

I refer to comment below:

In FY2019 to FY2021, actual results were under budget. A sizable portion of that savings was due to temporary cost avoidance from vacant positions. Vacant positions are typically replaced at a lower salary. FY2022 through FY2024 assume all vacancies are filled.

What is the impact on Town services if the vacant positions remain unfilled?

Generally when a position, other than a police officer or a firefighter, becomes vacant we assess the position and determine whether the job functions can be performed by an existing employee (Town or BOE) or at less hours per week or in a different manner. This process results in a lag time between the vacancy occurs and when it is filled, assuming it is ultimately filled. Depending on the position, the job responsibilities may be performed by an existing employee assuming an action position, a temporary employee or added to the responsibilities of an existing employee with any necessary increase in hours worked.

In the last five years at least the following positions have been eliminated or consolidated:

- Town CFO and School Finance Director consolidated. Cost shared 50/50*
- DPW Director and Facilities Director-consolidated*
- DPW Director/Facilities Director and School Facilities Director. School position eliminated. Stipend paid by Schools to DPW Director/Facilities Director*
- Secretary-First Selectwoman's Office-eliminated*
- Town Payroll Clerk and Bookkeeper-consolidated*
- Police Officer-eliminated*
- Part-time Tax Season Clerk*

The level of staffing and required overtime in the police and fire departments is regularly reviewed. The rationale and justification for the current level of staffing has been presented to the BOF twice in the last 5 years and can be provided again in a future meeting for the benefit of new members.

Vacancies in police and fire union positions are covered through overtime until the position is filled. Both departments experience a lag between the time a vacancy occurs and the filling through a new hire or a promotions because

- New hires may need attend the police or fire academy so the timing of the hire must be coordinated with the availability a spot at the academy and the timing of that session*
- Both departments require testing of candidates for certain positions as part of the hiring or promotion process.*
- Many of the positions in these departments are filled through promotion, the promotion can set off a chain of vacancies. For example, the retirement of a captain, may result in the promotion of lieutenant, which then creates a new vacancy in the lieutenant position. A fire fighter may be promoted into the lieutenant position, creating a vacancy in the firefighter.*

I still don't understand why we have a fully paid vs volunteer town fire department. Isn't there a hybrid model that will

reduce costs and increase community involvement? Along those lines, in the past we have discussed the rationale for 100% full time paid fire department personnel to include the need for our fire department personnel to frequently provide services at the for profit, assisted living facilities in town. These increment costs which benefit those for profit businesses, are disproportionately borne by the rest of the Wilton taxpayers who generally don't have the need for specialized services. I understand that those facilities also pay real estate taxes, but if my house alarm goes off more than one or two times, there is a penalty charge. If the town needs incremental specialized resources in order to deal with the specialized needs of those institutions, why aren't those costs borne by those institutions, and at same time transition to a hybrid model including volunteer and paid leadership, core and specialized personnel.

Over the last dozen or so years, Fire Districts across CT and the country have experienced a decline in volunteers. A report issued by the Nation Fire Protection in 2018 indicated that that across the country fire volunteers were down 16% from 2015. Current estimates put the decline at over 22%. The same is true for volunteer in other public safety areas. WVAC and the Georgetown fire district both hire profession EMS personnel to cover their daytime shifts.

Reasons for the decline include the extensiveness of the technical and physical training and an increasing unwillingness of employers to allow volunteers to take time off from the paying jobs to train and perform their volunteer duties. Because of the nature of the job, almost one-third of volunteers are under 30 and only 15% are over 50.

Wilton C.E.R.T. has an active group of volunteers, but most are of an age that they wouldn't be potential candidates for volunteer firefighters.

The Town has retained the right to have volunteers and the Fire Commission has periodically considered the subject. Building a volunteer component would require an investment by the Town, based on the Town's demographics, the decline in volunteers experienced by Wilton non-profits and the decline in the firefighters experienced locally, there hasn't been a decision to invest in volunteering.

2. Have you done any bench marking of our town services in terms of size, spending and priorities with other towns. What metrics are used if such bench marking exist? What recommendations have come out of those?

Yes. Generally Wilton's department level spending and salaries are in the mid or low range of neighboring towns. None of the neighboring towns are sharing services between the Town and the schools at the level that is happening in Wilton.

Department heads and the first selectwoman have regular discussions or meeting with their counterparts in the area. The first selectwoman informs her decision making by reviewing the detailed budgets and the CAFRs of surrounding communities.

3. Interest rates are increasing. Is there any bondable spending that is contemplated at any point that we should be doing now. I know that there are rules, but should we contemplate acceleration of borrowing, including for renovations at the town hall complex, including the police Dep't building, at some level? This will likely save taxpayers money.

Police headquarters is our largest potential project, but it has not been finalized. We hope to bring that to a Special Town Meeting in last October. We haven't quantified potential interest savings and the impact on annual debt service of bonding multiple years smaller items such as road paving or roof replacements, but we can prepare that in advance of the Board of Selectman's April 5th meeting.

4. In our discussion, could you please address will we and how we maximize the benefit to the town of the projected \$5.3 million in Funds from the \$1.9 trillion covid stimulus bill. How can we beat benefit the taxpayers?

This discussion is premature at this time, as we don't have the enough details about the when and how on the spending.

5. Are there any BOE employees who could be town employees, so they can be managed to best benefit the entire town's spending? Can we go further on shared resources, similar to the very successful transition of the finance group? Other non education functions?

We don't discuss specific employees or their job function. Hopefully our place as leaders in the State on shared services between town and schools demonstration to our commitment.