

Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sBs7IDjWtU>  
Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzF30iEQSNM>

\*\*\*\*\*FINAL\*\*\*\*\*

**BOARD OF FINANCE  
PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING  
MEETING MINUTES  
March 16, 2020**

The Public Budget Hearing Meeting of the Board of Finance was held in John J. Sullivan Independence Hall, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room, 725 Old Post Road, on Monday, March 16, 2020, at 7:30 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT** Jim Brown-Chair, Christopher DeWitt-Vice Chair

**MEMBERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE** Edward Bateson, Lori Charlton, Mary LeClerc-Secretary, Sheila Marmion, John Mitola, Jack Testani, James Walsh

**ALSO PRESENT** First Selectwoman Brenda Kupchick, Town Attorney James Baldwin, David Becker, Chief of Staff Jackie Bertolone, Interim CFO Caitlin Bosse, CAO Thomas Bremer, Town Clerk Betsy Browne, Budget Director Linda Gardiner, IT Director David Kelly, FairTV

**ALSO PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE** Community and Economic Development Director Mark Barnhart, Conservation Director Brian Carey, Purchasing Director Gerald Foley, Fair TV Commission member Andy Jones, Tax Collector David Kluczowski, Tax Assessor Ross Murray, TP&Z Director James Wendt

1. Call to Order – Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance – Mr. Brown led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Brown thanked the administration for setting up the virtual meeting in these trying circumstances and thanked the public for their understanding and explained the process which allows us to comply with FOI and conduct Town business. He thanked the Department Heads for their work, the BOE who they will hear on Wednesday night and the BOF members.

**Mr. Walsh motioned that the BOF adjourn these proceeding for 30 days because today the State and Federal governments declared a State of Emergency and that all deadlines for budget submissions ending June 30, 2021, can be delayed for 30 days; furthermore the Town Charter Section 1.2C allows the BOS to modify the process under special circumstances. Mr. Bateson seconded the motion.**

Mr. Walsh believes it would be insensitive to taxpayers to go forward with this process. He said everyone is going through business and personal stresses caused by this crisis and he noted that this budget may change after the crisis. He said he doesn't want to take away the time of the Emergency Management Team in the middle of an emergency for the budget.

Mr. Bateson commented at the last meeting that assigned dates and times for these meetings continue, but is in shock over what's happened in the past week and how lives have changed due to COVID-19. He said he is overwhelmed by the factors he has to deal with and agrees with Mr. Walsh that the budget is secondary.

First Selectwoman Kupchick said the Town's emergency response team is in full action working every day and is making plans for the Town to shut down. She said it is difficult to hear that some members want to postpone budget meetings after the hard work that has gone into putting the budget together. She said she feels in 30 days or so the situation with COVID-19 will be much worse and the Town should at least get through this part of the budget process. She asked for these proceedings to move forward noting that this budget can be amended and adjusted after it is passed.

Mr. DeWitt said the U.S. is three weeks behind Italy according to the news. He said the BOF could be done with holding budget meetings by next Tuesday if unused snow days are used. He said he is not supporting the postponement of BOF budget meetings at this time.

Ms. Marmion said she appreciates Mr. Walsh and Mr. Bateson's comments and that these are trying times, but she said she agrees with Mr. DeWitt that things may get worse and the BOF should proceed with this process. She said it would be concerning to go silent now and wants to be in contact with Department Heads as we go through this process so she does not support the motion.

Mr. Mitola believes the BOF should move forward. He said the BOF has some additional time, but should be sensitive to some members' concerns from a professional and personal standpoint and if needed move a meeting to accommodate members. He said he won't support the motion.

Mr. Testani said he supports what First Selectwoman's comments. He said the BOF needs to continue a sense of normalcy. He is not in support of the motion.

Ms. Charlton believes the BOF should move forward. She acknowledged that the Governor allowed an extra 30 days to discuss and vote on budgets. She said the BOF should be flexible with colleagues, but she doesn't support the motion.

Mrs. LeClerc said she agrees with Ms. Charlton to try and continue with meetings and spread them out if members find there is too much going on.

Mr. Brown said he respects what Mr. Walsh said, there is a lot of stress, but isn't sure what the Town will be facing 30 days from now. He said he wants to keep continuity in government and department heads are ready to speak and the BOF should hear them. Mr. Brown said there is time to make changes and the BOF is prepared now, but may not be in 15 days. He said the BOF will be flexible where it can. He said he is sensitive to what's going on in member's personal and professional life and to move forward.

**Mr. Walsh motioned to postpone the BOF Public Hearings. Mr. Bateson seconded the motion. The motion failed 2-7-0. (Bateson, Walsh in favor and Brown, Charlton, DeWitt, LeClerc, Marmion, Testani and Mitola opposed)**

### 3. Summary Budget Presentation by First Selectwoman

First Selectwoman Kupchick thanked department heads and the finance department for their hard work on the budget. She said she noticed many deficiencies coming into office and got a clear sense of what was needed after meeting with the public.

She said there needs to be more investment in the Town's infrastructure. First Selectwoman Kupchick presented an overview of her proposed budget. She said she needs to meet with the BOE regarding its budget which includes a 3% increase.

First Selectwoman Kupchick discussed her budget recommendation and summary, vision statement, objectives and goals, revenues and expenditures. She discussed BOE recommendations, requests and student enrollment. She reviewed the Town budget and recommendations to improve town services and efficiencies by modernizing town government, enabling long-term economic growth and providing tax relief. BOS adjustments to the FY2021 budget, general fund, revenue and expenditures were then examined.

Mr. Walsh requested to view all the investments and how calculations were made which Mr. Bremer said he will submit to the BOF. Mr. Walsh asked how the corona virus had any effect on this budget. He also discussed investment rates to reduce the budget by \$1 million. Mrs. Gardiner explained the Town won't receive any interest and is at risk. She said she will provide a schedule and send the entire package to Mr. Brown to send to the Board. Mr. Walsh requested if anything is going to be presented at a BOF meeting, members would like it submitted in advance so they have time to review the information.

Investment income and adjustments were discussed. Mr. DeWitt said he feels the Town may be defaulting too much. Mr. Bremer said the Town may be a bit conservative. First Selectwoman Kupchick said this can be discussed after they had a chance to review. Mr. Brown stated the BOF will discuss Thursday. He said he will forward questions the Board has to the finance department. Mrs. Gardiner reviewed the breakdown of new employees. Mr. Bremer explained the total expense increases for the Town and BOE. Ms. Charlton asked the First Selectwoman if she considered other broad revenue lines. She replied she thinks things are happening that are going to impact this year's budget regardless we'll have to make changes.

#### 4. Discussion on the Following Budgets:

##### **Miscellaneous – Not-for-Profit Organizations**

Mr. Brown had a list of each organization's representatives' numbers in case members had questions, but no member had any questions.

##### **Administrative and General**

###### **1010 First Selectwoman's Office**

Mr. Walsh said the increase in total budget majority seems to be in payroll and asked First Selectwoman Kupchick how it is working out with the full-time Chief of Staff and CAO. First Selectwoman Kupchick replied she can't imagine how she could work without them and that she couldn't have managed as productively. Mr. Mitola asked if page 45 of the budget summary are items the BOF discussed a few months ago with the First Selectwoman who replied yes. Mr. Testani asked if all changes were approved as requested. First Selectwoman Kupchick replied yes and stated the BOS approved these positions and is very supportive. She said Selectwoman Lefkowitz couldn't support the education reduction. Mr. Walsh asked about the secretarial services increase. Mrs. Gardiner said it is due to increased BOS meetings. Mr. Walsh asked about the communications increase. First Selectwoman Kupchick explained it is for cell phones and a cable line.

She said she had office supplies which were pretty scarce restocked and had a water cooler ordered for staff and the many people from other departments and the public who come to the office. Mr. Walsh requested water cooler bills for the departments that have them. Mr. Walsh asked about the travel and meeting increase. First Selectwoman Kupchick said it was increased so she could attend two national mayors' conferences as a new leader and to network for the Town. Mrs. Gardiner said an explanation for all increases are outlined in the text report online on the Town website. She said there are also two other reports online- YTD revenue and YTD expenditure reports that may be helpful. Ms. Charlton asked about the education and membership line. First Selectwoman said it is to pay for the Town to be a member of CCM.

1030 Town Clerk

Ms. Browne reviewed her budget expenses and said everything is status quo. She said the regular payroll increase is due to contract settlements and longevity bonuses. She tried to cut where possible, decreased rental and storage and postage. She said her office is doing more electronic recording, but kept the money in that line because it is a presidential year.

Revenue – Ms. Browne said the BOS increased the conveyance tax line. She said there are no fee increases from the State and recording fees vary. She said she believes she will exceed the conveyance tax budget because there was a large tax sale and are expecting a few others. She said she will supply the \$227,000 recording fees she reported. She said filing fees increased from \$5 to \$20 for liquor permits set by the State.

1040 FairTV

Mr. Jones reviewed the increase. He said FairTV received funding from two sources: the Town and the Cable Advisory Committee. He said after going through the process, the Committee discovered its main grant supporter is more generous for equipment and technology so labor costs was put on the Town side. Mr. DeWitt said the Town needs to upgrade the equipment especially as the pandemic continues. He said since town meetings are posted on YouTube, it's a much better system that the BOF should support. Mr. Walsh asked what other funds the Committee gets from the Cable Advisory Committee. Mr. Jones explained. Mr. Bateson asked if RTM meetings at McKinley School could be broadcast live.

1110 Town Plan and Zoning

Mr. Walsh recused himself. Mr. Wendt reviewed expenses and revenue.

The Board recessed at 10:02 p.m. and reconvened at 10:10 p.m.

1230 Conservation

Mr. Walsh recused himself. Mr. Carey said budget is flat and the only increase is the payroll line because of contractual obligations and social security contributions. He said revenue is up and actuals are coming in higher. Mr. Bateson offered any assistance from the Board to make it more business friendly for people with applications since the Town is shutting down.

1290 Miscellaneous Contingencies

Mr. Bremer presented and noted the budget is flat for the year. He said it's a catch all for small items that aren't included in other line items.

1350 Community and Economic Development

Mr. Barnhart said the major change this year is for business development. Mr. DeWitt said he noticed the BOS reduced the regular payroll line by \$20,000. Mr. Barnhart said it was a placeholder. Mr. Mitola questioned the \$150,000 salary. Mr. Bremer replied the market rate is \$130,000. Mr. Barnhart recommended a lower amount of \$95,000 to \$110,000. Mr. Bremer said he will send the Board a list of other Towns Economic Development staffing. Mr. Walsh asked what he will be doing now that his time is freed up. Mr. Barnhart discussed the many components of his job. Mr. Walsh asked Mr. Barnhart to justify the position. Ms. Marmion requested job descriptions for each position. Mrs. Gardiner said job descriptions are on the Town website and she will resend the link to the BOF. Mr. Brown asked for a job description for the new position and the new job description for Mr. Barnhart. Ms. Charlton said she is concerned with adding a new position in this climate. Mr. Bateson requested an organizational chart showing who reports to whom which Mr. Bremer said he will supply. Mr. Brown said the BOF will have to review the position thoroughly.

**Finance**

3030 Purchasing

Mr. Foley noted the biggest adjustment is his request for more hours for a part-time position. He said it is an administrative position to keep track of records and assist him and the junior and senior buyers. Mr. Testani asked about the 65% advertising increase. Mr. Foley said it costs more money to advertise legal ads, invitation to bids and grants. He said his department also publishes information on the Town website and State portal. He said his department is required by State statute to advertise in a local paper. Mr. Walsh commented that the fill pile work can be extremely labor intensive. Mr. Foley said it is taking time away from other things such as validating bonds and checking insurance certificates.

1050 Administrative Services

Mr. Brown asked about the 8% reduction in copier leases. Mr. Foley explained with the assistance, efforts and coordination of Mr. Kelley, his department opted to buy instead of lease some of the smaller copiers. He said when the leases were up, he optioned not to lease, but to buy and is hoping to continue this with other departments.

3010 Finance

Expenditures – Mrs. Gardiner said the part-time payroll increased with the proposed grant writer. Mr. Brown asked what the plan is for a new CFO. Mrs. Gardiner said when the budget was developed, the prior CFO's salary was used and it will be adjusted. Mrs. Bosse said she is getting paid as Controller and receives a stipend. Mr. Bateson asked if there is a savings if Mrs. Bosse transitions to CFO and the Controller position opens. Mrs. Gardiner said there would be savings on the Controller line. She said Mrs. Bosse receives a \$20,000 stipend, about \$16,000 less than the previous CFO. Mrs. Gardiner said she will be retiring soon and there will be a savings in her position with someone who does not have her seniority. Mr. Bateson stated the CFO is a critical position and it needs to be filled. Mr. Bremer agreed the department needs to get some permanency. Mr. DeWitt asked if the Town is searching for a CFO. Mrs. Bosse said there is so much going on that the search has not yet occurred. Mrs. Gardiner's Budget Director \$86,000 salary was discussed. Mr. Bremer said the new person will be on the 401a plan. He said that is a negative in getting the position filled because some towns are still paying a pension. Mrs. Bosse explained the grant position, the internal auditor role and part-time positions.

Mr. Walsh asked if the department has looked at what other towns do for internal auditors. Mr. Bremer replied no, but will be doing so. Ms. Gardiner said the revenue is based off of the Governor's 2021 budget and three-year averages. The BOF then reviewed line items.

2020 Fund Balance

The item was moved to the 3/26 meeting.

3050 Assessor

Mr. Murray discussed the software account which he said decreased because of last year's vision software. He said the fees and professional line is up due to costs associated with the revaluation and he increased funds to cover appeals. Mr. Murray said communications increased because his department is testing a wireless laptop in the field which helps check items in the field. Mr. Walsh asked about the postage increase. Mr. Murray said \$1,500 is a new item to create a mailing for the Senior & Disabled Tax Relief outreach. He said travel and meeting is up primarily because during the Board of Assessment appeals, it is customary to bring in dinner while there are deliberations. Mr. Murray said there is increased costs in education because a new employee is taking classes.

3090 Tax Collector

The Board took the Tax Collector item next. Mr. Kluczowski said the 2.9% increase is status quo and the majority of the increase involves contractual increases.

10030 Debt Service

The item was moved to the 3/26 meeting.

**Mr. Brown motioned to move the following items to the March 26, 2020, meeting. Mr. DeWitt seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 9-0.**

**Administrative and General**

**1070 Registrar of Voters**

**1090 ZBA – Jim Wendt**

**1130 Probate Court**

**1210 Historic District Commission**

**1250 Shellfish**

**1370 Harbor Management Commission**

5. Adjourn

**There being no further business to come before the Board, Mr. Brown moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:06 am. Mr. DeWitt seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 9-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Tesei  
Recording Secretary