

OFFICE OF THE
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TOWN HALL
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, CT 06897

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN
REGULAR MEETING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2009
WILTON TOWN HALL, ROOM B**

PRESENT: First Selectman William Brennan, Second Selectman Susan Bruschi, Selectman Richard Creeth, Selectman Ted Hoffstatter

ABSENT: Selectman Hal Clark

GUESTS: Sandra Dennies, Sarah Taffel, members of ETR Committee, Pat Sesto, members of Tree Committee, Jan Andras, approximately 10 members of public

OTHERS: Joan Lounds (Bulletin), Kara O'Connor (Villager), Christian Camarota (Patch.com)

First Selectman Brennan called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

A. Consent Agenda

A motion was made by Mr. Creeth, seconded and unanimously carried, to approve the Consent Agenda as follows:

Minutes

- Board of Selectmen Regular Meeting, December 7, 2009

Tax Refunds

- Motor Vehicle Tax Refunds as per Tax Collector's memorandum dated December 14, 2009

B. Discussion and/or Action

1. Elderly and Disabled Tax Relief – Discussion of Committee Recommendations

Committee members Judy Zucker, Jerry Holdridge, Toni Wiseman, Chuck Cunningham, Joseph Equale, David Lisowski, Phil D'Amato and Cathy Pierce were present.

There was a discussion of the current economic situation, including current assumptions regarding the town's debt service and revenue expectations that indicate a \$962,000 deficit (which does continue to improve). It is also expected that there will be a decrease in state aid due to state budget deficits. The Board of Finance is planning to add \$50,000 to the current level of tax relief. The Board of Finance also plans to add a 15% contribution to the Pension obligation to attempt to lower the unfunded pension liability. The Tax Relief Committee has done a thorough job and presented an extremely well written report with excellent recommendations but the key question is – how much can the Town afford? Mr. Brennan then outlined his analysis of costs and estimates that the recommended changes could cost \$950,000, which is \$100,000 more than the current assumptions of the Board of Finance.

Ms. Bruschi stated that there is a need to help seniors to be able to remain in town but we do have a finite amount of money to put towards that goal. She would be very much in favor of the recommendations if we could afford them at this time.

Mr. Creeth feels strongly that we should not reduce the existing program as those who are beneficiaries at this time are in need, and this program should be needs-based. He would like to support the committee's work as much as possible and would propose consideration of a modest interest rate for the deferral program.

The next step for these recommendations of the committee will be for each of the Selectmen to come back on January 4, 2010 with their specific recommendations and cost estimates. Recommendations would then be referred to the Board of Finance.

Mr. Michael Graupner, 91 Signal Hill Road, had interrupted the discussions to voice his opinion that the only reason seniors leave town is the increasing tax rate and that the ETR Committee should not have been limited with the charge to only look at a needs-based program.

Other members of the public were invited to speak at this time rather than wait for the Public Comment portion of the agenda.

Ms. Barbara Holdridge, 14 Forge Road, also owns property in Redding and their tax relief program was approved by a town vote. The Wilton program was not originally "needs-based".

Mr. Alex Ruskewich, from 1990-2009, the average increase in Social Security, if it were based on COLA, would have been 170%. The tax increase was 230%.

Judy Zucker, pointed out that if the decision were only to modify the interest rate on tax deferrals, it could be done without amending the ordinance, since the ordinance gives the Selectmen the authority to do so.

2. Consideration of Proposed Tree Ordinance

Environmental Affairs Director Pat Sesto was present along with Tree Committee members Jessica Kaplan and Paula Byrdy. A few minor changes were made to the originally proposed ordinance. A public hearing will be held on 1/4/10 at 7:00 pm.

3. Application for DEMHS Grant

Wilton P.D. Deputy Chief Robert Crosby was present. The application is for a grant in the amount of \$60,000 to be used to assign a Wilton detective to the Connecticut Intelligence Center, which provides a great resource to the Police Department. The funds come back to the town to offset the detective's salary and still allows the flexibility for the detective to come back into the town if needed for an emergency situation.

Mr. Brennan moved to approve the application for a DEMHS Grant in the amount of \$60,000 to assign a Wilton Detective to the Connecticut Intelligence Center. Motion seconded and unanimously carried.

4. FY 2011 Budget – Discussion and approval of Budget Calendar and Long Term Capital Planning Strategy

CFO Sandy Dennies had prepared and distributed a budget calendar outlining meetings for the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Board of Education.

Mr. Brennan stated that the majority of bonded capital projects in the last several years have been for schools, and those projects were valid. Town projects have been put on hold, such as the Comstock Community Center with Senior Center. He feels that we need to be more proactive by deciding on priorities and getting them into the schedule. He has had discussions with Malcolm Whyte and Judy Zucker about possibly planning the Senior Center on its own. The \$425,000 appropriation that was made could be used now to begin the plans and site work, which would shrink the lead time when the project is ready to begin construction. The Comstock committee will continue with the planning stage and development of alternatives.

5. Appointment to Conservation Commission

Mr. Brennan moved to appoint Mr. Jeffrey Coppelman as a member of the Conservation Commission for a term to expire 11/30/12. Motion seconded and unanimously carried.

6. Appointment to Commission on Social Services

Ms. Bruschi moved to appoint Nathaniel Shipp as a member of the Commission on Social Services for a term to expire on 11/30/11. Motion seconded and unanimously carried.

7. Re-appointments

Mr. Creeth moved to reappoint the following: Kevin O'Brien and Joseph Burke to the Parks and Recreation Commission for terms to expire on 11/30/13; Susan Chalons-Browne and Betty-Jo Corridon to the Commission on Social Services for terms to expire on 11/30/11. Motion seconded and unanimously carried.

8. Public Health Preparedness and Response for Pandemic Flu Grant

Mr. Brennan moved the resolution – BE IT RESOLVED, that the Wilton Board of Selectmen authorizes William F. Brennan, First Selectman, on behalf of the Town of Wilton, to enter into and execute a Public Health Preparedness and Response for Pandemic Flu Grant contract with the State of Connecticut Department of Health. The purpose of the grant is to enhance the Town of Wilton Department of Preparedness for and Response to Pandemic Flu, other outbreaks of infectious disease, and other public health threats and emergencies. Motion seconded and unanimously carried.

C. Public Comment – None noted

D. Reports

1. First Selectman

Route 7 – The four lanes were opened this week before the storm and before the end of the year. The opening was originally planned for Spring 2010.

Snow Storm – There were no problems with the first major snow storm. The ordinance regarding snow removal from sidewalks applies to the new 3.5 miles of sidewalks along Route 7. The owners of land abutting public sidewalks have the responsibility of snow removal within 6 hours.

Speak Up Wilton – Planned for Saturday, 1/23/10 from 9:00 am to 11:00 am, possibly at Trackside.

Revised Town Charter – Sarah Taffel and Bettye Ragonetti are working on printing up new Town Code Books to include the revised Charter, and having revisions made to the on-line Town Code.

2. Selectmen's Reports

Ms. Bruschi – No report

Mr. Hoffstatter – A troop box was donated tonight and will be shipped.

Mr. Clark – Not present

Mr. Creeth – No Report

E. Adjournment

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Jan Andras, Recording Secretary