

TOWN OF SOMERS  
BOARD OF FINANCE  
SPECIAL MEETING  
MONDAY, MARCH 16, 2009

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman James Persano called the special meeting to order, at 6:00pm. Members present were George Warner, Michael Parker, Tom Mazzoli, Steve Krasinski and James Persano. Also present were Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Maynard Suffredini, School Business Manager Bill Boutwell, Library Board Chairman Shirley Warner, Selectmen David Pinney, Kathy Devlin & Joe Tolisano and Finance Director Greg Simmons.

**II. BUDGET REVIEW AND DISCUSSION**

Dr. Suffredini distributed a handout showing the BOE proposed budget for 2009-10 and discussed the major areas in the budget. He explained that maintaining a level service budget would require a net increase of 4.36%. This factors in the increases in salaries, insurance and other areas, which are partly offset by reductions in utilities and transportation.

Dr. Suffredini then explained what would be needed to achieve a level funded budget as requested by the BOF. This would require staff reductions with savings coming from salaries and health insurance costs. The budget handout enumerated how these staffing reductions would be made in the administrative, instructional, secretarial and custodial/ maintenance departments. Dr. Suffredini explained that 10 teaching positions would need to be cut.

The reduced insurance cost is projected to be about \$100,000 in this budget. The BOF estimated that the unemployment costs for laying off ten people would be about \$100,000 but did not see where this expense was included in the BOE budget. Mr. Boutwell explained that the unemployment cost was calculated in the level funded budget under the insurance expense.

Mr. Persano thanked the BOE for their presentation and cooperation.

Mrs. Warner discussed the Library budget. A copy of the budget had been distributed to the BOF prior to this meeting. Mrs. Warner explained that in the past the Library has always provided a budget at or under what was requested by the BOF. Unfortunately, this year the cost of heat and electricity have increased between \$7,000 to \$8,000 resulting from the construction of the new Library addition. This increase was partially offset by 8.22% in total reductions taken in other line items. Selectman Pinney said that this increase has been absorbed into the Town budget, which has 0% increase for this year.

Selectman Pinney presented the BOS budget. He explained that the Selectmen have tried to identify funds that can be retained this year to be applied to cover deficits in next year's budget. This forward thinking comes as a result of inside knowledge provided by Mr. Tolisano who works with the State.

Mr. Pinney provided a summary of the BOS budget for the coming year with an explanation of it's "highlights:

Worker's Compensation insurance has gone up about 40%. Fire protection costs will go up because of the new lines and hydrants needed for the new subdivisions. The changes in the Human Services Department staffing have resulted in a net increase in salaries. The State proposal to increase the Town's share for the Resident Troopers from 70% to 85% will mean an additional cost of \$125,000. At the Highway Department, there were staffing changes that resulted in increased salaries.

The Health Savings Account insurance plan reduces the Town's insurance cost. The Fire Department's decision to only offer this plan results in considerable savings. About 1/3 of the Town's employees are enrolled in this plan.

The BOS is considering ways to reduce the extra Resident Trooper costs. Currently, there is an open part-time clerical position in that department that will not be filled. Also, it has been proposed to reduce the number of State Troopers from 6 to 5. It is anticipated that the Town's share of the Resident Trooper's cost may go to 100% next year. There was a discussion about maintaining or possibly rebuilding the town Constable staff if the State Trooper expense becomes untenable.

All of the Town's non-union staff has agreed to a wage freeze and the Fire union has agreed to a contract extension that maintains current salary levels.

Anticipated revenue will come from the Hartford Foundation as \$105,000 in grants over 3 years for senior services. The Ambulance Department brings in about \$105,000 each year and some of that could possibly be transferred to the General Fund. Increases in some Town fees are being considered as well.

The BOF asked how the expense for the Planning Engineer could be controlled. Mr. Pinney explained that there would be times when Mr. Strauss' knowledge will be indispensable. However, the Planning Department understands that this expense needs to be kept to a minimum.

A decrease of \$29,000 in vacation expense was questioned. This has to do with an unfunded liability for vacation days that are not taken. Mr. Pinney explained that the BOS established a fund only five years ago to cover this liability and made deposits into it when times were better. Due to this year's shortfalls no money has been allocated to this fund. Town policy now caps rollover vacation and sick days so the potential amount of this liability has been reduced.

Mr. Persano thanked Selectman Pinney for his presentation. He then explained that with no mil increase the Town would have a shortfall of \$400,000. With a .35 mil increase the shortfall would be \$120,000 and with a .5 mil increase the budget would be covered. He concluded that the job of the BOF is to determine the pulse of the Town in formulating a budget that will pass.

Mr. Pinney offered that a non-scientific survey had been posted on the Town website which has received about 300 responses. He will bring the results to the next BOF meeting. Mr. Persano thanked him and asked for others to notify the BOF of their opinions regarding the budget as well.

## **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion was made by Mr. Parker; seconded by Mr. Krasinski and unanimously voted to adjourn the March 16, 2009 meeting of the Board of Finance at 7:00pm.*

MINUTES ARE NOT OFFICIAL UNTIL APPROVAL AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING