

**BOLTON BOARD OF FINANCE
PUBLIC HEARING
TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2021– 7:00 pm
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM WEBSITE PLATFORM
Minutes**

Board of Finance Members Present: Chairman Emily Bradley, Vice-Chair Robert Munroe, Charles Danna Jr., Kristen Gourley, Robert DePietro, and Richard Tuthill

Board of Finance Members Absent: Ross Lally

Board of Selectmen Present: First Selectman Sandra Pierog, Selectman Robert DePietro, and Selectman Robert Morra

Board of Education Members Present: Superintendent Kristin Heckt and Christopher Davey

Staff Present: Interim Town Administrator Jim Rupert and Board Clerk Linda McDonald

Others Present: Paula Meyers and two unidentified others by phone

1. Call to Order: E. Bradley called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.
2. Public Hearing for the Town of Bolton Fiscal Year July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022 Budget:

E. Bradley introduced the board members and opened the public hearing with a power point presentation of the budget process.

She explained this year's budget deliberations involved considering the current and future impacts of the COVID health crisis; assessing learning loss for students during the pandemic and determining how best to support them and incorporating online services into general operating procedures. She said the Town is expecting several reductions in revenues that have a direct impact on the budget; revenues from interest is expected to be considerably less than prior years and the number of Columbia students attending BHS is less than prior years, a portion of the received tuition goes to paying down Town debt.

E. Bradley said the budget presented tonight is based on what is known at this time. Unknowns at the current time are:

- health insurance costs and employee enrollment numbers,
- State grants will be less than planned, but final numbers have not been released, and
- The Town has not been notified if any additional COVID funds will be given to Bolton and what those funds can be used for

She concluded the presentation saying the board spent a significant amount of time discussing how best to finance the budget; balancing, maintaining, and improving Town and Education Services vs tax revenues for the taxpayers. Reductions in Town and Education budgets were made by the board. Increase in tax revenues will be required to balance the proposed budget. The Board of Finance is proposing an increase in property and motor vehicle tax revenues from \$16,984,153 (FY21) to \$18,262,203. To achieve this increase in tax revenues, this would translate to an increase in the mil rate from 38.86 to 41.45, a 6.67% increase.

E. Bradley noted, over the past five years, there has been a 3.6% total increase to the town's mil rate , well below the cost-of-living increase. The mil rate stayed level for three years and went down last budget cycle.

E. Bradley opened the floor to questions and comments from the public.

Bob Morra of 15 Tinker Pond Road asked if the board considered a rough idea of what the reduction in expenditures would be based upon the change in the medical expenses or is that simply too early to give a projection.

E. Bradley responded it is too early to tell. She said the the board does not have those numbers yet as to what the final costs are and what the enrollment projections are to even know how big an impact it has on expenditures.

B. Morra asked if the board would hold off as long as possible as far as setting a final number and any mill rate modification that s it currently has.

E. Bradley confirmed that is the plan and what the board put together tonight is based on what is currently known. The board will wait as long as it cans before referendum to incorporate as much information available as possible.

Christopher Davey of 21 Mount Sumner Drive expressed his appreciation to the BOF. He said he sat in on quite a few of the budget meetings and this is clearly an unusual budget season this year given the number of balls that are still up in the air and do not know where they might land. He said he watched the board grapple with what that means for the townspeople. He is appreciative of the decision of the board to cut the BOS and BOE budgets slightly, but to present to the taxpayers a fairly significant tax increase and allow them to have the final word. He said we all hope that mill rate increase will not be anywhere near as large as what is currently projected to be and are looking for good numbers on the health insurance front. He said he appreciates the route the board has taken.

Hearing no other comments, E. Bradley closed the public hearing for the Town of Bolton Fiscal Year July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022 Budget at 7:32 pm.

3. Adjournment: E. Bradley adjourned the public hearing at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Linda H. McDonald, Board Clerk

Linda H. McDonald,

PLEASE SEE THE MINUTES OF SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS FOR THE APPROVAL OF THESE MINUTES AND ANY CORRECTIONS HERETO.