

**BOLTON BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 2021– 7:15 pm
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM WEBSITE PLATFORM
Minutes**

Board of Finance Members Present: Chairman Emily Bradley, Vice-Chair Robert Munroe (joined the meeting at 7:34 p.m.), Charles Danna Jr., Kristen Gourley, Ross Lally and Richard Tuthill

Board of Finance Members Absent: Robert DePietro

Board of Selectmen Present: First Selectman Sandra Pierog

Board of Education Members Present: Superintendent of Schools Kristin Heckt, Anne Decker, Scott Rich

Staff Present: Board Clerk Linda McDonald

Others Present: Nick Lavigne Community Voice Channel (CVC)

1. Call to Order: E. Bradley called the meeting to order at 7:17 p.m.

2. Public Participation: No public participation.

3. Approval of Minutes

3.a May 20, 2021 Regular Meeting:

Chairman Bradley asked unanimous consent of the May 20, 2021 regular meeting minutes as presented. Hearing no objections, the Chair said the minutes are passed.

3.b May 27, 2021 Special Meeting:

The minutes of May 27, 2021 were amended as follows:

Agenda item 3.a: "E. Bradley noted that several small changes to the education budget, primarily stemming from savings due to the revised healthcare expenses and a small increase to the school system's special education spending, would yield a net savings for the upcoming fiscal year of ~~\$64,000~~ **\$64,499.**"

Chairman Bradley asked unanimous consent of the May 27, 2021 special meeting minutes as amended. Hearing no objections, the Chair said the minutes are passed.

4. Elected Official and Town Staff Reports:

4.a Tax Collection Summary: The members reviewed the tax collection summary and town revenues as of May 31, 2021.

4.b Town Update: The town is 77.23% expended as of May 31, 2021. S. Pierog reported fringe benefits, highway expenditures and police will be expended before the end of the fiscal year. Indian Notch has opened and the parks budget will decrease significantly. The board reviewed the BOS transfers for the period 5/5-5/27/21.

4.c Board of Education Update: Superintendent Heckt reported, as of May 31, 2021, the BOE budget is 80% expended for FY 2021. She said the BOE has not yet taken action on the transfers. She said the revised under expenditure net of the committed amounts and any requested transfers are \$298,732.

5. Ongoing Business:

5.a Discussion on FY 2021/2022 Revenues and Expenditures:

E. Bradley summarized the budget process to present and shared a document showing the adopted budget for FY 2021, showing the various asks from the BOE and BOS. Going into the public hearing, the board made two reductions, \$30,000 to the Town budget and \$100,000 to the BOE budget which would have required a mil rate of 41.45 to come up with property tax to support that. After the public hearing and further discussions and additional revenues the board was able to account for, the board had additional givebacks from the BOE and BOS. Going into referendum, the board had additional revenues it could recognize and medical insurance savings of \$130,000 from the Town and \$64,499 from the BOE which needed a 40.16 mil rate to support that. As a point of note, E. Bradley said the overall expenditures for the proposed FY2022 budget sent to referendum are only \$164,950 over the adopted FY2021 budget.

E. Bradley said, since the budget failed at referendum and according to the Town Charter, the board has to make additional reductions to the total expenditures.

As moderator at the referendum, R. Lally shared feedback from some voters. He said voters asked why the town was raising the mil rate when it is getting all these federal funds. Some said their revenue has been affected by COVID and others said they do not have the money to give. Others expressed when is enough, enough regarding funding the BOE budget. R. Lally said the board has to account for the number of people who voted no and that their focus is on the mil rate, not the amount of the budget.

S. Pierog said the federal relief funds definitely cannot be used to reduce taxes. She commented nobody knows what the relief funds from the federal government can be expended on, except tax reduction is definitely one of the no's until the Supreme Court decides the Ohio case appealing this. She said the rules for expending the funds, at this point, are very tight and they also have a hold harmless effect on the federal government side, so if the government comes in after the Town has spent the money and say; no, this is not a valid expenditure, the Town has to pay it back.

C. Danna said he has also heard comments from the public about using the federal relief funds to reduce taxes. He commented the public does not see at all that the federal monies may be coming, but it may end up being something the Town does not qualify for anything on and the Town may be unable to spend the funds or penalized if spent inappropriately.

E. Bradley said because the board's ask on the expenditure side is really not that much more than what was approved last year, that highlights the fact that the Town has less revenues in many cases so the board has to raise property taxes to cover the spend. She noted there are many different reasons why the Town has less revenue income feeding into next year's budget (i.e., interest rates are down, parks and recreation programs that did not happen this past year, late fees based on waivers).

E. Bradley presented some possible scenarios for consideration and discussion. She calculated, recognizing additional revenues, the board would have to cut an additional \$56,000 for a mil rate of 39.86 and, again recognizing additional revenues, the board would have to cut an additional \$217,000 for a mil rate of 39.50.

Board discussion followed. Members expressed their views on presenting a budget for the next referendum.

R. Munroe MOVED the BOE request be reduced by an additional \$100,000 and the BOS request be reduced by an additional \$20,000. R. Lally SECONDED. Discussion followed.

E. Bradley said the mill rate associated with this expenditure reduction of \$120,000 would be 39.71, having been verified with the Finance Officer.

S. Pierog noted the BOF can only recognize additional revenues after referendum only when setting the mil rate.

E. Bradley said the board has to communicate appropriately and thoughtfully with the public to make sure they are getting the right information and let them know the revenues are less than what were in the past and that is one of the significant factors on why the board is looking to raise taxes.

MOTION FAILED 3:3:0 with R. Tuthill, E. Bradley, and K. Gourley opposed.

R. Tuthill MOVED to reduce the planned spending by \$225,000. R. Munroe SECONDED. Discussion followed.

R. Tuthill amended his motion to include reducing the BOE request by \$150,000 and the BOS request by \$75,000. R. Munroe SECONDED.

E. Bradley said the mil rate would be 39.48 with this expenditure reduction of \$225,000. MOTION FAILED 1:5:0 with E. Bradley, R. Munroe, K. Gourley, C. Danna, and R. Lally opposed.

K. Gourley MOVED to reduce expenditures by \$100,000 including an additional reduction of \$25,000 from the BOS budget and an additional reduction of \$75,000 from the BOE budget. R. Munroe SECONDED. Discussion followed.

K. Gourley amended the motion to reduce expenditures by \$100,000 including an additional reduction of \$35,000 from the BOS budget and an additional reduction of \$65,000 from the BOE budget. C. Danna SECONDED.

E. Bradley said the mil rate would be 39.76 with a \$100,000 reduction.

MOTION on the amendment CARRIED 5:0:1 with R. Tuthill abstaining.

The amended MOTION CARRIED 5:1:0 with R. Tuthill opposed.

3.b Consider and Possibly Act on Ballot Question:

K. Gourley MOVED the ballot question as follows:

At its June 17, 2021 regular meeting, the Board of Finance of the Town of Bolton voted the following:

“Shall the Annual Budget for the Town of Bolton, Connecticut for the fiscal year 2022 as recommended by the Board of Finance in the amount of \$22,973,494 be adopted?”

R. Lally SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED 5:1:0 with R. Tuthill opposed.

6. New Business:

6.a Meeting Calendar:

E. Bradley asked the members if they would be willing to change the remaining regular meeting 2021 calendar dates to the fourth Wednesday of the month as she has a scheduling conflict with Master classes she is taking this fall. Consensus of the board was to change the remaining regular meeting 2021 calendar dates to the fourth Wednesday of the month.

7. Adjournment: E. Bradley adjourned the meeting at 9:38 p.m.

Next Meeting: June 29, 2021 at 8:15 p.m. – Special Meeting

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.