 – 165)

There appears to be increased need in the town for social service support. **Correct. There is an increase in the number of social services clients, including residents using the food pantry, needing heating and other forms of assistance, an increase in the number of residents seeking a mental health referral and those just calling to ask questions about the mental health landscape.**

Dr Smith during his budget hearing with the BOF noted that a major problem facing the school district was the “lack of community resources in our region.” Yes, we spoke with Dr. Smith. His comment was in reference to mental health and he was referring to counseling services. The lack of adequate resources is not a new concept for the region or the state, but as everyone knows, the difficulties accessing available mental health providers worsen during and following the pandemic. CT has consistently been ranked within the group of the worst states for availability of mental health professionals. Approximately 43% of CT residents live in areas classified as a Mental Health Care Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA). HSPAs are designated by the federal Department of Health and Human Services. See this link for the list of the Mental Health Care HPSA states and their data: <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/mental-health-care-health-professional-shortage-areas-hpsas/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>.

If people aren't familiar with the shortage, this is a good fairly recent read from the AAMC about one area: <https://www.aamc.org/news-insights/growing-psychiatrist-shortage-enormous-demand-mental-health-services>

Neither the schools nor the town provide mental health counseling services.

Social Services has stepped up its visible activity in the community by participating on panels, and partnering with the Police Department, and likely other groups that I am not aware of. Historically, the department has always partnered with the police department, the health departments, Wilton organizations and organizations outside of Wilton, such as The Hub, Positive Directions and Kids in Crisis to provide programming and panel discussions on many issues facing the community. This has been true with Sarah Heath as the Director and with Cathy Pierce, her predecessor. Topics have run the gambit reflecting what is happening in the community.

This reason it feels like there more is because

- 1- There is greater interest within the Wilton community to learn about mental health, a topic of recent collaborations. This is for a number of reasons, including
 - a. The widespread increase in mental health issues among Wilton's and areas youth, which has increased the number of parents wanting to learn about it , even if their child isn't current having mental health issues.
 - b. The increase substance abuse deaths, particularly related to fentanyl and other additives.
 - c. Increased coverage by local, state and national media.
 - d. People being more open to talking about mental health.
- 2- Zoom. It has made it easier for residents to participate live from work or home. A recent Social Services Zoom event had over 40 participants. In person events didn't typically draw that number of participants. Prior to Zoom, videos weren't available. Now if you can't catch the event live, you can watch it on video. And videos are being circulated and shared among groups or organizations, further increasing the number of people aware of and with access to the events.

My hope is that Social Services has the resources (i.e., staffing and budget) to strengthen its ability to meet the critical social service needs facing our community. As Sarah Heath presented at a recent meeting, the department continues to meet the needs for which the department is responsible. She shared the same information a few years ago and that she changed the functioning of the department, so all licensed staff members, whether assigned to Youth Services, the Senior Center or Social Services,

are trained in all functions within the department and therefore can provide extra assistance as needed. There are no silos within the department.

The department's responsibilities specific to your often expressed concern, mental health, is to provide referral services and to provide financial assistance to those who qualify. As has been discussed at Board of Selectmen meeting, what sets the department apart is 1-the financial assistance the department provides and 2-the goal and associated hard work to match each individual with the right counselor/program to meet that individual's specific needs. Sometimes that means more than one referral until the individual is comfortable. As Sarah shared in her recent and previous presentation, she and the staff work with multiple agencies. As shared after an agency had to backout of an agreement to provide onsite counseling at Comstock, she was working individual and the collectively with Westport and Weston to secure guaranteed hours from one of the agencies, Positive Directions. That has occurred and messaged out to the schools, partners and others to spread the word and will included in my February update. Those hours are for emergency needs or for clients for whom we provide financial assistance. The individual needing an emergency referral doesn't have to qualify financially to be referred to Positive Directions under this program. If Positive Directions isn't the right match, the department will find the right match for the individual's needs. If more hours are required, Positive Directors is open to the request. Shared hours with a minimum guarantee allows for greater flexibility for the three communities.

The department is meeting the needs of those directly seeking assistance and those referred by the schools. Not all students are referred to social services. Not all parents want a referral. And not all mental health calls into social services are for assistance with finding a provider. Some calls are from residents wanting to understand the landscape.

The Youth Services grant is at \$11,984 in 2024. (A decrease from the FY23 amended budget of \$20,171) Is there a way to increase the resources available to meet the needs of the school age population (and likely the other demographic groups in town)? The Youth Services Grant budget is \$32,155. The \$11,984 is the increase in FY2024 versus the FY2023 budget. This is a state grant that reimburses the cost of current staff. The State has a set sum of money and the amount of the allocation changes with the number of grant applications. The grant amount increased because of a decrease in applicants. The grant has no impact on our level of the staffing. We staff as needed. In the past, staffing was dependent on the grant.

- 1) What is the explanation for the significant decrease in Senior Center totals (2022 - \$31,000 and the FT '24 adopted, \$3984?). That line is not Senior Center revenues. Senior Center revenues is the line above. That line is the total revenue for Social Services and the Senior Center. The total of \$32,155 is \$3,984 higher than FY2023 amount. The change is the net of the \$11,984 increase in the Youth Services Grant and the \$8,000 reduction senior center fees due to us no longer charging for program.
- 2) I am pleased that we will continue the "new fee" strategy for seniors. They are the fastest growing segment of Wilton's population. Stay at Home Wilton is an important partner of Social Services, yet, it does not appear to receive any direct funding from the town. Might Wilton provide some administrative space to Stay at Home? No. For years Stay at Home has requested they be given exclusive use a small room/office at Comstock that serves as the employees' break room and the work area for our dial-a-ride drivers. Presumably you were also asked. Besides the fact that we don't have available space, we do and should treat all nonprofits equally. You can't give free office space to one nonprofit without offering free space to all other interested nonprofits. With the exception of the Library, nonprofits receiving funds in FY2024 are either maintaining town-owned buildings or are part of public safety.

- 3) As noted, there is tremendous need for mental health resources.
- a. I see in the budget that there are part time staff. Can they be made full time and thereby automatically increase the town resources without recruiting more staff? Is Trinity full time? Again, the tremendous need is for mental providers. The department is not a mental health provide. They are meeting their referral responsibilities. Yes, Trinity is classified as full time. And of course as needed hourly and non-hourly staff work more hours as required. Sarah Heath knows if she needs to increase staffing she can do so. She knows if she can increase the guaranteed hours with Positive Directions if she needs to do. As discussed above, resources that are lacking are professional counselors, psychiatric doctors and available psychiatric facilities. As Deputy Chief Cipolla shared during his recent presentation, residents who require immediate mental health care are taken to Norwalk Hospital. Norwalk Hospital does not have long-term care. Norwalk Hospital generally transfers individuals needing long-term care to Yale Hospital in New Haven.
 - b. When we were discussing objectives for 2023/2024, the BOS identified several initiatives – one of which was an assessment of the mental health needs in the town. I did not see any funds allocated to determining the depth or extent of the mental health needs of Wilton. Could this be included in the Building and Health goal of “Complete Community Health assessment?” You suggested the BOS consider a mental health assessment, but the BOS did not decide to do so. As above, the Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan does have a mental health component.
 - c. Are there funds allocated to increasing access to mental health resources and building awareness of new programs etc.? As discussed above.
- 4) Social Services has increased its visibility in our community. I hope that this effort continues. If these additional seminars, zoom, public education, etc. continue, what additional resources might be needed to help Wilton? As above, these events are not new. There are in partnership and at little to no cost. Not additional funds are required.
- 5) I did not see The Wilton Community Assistance Fund mentioned. It is a vital part of our community. What sort of support does it receive – is it totally self-sustaining? The Wilton Community Assistance Fund is not part of town government. It is a 501-c-3 with a mission to provide assistance to residents in need through the social services department. Sarah Heath submits requests for funding based on an assessment of a resident’s needs. WCAF has a healthy fund balance due to the generosity of the community, including a loyal group of annual donors. The fact that Wilton Rocks for Food and Wilton Kiwanis fully meet the needs of the food pantry means the Community Assistance Fund, which previously helped fund the Pantry, no longer needs to do so.

Parks and Recreation (pp 146-159)

The amenities task force is working on the plan. Parks and Recreation is a major source of recreation/amenities in our town. What plans/resources are in place to enable Parks and Recreation to respond to the findings? The recommendations from the Amenities Subcommittee will be for projects over the longer-term as P&R already has several projects for the next couple of years, for which the BOS approved funding or are requesting bonding. They include the Merwin and Schenck’s playgrounds, turf field at Allen’s, drainage and irrigation at Middlebrook fields and repairs to the area around the concession stands/ bathrooms at the WHS Stadium. Without that funding, these projects would have

been requested over multiple years. They will take more than one year to execute. With the grants and annual savings, we pre-funded future years' projects.

Pickle Ball is one of the fastest growing sports in America. Are there any plans to create pickle ball courts in the town (that can be repurposed to tennis in response to the ebb and flow of the interest in the sport?). The Comstock gym and some tennis courts are lined for pickle ball courts. The Schenck's Island Merwin Meadows Master Plan includes 2 pickle ball courts. Right now we aren't hearing from residents requesting courts. Other aspects of that Plan had a higher priority, including the parking lot and the playgrounds, which we approved for funding. This may be a topic the Amenities Subcommittee investigates.

There is a growing, and I believe productive, movement in Wilton to coordinate sports activities. WAARF is the best example. WARF is the movement and includes all the youth sports groups. We aren't aware of any other movement within youth sports, which would be concerning as the goal is for one cohesive, jointly focused group. The Parks and recreation budget goals do not reflect this beneficial activity. Should resources be allocated to support/coordinate with the sports groups in town? Parks and Recreation has always and continues to coordinate with the Wilton youth sports groups, which are now working collaboratively under the WARF umbrella. That WARF-driven collaboration is and should continue to make it easier and less time consuming for the department. The new capabilities under Civic Rec for field and light scheduling free up staff time and makes WARF's coordination easier. No resources are required.

p.147 – Why did Comstock increase by \$2500? \$7,500 is based on FY2023 actual revenues.

p.148 – Why the change from \$4,000 to \$13,000 in the cost of stadium lighting? This is a revenue account, which accounts for lighting fees collected for the lights at Middlebrook. Budget is based on actual FY2023 activity.

p.151 Computer software went from \$6500 to \$0. What happened? This was the cost of the discontinued e-Trak software. The new software, Civic Rec is a Civic Plus product and is now being charged under IS software maintenance along with the other Civic Plus products, SeeClickFix and the town's website. Multi-department software is charged to IS. Unlike e-Trak, there are opportunities for other departments to use Civic Rec.

p.153 – I did not follow the math that created a \$120,000 reimbursement to the general fund. Parks and Recreation programs are accounted for in a Parks and Recreation Enterprise Fund. Enterprise Funds are meant to be self-sustaining and all revenues and expenses are charged to the Fund. We pay the town employees whose functions include working at or directly managing programs in the general fund through this department on the wages line and then charge the Parks and Recreation Enterprise Fund for their cost through this line item.

Police

P.105 – Pet adoption has a \$5 fee. I would support elimination of the fee or increasing to \$15 or \$20. A \$5 is a nuisance and likely costs more to process than is provided by the revenue. So, can we eliminate the fee to encourage adoptions or raise the fee so that it at least covers the processing cost? (Sale of pets was \$25. Sale of Pets is the general ledger account that accounts for pet adoptions. The budget is \$25. We currently and for several years have waived the fee. One of the quirky and annoying aspects of the New World software is that an account can be dropped from reporting if there isn't any activity within the reporting period. To maintain the account, a dollar value, usually \$1, is entered into the system. We'll have to check if that is a concern here. As an FYI, there is a requirement by the state that \$45 be charged if a dog needs to be neutered or sprayed before adoption to cover the cost of the service, which is performed before the adoption is finalized.

Fire/Police

The EMD and the Deputy EMD have always received a stipend and continue to do so. It appears that they will rotate the EMD and Deputy EMD positions. I do not believe the stipends are equal (Correct me

if they are). How will the rotation be handled? They will rotate the positions every two years. The stipends are now the same because of the rotation and the goal of each being prepared to handle either role. As both Chiefs have articulated, collaboration and mutual respect between the two departments is always critical, particularly in an emergency situation.

Construction Management

Other Expenses and Grants

15) What is the update on the changes in funding and management of the Route 7 Bus? The assumption by Senator Duff and others that support this proposal is that absorption by CT Transit will result in a lower cost to operate and integration in statewide transit mapping. In other areas, CT Transit uses subcontractors for transportation for the disabled known as para transport. At this point we don't know and if what subcontractor would be used. That is an open question we have asked. A subcontractor would need vehicles, a garage and drivers. We have addressed concerns about para transport with both Keith Denning and Ceci Maher. We asked Ceci to speak directly with Francis Pickering. We are waiting to hear back.

5 Year Operating Capital

Has the issue of potable water (other than from the storage tanks) for Station 2 been resolved? No. At this point, there isn't a viable solution as we have not received approvals for either identified solution. Tennis Court Repainting. Can Wilton develop some pickleball courts? See previous response regarding pickle ball courts.

5 Year Bonded Capital Requests

Do we have reliable estimates for Scribner Hill repair? We have an estimate, but we expect to update it when we request bonding.

Josh Cole Budget Questions

Page 25 - Property and Casualty Insurance - when is rebidding expected to be completed? Hoping before the BOF begins deliberations during the first week of April.

2. Page 27 - Board of Finance Legal Notices - why now \$0? We consolidated in the Board of Selectmen/First Selectwoman's Office budget. The Governor's bill allows for public notice via a town's website instead of printed newspaper.

3. Page 45 - What is "MRSA Bonded Distribution"? This is state grant, which shares sales tax revenue. MRSA stands for "Municipal Revenue Sharing Account". Previously the grant was a distribution of monies the state bonded, hence the name. Will be changed.

<https://portal.ct.gov/OPM/IGPP/Grants/Municipal-Revenue-Sharing-Account/Municipal-Revenue-Sharing-Account>

4. Page 45 - What caused \$400,000 increase in investment income? Increase in interest rates on investments.

5. Page 104 - What is 46% decrease in police permits attributable to? The police department is experiencing a significant decrease in applications for pistol permits.

6. Page 161 - What is the 59% increase to the Youth Services Bureau Grant attributable to? A set amount of funds are distributed to applicants. There were less applicants for the FY2024 grant, so those who applied are receiving more funds.

Bas Nabulsi

General Questions -- (1) The GWI and incentive compensation pool equals 2.75%. Given inflationary environment, how was that percentage arrived at? The 2.75% was developed with the realities of the budget in mind and with consideration to GWI increases awarded in the union contracts. Fire and Teamsters will receive 2.75% in the second year of their 3-year contracts. Police will receive 2.25% in the third year of their 3-year contract. Matt Knickerbocker and Sarah Taffel are performing a compensation review for nonunion positions.

(2) When the town hired a "town administrator", we agreed to reduce the First Selectwoman's salary in view of adjusted responsibilities. Based on experience-to-date, does the reduction make sense? As the First Selectwoman, I continue to believe that it was proper to reduce my salary and expected by the taxpayers. One of my arguments for the reduction was the expectation that my hours would be reduced. My required hours have been reduced. This has allowed me (or any future first selectperson) to make the decision for myself as to whether I want to devote more hours than are required.

I think it is worth noting the compensation for elected officials is not based on the qualifications, experience, competence or job performance or the elected official. The voters decided who holds the paid elected positions. The Board of Selectmen determines the appropriate compensation for those paid positions, regardless who the voters choose.

The three paid elected positions are the first selectwoman and the two registrars. An 18-year-old with no work experience is eligible for placement on the ballot. If elected to the first selectperson or registrar position that individual would be paid the same compensation as currently paid to Karen Birck, Annalisa Stravato or me.

Specific to the first selectperson position, in previous years, there hasn't been a shortage of individuals seeking the position. In 2015 when no incumbent was running, several individuals sought the republican nomination and I understand more than one sought the democrat nomination. In 2019, when I ran as the incumbent, there was a democrat and a unaffiliated candidate on the ballot.

General Fund -- page 24: Reference to "lump sum reserve". I'm not sure if the materials included in the binder reflect the total amount in the noted reserve, or just the delta based on this year's budget proposal. I'd appreciate clarification. The amount is the annual addition to the reserve. Dawn will present an analysis of the balance sheet reserve at our next regular meeting.

Page 25: Reference to rebidding insurance -- when will we know the actual pricing? Hoping before the BOF deliberations.

Human resources -- page 39: "Expected savings due to vacancies" -- Where are the budgeted vacancies and will they impact town services? We aren't budgeting specific positions to be vacant. It continues to be difficult to fill a position when someone leaves or retires. The Town's past experience combined with the years of service of many of our employees informs us that we are likely to have people leave their employment with the Town during FY2024. And as a result, their position will be vacant for a time. It is also worth noting, the defined benefit pensions have meant municipal employees didn't generally leave for positions with other municipalities or the private sector until they fully qualified for their pension. Defined contribution plans have a shorter vesting period and have resulted in greater mobility.

Finance/revenues -- pages 45-46: Putting aside the property tax component of the revenues, I look forward to gaining a better understanding of the revenue line items during the presentation. The agenda for the meeting on the 21st meeting includes a budget review of collective revenues with a focus on the major drivers of the increase or decrease of "other revenues" as defined in the mill rate calculation.

IT -- page 49: Is the reduction in "miscellaneous contracted services" consistent with current IT needs? Matt is in the process of engaging a consultant to review Information Services. We collectively agree this is the appropriate amount for miscellaneous contracted services, we expect that review will result in the identification of efficiencies.

Public Works -- page 98: I'm sure it was covered last budget season, but I don't recall the background for the "teamsters pension plan withdrawal". Effective October 2013, the Town withdrew from the New England Teamsters and Trucking Industry Pension Plan Fund through a negotiated agreement that required the Town make payments over a 20-year period.

Capital budget -- I've reviewed and reflected, but need to spend more time with this aspect of the budget in order to potentially advance coherent question(s).