

**Town of Seymour ~ Board of Finance**  
**MINUTES**  
**Budget Deliberations**  
**Monday, March 29, 2021 at 7:00pm**  
**Via Zoom Teleconference # 829 5347 1615**  
**(646) 558-8656**

COPY RECEIVED  
DATE: 3/30/21  
TIME: 11:25Am  
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

**Members Present:** Bettyann Peck, Richard Demko, Bill Sawicki, Beverly Kennedy, Kristyn Haniewicz, Jim Cretella, Zani Imetovski; Jessica Nunez (alternate)

**Members Absent:** Grace Brangwynne, Gary Popielasz (alternates)

**Others Present:** Rory Burke, Monica Dimon, Doug Thomas, Annmarie Drugonis, Jean Falbo-Sosnovich, Ethan Fry, Nancy Vaughan

**Item #1 – Call Meeting to order**

Chairman Bill Sawicki called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

**Item #2 – Pledge of Allegiance**

Everyone saluted the Flag and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Item #3 – Public Comment**

None

**Item #4 – Deliberation and Discussion of 2021/2022 Budget**  
**Discussion of 2021/2022 Budget – Edition 5 dated 3/24/21**

- Bill Sawicki said that this budget is currently at \$59,789,558.
- Bettyann Peck asked if mail in ballots will be allowed for this upcoming referendum? Is there a process for that? Bill Sawicki asked Doug Thomas who said he would have to find out from the Town Clerk tomorrow. The Public Hearing will be via Zoom Meeting. But the Town Meeting will most likely be in-person. First week in May will be the Referendum. This should be in-person also.
- Richard Demko asked about the 3% increase in our Town Buildings – Utilities line item. He feels this is a bit too much, especially given all the energy-saving things that Johnson Controls is proposing. Where are we with ACTUAL numbers right now? Doug said that he spoke with Tony Caserta and we are right at the projected numbers. Also, there is a clause in our contract with JCI that says we are to increase our budget by 3% every year in order to realize the savings. Richard Demko said that doesn't make sense – increase the cost to realize the savings? Doug Thomas said that this was the contract, that the increase of 3% would help to pay for the improvements. Annmarie Drugonis said that this has been discussed extensively at the Board of Selectmen meetings. There wasn't one person from the Board of Finance there to discuss this contract. This is going back to before COVID. The Board of Education had the same 3% increase. Rory Burke said that the basic idea is that JCI installs a variety of energy savings measures in Town facilities. Those savings are used to finance the cost of those energy savings measures. The solar arrays, the boilers, the insulation, LED lighting. The cost associated with these is financed through the savings in the project. Rather than cutting the energy savings budget to correspond with the savings, you keep it level so that the savings are there to finance the project, and an escalator is built in so that if rising energy costs occur, we will be covered. Richard Demko asked, so this is in addition to their \$43,575

performance contract fee? Doug Thomas said yes. Rory Burke said that you need to look at it as financing Capital Improvements.

- Richard Demko said that he thinks we still can cut \$50,000 off of the Board of Education.
- Bill Sawicki said that we have gone through these lines several times at these Budget Deliberations. The taxpayers are getting a 1.3% decrease on the Mill Rate and this still allows the Town moving forward. I don't think that a blanket slash to all departments is a good idea. It amounts to essentially "kicking the can down the road". We have talked the department heads, asked questions, talked to Annmarie, gotten some information, spoke with Rory. The bottom line is that this budget is fair to the taxpayers and fair to the departments. We need to be careful that we don't implement cuts that the department will come back to us needing things which we will then need to take the money from Fund Balance. That is not good planning. In the grand scheme of things, we are all one Town. We have come a long way and we are keeping the services as they should be. This budget gets us where we want to be. This is where the Rating Agencies want to see us. They want to see progress – which I think this budget shows.
- Richard Demko said he understands "kicking the can down the road", but he still feels that there is something more we can do during a pandemic when everyone is struggling, to maybe put a one-year moratorium on some of the bigger ticket items. Not eliminate but put on hold. Annmarie Drugonis asked what Richard would like to cut? Which items? Richard Demko said that is not the point. The point is to have a robust discussion about the overall department budgets. Annmarie said that many of the departments have a 0% increase. Richard Demko said that we have vehicle purchases, salary increases. Annmarie Drugonis said that the salary increases are required by contract obligations. Richard Demko said he is talking about a hiring freeze – no new positions. He said that if we cut the Public Works budget by \$25,000 and they still want to purchase a truck, they will need to find a way to purchase through his budget. These are the kind of things I think we need to be looking at. Annmarie said that say we cut \$25,000 from Public Works and we have a tornado come through and we need money for trees or have a freak snowstorm and need sand, where will that money come from? Richard Demko said Contingency. Annmarie said that this is poor planning. Annmarie said she does not want to lay people off. The only new hires are the Economic Development Director and a new seasonal employee.
- Bill Sawicki said that the one thing this Board cannot do, and hopefully would not want to do is "nickel & dime" these departments. If money isn't spent, it will fall to the Fund Balance. We are not the managers of these departments. We need to have enough trust and faith in the department heads that they know what they need to best to run their departments. If we take out \$100,000 for the truck (from Capital Plan) and then we need one next year and need to put up \$200,000, how will that be explained? Bad planning. We have planned fairly well for this Town. I get that there is a pandemic, and it is hard for people. But by the same token, we can't be in a stall. This Town is a \$59 million business that we are trying to sell. To do that we need qualified people for the Economic Development Director – which we have been trying to fill for two years now. We need to have faith that the department heads know what they need to run their departments.
- Bettyann Peck said the Mill Rate is 34.71? Last year was 36.
- Beverly Kennedy said that the revaluation caused increases in taxes for many people.
- Bill Sawicki said that the Board of Education that there are no new hires, they are replacing people who have left or retired with people at new lower rates. Tuition costs can only be estimated. The increase that they requested is \$200,000 less than they asked for. They need to be able to run the school system. If we cut them more, I think would cause more harm than good down the line.

- Bettyann Peck asked if she thought this budget would pass in referendum. What would happen if it does not pass? Bill Sawicki said that we would reconvene and reduce it further. I am hoping that the budgets pass. If the taxpayers don't want it, they don't want it. But I think that the budget is fair and moves us forward.
- Jim Cretella said that Annmarie Drugonis did a FANTASTIC job with the budget this year. Don't see anywhere we can cut.
- Beverly Kennedy said she does not like putting on new hires and new positions at such a crucial time.

Motion to approve the 2021/2022 Budget of Revenues and Expenditures of \$59,178,558 and a Mill Rate of 34.71

Motion: Jim Cretella

Second: Kristyn Haniewicz

Vote: Yes: 4                      No: 3

Abstain: 0

Kristyn Haniewicz – Yes

Jim Cretella - Yes

Zani Imetovski – Yes

Beverly Kennedy - No

Richard Demko – No

Bill Sawicki - Yes

Bettyann Peck - No

Doug Thomas will let the Board of Selectmen know and file with the Town Clerk.

The Public Hearing will be via Zoom Meeting at 6pm on April 6<sup>th</sup>.

Bill Sawicki thanked everyone for their time and efforts.

Bettyann Peck said that she greatly appreciates Bill Sawicki's leadership on this Board.

**Item #5 – Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn

Motion: Kristyn Haniewicz

Second: Richard Demko

Vote: Yes: 7                      No: 0

Abstain: 0

Meeting was adjourned at 7:38 pm.

Submitted by:

**Monica Dimon**  
**Recording Secretary**