

**TOWN OF SOMERS  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
SPECIAL MEETING  
MONDAY, MARCH 6, 2006**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

The special meeting was called to order by Chairman James Persano at 7:08 p.m. Present were Thomas Mazzoli, Michael Parker, James Persano, Marilyn Pronovost and George Warner. Also present: Treasurer Edward Sullivan, First Selectman David Pinney and Selectmen Kathleen Devlin and Ernie Allsup.

**II. CORRESPONDENCE**

None was presented.

**III. BUDGET REVIEW MEETING**

**Representative Penny Bacchiochi:** The Board reviewed a memorandum from Mrs. Bacchiochi which included the statutory formula for LoCIP, a presentation regarding state aid for the town and proposed bills regarding Somers. She commented that the figures she included will probably change somewhat after the Session, but generally they will see an increase rather than a decrease.

She explained that the proposed bills have been submitted and include a request for a \$500,000.00 grant to provide funding for renovation of all Somers athletic fields as well as a \$22,000.00 grant to provide funding for a backup generator at the Somers Senior Center. She reminded the Board that it is important to keep her posted about the town's specific needs so that she can work toward helping to meet them, and she suggested a good way to send this information to her directly is through email.

Kathleen Devlin asked about the status of homeland security grants. Mrs. Bacchiochi explained that the state is checking to be sure that the individual towns have comprehensive plans in place prior to granting funding to them for homeland security.

In reference to her memo, Mrs. Bacchiochi noted that the Pequot funding, now being referred to as Supplemental Municipal Aid, has increased by \$148,000.00 for 2007. This funding has worked out well for Somers because it is heavily based upon the amount of state-owned property a town has.

An increase of Public School Transportation Funding in the amount of \$77,418.00 was noted as

the largest, by far. Mrs. Bacchiochi will look into this figure further due to the large increase reported and keep the Board informed as to any additional information she attains.

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Mr. Sullivan expressed concern over figure for Education Cost Sharing of \$27,642.00, which is significantly lower than last year. This decrease was not anticipated when budget figures were compiled for the proposed budget. The change was attributed to the large boost in funding for last year.

Mr. Pinney asked about the proposed elimination of the car tax, noting that the Town would lose \$1 million in tax revenue should the bill pass. Any gain the town might realize from state funding would be offset by a loss of personal property tax revenue. Mrs. Bacchiochi expects that the bill will not pass because most municipalities cannot withstand the resulting loss of tax revenue. Governor Rell must be commended for trying to relieve the tax burden, but the proposed legislation would not be in the best interest of either the towns or the citizens.

Penny Bacchiochi also commented on the recent discussions about counting prisoners as residents of the town in which they lived prior to incarceration when considering funding opportunities. She is certain this would be bad for Somers if made into law and expects to be keeping watch on this issue should action be considered.

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**Senator John Kissel:** Because of the surplus this year and the fact that it is an election year, Mr. Kissel predicts that it will be an excellent funding year. He noted that such circumstances often work in the town's favor.

When asked if progress is being made regarding the elderly, Mr. Kissel said that the task force has made some positive steps. The long-term needs assessment is scheduled to be completed by January 1, 2007, and this will provide an overall snapshot of the state's elderly population. Such information is essential for making decisions and re-creating the Department on Aging. It has finally been agreed at the state level that the longer the elderly can be allowed to stay comfortably at home rather than having to move to nursing homes, the more the state can benefit financially.

Mr. Kissel noted that most of the towns are either opposed to or very cautious about Governor Rell's motor vehicle tax proposal. In his opinion, the legislation will probably not pass, but it has generated some good discussion regarding lowering taxes.

Mr. Sullivan asked about the state income level and it was discussed that the basis for the state

income is primarily the sales and income tax. In addition, the income tax collected depends largely upon the income level of state residents. It is not really possible to forecast too far into the future, but Connecticut has the lowest job growth in the country and is fighting to keep the small growth that it currently has. Energy rates are very high and the cost of living is very high in this state. We need to focus on job growth and to work towards bringing and keeping businesses into the state.

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**Board of Selectmen:** David Pinney spoke on behalf of the Selectmen, presenting their budget information, which includes a 4.88% increase. \$115,000.00 of the total increase is because of the rising fuel costs. This figure, when compared with the total budget increase of \$250,000.00, is quite substantial.

Salaries have increased and there are two contracts which will need to be negotiated. The largest increase to salaries can be found within the Police Department because they have opted to give their senior officers a significant increase this year. Three of the officers serving Somers fit into this category and are eligible for the increase. Because the Fire Department had a substantial increase last year, they will receive a more moderate increase this year. In fact, most increases had to be eliminated in order to cover energy costs.

The Transfer Station budget has increased by \$20,000.00 this year, mostly due to the increase in the amount of trash. The current contractor is posing some incentives towards a multi-year contract with the town, and the other bids are being sought as well. Consideration is being given to the current fee schedule for residents and it has been noted that some residents are bringing in trash from their out-of-town businesses because of the low disposal rate in Somers.

Town employees have begun paying 10% of their health insurance premiums this year. A transition to this policy was compensated for this year by way of salary increases. This has served to help the town by saving them \$25,000.00 in health insurance premiums.

Mr. Allsup stressed that only 2.6% of the Selectmen's budget increase this year is due to non-energy items. The remaining 2.2% directly related to the increase in energy costs is, therefore, out of the control of the Board of Selectmen. Because of this increased energy cost, the Board has worked very hard to keep other increases to a minimum. They have sought to level-fund maintenance and equipment, but with the high energy costs, it is the same as if cuts were made instead.

#### **IV. SELECTMEN UPDATE**

No further update was given.

## **V. REVENUE FORECAST**

Mr. Sullivan explained that Mrs. Bacchiochi's comments regarding educational funding were noted and he will be re-working some of the figures for presentation at the next meeting.

- **VI. MINUTES REVIEW** - Item was deferred.

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- **VII. MINUES CORRECTIONS** – Item was deferred.

- **VIII. BILLS, TRANSFERS AND APPROPRIATIONS** – Item was deferred.

## **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

It was the consensus of the Board to adjourn at 8:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Timmons, Recording Secretary

MINUTES ARE NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVAL AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING.