

TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER
BOARD OF FINANCE
SPECIAL MEETING
May 28, 2009
7:00 p.m.

Members present: Colin Brown-Chairman, George Allingham, Greg Buchholz, Meg Khare, Don Shail, and Molly Stratton

Guests present: Amy D. Allingham-Treasurer, Neil Cable-Selectman (arrived at 7:30 p.m.)

Agenda Item #1 – call to order at 7:05 p.m.

Agenda Item #2 – Minutes of the April 22, 2009 Meeting, review, discussion and action. MOTION to accept the minutes as presented. MOTION by Greg Buchholz, second by Meg Khare, unanimous and so moved.

Agenda Item #3 – Mil rate to fund the Fiscal 2010 Budget. Colin discussed that the mil rate for the budget passed at the May 22, 2009 Town Meeting, without using any fund balance, is 15.75, a .25 mil increase from FY 2009. Amy distributed historical summaries of mil rates, grand lists, and fund balance balances. Colin stated that the First Selectman has suggested that the mil rate should be set at 14.5, representing a 1 mil decrease. Colin considered the effect of a 1 mil decrease to taxpayers and for a house assessed at approximately \$300,000 the effect would be an approximate \$300 savings. To accomplish this decrease, it would require the use of \$500,000 of fund balance, essentially ½ of the existing fund balance. Using this much fund balance would eliminate the ability to use fund balance next year and therefore a comparable FY 2011 budget would result in a mil rate increase. Don stated he thought decreasing the mil rate is important but that a 1 mil decrease is an artificially low rate, Meg concurs. George favors using approximately \$200,000 of fund balance, reducing the mil rate from 15.5 to 15.2. Molly thinks it important that the Board of Finance makes it clear to the public that this budget is as lean as possible and agrees with the suggestion to use \$200,000 of fund balance. This will decrease the mil rate and will maintain the fund balance at approximately \$1 million. Further, this recognizes that although this is an economically difficult time, a 1 mil reduction would be risky for future budgets and possible needs of the town. Greg agrees that the use of approximately \$200,000 is reasonable and the highest amount he is comfortable with using is \$300,000. Greg also wants it noted that mil rate reflects an estimated decrease in the tax collection rate from 98.5% to of 97.5%; based on the slow tax collections noted in the current year due to the hardships faced by many.

MOTION to set the mil rate at 15.2 and to use \$225,000 of fund balance to fund this mil rate. MOTION by Don Shail, second by Greg Buchholz, unanimous and so moved.

Agenda Item #4 – FOI request from Attorney David Bennett. Meg Khare recused herself from discussion on this matter, citing a professional relationship and departed the meeting. Distribution of request from Attorney Bennett and correspondence received in connection with this matter, attached hereto and made a part hereof. Distribution of welfare invoices for fiscal years 2004-2009 and summary of same. Molly noted that there are no Senior Center documents attached for review. Colin reported that he has been in contact with Attorney Bennett requesting clarification on the Senior Center documents requested. For this project, documents are held by both the Treasurer and the First Selectman. In an effort to not commingle documents maintained by Amy and the First Selectman, Colin has advised Amy to keep her records separate. Amy then stated that Selectman Ed Bennett reported to the Republican Town Committee meeting on May 27, 2009, that the Treasurer (Amy) has delayed the response to Attorney Bennett's request. Colin stated that this does not appear to be the case, as he has been in contact with Attorney Bennett and stated that to date, Attorney Bennett appears satisfied with the response and communications he has received in connection with his request. Colin has advised Attorney Bennett that there are many documents associated with the senior center and that it may be best to make an appointment to view the documents in the Town Hall. Attorney Bennett has requested that Colin provide a fax stating the quantity of documents surrounding the senior center, as well as the cost involved of copying it so that he can share that information with his client. Neil stated that a delay has never been discussed at a Board of Selectmen meeting and apologized for the accusations of his fellow Selectman. The Board concurs that since the request was made to the Board of Finance, the board should reply to the request. Further the Board authorized Amy to mail the welfare invoices and spreadsheet to Attorney Bennett.

MOTION to adjourn at 7:55 p.m. MOTION by Don Shail, second by Molly Stratton, unanimous and so moved.

Respectfully submitted

Colin Brown, Chairman