

Attendees:

Lori Mix, Chair (LM)
Thomas Cook, Secretary (TC)
Tom Silvia (TS)
Steve Boczenowski, Alternate (SB)

Ways & Means Meeting Call to Order: 8:47 pm. Felix Hertzka Conference Room after the 6:30 Board of Selectman Meeting

1. Motion to accept the 11/14 Meeting Minutes – LM motion and SB second.
2. Discussion on the process of communicating disagreements and recommendations to the Board of Selectman (BOS).
3. LM – BOS requested that the W&M recommendations be communicated by 12/19.
4. Discussion on Town Budget:
 - a. TS – Felt that the BOS did good work during the meeting. Getting to be fine with the budget.
 - b. SB – Where do we think we need to end up in terms of figures?
 - c. TS – Current budget is fine given the current economic environment. Some more tweaking may be possible but generally in a pretty good place.
 - d. SB – Why are the BOS arguing about 100K from the unassigned balance? Context- BOS had discussion about whether to use 1 Million or 900K in their forecast for how much unassigned balance to use to offset this year's taxes.
 - e. TS – Explained the mechanics of the unassigned balance. Felt Bill Stoughton (BS) was being cautious about how much would be available to spend.
 - f. LM – The BOS doesn't want to make the tax rate increase too much from this year to next by overdoing how much is going into the budget from the unassigned balance.
 - g. TC – Expressed concern that employees could leave for private sector if COLA is insufficient.
 - h. TS – Tradeoff to delay 100K road increase to preserve COLA. Thinks 1.8MM was the long term road budget goal and that its okay to pause a year and catchup in a few years. Noted that the BOS kept using 100K figure but could look at different dollar increments like 20 or 50K.
 - i. TC – Noted that the BOS has been focusing on the spending but when is the revenue forecast going to be available. Revenue projection is waiting for 12/12. Could have a minor impact on the tax change.
 - j. TS – Per BS' spreadsheet, the revenue is currently projected to decline 35K. The taxpayer increase is due to the revenue being pretty flat. 4.4% spending increase seems prudent. Do we know when the last town budget was not approved by the voters?
 - k. LM – Don't remember last time the budget was not approved in town. Town has done a better job with the budget than the schools of keeping the budget consistent.
 - i. LM & SB – Why not get Bike & Ped warrant article money out of the unassigned balance? SB - Guess its up to the BOS.
 - l. TS – Citizens passed all the prior budgets because they like the services the town provides and are willing to pay for them.
 - m. LM – Will email Peter Lyons (PL) about exploring the other dollar figures like 20k or 50K for road reconstruction increase or unassigned balance assumption.

- n. NH Retirement System discussion – Not selected for the upcoming budget. SB noted that the cost per employee didn't seem to match the expected payout.
- o. TS – The math gets very complicated and depends on many factors for how the payout works so its difficult to compare.
- p. SB – Wants to know more about how data is collected by the BOS to make decisions. Some BOS referred to data that they'd collected.
- q. LM – Will ask Peter Lyons for the data referenced by BOS members.
- r. TS – Concerned about cutting COLA too much since employee retention has been referenced as an issue by many departments.
- s. LM – Want to see some more warrant articles funded out of the unassigned balance since the balance is large and not doing anything.
- t. TC raised the plan outlined by the BOS to reduce the unassigned balance over a few years. Expressed concern about using unassigned balance to pay for Warrant Articles that are not one-time expenses.
- u. LM – Wants to get details from BOS on how they can fund these articles.

5. 9:28 TS move to adjourn. LM second

PM Meeting adjourned

ACTIONS:

- LM to communicate to BOS that they should consider cost change intervals smaller than 100K
- LM to inquire about the BOS collected data used in decision making.
- LM to inquire about how the warrant articles are planned to be funded.

Respectively Submitted,

Tom Cook
Secretary, Ways & Means