

**Weston Annual Town Budget Meeting
April 6, 2011 8:00PM
Weston High School Auditorium**

Present: (*Head Table*) First Selectman Gayle Weinstein, Town Administrator Tom Landry, Finance Director Rick Darling, Legal Counsel Patricia Sullivan, Board of Finance Chairman Michael O'Brien, Board of Education Chairman Philip Schaefer, acting Superintendent John Reed, School Finance Director Jo-Ann Keating and Donna M. Anastasia, Town Clerk.

Approximately 160-170 people attended this meeting.

First Selectman Weinstein called the meeting to order at 8:01 PM and thanked everyone for attending and turned the meeting over to Police Commission Chairman Rick Phillips to present the Citizen of the Year Award.

Chairman Phillips explained that each year the Commission selects an individual or as the case is this evening two people for significant contributions to the community.

This year the Citizen of the Year Award goes to Maria and Louis Dempsey for their very hard work coordinating community groups and volunteers to insure all Weston homes be equipped with carbon monoxide detectors. The Dempseys were struck with tragedy when Maria's sister and her entire family were lost due to carbon monoxide poisoning. The Dempseys wanted to ensure that a tragedy like this could never be repeated.

In addition to the Citizen of the Year award the Dempseys have introduced a bill into legislation, they have received The Red Cross Award, enacted an ordinance and received an additional award from the State of Connecticut. In closing Mr. Phillips congratulated the couple and expressed to Mr. and Mrs. Dempsey that "you'll never know how many lives you have saved".

Mr. Dempsey wanted to thank Mr. Phillips and members of the Police Commission in addition to John Pokorny who nominated the Dempseys, Woody Bliss, Joe Abruzzi, Larry Roberts, Curtis Gunn, Craig Cohen and the 75 members of the Weston Fire and EMS.

Mrs. Dempsey thanked everyone and was "honored" to receive the award and be a part of such a caring community.

Ms. Weinstein congratulated Mr. and Mrs. Dempsey and introduced the head table. She then asked for a motion to nominate Woody Bliss to serve as Moderator of the meeting. There were no other nominations. Motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Ms. Weinstein turned the meeting over to Mr. Bliss.

Mr. Bliss thanked the Board of Selectmen and welcomed everyone to the Annual Town Budget Meeting which will be held for the following purpose:

1. To consider and act upon the appropriations for the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2011. Individual appropriations listed in this Notice and Call may be reduced to an amount less than that recommended by the Board of Finance by an affirmative vote of a majority or more present and voting at this Town Meeting.

No motion shall be entertained by the Moderator to reduce the sum of any appropriation in the Board of Selectmen's Budget or of all appropriations recommended by the Board of Finance, or as amended, unless such motion specifies the individual line item in the Notice and Call proposed to be reduced, accompanied by the recommended total amount.

Mr. Bliss stated he would like to appoint Barbara Reynolds to serve as Parliamentarian. He then went over procedural items.

a. Section 7-6 Eligibility to Vote

“At any town meeting ... any person who is an elector of such town may vote and any citizen of the age 18 years old or more who, jointly or severally, is liable to the town, district or subdivision for taxes assessed against him on any assessment of not less than \$1,000 on the last completed grand list of such town ... or who would be so liable if not entitled to an exemption under subdivision 17, 19, 23, 25 or 26 of section 12-81 may vote ...”

b. Section 9-360 Fraudulent Voting

“Any person not legally qualified who fraudulently votes in any town meeting or in any election in which he/she is not qualified to vote, and any legally qualified person who, at such election, fraudulently votes more than once at the same election, shall be fined not less than \$300 nor more than \$500 and shall be imprisoned not less than 1 year nor more than 2 years and shall be disfranchised. Any person who votes or attempts to vote at any election or town meeting by assuming the name of another who is registered shall be fined \$500 and imprisoned 1 year and shall be disfranchised.”

Moderator Bliss asked that all non-voters please be seated in the Non-voting section and the working press may sit in front. He noted that Donna M. Anastasia, Town Clerk will be Clerk of the Meeting.

Motion

Mr. Bliss asked for a motion to waive the reading of the Call, motion was seconded and unanimously approved. He then asked the Clerk of the Meeting to enter the Call of the meeting into the minutes. So noted by the Clerk.

Mr. Bliss explained that all items on the capital budget, debt service budget and all items on the Board of Selectmen's budget will be acted upon and voted upon. With regard to the total Town Operating budget and the Board of Education budget; tonight we will discuss, with the opportunity to amend, and vote upon the total amount to be placed on the referendum ballot; however, before those numbers become final, they must be approved by the referendum on April 14th at the Weston Middle School Gymnasium from 6:00am - 8:pm.

Voters can vote to amend the budgets tonight, but cannot cast a final vote on the Selectmen and Board of Education budgets until Thursday April 14.

Mr. Bliss went over absentee ballot procedures

- 1, Absentee Ballots will be available starting on Thursday, April 7th at the Town Clerk's office from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm as required by state statute. This is a 2 step process, upon an executed application a ballot will be issued to the voter or the voter's designee.
 - 2, Town Hall will provide a special Absentee Balloting session on Saturday April 9th from 9:00 am – noon.
 - 3, Voters may continue to vote absentee during regular Town Hall business hours on April 11 – 13th from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm.
 - 4, Voters by absentee ballot must appear in person or designate a family member/caregiver to pick up and return an absentee ballot. The family member/caregiver must be designated on the Voter's application.
 - 5, Absentee ballots WILL NOT BE MAILED per state statute when there is less than three weeks between finalizing the budget and the machine vote.
- A machine vote for the Town Budget will be held on Thursday, April 14, 2011 from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm in the WMS gymnasium.

Mr. Bliss then went over voting and amendment procedures

- a. Each of the following items will be moved, seconded and voted upon as a separate single item; each will be moved by Board of Finance Chairman Mike O'Brien.
 - i. Each item in the Selectmen's Budget (36 items in all)
 - ii. The Board of Education Budget TOTAL—you do NOT get to vote on individual items that make up the Board of Ed budget;
 - iii. Each item in the Capital Improvement Budget (13 items);
 - iv. The Debt Service Budget:
 - a. First the Municipal Debt interest;
 - b. The Municipal Debt principal;
 - vi. The Total Town Budget, which will be the total of all the preceding items as amended, if amended, will be voted on, pending the outcome of the referendum vote.

The other items on the Call (the estimated revenue, the proposed mill rate) are informational only and are not subject to debate or vote.

For each line item in the Call, the Chairman of the Board of Finance, Mr. O'Brien, shall present a Main Motion. After each main motion is made it must be seconded, and *then* may be debated. NOW, with regard to the budget, any voter present may propose, by means of a motion duly made and seconded, an alternative amount to be appropriated under the line item being discussed.

There are 2 requirements:

1. The alternative amount proposed MAY NOT exceed the amount recommended by the Board of Finance: you can only vote to LOWER that particular budget item;
2. The alternative amount proposed must differ from the Board of Finance recommendation *and from every other alternative amount proposed under the same line item* by a significant amount.

After debate on the recommendation and the proposed alternatives, I will put each amount to a vote successively, in descending order of magnitude, with the Board of Finance amount first. The first amount to receive a majority affirmative vote of those voting shall be the amount appropriated, and any remaining alternative amounts not voted upon shall be deemed to have been defeated.

c. EXPLAIN VOTING PROCEDURES:

1. Votes at a Town Meeting are generally taken by voice vote, with the Moderator determining the outcome.

There are 3 exceptions:

- a. If I cannot determine the prevailing side, I will immediately ask for a standing counted vote.
- b. If seven voters rise to challenge the moderator's determination, the vote will be retaken by a standing counted vote.
- c. If prior to taking a vote on a motion on the floor, the Meeting itself, upon motion duly made and seconded, votes to take the vote some other way—such as a paper vote.

Outside of a challenge to the Moderator's call, a standing counted vote or a secret paper ballot vote shall be used when a motion is made, seconded, debated and passed by a simple majority of those present and voting.

- i. The motion to fix the method of voting has no established order of precedence and may be offered when pertinent, except that the motion may not interrupt a speaker.
- ii. At every Town Meeting the registrars are prepared for a standing vote by having appointed counters to determine the vote section by section.
- iii. At every Town Meeting the registrars are prepared for a secret paper ballot by bringing the necessary paper ballots and ballot boxes.

Mr. Bliss introduced the Registrar of Voters (Laura Smits (D) & Susan Moran (R) and announced that official checkers and counters were in attendance.

If we are in the middle of counting paper ballots at 11:30 pm., we will adjourn, but allow the ballot count to continue. You may stay to hear the results if you wish. We will reconvene tomorrow night at 8:00 pm, announce the result again, and continue where we stopped for the vote.

Mr. Bliss explained rules for addressing the Meeting;

- a. Get recognized by the moderator
- b. Approach one of the microphones in the front of the room.
- c. Identify yourself by name and street in Weston
- d. Please address remarks or questions to me – the Moderator. Be as brief as possible and do not simply repeat what others have said.
- e. PLEASE, Do not comment on personalities. This is not the time or place to air any differences that you may have with your neighbors.
- f. Any issue outside the scope of the call, or comments not germane to the motion at hand, will be ruled out of order.
- g. The moderator has the right to limit individual comments to ensure that everyone has a chance to address the Meeting. In the past we have limited debate by each person to 3 minutes, and that has worked extremely well. I would entertain such a Motion from the floor. Do I hear such a motion? Motion seconded and carries unanimously.
- h. Now, every now and then someone will ask to “call the question”. Calling the question has the effect of ending debate on a particular question and having it put to a vote immediately. The moderator has the discretion whether or not to accept a motion to call the question. It is my personal belief that a Town Meeting is a forum where everyone with something to contribute should have the opportunity to speak. If, in my opinion, the request to call the question is premature, I will defer the request. If it is timely, I will ask for a second and we will take a vote. A motion to call the question is not open to debate and requires a 2/3 majority to pass. If the motion to call the question passes, we will take an immediate vote on the item that was under debate.
- i. Pursuant to the Town Charter, this meeting will end PROMPTLY at 11:30 p.m. If we have not finished our business, we will reconvene tomorrow night at 8:00 and go until 11:30 pm if necessary, and each consecutive night until finished.

Moderator Bliss turned the meeting over to Chairman O'Brien of the Board of Finance to read each item on the call:

Chairman O'Brien proceeded to read each item:

BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S BUDGET
VOTE ON EACH ITEM (36)

			Comments/Discussion
Administration & Finance	All	\$610,253	
General Administration	All	3,928,000	
Information Systems	All	216,900	
Probate Court	All	4,000	
Elections/Registrars	All	44,042	
Board of Finance	All	51,400	
Assessor	All	121,540	
Tax Collection	All	114,660	
Board of Assessment Appeals	All	295	
Legal Counsel	All	239,600	
Town Clerk	All	127,379	
Historic District Commission	All	300	
Planning and Zoning Commission	All	93,353	
Zoning Board of Appeals	All	2,500	
Conservation Commission	All	54,882	
Building Inspector	All		
		98,469	
Building Committee	All	600	
Volunteer Fire Department	All	212,178	
Fire Marshal	All	43,544	
Animal Control	All	62,568	
Communications Center	All	267,164	
SW Conn. Emerg. Med. Serv.	All	1,300	
Emerg. Med. Commun. Serv.	All	12,269	
Regional Paramedic	All	133,647	
Police Services	All	1,676,969	
Public Works- Highway	All	1,738,546	
Solid Waste Disposal	All	92,093	
Westport/Weston Health Dist.	All	178,400	
Weston Water Utility	All	15,320	
School/Town Water Supply	All	36,630	
Human Services	All	76,030	
Youth Services	All	0	
Senior Services	All	91,777	
Public Library	All	389,529	
Recreation Department	All	190,389	

Parks & Fields	All	167,441	Herbert Parker, Briar Oak-asked about revenue involved and renting fields. Ms. Weinstein explained that the school would pay the town in the past now the school has taken over the expense directly.
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Middle School Pool	All	<u>90,249</u>	
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TOTAL BOARD OF SELECTMEN'S BUDGET	All		
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\$11,184,216

I move that we recommend a Town Operating budget of \$11,184,216 for a machine vote on Thursday April 14th, 2011

TOTAL BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET

\$45,166,337

I move that we recommend a Board of Education Operating budget of \$45,166,337 for a machine vote on Thursday April 14th , 2011

Harvey Bellin, Maple Street suggested a 250K decrease in the school budget by reducing clerical and administrative staff.

Carolyn Mulcahey, Godfrey Rd, suggested “restraint” on the part of the BOE and noted the decreased enrollment.

John Reed, acting Superintendent commented on state funds being reduced as a result of reductions.

Louis Bray, Human Resources Schools, in addition to losing state funds, depending on the reduction amount, there are also possible penalties imposed if the town were not to put the money back into the budget.

Lucy Bowden, Stonehenge Rd asked for an approximate amount of state aid.

Mr. Landry, Town Administrator noted the last page of the revenue summary [813,236. state funds]

Henry Bromberger, Kettle Creek, presents a new motion to amend the amount to 44,697,023.
Motion seconded.

Keith Brooks, Codfish Lane asked for the average BOE retiree income.

Mr. Reed explained that one can’t speculate because of so many variables i.e. length of service, salary upon retirement. the State Retirement Board handles this not the Town of Weston.

Frank Billone, Curiosity Lane expressed concern regarding the escalating salary increases.

Martha Diamant, White Birch commented on the current assistance that residents are receiving and the BOE to plan a dialogue with residents other than just parents of children.

Hal Mathews, Treadwell Lane mentioned his concern with “redundancy” in personnel and the current economic crisis we are facing right now.

Megan Couch, Aspetuck Glenn supports the BOE budget.

Rose Horowitz, Silver Ridge Common feels that there are parents who do not want to publicly comment on the budget.

Mr. Bellin calls for a paper ballot and several people comment regarding a paper ballot vs a standing vote.

The question is called (paper ballot) and is seconded.

Moderator Bliss calls for a standing vote to determine the voting method

Vote: In favor of a paper ballot 43 Opposed to a paper ballot 103

Paper ballot motion fails.

Chairman O'Brien moves to recommend a Board of Education Operating budget of \$45,166,337 for a machine vote on Thursday April 14, 2011

Moderator Bliss calls for a voice vote and motion passes.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET

10. Town Vehicle Sinking Fund	All	50,000	
18. Police/ Fire Digital Radios	All	45,000	
21. Town Repair Bridge	All	150,000	
37. DPW Snow Removal Truck	All	165,000	
38. DPW Small Dump Truck	All	35,000	
43. Town Building Repairs	All	50,000	
73. BOE HES South House	All	213,000	
74. BOE WMS Seal Smoke	All	91,568	
75. BOE Central Office Paving	All	49,962	
78. MS Wetlands Mitigation		120,000	Harvey Bellin, Maple St asked about this item and Mr. Landry clarified that the Town is responsible for the re-establishment of wetlands going back to the school project. Bill McDonough, Scatacook Trail asked why the Town did not sue and Mr. Landry said the Town did sue and received a settlement from Fletcher Thompson.
84. BOE/P&R Turf Replacement Fund	All	20,000	
64. BOE/P&R Seal Track	All	27,500	
87. P&R Bisceglie Infield	All	10,000	
TOTAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BUDGET	All	\$1,027,030	

DEBT SERVICE BUDGET

Debt Interest	2,703,200
Debt Principal	<u>4,045,000</u>
TOTAL DEBT SERVICE BUDGET	6,748,200

TOTAL TOWN BUDGET **\$64,125,783**

I move that we approve a total Town Budget of \$64,125,783. pending the outcome of the referendum vote on April 14th, 2011

Less: Estimated Budget Revenue 2,581,480

Net to be Raised by Taxation **\$61,544,303**

The Second Order of Business tonight is to transact any other business which may properly come before this meeting.

With no further business to come before this meeting Moderator Bliss made a motion to adjourn the meeting which will be dissolved after the Referendum vote April 14 if both questions pass.

Motion is seconded and meeting adjourned at 9:43 PM.

First Selectman Weinstein thanked Mr. Bliss, Mr. O'Brien and everyone for attending the meeting.

Respectfully submitted

Donna M. Anastasia, Town Clerk

