

**BOLTON BOARD OF FINANCE
PUBLIC HEARING
APRIL 26, 2022 – 7:15 P.M.
HYBRID MEETING VIA ZOOM WEBSITE PLATFORM &
TOWN HALL, 222 BOLTON CENTER RD, BOLTON
MINUTES**

Board of Finance Members Present: Chairman Emily Bradley, Vice-Chair Robert Munroe, Charles Danna Jr., Alex Rivera, Kristen Gourley, Mather Clarke, and Ross Lally.

Board of Selectmen Members Present: Selectman Pam Sawyer, Deputy First Selectman Robert Morra, Sandra Pierog, Kathy McCavanagh, and Interim Town Administrator Jim Rupert.

Board of Education Members Present: Superintendent Kristin Heckt, Rhea Klein, Christopher Davey, Susan Pike, and Scott Rich.

Staff Present: Chief Financial Officer Jill Collins and Board Clerk Ashleigh Johnson.

- 1) **Call to Order:** E. Bradley called this hearing to order at 7:17 P.M.

- 2) **Public Hearing for the Town of Bolton Fiscal Year July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023**

Budget:

E. Bradley began this hearing with a presentation on the budget. First, E. Bradley highlighted on the FY2023 Budget Process, including information about the Budget Referendum on May 24, 2022 at the St. Maurice Church, 32 Hebron Rd, Bolton.

E. Bradley then went on to explain the Budget Deliberations, explaining the knowns and unknowns. One of the unknowns being the 29 mill rate motor vehicle cap, another being the increase in health insurance costs and employee enrollment numbers. P. Sawyer then mentions that the motor vehicle cap has been increased to a possible more than 32 mill rate.

E. Bradley then reviews the Town Proper Goals, which are: Transparency, modernization, efficiency, and resourcefulness. Town Proper Budget Highlights including: staff wage increase, decreased Administration budget, Fire Commission budget increase, election costs increase due to 2 voting districts instead of one and replacement of SCBA, Recreation Department cost increase to keep programs available to residents, Building and Land Use proposed wage increase for Assistant Building Official, Assessor wage increase due to moving to full-time shared position with Willington, and Refuse Services increase in fees and disposal of trash.

E. Bradley next goes over the Board of Education Goals and Budget Highlights, which include: support the implementation of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, Supports the mission and vision of the Bolton Schools Strategic Plan, contracted wage increases, health insurance increase, and Shared Service Partnerships with EASTCONN and Town of Bolton.

The Board of Education's 2022-23 proposed budget is \$15,306,666 compared to the 2021-22 budget, which was \$14,868,914. This is a dollar increase of \$437,752 and a percent increase of 2.94%.

The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) total cost is \$438,598, with \$19,308.21 proposed for reallocation from completed CIP projects, concluding with a \$464,290 total taxpayer ask.

Our debt costs are at a total of \$1,069,208.

Increase in tax revenues will be required to balance this budget. The proposed increase in property and motor vehicle tax revenues from \$17,732,249 (FY22) to \$18,655,649 (Proposed FY23). To achieve this increase in tax revenues, this would translate to an increase in the mill rate from 39.43 to 40.85, a 3.60% increase. There was an increase of 2.7% in the 2021 Grand List.

Paula Meyers, of 57 Country Club, asked what the plan was as far as increasing enrollment. K. Heckt responded that they haven't had a discussion on this, but they will continue to have discussions on how to increase enrollment. K. Heckt continued to say that there have been additional seats opened in CHOICE so that will hopefully increase enrollment. Paula Meyers expressed her concern for the low numbers in enrollment further. Paula Meyers asked if the motor vehicle is capped at 29 and if the health insurance numbers do increase, would that mean an increased taxpayer ask or a cut in the budget. E. Bradley responded that the motor vehicle cap is new information to the Board of Finance and they will be discussing it further.

Robert Morra, of 15 Tinker Pond Rd, asked K. Heckt if she was aware if any of the surplus in the budget would be utilized to increase the amount of money that would be going to the school systems in towns. K. Heckt said there were a number of bills about funding, there was a change in one of them in regards to ECS and special education

funding. Superintendent association put forth a blueprint to equitably fund education which would've meant more money for Bolton. They were bringing it forth, but it ended up only being pieces of the plan. She doesn't anticipate whole sale changes, but she is hopeful that there will be money coming forth for air systems. She is still unsure about what will happen.

Sandy Pierog, of 37 Brandy St, asked about the fire house expansion timeline and amounts, the \$165,000 over the next 3 years for a modular office, where it will be, what it will contain, and what happened to the potential plan to utilize the two classrooms in the back of the senior center, BOS bond notch road demolition, and what the reasoning behind the skid steer loader for the highway department. Jim Rupert responded, there is no particular timeline for the fire house expansion, it is still being worked on. As for the plan for the senior center, the school has allowed the YMCA to move to the school after Jul 1. Current space being utilized at the Notch Road Municipal Center will be used for meeting space because of hybrid and in person meetings, the current BOS is putting off temporary building for a leased purchase option and will hopefully get us to the point where we can get a bonding project to build a Town Hall or addition to Town Hall. It is planned to be located between the Congregational Church and the Town Hall and we will be moving the staff that we currently have in the Notch Road Municipal Center into Town Hall and the new building, because the building has become unsafe. BOS hasn't made any decisions to bond Notch Road demolition at this point in time and is for future discussion. As for the Skid Steer, it has been in the budget for a number of years, we have had issues with our current equipment and it has been difficult to get parts to replace for our current equipment and keeping it up and running. The BOS has felt it would be a good piece of equipment that would be efficient for the Highway department to function. Mike Eremita, of 30 Lori Rd, included that this Skid Steer would be available for all departments which would make the cost for each department less and he believes it would be a great time to get this equipment. Pam Sawyer includes that it would reduce wear and tear on our other equipment. Sandy then added that she was "disgusted" that the Town is putting a modular building in our historic center.

Amanda Gordon, of 23 Golf Ln, asked why we are increasing the teacher FTE if there was such a small increase in the enrollment and what is our plan to fill the teacher positions. Also, a question on the modular office and how they had mentioned in a BOS meeting that the Congregational Church was willing to rent space instead of doing the

modular building, if that is still an option. Question regarding the increase in the Recreation department, is it increasing because we think that enrollment will increase and we don't want to lose staff or do we not foresee an increase and we just shouldn't be funding it. And for the Assessor increase, that is a 57% increase what was the prior FTE before the shared position, do we need more time with an assessor, what is the reasoning. K. Heckt responded to the question about the teacher increase by stating they did not have any new teacher positions and it may be positions that had to come out of grants that are funded as part of the operating budget. P. Sawyer responded to the question about the modular building stating that they went over the pros and cons, but because of the separation of church and state, they believed to be fair to the current and future employees and to the public it would be better to have a neutral space. R. Morra responded to the Assessor question stating that we currently have a full-time Assistant Assessor, and the opportunity came to have the shared position with Willington with revaluation coming up it is going to be difficult because of increases and the current Assessor being only part-time.

Paula Meyers expressed her concern about the lack of efforts in increasing enrollment. She asks that BOE give us a plan for enrollment increase. She also asks that we keep the current proposed expectations of tax increase to the best of ability.

Rhea Klein, of 4 Bayberry Rd, asks to reconsider putting the modular building in the center of the town, stating that the building with the Congregational Church is completely separate from the church and that having gone inside the building there are no Christian artifacts inside.

3) Adjournment: E. Bradley adjourned this hearing at 9:05 P.M.

Next Meetings:

May 5, 2022 – Special Meeting (if necessary)

May 19, 2022 – Regular Meeting

Other Important Dates:

May 10, 2022 – BOF must adopt the budget on or before this date

May 24, 2022 – Budget Referendum

Respectfully submitted by Ashleigh N. Johnson, Board Clerk

Ashleigh N. Johnson

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