

APPROVED BOARD OF FINANCE MINUTES – BUDGET DELIBERATIONS
THURSDAY, MARCH 31, 2016

A budget deliberations meeting of the Board of Finance was held on Thursday, March 31, 2016 in the large conference room in Town Hall at 7:30 p.m.

Members Present: David Ulmer, Chairman; Paul Sutherland, Vice Chairman; Marty Heiser, Jessica Mancini;
and Michael Raduazzo

Town Officials: Rudy Marconi, First Selectman; Maureen Kozlark, Selectman; Kevin Redmond, Controller; Phil Kearns, Chairman Parks & Recreation Commission; Paul Roche, Director, Parks & Recreation; Fire Chief; Jerry Myers, Assistant Fire Chief

A G E N D A

Board of Selectman's Operating and Capital Budget
General Budget Discussions
Potential Vote on Capital

Mr. Ulmer called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Ulmer began the meeting with a "fact check" to clarify things said in prior discussions.

- The mill rate increase from 2001 to 2011 was 48.3 % (from 23.25 to 34.47). Over the next five years it increased 39%, making it between 50/55% over those fifteen years.
- The percentage of total spending attributable to the schools is 67.5%, not 80%.
- What percent of the Board of Education's budget increase is due to special education?

Mr. Heiser expressed his frustration at not having answers to the three questions he posed to the Board of Education. Mr. Ulmer said he would call the Superintendent's office and make sure they responded to Mr. Heiser's inquiries.

BOARD OF SELECTMAN'S BUDGET

PARKS & RECREATION

Mr. Roche stated that P & R had "no additional full-time head count, no new employees in the 2016/2017 budget." Mr. Marconi added that the increased program costs are covered by the increased revenue those programs generate. Mr. Roche opined that the net P&R costs to the Town would decrease by ± \$20k in the next fiscal year.

Field maintenance was discussed and it was noted that the State is pushing municipalities to "go organic" which is more expensive and less effective.

Mr. Redmond noted that golf course revenues are quite consistent year to year, with revenues of about \$1.3MM. Including debt service attributable to the golf course and benefits (fully loaded) the golf course

on average breaks even annually. Mr. Marconi gave Frank Sergiovanni a “shout out” for his excellent work maintaining golf course revenues even when other courses were shutting down.

Mr. Heiser asked about the new spray bay at the recreation center and was told “it has really been terrific.”

The environmental/health impact of Ridgefield’s synthetic turf was discussed.

The Parks & Recreation Department’s capital request includes \$30k for a Pavillion to be used primarily for summer campers/outdoor education, but which would be available for other uses and rental as well. P & R originally requested \$52k, the BOS cut it to \$30k and challenged P&R to raise the balance from private funds.

Maintenance of P & R infrastructure was discussed. Mr. Roche explained that he tries to work in phases in order to keep annual costs to a minimum and avoid any catastrophic repairs.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Chief discussed the change from six man minimum staffing to eight man, to be accomplished without hiring any additional firemen. The Department has two ambulances and two engines, each of which has to be manned by two firemen. If the Department is busy and there are only six firemen on duty, one piece of apparatus cannot be used and it becomes necessary to call for mutual aid. Chief said he would like to improve the Department’s response time, which is good but he believes it can be better.

It was noted that 2/3 of the Fire Department’s calls are EMS calls. Chief speculated that this was due to an aging population and the fact that people are more willing to call for help than they were ten years ago.

Mr. Heiser asked if the Department had universal radio coverage and Chief responded: “No, they are waiting for the new system to be up and running.”

The location (Catoonah Street) of the Fire House was discussed. Chief said there were pros and cons to the present location and noted that one half of all calls are located within one mile of the Catoonah Street station. He said he is not in favor of re-locating the Fire House to the Slumberger property.

Cistern maintenance/repair was discussed.

ROADS

Mr. Marconi discussed road maintenance and noted that \$400k in TAR (Town Aid Roads – which comes from the State) money was being added to the \$1,875,000.00 in the proposed 2016/2017 budget.

MISCELLANEOUS

The registrars State-maintained certificate program.

Mamasco Lake drainage.

Teen activities supported by the Town’s budget.

Police salaries – one officer is back on the payroll after serving in Afghanistan.

The Library’s \$25k capital request for new website design costs.

Debt service – the ongoing effort to keep reducing it by maintaining annual capital expenditures at \$2.7MM or less

Shifts in tenant location and space allocation in the Venus Building. Netting to protect parked vehicles from stray baseballs.

“LULA” a/k/a the Lounsbury House Chair Lift.

Highway garage floor repairs.

Solar panels impact on the integrity of school roofs.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Heiser made and Mr. Sutherland seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 p.m.

Vote: 5-0. Motion **APPROVED**.

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Rodgers, Recording Secretary