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**Town of Seymour ~ Board of Finance
MINUTES
Public Budget Hearing
Tuesday, May 12, 2020 at 7:00pm
Via Zoom Teleconference #874 3599 4126**

Members Present: Bettyann Peck, Kwame Dunbar, Bill Sawicki, Beverly Kennedy, Jim Cretella, John Stelma; Grace Brangwynne, Paul Wetowitz (alternates)

Members Absent: Richard Demko; Gary Popielasz (alternate)

Others Present: Kurt Miller, Chris Bowen, Doug Thomas, Valley Indy, Jean Falbo (Register), Linda (Voices)

Item #1 – Call Meeting to order

Chairman Bill Sawicki called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

Item #2 – Pledge of Allegiance

Everyone saluted the Flag and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Item #3 – Public Comment on 2020/2021 Budget

Chairman Bill Sawicki read into the record two public comments:

- *Fred Stanek, 22 North Benham Road* – Statement was as follows:

STATEMENT OF FREDERICK D. STANEK TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF FINANCE DURING ITS PUBLIC HEARING ON THE 2020 - 2021 PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE TOWN OF SEYMOUR

We obviously are living during an unprecedented time as a result of the COVID-19 health crisis. Needless to say, the crisis is bearing down heavily on many individuals and families who have lost their jobs or who are living on reduced levels of income due to the need for all of us together to protect ourselves.

As most of you know, I am a Member of the Seymour Board of Education. In January of this year, I voted against the proposed Board of Education Budget for the 2020-2021 fiscal year because the Board asked for an increase of 3.58% over its 2019-2020 Budget. I commented to the Board of Education that I thought the requested increase was too high. I understand that you have reduced the increase requested by the Board of Education from 3.5% to a 1.5% increase. Now that the COVID-19 crisis has affected us, I would like to urge you to reduce spending in other departments rather than attempting to reduce the mill rate by only .10 mill without reducing expenses. The Town of Seymour should impose a spending freeze to eliminate the purchase of new vehicles, curtail capital projects and not fill open positions. The current crisis should dictate that the Board of Finance needs to substantially reduce spending during the next fiscal year and accordingly the tax burden on the people of the Town of Seymour.

I therefore respectfully request that the Board of Finance deliberate further regarding the proposed budget to reduce the mill rate well below 36 mills.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED

Frederick D. Stanek
22 North Benham Road
Seymour, CT 06483

- Steve Muricchio – 7 Hidden Meadow Road – sent the e-mail below:

Hi Rory,

Please confirm receipt and see that this note be forwarded to the First Selectman. Prior to tonight's budget hearing.

This is Steve Muricchio from 7 Hidden Meadow Road Seymour. I have a few questions that I would like addressed during the budget hearing meeting tonight.

1) COVID related expense savings and how they will be shown and accredited back to taxpayers, and what this process and steps will look like?

-***Specifically, Transportation is a huge line item (I see over 2.2mil) that is part of the education budget and all bus transportation and associated costs payroll/gas/repairs/insurance etc. from March-(at least Aug) undetermined should be accredited back to taxpayers in the 2020 tax year. Even if there is a contract a Force Majore legal action (and well spent) should be taken to cancel/renege. Additionally, all sports related transportation as well.

-Any sports related maint of fields such as baseball field daily raking line painting etc..

-School costs supplies/repairs/maint/elect/consumables etc....besides keeping the lights on and normal upkeep there has to be substantial costs that have been saved from a shut down

-What other areas have potentially saved on costs? There should be a report issued on this related to last year's budget line items

2) Non COVID savings. We had the least snow and ice on record demonstrated by only a couple storms and only a couple school closings. What was the surplus on this savings and how will it be applied to the 2020 budget?

Regards,

Steve

Discussion of Comments

- Kurt Miller – said that Mr. Muricchio had called him this afternoon and had a discussion that answered most of his questions. It was a good conversation; mostly about our potential for savings, especially with regard to snowplowing. We talked about the General Fund and how money is encumbered. For his questions on the Board of Education, Kurt did try to answer the questions, but Mr. Muricchio will reach out to the Chairman of the Board of Education for further clarification. Kurt did explain the process of asking questions, and then make public comment at the next meeting.

- Bill Sawicki said that we are keeping the mill rate the same for the 5th year in a row. He said that he doesn't see how we can go below that without hurting/affecting services.
- Paul Wetowitz – said that it is a shame that we got only two comments; he thinks that we should consider cutting. Paul had mentioned at a previous meeting some ideas for areas to cut: shave ½% off of the Board of Education budget, remove \$50,000 from Trees budget, not fund the Floater position at Town Hall, remove a vehicle from the Police Department budget.
- Bill Sawicki said that there are no cars budgeted in the Police Department budget; with the Board of Education, we really cannot cut any more – the class sizes need to be considered. They have been watching their spending. Anything left over in the budget will fall to the bottom line. With respect to the Floater position – there are only two people per department; if anyone is sick or out for any reason, this will be a problem. The budget with 1.2% increase with a mill rate held steady is as good as we can do. The Town is fiscally able to weather the storm. If we cut anything out, we will be cutting services.
- Kurt Miller said that we have not yet gone out to bond. Because it has been 60 days since our last rating, Kurt had a phone meeting with S&P today just to touch base with us and see how we are faring with everything. The thing they were least happy with was the fact that we kept the mill rate level. They expected an increase because they would rather that everything wasn't cut now, but that it was kept in the budget or that there was a "buffer". That way if there were issues with revenue, then you have places to cut. Their concern is that if we make all of these cuts now, we bring the mill rate down. If there is still a decrease in revenue, and now instead of cutting Capital things, we are into cutting services. They are thinking a little differently than we all were. Kurt tried to explain to them that we were trying to give the residents a bit of a break; we wanted to keep the mill rate level to show some support and solidarity. Kurt said he does have some concerns about their reaction, but we are not going to base our decisions just on S&P's thoughts.
- Bill Sawicki said that the biggest bump in the budget this year relates to insurance; we don't have a choice on this. We got the best deal we could on this. It's true we don't have much wiggle room. Hopefully this virus situation will be resolved soon.
- The Revenue/Expense Budget is: \$58,084,616. Mill Rate is at 36 mills.
- Our next meeting is two weeks from tonight, May 26th. At that time, per Executive Order, we will be voting on approval of this budget.

Item #4 – Adjournment

Motion to adjourn

Motion: Kwame Dunbar

Second: Paul Wetowitz

Yes: 6

No: 0

Abstain: 0

Meeting was adjourned at 7:22pm.

Submitted by:

Monica Dimon
Recording Secretary