

APPROVED
MINUTES FOR THE BOARD OF FINANCE BUDGET DELIBERATIONS MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 2010

A budget deliberations meeting of the Board of Finance was held on Wednesday, March 31, 2010 in at 7:30 p.m.

Members Present: Peter Gomez, Chairman; Jill Bornstein, Vice Chairman;
Marty Heiser ; David Ulmer; and Margaret Price Sims

Town Officials: Rudy Marconi, First Selectman (from 8:40); Andy Bodner, Selectman;
Kevin Redmond, Controller; Jane Berendsen-Hill, Tax Collector

A G E N D A

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

Jane Berendsen-Hill announced that she had some "better news", that March is back on track after collections lagged in January and February, but March is where it is supposed to be. She said that foreclosures and short sales are not bad from a tax-collection standpoint because the taxes get paid in both instances. Looking forward at the balance of the current fiscal year, Ms. Jane Berendsen-Hill said the worst case would be that tax collections were up on \$300k.

Mr. Ulmer asked about the elderly tax payers, and Jane Berendsen-Hill said that Tax Assessor, Al Garzi manages that. Mr. Garzi requires people to come to his office and affirm that they have no other home. Jane Berendsen-Hill said she did not know how the applications for the elderly tax deferral were running.

Mr. Bodner asked about the outstanding balance of unpaid taxes. Jane Berendsen-Hill responded that she did not know, but stated that it has grown quite a bit and some of that has to do with abatements that have been granted, e.g. the Boys and Girls Club. Mr. Bodner opined that it may be time to reexamine the qualifications for the senior tax credit, which is income dependent. Mr. Ulmer said Ridgefield has collected 98.7% of taxes, deferring 1.3% every year, and the uncollectible rate is 0.5%. Mr. Bodner asked where the interest is accounted for, and Mr. Ulmer responded that it is in the interest and liens line.

Mr. Gomez noted that interest income is down to \$100k from \$250k and asked what backup there was. Mr. Ulmer said the \$100k sounds a little conservative but he could find no basis to increase it.

Mr. Redmond reviewed the intergovernmental revenue line saying the biggest item is educational cost sharing. The BOE is getting 15% and the Town is getting 85%. The BOE says it will lower its budget number by the amount it gets from the federal government. Mr. Redmond noted that another big driver is the manufacturer's exemption. Mr. Garzi provides that number. Ms. Bornstein asked what was driving the 32% increase and Mr. Redmond responded that is

was an increase in items that fall under the manufacturer's exemption. Mr. Bodner asked if that was attributable to Boehringer Ingelheim. Mr. Redmond said it was.

Mr. Redmond said the selectmen are following the current year's forecast for license and permit fees. Building is down according to the building inspector.

In charges for services, the Town Clerk forecasts a small increase in conveyance tax revenue for the current year, which is attributable to one large transaction, i.e. Copps Hill Development.

It is anticipated that recording fees will be lower than forecast. Fire Department ambulance services revenue will show a significant increase because of the fee reduction from 10% to 3% that the Town pays to the private company that does its billing.

Mr. Redmond said that Frank Sergiovanni, golf course supervisor, thinks his revenue budget for the current year was aggressive and he would like to bring it down.

Mr. Gomez questioned the 15% rental decrease for the Children's Corner saying it did not make a lot of sense. Mr. Redmond thought the amount of square footage rented was decreasing. Mr. Bodner interjected that the current lease is an unusual gross-rent lease and the Town pays all heat, water, electric, maintenance, etc. Mr. Heiser said he was miffed that Children's Corner withheld rent while the water issue was being discussed. Mr. Bodner said he was more than a little miffed, saying he found it "extraordinary".

Mr. Redmond said his forecast could get \$50k worse than what he forecast last week. Now he is forecasting using \$100k from the fund balance vis a vis his earlier \$67k forecast.

Mr. Gomez called for a short recess at 8:45 p.m. Mr. Gomez called the meeting back to order at 8:50 p.m.

The BOF discussed its upcoming budget deliberations, outlining proposed agendas.

Mr. Gomez asked Mr. Marconi about the forecast decrease in the Children's Corner's rent. Mr. Marconi said that there was a reduction in the square footage, not the rate per square foot, but the BOS has not yet signed off on the reduction. The Town is still negotiating the water-supply issue, it feels the Children's Corner has calculated its claim incorrectly.

Mr. Ulmer asked how the insurance increase was held at 6%. Mr. Redmond responded that dental was actually lower. Mr. Marconi added that experience is the bottom line.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mr. Heiser and seconded by Ms. Sims to adjourn the meeting at 10:13 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Karen Rodgers, Recording Secretary