

Bd of Finance/Selectmen Minutes
Special Meeting April 15, 2020 via Zoom
Warren Town Hall, 50 Cemetery Road

Board of Finance members present: Susan Haxo, James Richardson, Eric Schoenfeld, Robyn Kasler, Luke Tanner, David Robinson

Regrets: None

Selectmen present: Tim Angevine, Craig Nelson, Alexandria Papp

Also present: Colleen Frisbie, Town Treasurer, members of the public

The meeting was opened at 7:000 pm by chair Susan Haxo.

1. E.Schoenfeld moved to accept the minutes of March 4, 2020. Second by J. Richardson. Roll call vote was taken, all in favor, the motion carried 6-0-0.
2. 2019/2020 expenditures: Nothing out of order.
3. Budget Workshop: S. Haxo asked if the board had read and understood Executive Orders 7B, C & I pertaining to the budget process. All understood. T. Angevine deferred explanation of the budget to C. Frisbie. There was discussion as to whose responsibility the budget is and past practices. C. Nelson pointed out that the budget is the selectmen's responsibility by state statute and has always been a joint collaboration between the first selectman and administrative assistant. J. R.-regardless of what happened this year the first selectman shall set the tone with the other two as well as the treasurer then bring it to the Bd Finance. T.A. noted that the administrative assistant is also the treasurer and feels, from what he heard at a CCM meeting, that is a conflict of interest and not in the best interests of the town.

C. Frisbie noted that there is a 30 day extension for the budget but we still need to have the budget approved with a mill rate for June so that tax bills can go out. There needs to be a process for the public to comment, most likely this will be a dedicated email address. It was questioned who would read and respond (if any) to the emails.

J. Richardson asked about investment income. Should it be the same as last year? C.F.-We won't know much for a while, hoping for a better idea. We have always been conservative.

Other line items were discussed. It was suggested that the equipment fund and fire truck replacement lines be increased by \$10,000 each. J. Richardson moved to increased lines 99 & 118 by \$10,000 each, second by L. Tanner. A roll call vote was taken, all in favor. The motion carried 6-0-0.

Other lines that might need adjusting are:

Lline 22-Reg 6. It was noted that while the board voted to not let any of the three Reg 6 towns suffer more than a 5% increase, based on new figures this should not occur this year.

Line 64-Charities-Still waiting for a decision on some.

Line 91-Removal of ash trees-need to increase. T.A. to get figures from Josh.

Line 15-Computer management-T.A. to get information

Line 89-Road fund may need to be increased due to no funds being bonded through state.

Line 76-T.A. to contact Mark Bobman for update on recycling fees.

Fire Co. Figures coming from J. Marsh.

There was discussion as to whether to budget for less than 100% of taxes. C.F. quoted alternative at 98% which could raise mill rate.

Salaries were discussed. C. Frisbie had done extensive research comparing salaries to those of other towns, with the exception of lower Fairfield County and the big cities, using information from NWCOG and CCM and found many of our salaries are far below what is comparable out there. D. Robinson recommended that a Compensation Committee be formed with representation from the Bd Finance and Bd Selectmen to meet yearly so that we don't get in this situation again. He suggested the committee have a mission statement. L.T.-Questioned the increase in First Selectman's salary. It was asked if the selectmen had reviewed the salary information. C.F.-It was brought to the last Bd Selectmens meeting and noted it was very uncomfortable for her to be discussing salaries as hers is part of the discussion. This is why a Compensation Committee is important. T.A.-How did we get into this situation. C.N.-We have always gone with the increase that is in the union contract, it was not looked at any more closely. T.A. noted that the discussion originated with his recommendation to hire a new ZEO at a higher hourly rate. Selectmen have the survey information and will have recommendations for the next Bd of Finance meeting. From his review of the information C.N. was in agreement with the salary lines.

Taxes-Executive Order 7S gives two options for some tax relief, towns need to choose one by April 25, so selectmen must make a decision at their April 21 meeting. H.Perssonatti explained option 1. Is to increase the grace period from 30 to 90 days. At the end of the grace period interest will be charged as of the July 1 due date. She noted most town are choosing this option. Escrowed accounts will not be given this extended grace period as banks have already collected the tax money so should not be allowed to hold onto it. T.A. noted of the 1114 real estate accounts, 300+ are in escrow. Option 2. Is to charge a lowered interest rate of .25%/month for three months. This one is a little more confusing. The matter will be discussed at the next Bd Selectmen meeting.

E. Schoenfeld moved to adjourn at 8:25 pm. Second by J. Richardson. Roll call vote was take, all in favor. 6-0-0

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne C. Tiedmann

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