

**Board of Finance Special Meeting
March 11, 2025, 6:00 pm
Meeting Held Remotely**

Call to Order: BOF Chairman Michael Imber called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Attendees were BOF members Vice Chairman Jeffrey Farr, Rone Baldwin, Theresa Brasco, Christopher Bryant, Daniel Gershburg, Jeffrey Goldstein, First Selectwoman Samantha Nestor, Town Administrator Karl Kilduff, Town Director of Finance Rick Darling and TOW Department Heads.

Discussion concerning the Board of Selectmen's proposed operating, capital and debt service budgets for FY 2025-2026: First Selectwoman Nestor reviewed a presentation on the proposed budget as approved by the BOS:

- Town and BOE Operating Budget: Proposed Town operating budget increase of 4.36%, BOE Operating proposed increase of 3.05%. Total TOW Operating proposed budget represents a 3.33% increase. Total proposed FY 26 \$77,587,756.
- Town and BOE Capital Budget: Town proposed capital budget decrease -16.27%. BOE proposed capital budget increase of 31.89%. Less capital offsets, total TOW Capital proposed budget represents a 17.62% increase. Total proposed \$3,858,598.
- Debt Service: Town debt service increase of 1300.98 (due to BANS being paid for road paving), BOE total debt service decrease 58.91%, total TOW debt service is 42.79%.
- Overall Proposed Budget Increase: 3.42%.

Proposed Revenues for financing the budget was reviewed:

- Revenue Decisions: State aid, delinquent taxes, and interest income were higher FY24 year and are expected to decrease this year.
- Grand List Growth: Increased by approximately 1%.
- Motor Vehicle Valuation: New state law results in a decrease to the motor vehicle portion of the Grand List.
- State Aid Reduction: Governor's budget reduced state aid to Weston by \$4,500.
- Motor Vehicle Reimbursement: No longer eligible for a motor vehicle cap reimbursement received due to a lower mill rate.
- Investment Income and Permits: Permits and fees reduction of \$93,000.
- Fund Balance: Proposed budget applies \$300,000 from the fund balance to provide relief of tax relief. (noted that this was previously used during COVID to hold tax rate flat for one year.

Town Operating Highlights Reviewed:

- Road Maintenance: Plan to increase road maintenance as an operating expense.
- Public Safety: Increase in the Georgetown Fire District levy
- Healthcare insurance projected to increase by 11%.
- Union Contracts: Currently being negotiated. Salary line items in the budget are artificially suppressed as there is no assumption for general wage increases.

Capital Improvements

- Critical Investments: Deferred maintenance funding for Facilities.
- Fire Truck Replacement Reserve: Development of a reserve fund for 3 fire truck replacements.
- Vehicle and Equipment Replacements: Funding for plow trucks, police vehicles, and EMS flycars.
- Library Construction Grant: Matching funding to leverage state and library construction grants.

- 95% of town requests are maintenance only investments.

Mill Rate and Tax Impact

- Proposed mill rate 24.01.

Discussion and Review of Budget:

- Fund Balance - Discussion on using \$300,000 from the general fund balance, discussed not using the UFB to offset taxes. UFB is for special appropriations, non-recurring expenditures and discussed concerns with implications of doing so.
- Administration and Finance – Questions on salaries and wages positive variance, hiring of HR manager later in the fiscal year, slight reduction in records coordinator hours, tower communications rental additional revenue, work associated with being landlord for the tower.
- General Administration – Georgetown Fire District allocation under contractual services discussed, being moved to it's own department line in the budget. Health insurance increases of 11% discussed. Mr. Kilduff explained major changes are subject to collective bargaining negotiation. Pension contribution discussed, employer contribution rates will have a slight increase. OPEB, budget proposes not to make any contributions because we are overfunded, Mr. Imber asked for further documentation on assumptions. EMS director stipend was clarified, previously incurred as OT in the PD.
- Information Systems – decrease mainly due to one-time IT related initiatives. Mr. Imber asked about upcoming needs for development and implementing a long-term technology plan. Mr. Kilduff discussed a state cybersecurity grant program as well as capital planning for online land use permitting
- Assessor – Increase reflects an upgrade to the Assistant Assessor's union negotiated position as well as a payout for retirement of previous Assistant Assessor.
- Tax Collector – Clarification by Mr. Darling that the projected is lower than budgeted due to hiring process and to backfill the assistant tax collector position as well as the previous Tax Collector was kept on board for a temporary period to fill the vacancy gap. Clarification as well on the request for the current two employees to work full time during tax collection periods in July and January.
- Land Use Department – Mr. Farr asked about benchmarking application and permitting fees against other towns. Online proposed permitting discussed as well for realizing revenue faster.
- Police Services – Contractual services increase discussed which reflects IT estimates for software and consultation services for server upgrade and software upgrades to support security. Mr. Imber had questions on recruiting for positions which will be opened due to retirements. Chief Henion discussed temporary overlaps which occur during PD hiring process.

- WVFD – Discussed an increase for gear replacement which is state mandated to be PFAS free and a five-year recurring expense to roll out new gear. Discussed capital budget needs of firetruck reserve fund and the first estimate for replacement needs, 50% deposit. Capital request to be contributed to the reserve fund as well as reimbursement from LMR state grant which will be applied for deposit for new truck.
- Georgetown Fire District – Discussed the area of the fire district which is part of Redding, Wilton and Weston and has shared expenses. TOW increase was discussed, due to recent revaluation and is mandated. Further discussion and understanding of Georgetown fire district will be reviewed for the future.
- Animal Control - Metrics for animal control requested.
- Communication Center - Overtime expense was discussed, recent hire of a part time person will help alleviate.
- Public Works Highway – Snow removal OT increase request discussed, increase due to budget cut last year at ATBM, requesting amount to be put back in as well as an increase. Repairs to vehicles increase in budget requested due to an aging fleet. Preventative maintenance for roads reviewed. Salary and wages for requested facilities manager, roles and duties of requested position discussed. Cost benefit analysis requested by BOF.
- Parks and Field – contractual services, questions on rental of field increase going to the schools, shared costs for field use and maintenance.

Mr. Imber noted that debt service and the capital budget discussion to be continued at the 3/13/2025 BOF meeting.

Adjourn: Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Bryant, seconded by Mr. Goldstein. Meeting adjourned at 9:40pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Shawn Amato, Recording Secretary