

## **RTM Finance & Budget Committee - regular scheduled meeting minutes 05//05/2014**

Present: J. Davis, M. Banks, R. Cardone, S. Anderson, T. Duffy, J. Palen, B. Ball K. Hoffman, D. Ritchie, A. Millar, M. Thorne ,A. Rycenga, G. Dupont

Absent:, B. Hayes, J. Boulton

Guests:

Board of Education members: Vice Chairwoman -H. Shea, M. Harman, BOE clerk

With 10 of 15 members present consisting of quorum, Jim Palen called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m. Shortly after the start of the meeting three additional members joined bring those in attendance to 13 of 15 members present.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed Town of Darien budget for 2014-2015.

The first area of questions and discussion were on the Board of Selectmen's budget or paragraph "A" of the budget resolution an appropriation from the General Fund to the Selectmen's operating budget of \$44,957,974.

The first topic discussed was the addition of the civilian dispatcher. Discussions were held regarding the increase to staffing and the long term cost of added personnel. Some felt although the additional staffing would be at a lower rate than adding sworn police officers the long term effects would be an overall long-term increase to staffing. It is noted that upcoming negotiations in the contract would ultimately determine these staffing levels. Others felt it may be good to take the opportunity to add civilian dispatch to send a message for future staffing. Overtime was also discussed during this time. A few members felt this area should be addressed more closely with reference to comments made at a previous meeting that a good portion of the overtime was due to sick days.

Another are of discussions was on the movement of some items to the capital budget and out of proposed Selectmen's budget. While the items would not show an overall increase to the budget they would still be increases regardless if they were capital verse current budget expenses. Much debate went into the funding of expenses and how they would be paid for It was noted how the Board of Finance decides to chose to spend from the General Fund was not for the committee to decide but to focus on the actual presented budgets. There was discussion that the overall rate of increase for the proposed budget was well above the rate of inflation. A good portion of the budget is higher than the inflation rate is due to previously negotiated contracts. Some committee members would like to see a representative from the RTM be allowed to sit in on future contract negotiations to act as a liaison to communicate back to the RTM if this is permissible. The negotiated contracts were not the only area of the proposed budget exceeding the rate of inflation. Many felt the various bodies in town have their hands tied when it comes time to prepare the upcoming budget due to contract stipulations. This leaves few areas of the proposed budget where meaningful savings could be achieved without reductions in headcount or services provided.

Lengthy back and forth discussions on increases and efficiencies and the overall process of the budgets were held. A motion was made by S. Anderson to amend paragraph "A" of the budget resolution calling for an overall reduction to paragraph "A" of the budget resolution by the amount of \$800,000 and seconded by K. Hoffman. Discussions were held on the motion before the committee. A call to question and vote was called by J. Palen and seconded by J. Davis. The motion failed with 2 in favor: S. Anderson and A. Millar; 9 against: M. Banks, R. Cardone, J. Palen, B. Ball, K. Hoffman, D. Ritchie, M. Thorne, A. Rycenga, G. Dupont; 2 Abstentions: T. Duffy and J Davis.

A second motion was made by B. Ball to reduce the paragraph "A" of the budget resolution by the amount of \$200,000 and was seconded by M. Banks. Further discussions were held until a call to question and vote was made by J. Palen and seconded by S. Anderson. The motion to reduce paragraph "A" of the budget resolution by the amount of \$200,000 passed with 6 in favor: M. Banks, S. Anderson, K. Hoffman, A. Rycenga, R. Cardone, B. Ball; 5 against: G. Dupont, J. Palen, A. Millar, D. Ritchie, M. Thorne; 2 abstentions: T. Duffy and J. Davis.

The discussion then moved to paragraph "B" of the budget resolution for an appropriation in the General Fund to the Board of Education operating budget of \$88,135,967.

Lengthy discussions were held and some felt this was not the year to make cuts in lieu of what occurred during the past year. The changes need to fix the system would take time and resources and should be given an opportunity to remedy previous missteps. It was argued that this is the time to be spending money to properly staff to prevent future district problems. Others felt that they have heard this for a number of years with the less than desired results. A call to question and vote was made by K. Hoffman and seconded by T. Duffy. Paragraph " B" of the budget resolution for an appropriation in the General Fund to the Board of Education operating budget of \$88,135,967 passed with 7 in favor: M. Banks, G. DuPont, K. Hoffman, J. Davis, D. Ritchie, J. Palen, M Thorne; 5 Against: S. Anderson, B. Ball, A. Millar, T. Duffy and A. Rycenga; and 1 abstention: R. Cardone.

There was then a motion made by K. Hoffman to reduce the above appropriations, totaling \$133,033,941 are for the purpose of meeting the expenses of Town of Darien for the fiscal year commencing on July 1, 2014 and ending on June 30,2015 as shown by the budget this day approved by the amount of \$200,000 which had passed in the previous motion to reduce paragraph "A" of the budget resolution and was seconded by B. Ball. A call to question and vote was made by J. Palen and seconded by J. Davis. Amended paragraph "C" of the budget resolution passed with 6 in favor: B. Ball, M. Banks, S. Anderson, K. Hoffman, R. Cardone, A. Millar: 3 against: G. Dupont, J. Palen, M. Thorne: 4 Abstentions: J. Davis, T. Duffy, D. Ritchie and A. Rycenga.

A motion was made by D. Ritchie and seconded by M. Thorne to vote on paragraph "D" of the budget resolution for appropriations for other funds are hereby made below for the 2014-2015 fiscal year as shown by the budget this day approved;

- a. From the Reserve Fund for Capital and Non-Recurring Expenditures \$ 2,510,955
- b. From the Sewer Operating Fund \$ 3,293,139
- c. From the Sewer Assessment Fund \$ 550,000
- d. From the Sewer Capital Fund \$ 203,807

- e. From the Parking Lot Administration Fund \$ 779,000
- f. From the Parking Lot Capital Fund \$ 231,040

The resolution "D' passed with 13 members present voting unanimously to approve.

A motion was made by K. Hoffman to amend paragraph "E" of the budget resolution that a tax of 15.01mills is hereby levied upon the last complete grand list of the Town with a total net assessment of \$8,250,643,822 on property as of October 1, 2013 payable in two equal semi-annual installments, the first installment to become due and payable on July 1, 2014 and the second installment to become due and payable on January 1, 2015, provided however that:

1. Any taxpayer may pay both of said installments on July 1, 2014;
2. The personal property tax on motor vehicles in said Town shall become due and payable
3. Any property tax in any amount not in excess of one hundred (\$100) dollars shall become in one single installment on July 1, 2014. due and payable in one single installment on July 1, 2014.

Be reduced by the amount of \$200,000 as a result of the previous passage of the amendment to paragraph "A" of the budget resolution. The amendment to paragraph "E" of the budget resolution to reduce the amount by \$200,000 passed with 6 in favor: M. Banks, B. Ball, A. Millar, K. Hoffman, J. Davis, R. Cardone; 2 against M. Thorne and G. Dupont; 4 abstentions: T. Duffy, D. Ritchie, A. Rycenga and J. Palen. S. Anderson was not in the room for the vote so he did not cast a vote.

A call to question and vote on paragraph "F" of the budget resolution that the Town of Darien, acting through its Board of Selectmen, and subject to the approval of said Town at the Annual Budget Meeting of the Representative Town Meeting to be held May 12, 2014, be authorized to borrow on the note or notes of the Town the sum of five million (\$5,000,000) dollars or so much thereof as may be necessary for the general expenses of the Town pending the collection of either or both of said semi-annual installments of taxes on or prior to June 30, 2015, was made by J.Palen and seconded by T. Duffy The paragraph "F" of the budget resolution passed unanimously with all 13 members present in favor

Motion was made and seconded to approve the resolution for the appropriation of sixty million dollars (\$60,000,000) to refund certain of the Town's outstanding bonds and authorizing the issuance of refunding bonds to finance such appropriation. The resolution passed unanimously with all 13 members present in favor.

At 9:30 pm a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by D. Ritchie and seconded by T. Duffy