



**THE TOWN OF WOODBRIDGE
SPECIAL BOARD OF FINANCE
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, MAY 18, 2020
6:00 PM**

A Virtual Board of Finance Meeting for the Town of Woodbridge using Webex was held on Monday, May 18, 2020 at 6:00 pm.

Due to the Corona-19 Pandemic, this meeting was held virtually using Webex.

BOF PRESENT: Chairman, Matthew Giglietti; Vice Chairman, Paul Kuriakose; Susan Jacobs Tom Handler; Tom Kenefick; Ellen Scalettar

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman, Beth Heller; Administrative Officer/Director of Finance, Anthony Genovese; Budget Analyst/Payroll & Benefits Administrator, Karen Crosby

Matthew Giglietti called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

REVIEW AND ACT ON BOARD OF FINANCE FY21 BUDGET

Matt turned the meeting over to Tony Genovese for remarks.

Tony stated that at the Preliminary Budget Hearing we were at:

- A little over a 2% expenditure increase
- A tax increase of .97% increase
- A mill rate increase of 4.82%

Tony then tried to identify which items would be either impacted by the pandemic or programs or expenditures that would not happen as a result of the pandemic. Tony had great cooperation from the department heads in reaching these reductions. We had to work together to work through this as we really don't know exactly what the future will bring. That is the background on how we went through each department to find the reductions. Below is the result:

- Expenditures were reduced by .42%
- 1.02% reduction in taxes
- Mill Rate increase of 3.23% (due to revaluation)

Matt asked Tony to report on the Tax Collection Rate:

Tony reported that normally at the end of April we would have \$200,000 in uncollected taxes. At the end of April this year we were at \$400,000 and has now dropped to \$350,000. The Tax Collector is working diligently to collect the taxes. A lot of these taxes were due prior to the Pandemic. They were due last July and this past January.

Matt stated that we are usually at 99.5% collection rate and we probably won't reach that this year.

The Board of Selectmen approved a deferment of taxes for residents. Those residents who apply for the program will have until October 1, 2020 to pay taxes rather than July 1, 2020. If taxes are not paid by October 1st, there will be interest for three months due on the unpaid taxes as of that date. This program is for residents who apply and are eligible due to the pandemic. Matt stated that he believes that about half of our taxes are paid through escrow. The applications are due back to the Tax Office by July 1st.

Matt stated that he and Tony have been meeting and talking a lot discussing the savings and reviewing the programs that will not be done, what salaries will not be paid during the pandemic. Matt stated that he doesn't think that there is a contest for the finest Finance Director in the State but if there were, he would enter Tony. He is amazing, always there with the right answers. Tony and Matt both learned how difficult it would be to make a cut in the budget like this if it wasn't for the programs that will not be happening, for example the sports camps and concert series.

Matt reviewed the Preliminary Budget Hearing and what came out of it. The vast majority of the comments were about the Beecher budget. The Board of Finance could not cut a line item. Matt stated that Amity started with a 3.95% increase which was \$1,019,439 for Woodbridge. After many meetings they settled at 2.49% which for Woodbridge was a \$790,513 increase. This was \$228,926 from their original.

In the current year we are in, Beecher was granted a 3.6% increase, far more than any other department. In addition to that, we paid off their deficit in special education of \$289,000. If you check back Beecher has always gotten the largest percentage increase of any department. If you take the budget we gave them plus their debt service they are at \$16,004,627 which is \$220,000 more than the Woodbridge portion for Amity. Over the past three years Amity has returned to Woodbridge \$2,129,588 and it was because of that we were able to pay the Beecher deficit.

Matt stated that there was an article in the NH Register regarding unemployment claims in Connecticut. Greenwich, Westport, Easton and Redding are ranked among the top 10 towns from where initial claims were filed. Woodbridge is in the top 25 municipalities with jobless claims.

Matt reviewed the budget suggestions for revenue and expenses. The items on the list resulted in a 1.02% reduction in the amount to be raised by taxes.

Revenue adjustments totaled \$295,164

The total expenditure reduction amounted to \$1,228,688 (list of reductions is attached). A lot of the reductions are a result of programs and services not being offered due to the pandemic. Programs are budgeted for January 2021 through June 2021. Tony stated that there were also some vacant positions that weren't filled – a mechanic in public works, police officers, building official from full time to part time which resulted in the fact that we did not need contingency to fund the cost of living increases from contract negotiations.

Tony stated that we are in the process of applying for up to 75% reimbursement on expenses from Covid-19 through FEMA. It is hoped that once we receive reimbursement that we can address some of the capital items requested in the FY21 budget.

Ellen thanked Matt for his time and Tony for a fabulous job. She wondered if the Board can send a thank you and recognition to the department heads for making this happen. We should also send something to Tony.

Susan is impressed by the spirit of community. Wanted to commend Town Hall and Beth for ensuring that everyone knows what is going on in Town. The updates have been incredibly helpful; also encouraging the residents to use town businesses so they can stay in business; and now we know who to order from and how to get it. It has been quite an effort. We don't know what is going to happen but we remain hopeful. She is very impressed how Town Hall and Tony and his staff have handled this.

Beth stated that Betsy Yagla has been phenomenal getting all this out. Beth has been working with Gerry Shaw and Tony every day.

Matt stated that he also wants to mention Karen Crosby who is Tony's right hand woman and she is a vital part of this as well.

Beth stated that all the employees have been incredible. The department heads meet once a week now rather than once a month. Everyone has been amazing.

Tom Handler stated that things are going incredibly well and is amazed at the work that was done with the budget. He hopes that some programs could start opening up over the next few months. Let's hope we get back to normal soon.

Paul thanked Tony, Matt and Beth as well as department heads to get to this reduction in the budget. You really can't argue with the results for this budget, it really is amazing. No savings was too small.

Beth stated that we are really blessed to have a wonderful fund balance. She is chairman of SCROG this year and there are a lot of area towns are scared to death because they don't have a fund balance to rely on. They don't know where they are going to get money from.

The Board of Finance voted (Giglietti/Scalettar) unanimously to adopt a FY21 budget with:

total expenses of \$50,083,907 non-tax revenue of \$3,609,635 amount to be raised by taxes of \$46,474,272 with a mill rate of 41.53

The Board of Finance meeting adjourned at 6:34 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Crosby

Karen Crosby
Budget Analyst
Payroll & Benefits Administrator