

West Boylston Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

March 29, 2006

Upon notice duly given and quorum present, the West Boylston Finance Committee convened on March 29, 2006, Ray Bricault chairing the meeting.

Members in attendance: Ray Bricault, Patricia Altomare, Mychelle Phillips, Chris Berglund and Paul Bohnson.

Minutes

Upon motion duly made by Mychelle Phillips and seconded by Chris Berglund the minutes of the February 16th, 2006 meeting, the March 14th, 2006 meeting and the March 21, 2006 meeting were unanimously approved as amended.

Executive Session:

Upon motion duly made by Chris Berglund and seconded by Mychelle Phillips, the Finance Committee went into executive session wherein the status of the sewer enterprise was discussed. It was noted that the MDC will not discuss the issues with the Town officials without an attorney being present due to past acrimony. Likewise, the town is unable to close out the books because the MDC will not disclose whether there are any more expenditures. The Board of Selectmen has instructed Leon Gaumond to resolve the litigation between the town and the MDC as quickly as possible.

Regular Business:

Under regular business it was noted that the Fire Department's increase in budget request was due to the additions of two new positions: a deputy chief and secretarial.

Joint Meeting:

At this point the Finance Committee joined the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee for a joint meeting.

Leon Gaumond presented his proposed FY07 Operating Budget to the joint committees. Mr. Gaumond indicated that the budget balanced but only because the departments were told to cut costs and limit growth. There are very few discretionary line items. Mr. Gaumond's entire message is on the town website however, he highlighted three budgetary issues: 1) building and facility needs; 2) operating shortfalls; 3) cost of personnel benefits and contractual increases (the health insurance costs rose 11%.)

Mr. Gaumond pointed out that the revenue sources are 1) property taxes; 2) state aid; 3) local receipts; 4) special revenue funds i.e. "free cash"; and 5) miscellaneous sources such as ambulance receipts. Mr. Gaumond calculated an additional \$200,000 increase in property tax revenues for FY07. Further, he noted that the State has uncapped the lottery fund and hopes that this will have a positive impact on our state aid. The "free cash" has been certified by the State at \$750,000.

The town's expenditures have increased approximately \$1,000,000 which represents a 6% increase over last year. Mr. Gaumond further detailed the proposed budget on a line-by-line basis. Some items noted are as follows:

- ◆ It is hoped that the town legal fees will decrease with the end of sewer litigation and union negotiations.
- ◆ The school committee requested an 8.1% increase in their budget but Mr. Gaumond indicates that without an override or severe cut in other departments, only a 4.25% increase is possible.
- ◆ The Library will not have to get a waiver from the State this year.
- ◆ Our group health insurance increased 11%, however that is modest compared to the industry trends.
- ◆ Most increases in anticipated expenditures were due to cost of living increases.
- ◆ Via political means, the town is aggressively pursuing reimbursement from the County Jail for our costs incurred on its behalf.
- ◆ The reservoir pilot monies are being level funded (approximately \$500,000).
- ◆ The Town's non-taxable land is comprises approximately 54% of the Town; of that 47% is State-owned land.

Upon a period of questions and answers the joint committees discussed the status of school-choice monies and Chapter 70 monies.

There being no further discussion, upon motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Altomare, Clerk
West Boylston Finance Committee