



**THE TOWN OF WOODBRIDGE
BOARD OF FINANCE
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2022**

A Board of Finance Meeting for the Town of Woodbridge was via WebEx

Link to video recording of this meeting: <https://youtu.be/w-tNn2LLNyA>

BOF PRESENT: Chairman, Matthew Giglietti; Vice Chairman, Susan Jacobs Tom Handler; Donavon Lofters; Ellen Scalettar

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman, Beth Heller; Administrative Officer/Director of Finance, Anthony Genovese; Budget Analyst/Payroll & Benefits Administrator, Karen Crosby

Chairman Matthew Giglietti called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dr. Jonathan Budd, Superintendent of Woodbridge Public Schools stated that the board will hear from Tony Genovese later in the meeting regarding medical insurance for next year. He stated that the Board of Education supports what Tony will be proposing later in the meeting and he is asking for the Board of Finance to support it as well.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER / DIRECTOR OF FINANCE REPORT

Tony reported on expenditures through March 2022 with an estimated year-end budget surplus of \$672,413. As the current budget includes an allocation from fund balance of \$400,000, increase to fund balance at year end is projected to be \$272,413. Fund balance at 6/30/2022 is estimated to be \$7.0M or 13.55% of annual expenses.

Revenues

Intergovernmental Revenue – projected to generate a surplus of \$458,507. The Town received \$163,075 in FEMA funds for the reimbursement of expenses related to storm Isaias and \$15,017 in PILOT funds from the State of Connecticut. Both are not budgeted revenues in 2022. In addition, Tony anticipates a budget surplus of \$23,574 in education cost sharing grant funds and \$255,000 in special education excess cost grant funds.

Investment Income - projected to experience a deficit of \$80,000 at the end of the year due to continued low short term interest rates.

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Charge for Services – projected to experience a surplus of \$177,131 due to a projected surplus of \$20,000 in transfer station fees, a surplus of \$175,000 in building permits, and a shortfall of \$17,000 in library fines and other department charges.

Expenses

Board of Finance – projected to generate a surplus of \$3,640 due to lower than anticipated cost for the Town audit.

Center – projected to generate a surplus of \$5,000 due to a savings in electricity.

Building Official – expected to experience a surplus of \$25,000 due to savings in part time wages. The Building Official is part time, and his hours are “as needed.”

Transfer Station – should stay within budget this year. Tonnage is being tracked closely and it appears that a surplus in recycling due to reduced costs and demo/bulky waste due to reduced tonnage will offset a deficit in MSW due to increased tonnage.

Human Services – projected to experience a surplus of \$30,000 due to savings in part time wages.

Library – projected to generate a surplus of \$30,000 primarily due to savings in wages.

Benefits – projected to generate a surplus of \$10,000 due to savings in workers compensation insurance.

Matt stated that it looks like the Woodbridge Board of Education now has a projected surplus of \$48,604.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board of Finance voted (Giglietti/Handler) unanimously to approve the minutes of the March 17, 2022 meeting.

FIRST SELECTMAN'S REPORT

Beth reported the following:

- The State of CT has awarded the Town of Woodbridge \$2M to convert the Old Firehouse into a Community Center. This is a project we have been working on for a long time, and these State funds mean that the Town will not have to borrow money to pay for the project. The Old Firehouse has been used primarily for storage since it was damaged by a horrible fire in 2006. Beth is hopeful that construction will begin this summer. She will appoint a Building Committee to oversee the Community Center renovation project at the next Board of Selectmen meeting. There was a press conference with our legislators and Governor Lamont this past Monday in front of the building.

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- The next building that desperately needs renovations in our Town Center is the Center Building. Our Police Department needs remodeling and upgrades to conform with State standards, and the rest of the building needs new heating, ventilation and cooling along with other upgrades. To investigate these needs and make recommendations, Beth is appointing a Center Building Renovation Committee with Board of Finance member Dwight Rowland serving as Chair, Police Chief Frank Cappiello, Police Commissioner Andy Esposito, Human Services Director Jeanette Glicksman and Board of Selectman member Paul Kuriakose. As experience has shown, if we have a so called “shovel ready” project, she is then able to seek grant funding. Beth is hopeful that the Town will be able to fund all or some of this project with either state, or even federal funding. Beth has already reached out to our legislators to hopefully apply for Homeland Security funding as they will fund emergency operation centers.
- The Town has heard from a consultant (Laurie Pitrie) recommended to the Town by the 2030 Task Force with a proposal to build upon the Platus report from years ago. As a reminder – the 2030 group of volunteers was charged with coming up with ways to grow our grand list. The Board of Selectmen approved funding the planner for recommendations for the Business District.
- At the last meeting of the Board of Selectmen, the Housing committee requested, and the Board of Selectmen agreed, to table the discussion regarding development of the CCW. Arbor Haven has officially withdrawn their proposal at this time. The Town plans to put together a Request for Proposals for this property, and Beth hopes that Arbor Haven might participate in that process, along with other interested and qualified developers with any and all ideas.

LIAISON REPORTS

Amity – Matt was unable to attend the last meeting. Matt has observed that there seems to be some strong anti-Amity sentiment out there. It seems that it is about the Amity surpluses, May 3rd is the referendum.

Police Commission – Ellen reported that they are on target for their budget. Motor vehicle accidents seemed to have increased over last year. Brian Pedalino has been promoted to Sergeant.

WBOE – Tom reported that the projected budget at Beecher is a surplus of \$48,000. Things are looking positive. There were some announced retirements of some fairly senior employees. Negotiations are starting to be discussed.

Fire Commission – Donavon reported that Engine 3 is out of service for 1 ½ months due to a compressor problem. Fund Raiser at firehouse on May 21st. The motherboard went on the Lucas II device. They are expecting to get a loaner for this piece of equipment. They discussed the relaxed Covid restrictions.

Library – Susan reported that she was unable to attend. For clarity, the Woodbridge 2030 committee Planner is partly funding in this budget and the rest is part of the FY23 budget.

FY23 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS TO ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

Review of Public Hearing Comments

Matt stated that it wouldn't be a bad idea if you want to ask a question at a budget meeting to talk to Tony in advance. He wouldn't have all the information for some questions at the meeting. If he knew in advance, he could have some information available.

Scale at Transfer Station

Matt stated that the scale was one question that the details wouldn't be available at the budget hearing as that was a project a few years ago.

Tony reported that the expenditures to install the scale was \$86,555 and there were some other expenses of \$12,386, site expenses of \$7,140 the rental of an excavator of \$6,947. The total cost was \$113,028. It went about \$10,00 over budget which was basically due to the site expenses and the excavator rental.

We have collected in revenues in FY20, 21, and estimated FY22 is \$175,882. It was anticipated to collect \$112,100 in revenue the first year, but the Board of Selectmen did not adopt a tip fee charge that year for bulky waste. The revenue was only approximately \$60,000 for that first year. It took a few more years to get to the \$113,028.

Haulers used to just pay a registration fee in order to dump at the transfer station. Now they are charged \$90 per ton. The tonnage, when this was instituted, has decreased.

Amity Surplus Question

Matt stated that this has to be taken up with the Amity Board of Education.

10% Affordable Housing Question

Jerry Weiner stated that it is a long statute (8-30g). This statute shifts the burden of proof from the applicant to the Town. It used to be that the burden of proof (in an appeals court case) that a zoning commission made a mistake or error in their decision in denying a developer's application. It has been very difficult for a developer to win an appeal – not impossible, but very difficult.

This would impede the developer from developing affordable housing in towns.

Now, with 8-30g when a developer appeals a denial of development of affordable housing, it is the Town (planning commission) that must prove to a judge that the decision they made in denying the application that they were consistent with health, safety, and welfare of the community. Some of the issues that would be looked at are flooding, traffic, and environmental issues.

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The developer doesn't have to say a thing in court, the Town (planning commission) must prove that they made the correct decision and why the developer cannot go forward with the project. This is a high burden on the Towns. The Towns have to be mindful when they receive applications for affordable housing project applications when they have not met the 10% benchmark of affordable housing. It could be that developers may take the opportunity to come into Woodbridge to get the projects approved where it used to be very difficult. Woodbridge is way below the 10% benchmark for affordable housing. It is incumbent on all Towns to get as close to the 10% benchmark so it can control the kind of development they want in Town. If they don't, then the developers have a bigger say of what will get built in Town.

Jerry reported that the statute does not state a penalty. It does not say that the Town will be penalized. What it does say is that it will be much more difficult for the Town to sustain a denial of a developer's affordable housing project.

There is also a provision in 8-30g that allows a Town to apply for a moratorium and Woodbridge may be eligible for that. The legislature recognizes that there may be some towns that would have difficulty reaching the benchmark. If a town is making progress and has approved some projects, and still has not reached the 10% they may apply for a moratorium for up to four years. The town then can go back and look at the regulations to see if changes need to be made. It takes the pressure off the town and developers will not be applying for projects during the moratorium year(s).

Jerry also reported that there could be lawsuits against the Town that Woodbridge's zoning regulations are exclusionary and that there was an allegation made that the Town violates the Fair Housing Standards and the Connecticut Constitution by not allowing ample opportunity for everyone to come to town regardless of income. It is possible that someone out there could sue the Town and the Town could be susceptible to monetary damages. There is a very good legal reason to strive to obtain significantly more affordable housing. The Planning & Zoning Commission has done admirable work in amending our regulations in allowing affordable housing in Town. It was a step in the right direction.

Controlling Personnel

Matt stated that the Town has eliminated positions over the last few years. From 2017 to 2022 the Town has eliminated 10 full time employees. There are 78 full time employees in the Town. If the police department has 30 and public works may have 15, you are down to 33 full time employees working in Town. Review of personnel is constantly being done. The Town is being run on a very lean basis. A lot of work gets done without a lot of people. Tony stated that on a regular basis they do succession planning. There are regular discussions that include department heads on how to deliver services efficiently.

Class Size

Matt stated that it is not up to the Board of Finance to determine class size, this needs to be addressed with the Woodbridge Board of Education.

Additional FY23 Budget Considerations

Tony explained that there are some changes that do not increase the expenses, mill rate or amount raised by taxes.

1. Add \$275,000 to the Human Services capital budget for fiscal 2023 to be used to fund HVAC improvements in the senior center using funds from the American Rescue Plan act. This was reviewed and recommended by the Board of Selectmen at their last meeting.
2. Add \$35,000 in 2024, 2025, & 2026 totaling \$105,000 to possibly lease purchase air packs for the fire department
3. Add \$80,000 in 2024, 2025, 2026 & 2027 totaling \$320,000 to possibly lease purchase radios for the fire department
4. Reduce Fringe Benefits by \$80,000 (General Town Healthcare - \$30,000, Police Healthcare - \$15,000 and Retiree Healthcare – \$35,000) due to savings in healthcare.
5. Add \$80,000 to the Woodbridge Board of Education for increased healthcare costs.

Tony explained numbers four and five above. The Town and the Board of Education has historically been part of the same health plan. This year the Board of Education explored some options that were available to them but not to the Town. The Board of Education could have saved about \$100,000 going with the State health plan. If they split with the Town, the Town would have cost the Town \$80,000. Tony discussed this with the Dr. Budd and he agreed to stay with the current health plan. Dr. Budd told Tony that the Board could come up with the additional \$20,000. That is why the Town decreased healthcare by \$80,000 and then the Board of Ed healthcare is being increased by \$80,000.

Tom asked if the \$275,000 HVAC improvements for the senior center include the gym. Tony stated that it does not. The senior center project is almost ready to go out to bid. The gym is a project that is being looked at for American Rescue Plan funds. Tony explained that there needs to be some more outreach and there will be a Town meeting sometime in the future to address the projects that are being looked at to use the American Rescue Plan funds. Tony stated that they have discussed incorporating the gym HVAC with the senior center project. It was recommended that the units be separate because of the layout of the building.

Board of Finance Recommendation to the Annual Town Meeting

The Board of Finance voted (Giglietti/Jacobs) unanimously to recommend to the Annual Town Meeting the numbers from the Preliminary Budget Hearing and incorporate the changes recommended by Tony.

- Total Expenses of \$53,824,129
- Amount to be Raised by Taxes \$49,997,487
- Non-Tax Revenue of \$3,826,642
- Resulting in a Mill Rate of 43.49

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Tony did mention that he will keep the Board updated on the auto tax cap at the State. The big question is whether the State reimburses the towns for the lost revenue if the cap is approved.

Tom asked if this does get voted in at the State would it be in time for the Town Meeting, or do we take the funds from contingency if the Town is not reimbursed. Tony stated that if it is in time for the Town Meeting, it can be addressed then; if not, then that is what Fund Balance can be used for.

Ellen asked if municipalities want this auto tax cap and is CCM advocating for or against it. Tony stated that CCM is neutral, but they do say "if you do it, then you have to fund it."

Susan commended Tony and his group for the work on the Preliminary Budget Hearing. Just the Numbers was a great document for the meeting. The power point was very helpful and well presented. She commended those who made constructive criticism and those that made constructive praise for the process. She stated it was a very nicely done preliminary budget meeting.

Ellen asked if the meeting is available on the website. Tony stated that he is not sure that the meeting is on the website, but the budget documents are on the website.

Tom suggested that prior to the Annual Town Meeting that a discussion should be had on how the count will be done if there is a quorum.

The Board of Finance voted (Giglietti/Jacobs) to adjourn at 7:02 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Crosby

Karen Crosby
Budget Analyst/Payroll & Benefits Administrator