

BOLTON BOARD OF FINANCE
REGULAR MEETING
7:15 PM, Thursday, October 15, 2015
Minutes & Motions

Attendance: Members Chairman Robert Munroe, Ronald Rousseau, Morris Silverstein, James Bruner, Judy Wilson, and Robert DiPietro (7:40) were present. Also present were Administrative Officer Joyce Stille and Interim Finance Director Linda Savitsky. Member Barry Stearns was excused.

1. Call to Order: Chairman Munroe called the meeting to order at 7:27 p.m.

2. Public Participation: Robert Galle introduced himself as a candidate for Board of Finance and said he and the others running appreciate everything the current members have done.

3. Approval of Minutes: J. Bruner moved to approve the September 10, 2015 minutes, with an amendment to note that the BOE surplus funds totaled \$302,634 in 5.c) Board of Education Update. R. Rousseau seconded. Motion carried 4:0:1, Chairman Munroe abstaining due to absence at that meeting.

R. Rousseau moved to approve the September 24, 2015 minutes as written. J. Wilson seconded. Motion carried 3:0:2, M. Silverstein and J. Bruner abstaining due to absence.

4. Correspondence: J. Stille received a letter from CCM 2015 on additional state aid cuts, predicting that the current cuts are only the beginning of some major emergency cuts to make the budget work. They recommended residents call and contact legislators to tell them that the towns can't afford the cuts.

5. Elected Official and Town Staff Reports:

a) Tax Collection Summary: L. Savitsky reported that 99.06% of the budgeted amount was collected though not of what was levied. Anything collected from now on will carry an interest charge, and the town is already at 50% of interest collections even though it is only at 25% of the collection period. She expects the town will be able to meet or exceed the budgeted collection.

J. Stille reported that a property owner who owes taxes on three lots (about 50' x 100' each) approached her about signing them over to the town. The town has no interest in buying the lots but will look into a tax sale to pay off the owed amount (about \$7000).

b) Town Update: J. Stille reported that the budget is 23.57% expensed as of 9/30. R. DePietro asked about salt and highway needs for winter. J. Stille said the town is fully stocked to start the year. Sewer construction around the Llynwood area is winding up. Catch basins are going in and the roads will be coated for winter. The first round of interviews for Finance Director is complete. There are two likely candidates remaining, both CPAs who have experience with small towns. The governor's decision to reduce municipal grants during the current Fiscal Year affected Bolton with a \$24,301 loss in the PILOT grant; the remaining \$9,107 was received September 30.

c) Board of Education Update: Superintendent Heckt submitted a review of the first 3-month period. School has been in session less than half that time, so the next review will be more informative.

6. Old Business:

a) Shared Services Update: There will be another 3-board retreat with a facilitator Tuesday, October 20th, at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

b) CHOICE revenues: L. Savitsky reviewed the CHOICE information. The first payments don't arrive until December, and then continuously stream from the state based on the number of students enrolled as of October 1st. State statute stipulates that the town shall make the monies available for education, which has not been the case. Currently funds are accounted for in the general fund but go straight to the BOE. The state has confirmed that their use is under the town's discretion. The town has received 1.3 million at this point. The BOE has been able to do what they want with it and town residents have received no credit. L. Savitsky, speaking in her professional capacity as consultant, strongly recommended the town take a look at how the funds are handled and why.

J. Bruner asked to verify what the Superintendent had said about CHOICE funds at a prior meeting. His understanding was that K. Heckt told the BOF that CHOICE monies were not the town's, but to go to the BOE directly, by statute. R. Rousseau affirmed that that is indeed what she said.

L. Savitsky said that all the information she was presenting was from the State Department of Education, where she had discussed it directly with the person who runs the CHOICE program. She recommended the town look at how other towns account for SHEF and CHOICE funds. Audits and budgets are available online to analyze and compare.

c) Report of Budget Sub-committee: The subcommittee submitted a draft of a revised budget format. J. Wilson presented the document and explained the changes. The subcommittee sought to improve budget presentation by making it more crisp and readable for residents, and adding relevant information for context. The first page now included the previous two years' budgets. The budget presentation was condensed, with accounting shown down to the department level rather than line item level. She noted the BOF does not have jurisdiction over line items anyway. The BOE budget is more broken down, making it closer to the town budget format. R. Rousseau moved to add taking action on the budget format as an agenda item under New Business. J. Bruner seconded. Motion carried 5:1:0, M. Silverstein against.

The subcommittee also proposed that the budget presentation include a cover letter, which they found to be a common practice in other towns. The letter would be an informal explanation and discussion of the budget to help orient readers unfamiliar with this kind of information. J. Wilson said this would address the difficulty people often have understanding the budget since it is largely composed of figures without anything accompanying it to explain them. It could also include an overall prospective on the town, providing relevant information to compare that year's activity to other towns. For example, one for this year might have had information on mill rate increases and development. The BOF approved of the use of such a document as a concept by general consensus.

7. New Business:

a) BOS/BOF/BOE Committee (2+2+2): The last meeting, two weeks ago, was a candid discussion of where the town is at in its various departments and boards. Among the topics were the declining student population and the ethics ordinance.

b) Report of Three Board Meeting: L. Savitsky provided a report of where they expect to be June 30th.

c) Vote on Budget Format Presentation: R. Rousseau moved to adopt the budget format as presented with the addition of cash surplus on page 2. R. DePietro seconded. Motion carried 5:1:0, M. Silverstein against.

8. Ongoing Business: Status Report on High School Project: The project is still waiting for LEED certification. Then the closeout process will start, which requires an audit by the state DOE.

9. Remarks by Chairman Munroe:

As this was the last meeting with Judy Wilson, Ron Rousseau, Jim Bruner, and Barry Stearns as members of the Board, Chairman Munroe read the following into record as thanks for their service:

“This is the last Board of Finance meeting for four of our members. It is difficult, oftentimes, for town citizens to find the time in our busy lives to serve as a volunteer on one of our elected boards or in one of the many other town organizations that exist for the benefit of the town of Bolton. It is difficult, as well, once on a board, to continue the commitment of time and energy for several years. For these reasons, I would like to say a few words about our colleagues. Ladies first:

Judith Wilson is completing her first term as a member of the BOF. She has served as vice chair for two of those years, and as a CPA, has contributed significantly to our discussions.

Second, Ron Rousseau, a local businessman with strong business and PC skills, began with the Board of Education in 2011 and migrated to the Board of Finance in 2014.

Thirdly, Jim Bruner, a retired UTC executive who served on the Planning and Zoning Board for six years before being appointed and elected to two and a half terms on the Board of Finance – a total of 16 years between the two.

These three have just completed revising our budget document format, which the taxpayers are going to find more informative and easier to decipher. Joyce Stille and Linda Savitsky also worked hard on this project and we owe them thanks as well.

Fourthly, Barry Stearns. This guy started serving on Bolton boards when they were first invented. He has served on the Board of education, Board of Selectmen, and Board of Finance. This town has had the benefit of this man’s not-so-common sense for approximately 30 years.

By the way, we hope the one-timers step forward again! On behalf of this Board and this town, WE SAY THANK YOU.”

9. Adjournment: J. Bruner moved to adjourn. J. Wilson seconded. Meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Benitez, Recording Secretary

Please see minutes of subsequent meeting for approval of these minutes and any corrections hereto.