

OFFICE OF THE
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**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 15, 2011
MEETING ROOM B, WILTON TOWN HALL**

PRESENT: First Selectman Bill Brennan, Second Selectman Hal Clark, Selectman Richard Dubow

ALSO PRESENT: David Lisowski, Assessor; Ken Bernhard, Town Counsel; Gerry Holdridge, Ken Dartley, Alex Ruskewich, Steve Hudspeth, Ed Papp

WORK SESSION TO DISCUSS SENIOR RELIEF

Chairman Bill Brennan called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and gave an overview of the current programs for seniors in Wilton.

The Town has regularly increased the contributions to the Senior and Disabled Tax Relief Program. In 2009, the contribution was \$615,000 and this year, the amount contributed was \$1,068,000, a 74% increase over three years. The Wilton Commons project for senior housing will be breaking ground in February. The Stay-at-Home in Wilton program is now helping to support seniors who wish to remain in their homes. The space at the Senior Center has been quadrupled. The Parks & Recreation Dial-A-Ride program provides low cost transportation for seniors and disabled from Wilton to Norwalk.

The question is what else can be done to provide economic assistance? What else can the Town afford to provide? This year, department heads have been asked to prepare no-increase budget requests.

At a previous meeting, Mr. Holdridge had asked about assessments for residential homes on smaller lots, and whether they were being assessed fairly. Mr. Lisowski distributed handouts with figures. He advised that valuations of property are given as a whole and land valuation is a major component. You cannot segregate out the land and say that it is "too high". Wilton uses the statistical measures and methods required by the State of Connecticut.

Mr. Brennan advised that Mr. Bernhard is here to once again answer Mr. Dartley's question about legality of his proposal. Mr. Bernhard stated that municipalities have no individual powers, other than what is given to them by the State. You have to look at the State Statutes to see what we can and cannot do. Section 12-129(n) provides methodology allowing each municipality to devise their own program for property tax relief for seniors, which has to be related to asset or income criteria. Mr. Dartley's letter suggests that we should look at whether a taxpayer does or does not have children in the schools. Mr. Bernhard's opinion is that you cannot assess properties by that criteria.

Mr. Dartley then suggested that at a certain age, 70% of the annual taxes could be frozen at the existing rate when the program is introduced. Mr. Bernhard replied that he would have to research the legality of that proposal, which differs from the suggestion in Mr. Dartley's letter. Mr. Papp added that the unpredictability of the school budget makes it impossible for seniors to be able to plan for tax increases each year.

Mr. Brennan stated that the senior population continues to grow and school projections indicate that enrollment is expected to trend downward. This would question the assumption that when seniors move out, families with children move in. When taxes are decreased for seniors, the burden shifts to others who are also in need, and others who do not have children. Mr. Dubow pointed out that everyone receives some benefit from the schools – some direct and some indirect.

Mr. Brennan distributed copies of an analysis prepared by Ms. Judy Zucker (attached) to compare the amount of senior tax relief in surrounding towns, and the per capita contributions by each town. The towns of Redding and Ridgefield have the highest amount of relief and it is on an entitlement basis, which is not a relevant comparison. Wilton's core principle is to provide relief on a "needs" basis. On that basis, Wilton's tax relief program for seniors and disabled citizens is the fourth or second best in the entire State of CT!

Social Services Report – Cathy Pierce, Social Services Director, could not be here tonight but sent the data she had prepared (attached).

Having no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Jan Andras
Recording Secretary

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ELDERLY AND DISABLED TAX RELIEF PROGRAMS (Local Option)

	2010 Census Population	65+ Percentage 2010 Pop.	65+ Total 2010 Pop.	FY 2012 Total Credit	FY 2012 Total Deferral	FY 2012 Total Credit + Deferral	Per Capita Contribution by Town
Fairfield County							
Brookfield	16,825	12%	2,009	\$481,086	\$15,566	\$496,652	\$29
Darien	19,777	13%	2,640	\$424,856	\$15,753	\$440,609	\$22
Easton	7,468	13%	1,028	\$386,642	\$24,962	\$411,604	\$55
Fairfield	56,557	16%	9,173	\$3,211,861	\$56,105	\$3,267,966	\$58
Greenwich	60,551	16%	9,741	\$906,000	0	\$906,000	\$14
Monroe	19,646	11%	2,291	\$376,964	0	\$376,964	\$19
New Canaan	19,403	14%	2,721	\$111,088	0	\$111,088	\$6
New Fairfield	14,144	11%	1,428	\$109,624	\$4,971	\$114,595	\$8
Newtown	26,331	11%	2,718	\$1,220,000	0	\$1,220,000	\$46
Redding	9,369	11%	1,050	\$1,470,000	0	\$1,470,000	\$156
Ridgefield	23,562	12%	2,859	\$1,600,000	\$519,100	\$2,119,100	\$89
Trumbull	35,676	17%	6,040	\$646,575	\$730,759	\$1,377,334	\$39
Weston	10,025	11%	1,103	\$477,789	\$102,739	\$580,528	\$58
Westport	25,602	15%	3,931	\$1,103,428	\$1,568,000	\$2,671,428	\$104
Wilton	18,079	14%	2,389	\$837,652	\$230,541	\$1,068,193	\$59
Hartford County							
Avon	17,648	15%	2,618	\$181,050	0	\$181,050	\$10
Farmington	25,262	16%	4,083	\$190,676	0	\$190,676	\$7
Glastonbury	33,372	13%	4,381	\$160,000	\$9,638	\$169,638	\$5
Granby	11,058	12%	1,316	\$230,000	0	\$230,000	\$20
Simsbury	23,220	14%	3,069	\$194,640	0	\$194,640	\$8
South Windsor	25,911	12%	3,270	\$221,990	0	\$221,990	\$8
West Hartford	64,201	19%	12,276	\$391,657	0	\$391,657	\$6
New Haven County							
Bethany	5,573	13%	688	\$36,000	0	\$36,000	\$6
Cheshire	29,411	12%	3,775	\$540,000	\$5,240	\$545,240	\$18
Guilford	21,968	13%	2,802	\$892,851	\$60,874	\$953,725	\$43