

**TRI-BOARD MEETING**  
**Board of Selectman, Board of Finance, Board of Education**  
**September 23, 2009**

BOARD OF EDUCATION: Karen Birck, Richard Dubow, Gil Bray, James Furnivall, Barbara Myers                      Also Dr. Gary Richards and Ken Post

BOARD OF SELECTMEN: William Brennan, Susan Bruschi, Richard Creeth, Harold Clark, Ted Hoffstatter

BOARD OF FINANCE: Warren Serenbetz, Robert Kelso, Andy Pforzheimer, Lynn Vanderslice, James Meinhold

ALSO PRESENT: CFO Joseph Dolan, incoming CFO Sandra Dennies, Sarah Taffel

GUESTS:                                      Eight members of public, Christian Camarota (patch.com)

The Chairmen called their respective boards to order at 7:30 p.m. at the Comstock Community Center.

**Opening Remarks and Purpose of Meeting**

First Selectman Brennan stated that the purpose of this meeting is to begin early to try to successfully develop the FY 2011 Budget. This was done last year and was effective, resulting in a unanimous budget being proposed to the community with a 1.4% mill rate increase, which was then approved by a wide margin. The goal is to determine the right balance of all variables in our \$100+ million budget.

**Town of Wilton Financial Position**

CFO Joe Dolan spoke about the town's financial position. The 2010 budget that was adopted assumed the use of \$5.2 million out of the fund balance. FY 09 is ending with approximately \$1.3 million more in the fund balance than was estimated. There is some decrease in "real estate sensitive" revenues like building permits, conveyance tax, etc., but we had planned for that by lowering those revenues. Interest income could be a trouble spot. On the expenditure side, it is too early to tell, but we might see some savings in benefits. There is \$300,000 in the budget for school construction grants. We might get \$500-\$600,000 from the state unless they decide to delay bonding.

**Board of Education Financial Position**

Schools Financial and Planning Operations Director Ken Post then advised of the Board of Education's financial position. They currently have a general fund surplus of \$369,000 plus a

Special Education Grant (ECG) amounting to a total of \$1.3 million. As of today, he is not aware of any expenditure category that will have a significant variance.

### **FY '09 Cost Containment Measures**

Board of Finance Chairman Warren Serenbetz stated that last year, mill rate models were prepared at -2%, 0, and +2% increases in expenses. This year, the models were run at 0, 1%, and 2% increases. After the tight budget prepared for this current year, the models developed were more realistic. Ms. Vanderslice then gave an overview of the mill rate model she had prepared, assuming the following:

- Tax relief for the elderly and disabled will increase
- A growth in the grand list of a half percent
- A collection rate of 98.7%, consistent with the current rate
- An additional \$1 million dollar fund balance is taken into account in all three scenarios.

It was suggested to ask auditors McGladrey and Pullen if other towns have had a fund balance lower than 10% and still maintained the Aaa bond rating. The BOF agreed to follow up on this suggestion.

### **Board of Selectmen FY '11 Critical Issues**

There are very few opportunities to cut operating expenditures any further, after reductions that were made in the current budget. The Town has not added any new employee positions in four years and still maintains a hiring freeze. Last year, we eliminated four positions due to attrition, which made it possible for us not to have to lay off any employees.

- Contain costs and maintain services to the community with reduced resources.
- No bonded capital projects last year and operating capital budget reduced.
- The Comstock capital building project was postponed due to the financial crisis.
- Town Hall improvements have been deferred for a number of years
- There is a growing list of capital equipment that will have to be replaced, which cannot be put off too long.

The BOS will be looking into economic development to see if there is a potential to grow our tax base to offset modest residential growth in the future.

### **Board of Education FY '11 Critical Issues**

It will be very difficult to find further cuts without effecting operations. Budget drivers would include:

- Enrollment – This year there are 36 more students than projected.

- Underfunded mandates for special education.
- Health benefit costs – we are working with a consultant.
- Pension contributions – employees make up the majority. \$1.6 million in contributions last year.
- Utilities – there are 700,000 square feet of buildings to heat/cool/light.
- Technology - \$1.7 million item in the budget. Technology is now essential in education and is integrated into curriculum.
- “Pent up Demand” – We have deferred building maintenance, professional development and textbooks.

Mr. Post advised that the schools have received an \$881,000 special education grant – over two years. This is to supplement current spending and has to be sustainable when the money runs out in two years. This grant will not have any effect on this year’s budget since we plan to use it to train existing staff to replace outsourcing.

Mr. Brennan advised that the ARRA Wilton “Stimulus” money that has been reported is for the Norwalk Danbury line signalization improvements. There is also a \$1.4 million grant approval that the town was working on for the past few years. This is a reimbursement grant meaning that funds must be spent by the town on a project related to easing energy demands in Fairfield County. If the state approves, then the town would be reimbursed.

### **NESC – Potential Project Assignment**

After discussion, it was agreed to form a “working group” consisting of one member of each board to meet with NESC, a firm that has done work in New Jersey, looking at intra and inter municipality cost sharing.

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Jan Andras  
Recording Secretary