

**TOWN OF SOMERS
BOARD OF FINANCE
SPECIAL MEETING
MONDAY, MARCH 12, 2007**

I. CALL TO ORDER

The special meeting was called to order by Chairman James Persano at 7:02 p.m. Present were James Persano, Michael Parker, Marilyn Provonost and George Warner. Also attending: Treasurer Edward Sullivan, First Selectman David Pinney, Selectman Kathy Devlin, Interim Board of Education (BOE) Superintendent James Chittum, BOE Director of Business Services Bill Boutwell and Representative Penny Bacchiochi.

II. BUDGET REVIEW MEETING

- Board of Education

Mr. Chittum provided a summary of the BOE's proposed budget and showed a PowerPoint presentation. The BOE's four goals in drafting this budget were:

1. To improve the organizational system
2. To implement a system linking curriculum standards to assessment and instruction
3. To recreate the learning environment using new technologies
4. To improve communication between all parts of the school community

The focus of the budget is to maintain existing programs, to provide resources to support students and to maintain the buildings. The total for the proposed budget is \$17,981,485, a 6.16% increase. Mr. Chittum stated that this figure represents the cost of maintaining exactly what is currently being done within the Town's school system.

Built into this budget are \$219,500 in program improvements in the following four areas:

1. Staffing to support students at a total increase of \$102,000 as itemized below.
 - a. \$45,000 for an additional Guidance Counselor at the High School. The two current counselors are responsible for 275 students each and cannot provide the needed time for each student.
 - b. \$23,000 for a part-time (.5) Special Education Teacher at the High School.
 - c. \$18,000 for a Special Education paraprofessional in the Elementary School.
 - d. \$10,000 for Special Education Consulting.
 - e. \$6,000 for extra support for Hearing Impaired students.

2. More support for programs at a total increase of \$58,500.
 - a. \$22,000 for a full time office secretary
 - b. \$6,000 for expanding the Guidance secretaries hours into the summer monthes.
 - c. Expanding Technology Support to the whole year.
 - d. Departmental supplies, areas of technology, maintenance supplies and athletic supplies.
3. Textbook Replacement – total increase \$30,000.
4. Building Maintenance – total increase \$29,000 as itemized.
 - a. \$15,000 for a ½ time Custodian for the Middle School due to the school’s expanded square footage.
 - b. \$10,000 for maintenance materials and supplies for the Elementary and High Schools.
 - c. \$4,000 for a new stove for the food service.

A handout of the BOE’s proposed budget was provided. In the “6.16% Analysis” section were tables breaking down the overall increase in this budget. Mr. Chittum discussed this section.

He explained that although enrollment projections anticipate that there will be 18 fewer students next year, the reduction in students will be spread out, thus precluding the possibility of a staff reduction.

The Salaries portion, which is 68% of their budget, will increase by 4.96% based on existing staff and existing contracts. This figure allows for current vacant positions to be filled.

Of the total budget, \$17,101,464 is for fixed costs, and \$880,021 is discretionary, i.e. textbooks, general supplies and staff improvements.

Mike Parker asked when transfers for the 06-07 year would be submitted to the BOF so the flow of money from budgeted to non-budgeted items could be seen. Terry Henderson said they could provide him with general information on this.

George Warner asked if the bus contract was put out for bid. Bill Boutwell answered that it can go to bid every five years. At the last opportunity for this, the contract was not bid, but was renegotiated with Laidlaw.

Mr. Warner further asked if the BOE is trying to effect a sharing arrangement with other towns. Mr. Boutwell said that some sharing is done, for example the adult ed is done through a cooperative arrangement with Enfield.

- Penny Bacchiochi

Ms. Bacchiochi discussed the budget proposed by the Governor.

For Somers, this budget would add extra money going into ECS, but would lose in the statutory grant formulas. In projection analyses, it is estimated that for every tax dollar paid by Somers residents \$0.28 -\$0.30 will be returned to the Town. However, Ms. Bacchiochi pointed out that the Governor's budget is a proposal and the final budget, after negotiations, may not reflect the Governor's proposals.

Ms. Bacciochi suggested that if the Town uses the same statutory grant formula as last year we should be OK. She expects that the Town can count on about ½ of the change in increase in the ECS monies. This would amount to about \$750,000 increase for ECS.

She expects that there will still be an income tax increase. These monies will go to Health Care like the Husky Plan and increased reimbursement to Hospitals for Medicare/Medicaid.

Ms. Bacciochi reiterated Mr. Warner's question regarding the sharing of services between towns, stating this is the "hot topic". The Legislature is considering incentives to encourage this type of Regionalism. Cluster zoning for low income housing also will be encouraged with financial incentives.

III. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT GRANT

David Pinney offered that it may be possible to participate with the Capital Region on the Emergency Notification portion of this project. The Selectmen are looking into this.

At this time there is not enough additional information to develop a specific proposal on the Emergency Shelter and Generator. This discussion was deferred to next week.

IV. SELECTMAN'S UPDATE

Mr. Pinney stated that the Town's Tax Collector suggested that if furnished with additional software, the monies for the Sewer Project could be collected from the tax office.

V. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

VI. SCHOOL BUILDING PROJECT CONTINGENCY STATUS

James Persano asked Mr. Boutwell to discuss the School Building project contingency status. This was in light of an Emergency Preparedness proposal to use contingency monies and a School request to transfer contingency money to the Mabel B. Avery (MBA) project for the gym floor and bleachers.

Per Mr. Boutwell, the gross contingency from the (MBA) and Central Office projects is between \$600,000 and \$700,000. At this time about \$480,000 of this has been used.

When the High School project closed there were about \$75,000 left in that contingency fund. There was about \$50,000 contingency remaining when the Elementary School project closed.

There are concerns that when the Town's projects are completed and contractors are paid the Town will need to cover the State's retainage amount. The state retains a percentage of grant money until

after the State audit is completed. The audit process takes up to 1 ¼ years. By Mr. Sullivan's calculations the retainage amount that may need to be covered is about \$424,000.

Mr. Sullivan stressed the need to have the projects closed out because the State had six months from the project closing to begin the audit.

VII. BILLS, TRANSFERS AND APPROPRIATIONS

A motion was made by Tom Mazolli, seconded by Marilyn Provonost and unanimously voted to approve the following transfers and appropriations:

From the Assessor a transfer of \$900.00 from Mapping Acct. (10-15-545.1) to Computer Services Acct. (10-15-532.1).

From the Selectman a reimbursement appropriation of \$1,964.67 to Kibbe Fuller Maintenance Acct. (10-10-531.2); a transfer of \$3,500.00 from Health Insurance

Acct. (10-10-511.1) to Kibbe Fuller Maintenance Acct. (10-10-531.2).

From the Fire Department a reimbursement appropriation of \$250.00 to Ambulance Uniforms Acct. (41-24-565.1); a reimbursement appropriation of \$1,000.00 to Ambulance New Uniforms Acct. (41-24-530.5).

From the Tax Collector a transfer of \$1,000.00 from Q D Computer Acct. (10-13-543.1) to Postage Acct. (10-13-533.1); a transfer of \$650.00 from Q D Computer Acct. (10-13-543.1) to Part-time Acct. (10-13-508.2); a transfer of \$550.00 from Supplies Acct. (10-13-520.1) to Part-time Acct. (10-13-508.2).

From the Fire Department a reimbursement appropriation of \$626.76 to New Equipment Acct. (20-16-530.5).

From the Selectman a reimbursement appropriation of \$14,147.17 to Street Lights Acct. (10-10-586.1).

From the Selectman a transfer of \$200.00 from Health Insurance

Acct. (10-10-511.1) to Other Acct. (10-10-523.1).

From the Fire Marshall a transfer of \$200.00 from Training Acct. (20-10-568.1) to Equipment & Supplies Acct. (20-10-520.1); a transfer of \$300.00 from Training Acct. (20-10-568.1) to Vehicle Maintenance Acct. (20-10-531.5).

From the Tax Collector a transfer of \$300.00 from Supplies Acct. (10-13-520.1) to Advertising Acct. (10-13-516.1); a transfer of \$110.00 from Supplies Acct. (10-13-520.1) to Dues & Seminars Acct. (10-13-534.1).

From Capital Equipment a transfer of \$2,509.00 from Reserve Capital

Acct. (68-10-990.1) to FD Hydraulic Tools Acct. (68-10-382.2).

From the Library a reimbursement appropriation of \$143.36 to Books

Acct. (50-21-520.2).

The following transfer was not approved:

From School Construction a transfer of \$29,283.95 from BOF School Contingency Acct. (10-52-311.0) to MBA Construction Acct. (10-52-301.0).

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Jim Persano moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. and it was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Reed, Recording Secretary

MINUTES ARE NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVAL AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING