



**THE TOWN OF WOODBRIDGE
BOARD OF FINANCE
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2021
6:00 PM**

A Virtual Board of Finance Meeting for the Town of Woodbridge using Webex was held on Thursday, February 18, 2021 at 6:00 pm.

Due to the Corona-19 Pandemic, this meeting was held virtually using Webex.

BOF PRESENT: Chairman, Matthew Giglietti; Vice Chairman, Paul Kuriakose; Susan Jacobs; Tom Handler; Ellen Scalettar

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Email received from Bill Silberberg regarding the cost of the Fitness Center for approximately 50 members. He suggested the Town consider subsidizing the membership of the 50 participants for one year at the cost of \$100/person to another area gym which would be an approximate savings to the Town of \$30,000. This \$30,000 would be available for other needs within the Woodbridge community. Discussions are ongoing with the JCC for a reduced membership for the 50 Fitness Center members.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER / DIRECTOR OF FINANCE REPORT

Tony reported on actual revenues and expenditures through January 2021. There is a projected year-end budget surplus of \$43,510. Because the current Town budget includes an allocation from fund balance of \$400,000, projected decrease to fund balance at year end is \$356,490. Fund balance at 6/30/2021 is projected to be \$6.14M or 12.26% of annual projected expenses.

Revenues

Taxes - Taxes are doing well and may have a slight surplus. Tony is waiting to see what the Town will receive as a result of the deferral program. We collected all the taxes in the fall and he expects to receive all the deferrals from January.

Intergovernmental Revenue – Surplus of \$100,000. Received \$163,000 from FEMA due to corona expenses. This was for FY20 costs.

Investment Income – projected to experience a deficit of \$130,000 at the end of the year. Rates have fallen from .49% in May to .14% in January.

Charge for Services – Department charges are projected to experience a deficit of \$33,077. There is an anticipated shortfall of \$100,000 in transfer station fees. The transfer station fee shortfall is offset by a projected surplus of \$25,000 in town clerk fees, \$20,000 in conveyance fees, \$10,000 in building permits, and \$7,500 in public safety fees. The transfer station fee budget anticipated a bulky waste per ton fee which has not been adopted. In addition, the transfer station has been experiencing reduced tonnage from haulers. Reduced tonnage also creates a surplus in expense.

Tony reported that the Town spent in excess of \$200,000 from Storm Isaias and there is a reimbursement of 75%. Tony is hopeful that this reimbursement will be received by the end of August to be able to be recognized in this fiscal year.

Expenses

Transfer Station – projected to generate a surplus of \$30,000. A surplus of \$55,000 in waste disposal fees is offset by an increase in recycling and bulky waste costs.

Benefits – expected to generate a surplus of \$160,000 due to a lower than anticipated workers compensation premium and savings in healthcare.

WBOE – the Woodbridge Board of Education reported a year end projected deficit of \$93,966 through December 31, 2020. Since this report, the deficit is now at \$69,000. Dr. Budd has mentioned that he anticipates covering the entire deficit by the end of the year.

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET UPDATE

Tony reported that he included the reports in the packet. We are receiving essentially the same amount as the current year. The Federal ESSER II grant of \$101,071 goes directly to the Woodbridge Board of Education and they must follow specific guidelines on the use of those funds.

FINANCIAL POLICIES UPDATE

Tony reported that over the next few months he would like to adopt a few policies so folks can understand how we create the budget. We currently have a fund balance and a debt policy. The policies he is looking for are: Reserve Policy, Structurally Balanced Budget Policy, and a One-Time Revenue Policy. He included draft of each of the policies in the packet. If anyone has any comments, he asked that they be emailed to him. Ellen suggested that for the Reserve Policy should indicate what a reserve policy is. She also wants to be sure that the Board will not overly tying their hands. Be sure they are being thoughtful and responsible but flexible when they need to be.

FUNDING REQUESTS

- 2021-06 Allocation.....\$2,000 (Line Item Transfer)
- To: Police/Technical 1210-00/55120
 - From: Police/Prof. Dev. Conferences 1210-00/54610
 - For: Purchase replacement printer for Chief
 - Vote: (Giglietti/Handler) Unanimous
- 2021-07 Allocation.....\$9,915 (Funding Request)
- To: Info Systems/Data Processing 1145-00/52210
 - From: Board of Finance/Contingency 1170-00/56800
 - For: IT Services related to improving Cyber Security Resiliency
 - Vote: (Giglietti/Kuriakose) Unanimous

Tony explained that there was a cyber security review done by the State as it related to the elections. We did well in comparison with other Towns and this is for us to tighten up the security as per their recommendations.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Board of Finance voted (Giglietti/ Scalettar) unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2021 meeting as corrected (Human Services report was given by Ellen not Tom Kenefick)

FIRST SELECTMAN’S REPORT

Beth reported on the following:

- Last Sunday was the last Covid Testing Clinic. The human services department has reached out to over 700 residents to help them get vaccinated
- Gov. Lamont has suspended the applications for the Elderly Homeowners Tax Relief Program. All those who have been on the program will automatically be included until the new application period in 2023. The Town allocates \$190,000 for this program and only 70% of it is being used. Details and qualifications along with the application is on the Assessor page of the town website.
- In creating the FY22 budget the town departments and commissions have been asked to be extra mindful of taxpayers dollars this year due the financial impact of the pandemic. The Board of Selectmen is meeting on February 23rd to make their recommendations. Every year it becomes

more apparent that we need to grow and diversify the grand list. We have consolidated staff positions and cut programs. There are very few other ways to we can make additional meaningful cuts to the budget without cutting services. We need to grow revenue. The 20/30 Task Force is examining how to grow the grant list by 20/30. Beth is looking forward to hearing their updates and recommendations.

- Attorney Elias Alexiades, a citation hearing officer, has moved out of town and she has appointed Attorney Robin Berke to replace him.
- The Town Plan & Zoning Commission is continuing hearing to consider an application to amend the zoning regs and the Town Plan of Conservation and Development to permit multi-family housing in most of the Town's residential district with affordable cluster-type housing. Because the BOS has agreed to have a thoughtful and purposeful approach to having housing opportunities in Woodbridge, last evening the Board voted unanimously to approve the study charge of the Woodbridge Housing Opportunities Study Committee. The board approved the establishment of this committee at a previous meeting. Now that there is a charge, the membership will be established at a later meeting. The charge is posted on the Town website. Beth remains confident that the Zoning Commission will review the zoning application in a fair, thorough, and thoughtful way. Beth is also confident that Woodbridge will remain a wonderful community.
- The Board of Selectmen has scheduled a special meeting for next week for the bonding of some projects: funding for new community center at the old firehouse, a storage shed behind the current fire station, completion of renovations at the senior center and a roofing project at Beecher Road School. With the low interest rates, it is the best time to complete the projects that have been pending for many years.

LIAISON REPORTS

Amity – Matt reported as of February 8th the surplus is \$576,000 due to unfilled positions and benefit adjustments. The most discussed item was the FY22 budget. Amity started at 5.75% brought it down to 3.65% and Orange is asking for an increase of no more than .45%. The superintendent brought it down to 2.81% with the proviso that this would require staff and program cuts. If you talk about staff and program cuts the public get riled. They are meeting again next week on the budget. Matt asked the board for any input on this budget. Tom Handler stated that there has been talk on the part of Orange regarding the surpluses that Amity has had year after year. Most times, Amity returns the surplus to the Towns. Amity seems to be more inclined not to return funds to the Towns. A huge surplus indicates that residents have been over-taxed. Continued discussion on the past surplus amounts. Matt also reported on the medical reserve account and how much they are funding each year.

Susan stated that the year Amity had a deficit, it is her recollection that the Towns voted down the referendum 18 times. It was not that they did not want to fund the system, it is that they insisted that the Board members to resign. That debacle was the origin of the three-town finance committee. Susan recalls just how edgy the issue was about having enough money when she served on the Amity Board of Education. It may be from a budgeting style that Amity may have to change their ways so that we do not have the highly uneven surplus ultimately returned to the towns. She is conscious that this year is a year of chaos in the education system because of covid. She does not think that this is the year to “lower the boom” to make it even harder for school systems to figure out what happens going forward.

Matt asked if anyone on the Board is willing to give them 3.5%.

Beth stated that Tony has some interesting data on the Town versus the education budgets.

Tony reported that the expenditures over the last five years:

The Town budget over the last five years is lower by 0.5%. We eliminated close to 10 positions or reduced them to part time and reduced programs.

Amity increased 16% while the Woodbridge Board of Ed increased 12% over the same time period. Tony will make a presentation at the budget meeting in March.

Paul stating that it is very concerning with Amity not returning their surplus to the Towns. Matt agrees with Paul that it is troubling. Matt will use his best judgement at this meeting on the Amity budget and he will keep the board members posted.

Susan stated that the Board may want to adjust the liaison assignments due to the library and fire commission meets on the same night.

Fire – Susan reported that due to covid they are spending more hours that get devoted to each call and that comes at a cost.

Library - Susan reported that they are using all the imagination they possess to create programs.

Human Services – Ellen reported that the department is working so hard to get the residents vaccinated.

Woodbridge Board of Education – Tom was unable to attend the meeting. He feels that Dr. Budd is doing a good job and they are anticipating that they will cover the current deficit. They are trying to figure a way to use the ESSER II funding. Tom applauds them. Matt stated that he agrees. Jonathan has hit the ground running and he is impressed with his work on the budget.

Police – Paul reported that they have posted the Deputy Chief position.

EMS – Paul reported that the contract with AMR has been extended for another five years. AMR has changed their name to Global Medical Response (GMR).

The budget meeting will be held on Thursday, March 4, 2021 at 6:00 pm.

The Board of Finance voted (Giglietti/Handler) unanimously at 6:50 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Crosby

Karen Crosby
Budget Analyst
Payroll & Benefits Administrator