

Board of Finance
Regular Meeting – December 15, 2009
MINUTES

Attending:

Board of Finance Members: Al Alper (8:07 p.m. arrival), Gail Lavielle, Jim Meinhold, Andy Pforzheimer, Warren Serenbetz, Lynne Vanderslice

Others: Sandra Dennies, Matt Spoerndle (Phoenix Advisors), Mike Lindberg (Wilton Energy Commission), Deputy Chief of Police Robert Crosby, John Savarese, Sarah Taffel, Joan Lownds (Bulletin), Christian Camerota (wiltonpatch.com)

Call to Order:

Warren Serenbetz called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

Election of Officers:

Andy Pforzheimer motioned that Warren Serenbetz be reelected as Chairman of the Board of Finance; Lynne Vanderslice seconded, and the motion passed unanimously (Al Alper not present for vote.)

Mr. Serenbetz motioned that Lynne Vanderslice be elected as Vice Chairman of the Board of Finance; Jim Meinhold seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. (Alper not present for vote)

Ms. Vanderslice motioned that Jim Meinhold be reelected as Clerk of the Board of Finance; Gail Lavielle seconded, and the motion passed 4 – 0, Mr. Meinhold abstaining. (Alper not present for vote)

Approval of Minutes:

- Regular Meeting of November 17, 2009

Mr. Meinhold motioned that the Minutes be approved as written; Mr. Pforzheimer seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. (Alper not present for vote)

Email for Board of Finance:

Mr. Serenbetz confirmed with John Savarese, IS Director, that the BOF was now set up to accept public comments via live email during meeting broadcasts at boardoffinance@wiltonct.org, and he asked board members for their thoughts on how those emails should be handled during the meeting.

Mr. Pforzheimer opined that if the email was a request for clarification of something being discussed, or was germane to the topic, it should be addressed at that time; if it was general commentary, it should be saved until the public comment section of the meeting. There was consensus that that would be a good approach to handling the emails. Mr. Meinhold said that it was important to note that all emails received would be identified and become part of the public record of the meeting.

Mr. Serenbetz reviewed guidelines for submission of emails and advised that emails should include name, address, and should also include a full message in the body of the email and not just a summary in the subject line.

Televising Update:

Mr. Serenbetz deferred update of this topic to a future meeting, as Mr. Alper was not present due to a schedule conflict. He reminded the Board that Mr. Alper had initiated discussion with Principal Timothy Canty at the high school with respect to soliciting student volunteers as part of the school curriculum to help video record town meetings. He recommended continuing to move forward with that idea, although due to the expense of the specialized equipment, a professional is still required to be on site during the broadcasts.

Wilton Police Department:

Consideration of a DUI Grant Application:

Deputy Chief of Police Robert Crosby advised that the Police Department annually applies for a grant from the Connecticut DOT to support enforcement of DUI laws for selective patrols during the holiday season. Sandy Dennies clarified that the total amount being requested is \$35,300, of which 75 percent, or approximately \$26,475, is reimbursed to the Town by the State.

Mr. Serenbetz asked for a motion to approve the Police Department's 2010 Comprehensive DUI Enforcement Initiative grant application in the amount of \$35,300 to the Connecticut DOT; Mr. Pforzheimer so motioned, Mr. Meinhold seconded, and the motion passed 5 – 0. (Alper not present for vote)

Consideration of an Emergency Management and Homeland Security Grant:

Deputy Chief Crosby reviewed a new grant opportunity for the Police Department through the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security in the amount of \$60,000 to pay for an officer to assist CTIC (Connecticut Intelligence Center), a group staffed by local, federal and state agency personnel who share expertise, resources, and intelligence information with law enforcement officials throughout the state.

Mr. Serenbetz asked for a motion to approve the Police Department's Emergency Management and Homeland Security Grant application in the amount of \$60,000 to assist CTIC; Ms. Vanderslice so motioned, Mr. Meinhold seconded, and the motion passed 5 – 0. (Alper not present for vote)

Wilton Energy Commission Request for Approval of Three Grant Applications:

Mike Lindberg briefed the Board on the history and mission of the Wilton Energy Commission, and he requested approval, on behalf of the WEC, to pursue three available energy grants to the Town as follows:

- a) American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2,009 – \$76,295
- b) Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant – approximately \$250,000
- c) Community Innovations Grants Program (CIGP) – \$4,000

Mr. Lindberg distributed materials and gave a detailed and extensive review of each of the three grants under consideration, and answered questions from the Board.

Note: Mr. Alper arrived at this point in the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

Mr. Serenbetz thanked Mr. Lindberg for his comprehensive presentation and commended him on the work that the Wilton Energy Commission is doing on behalf of the Town.

As there was no objection from anyone on the Board to combining approval for the three grant requests under consideration from the WEC, Mr. Serenbetz asked for a motion to approve all three grant applications which had just been presented to the Board of Finance by the Wilton Energy Commission. Mr. Meinhold so moved; Ms. Vanderslice seconded, and the motion passed 5 – 0, Ms. Lavielle recusing herself from the vote (as she is a member of the Energy Commission).

Bond Offering:

Matthew Spoerndle of Phoenix Advisors distributed materials to the Board, including an Aaa Peer Analysis which outlined some of the quantifiable criteria that rating agencies use, specifically Moody's, to evaluate the Town's credit and which showed the Town relative to other Connecticut Aaa municipalities. He explained that fund balance, debt management position, and demographic information are typically the three main quantifiable criteria, and noted that a management component is also factored in but is somewhat qualitative.

Ms. Vanderslice asked if unemployment data was also available for 2006 and 2007, as she found it interesting that it appeared the Town had the highest unemployment figure listed of the peer group in the report. Mr. Spoerndle said that he would forward that data to Ms. Dennies.

Mr. Spoerndle also distributed and reviewed a suggested bond scenario with respect to financing the remainder of the high school project in February, 2010 which he had drafted with Ms. Dennies, which was structured in such a way as to enable the Town to lock in long term financing at low rates and help mitigate budget impact.

Extensive Q&A and discussion followed with respect to the proposed bond offering.

The Board thanked Mr. Spoerndle for his informative presentation.

Schedule of Authorized but Unspent Funds and Their Use Per Bond Counsel:

Ms. Dennies distributed a schedule of funds that the Town is currently paying debt service on, which funds are no longer needed in the projects they were bonded for. She advised that she has spoken to bond counsel, who referred her to the Charter with respect to how such funds can be used. She explained that according to the Charter, surplus bond proceeds are to be transferred by the Treasurer to the General Fund to pay debt service on outstanding bonds unless the Board of Selectmen request that the Board of Finance redesignate all or part of such surplus to a project or projects for which there is authorized but unissued debt. Ms. Dennies stated that it was her understanding that the BOS will be coming before the BOF in January with such a request on the \$600,000 that is available from projects that are completed but where funds remain.

Several board members asked for further clarification on whether the funds are restricted when the money is returned to the General Fund. Ms. Dennies clarified that the dollars being returned to the General Fund can only be used to pay down debt service. Ms. Vanderslice said it was important to note that the dollars should not be considered “revenue” because debt service is being paid on it. Mr. Pforzheimer and Ms. Vanderslice both stated they thought it would be a good idea for the funds to be returned to the General Fund and used to pay down the debt of the Town.

Monthly Status Report on Town of Wilton Finances:

Ms. Dennies said there was some good news to report, and she distributed a summary of revenues by department to date for FY '10 compared to FY '09. She explained that as of month end, conveyance tax revenues have come up to almost half of what was budgeted, which will substantially reduce the loss that was anticipated in the last couple of months. She cautioned, however, that overall conveyance tax revenues were still down.

Ms. Dennies further reported that, unfortunately, building permit fees were only about 28 percent of what had been budgeted, i.e. only \$170,000 received out of the total \$600,000 budgeted, and that only \$55,000 of the \$750,000 that had been budgeted in interest income had been collected to date. Ms. Dennies said that she is hopeful that the spring will be strong, but that she is estimating the potential loss of revenues at close to a \$1 million due to interest income and fees still being down significantly.

2010 Budget – BOF: Minutes and Special Audits, etc.:

As this was her last meeting as Recording Secretary, Mr. Serenbetz thanked Anna Corra for her years of excellent service to the Board of Finance, and stated that a decision would have to be made on who would be taking minutes at future meetings and how that line item would be paid for. He further advised that the special audit budget issue would also have to be addressed. Ms. Dennies also reminded the Board that funds would have to be found for televising the meetings as well.

Ms. Vanderslice reported that she had been in contact with someone who was interesting in taking the minutes, whom she believed was a very qualified candidate. Mr. Alper asked Sarah Taffel if the position needed to be publicly posted prior to hiring someone; Ms. Taffel stated she believed there was no legal requirement for the BOF to post the position.

Discussion on the topic ensued.

Ms. Vanderslice read an email received from Amy Harris at this point in the meeting asking what the pay for the position is. Ms. Taffel stated that that was dependent on the way the pay would be structured and negotiated, e.g. a fixed fee per meeting or an hourly rate. Ms. Vanderslice suggested she work with Ms. Taffel on hiring someone for the position, and the Board agreed that that was a good approach to the issue.

Mr. Pforzheimer moved that the Board of Finance authorize Sarah Taffel to hire someone to take the Minutes at the Board of Finance meetings with the available funds without posting the position; Mr. Alper seconded, and the motion passed 5 – 1 (Meinhold). Mr. Meinhold stated that he felt they should post the available position.

2011 Town of Wilton Budget Issues:

Ms. Vanderslice reported that she had run the mill rate model again based on the latest data available, and she reviewed various assumptions and three budget scenarios she had drafted. Extensive discussion followed.

Ms. Dennies stressed that although the tax collection rate was currently 99.4 percent, she would not change the 98.6 percent rate used in the mill rate model, as she was concerned with the increasing number of Lis Pendens being filed in the Town Clerk's office.

Ms. Vanderslice outlined the three scenarios with varying assumptions on expense increases, changes in revenue, and ending fund balances. The resulting range of mill rate increases was from 2.1% to 6.5%.

Mr. Alper and Mr. Pforzheimer both stated they would encourage distribution of the draft scenarios and conveying to the BOS and BOE what budget increases would mean with respect to tax increases. Mr. Serenbetz said he would convey the information to the respective boards.

Ms. Vanderslice also encouraged groups who had budget concerns and wanted to learn more about the budget process to contact the Board of Finance and request that BOF members come to speak to their groups about their concerns.

With respect to the requested budget format changes requested by the BOF, Ms. Dennies advised that she was in the process of trying to have the requested format merged with the departmental budgets which had been distributed to department heads in November. She also asked Ms. Taffel to discuss some of the difficulties the Town was encountering translating some of the Town

workforce into FTEs, e.g. poll workers, seasonal workers, etc., as was being requested; Ms. Taffel did so.

Ms. Dennies also distributed the final draft of the Elderly and Disabled Tax Relief Committee's report to board members.

Calendars – Board of Finance and Budget:

Board of Finance 2010 Regular Meeting Schedule:

After review and discussion, Mr. Pforzheimer proposed moving the February 17 meeting to February 23 at 6:00 p.m. prior to the work session scheduled with the Board of Education.

Mr. Serenbetz asked for a motion to approve the Proposed 2010 Regular Meeting Schedule as amended; Mr. Alper so motioned, Ms. Lavielle seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

FY 2011 Budget Calendar:

Ms. Dennies distributed and reviewed the proposed budget calendar she had drafted, and board members offered some suggestions to it.

Mr. Serenbetz asked for a motion to approve the proposed FY 2011 budget calendar as presented by Sandy Dennies and discussed by the Board; Mr. Meinhold so motioned, Mr. Alper seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Other Business:

Public Letters:

Mr. Meinhold advised he had received a letter from Andrea Klancko of Pimpewaug Road which had been addressed to the BOF, which he was entering for inclusion into the public record (copy appended hereto.)

Ms. Vanderslice reiterated the rules for submission of emails during meetings, and she formally entered the email received from Amy Harris during tonight's meeting into the public record (copy appended hereto.)

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Adjournment:

Mr. Serenbetz asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Alper so motioned; Ms. Vanderslice seconded, and the motion passed unanimously at 10:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Anna Corra
Recording Secretary