

The February 19, 2019, Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen was convened at 5:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Central Meeting Room by First Selectman Beth Heller.

Present: First Selectman Beth Heller, Deputy First Selectman Mica Cardozo, Ms. Schatz, Mr. Crisco, Mr. Dey, and Dr. Lober.

Present for Staff: Mr. Anthony Genovese, Administrative Officer/Director of Finance; Ms. Karen Crosby, Budget Analyst; and Mrs. Shaw, Clerk.

### **RECEIVE CERC REPORT**

Ms. Heller's remarks: *"First on our Agenda tonight – you have received the Report from Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC). This document is simply a narrative write-up and documentation of all the material that CERC presented to us at our Board meetings in September and November 2018. As you will recall, CERC analyzed our Town's fiscal health by examining the grand list and then looking for cost efficiencies and opportunities for further exploration – specifically with regard to school district consolidation. I will quote from the report just briefly:*

*'The smallest quartile of homes have held their value the best over time, followed by the largest quartile of homes. The mid-sized homes, or middle two quartiles, have trend lines that slope downward more significantly, indicating a decrease in sales price over time. In examining the data by number of bedrooms, similar trends emerge – the smallest homes have held their value over time better than larger homes. In considering future development in Woodbridge, these trends help identify the types of housing currently in demand. These findings may also be indicative of larger trends the Town should consider as it examines its fiscal future, as declining home values in large segments of the market could reduce revenue, or result in a mill rate increase if expenditures are not reduced in conjunction with home values.'*

*Turning to our proposed budget, you will see that our Grand List update, received February 1<sup>st</sup> 2019, does indeed show the very modest growth, which the CERC report highlighted. The value of Real Property increased by .53 percent over the previous year. We will discuss further details of how this factors into our mill rate later in our meeting.*

*The main topic tonight will be our review of budget requests for fiscal year 2019-20, and vote on our recommendations for any adjustments we would like to make to the Board of Finance. The Board of Finance will then have an opportunity make additional adjustments to come up with the proposed budget that will ultimately go to the people of Woodbridge; first at the Public Budget Hearing on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, and then to the Annual Town Meeting on May 20<sup>th</sup>.*

*We begin by looking at the requests received from our Town Departments and our two school districts – Beecher and Amity. Initial requests totaled just over \$53 million, which if left unchanged, would amount to a 7.6% increase in spending over the current fiscal year budget. This is the starting point of our process. In preparation for tonight's meeting, I have asked Tony Genovese in his role as Town Finance Director, to identify ways to minimize the impact to taxpayers while ensuring we continue to provide all necessary services to townspeople with next year's budget. He will step us through a series of recommendations that we can consider. Tony and I have been capturing efficiencies throughout the fiscal year. With*

*shared service efforts and consolidation of staffing we have achieved savings that can now be embedded in our budget – such as at the Library and in the Finance Department. We will continue to explore and capture additional cost-savings -- Tony will talk more about these efforts as we go through the documents tonight.*

*I will note that, especially with regard to the Woodbridge BOE request, we continue to work with Superintendent Gilbert and District Director of Business Services, Al Pullo, to fine tune and look for adjustments to the Beecher budget as we await updates on items such as Health Insurance costs. So the timing of this information will be more in line with the Board of Finance's consideration of budget decisions. They will begin their deliberations at a meeting scheduled for March 7<sup>th</sup>.*

*I look forward to tonight's collaborative discussion with you, my fellow members of the Board of Selectmen. I am confident this process will result in a joint decision to move us forward in our annual budget setting process. With that introduction, let's start by looking at the summary pages in our packet, and I will turn it over to Tony to give us an overview."*

**REVIEW PROPOSED 2020 BUDGET AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD OF FINANCE**

The Board began its deliberation by reviewing the Capital Budget as presented and made the following reductions:

**Board of Selectman – Town Center Campus Beautification Plan** – Delete \$90,000 for Fire Department storage shed.

**Fire Commission – Lucas 3.1 Device** – Delete \$18,000 from the 2020 budget – put forward to 2021

**Public Works – Equipment** – Reduce to \$55,000 from \$83,000 for a reduction of \$28,000

**Waste Management – Equipment Replacement and Repair** – Delete \$10,000

The reductions reduced the FY2020 Capital Budget by \$146,000.

**Motion:** Ms. Schatz made a motion to recommend to the Board of Finance at its March 7, 2019 meeting that it accept the Board of Selectmen's recommended FY2020 Capital Budget in the amount of \$1,665,347. No one seconded Ms. Schatz's motion and she withdrew her motion.

The Board agreed to hold all votes on its recommendation to the Board of Finance until the entire budget was reviewed.

The Board then reviewed the FY2020 Operating Budget as presented. The Board agreed that even after the staff reductions, done in conjunction with the departments, the overall budget was too high and discussed how to proceed. Mr. Dey said that he reiterates that the Board should have given direction to the departments at the start of the budget process, i.e. present a budget with a zero or minus increase.

As members of the Woodbridge Board of Education were present the Board agreed to consider that budget first.

The Woodbridge Board of Education requested budget is \$15,519,603 and reflects an increase of 5.77%. Superintendent Robert Gilbert told the Selectman that the presented budget represents several meetings and reductions made by the Beecher staff.

Ms. Heller asked the Selectmen if they had any comments on the Woodbridge Board of Education Budget.

- Ms. Schatz said that she would not single out the Board of Education. She recommended that each department revisit its operating budget for reductions or deferrals to FY2021.
- Mr. Crisco said that he believes the Board of Education presented a budget that reflects what is required to continue to provide quality education for the students.
- Mr. Cardozo said that he has received feed-back from residents that, given the present financial environment, the budget is too high.
- Mr. Dey agreed with Ms. Schatz, that every department should revisit its budget for reductions, noting the impact due to such reductions.
- Dr. Lober said that the Town doesn't always have more money – and how do we maintain excellence while reducing the budget.

Mr. Genovese suggested that departments be asked to identify what is important, what is not, and what can wait in considering further reductions.

The Board agreed not to review each department's budget and to send the operating budget, as presented, to the Board of Finance with the following motion:

Following recommended reductions in the Capital Budget the Board of Selectmen **VOTED** (Schatz – Dey) to recommend to the Board of Finance the Budget for FY2020 in the amount of \$51,501,640, anticipating a non-tax revenue of \$3,331,552 with the remaining \$48,170,088 to be raised by taxes resulting in a 41.27 mill rate. The Board of Selectmen recommend to the Board of Finance the operating budget as presented, along with what has been done so far, and respectfully request that it work with all the departments collaboratively to see if they can find further cost-savings for an additional reduction of 3%.

**VOTE:** Aye – Cardozo, Crisco, Dey, Lober, Schatz

Nay – Heller

### **ADJOURNMENT**

On a non-debatable motion by Ms. Heller, seconded by Mr. Cardozo, the meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Geraldine S. Shaw, Clerk