

**BOLTON BOARD OF FINANCE**  
**SPECIAL MEETING**  
**7:15 p.m., April 28, 2015**  
**NOTCH ROAD MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 222 NOTCH RD**

**Minutes & Motions**

**Attendance:** Members Chairman Robert Munroe, Barry Stearns, Robert DePietro, Judy Wilson, James Bruner, Morris Silverstein, and Ronald Rousseau were present. Also present were Administrative Officer Joyce Stille, Interim Finance Director Linda Savitsky, First Selectman Robert Morra, Superintendent Kristin Heckt, Alison Romkey, Milton Hathaway, Matthew Giuffre, Rick Hayes, and others.

**1. Call to Order:** The Chairman called the meeting to order at 7:22.

**2. Public Participation:** The board received copies of emails from people unable to attend. Matthew Giuffre said the BOF had done good work last week, but given they had been looking at line items, it seemed odd and out of context to look at the percentage of the total for BOE allocation

**3. Review and possible amendment – updated calendar:** The BOF confirmed the May 13 meeting at 7:15 p.m.

**4. Discussion and Action RE: FY 16 Proposed Budget Revenues and Expenditures**

B. Stearns moved to accept the additional revenue line item of \$45,243. J. Wilson seconded. The motion passed 7:0:0. Discussion followed on what to do with the \$45,243.

B. Stearns spoke on the hearing and his experience on Bolton's boards. Budget season is always difficult and he expects it to continue. Tax is a big deal in Connecticut and he thinks there is a lot of discussion in Bolton because it is the only one that people feel they can control. However, he said Bolton taxes are a bargain for what they get. He agreed with concern over cuts, saying lower attendance will result in less revenue while debt increases. Choice funds are used for residents to go elsewhere, but if funds go down, it will come from the town budget. He compared Bolton to similar towns, and its mill rate is only a little over 1 mill above average. Tax has not tripled as said at the hearing; it averages a 2% increase per year.

B. Stearns moved to propose a 6.95% increase that would give an additional \$450,000 to the budgets and add \$47/month to an \$8000 tax bill. R. DePietro seconded. Discussion followed.

B. Stearns did not expect it to pass but said he was optimistic enough to try. M. Silverstein was against a number not expected to pass. He said it raised the platform higher for next year, and the BOE budget cannot be lowered past the previous year. J. Bruner asked what B. Stearns would go to if it failed; he said back to 4.35%. The Chairman felt the town was rounding a corner with good work by the boards and the PZC, but results take time. After so many initial budgets failed at lower amounts, he could not see 6.9% passing. B. Stearns said the boards do not just add to previous budgets; they consider what is necessary to perform the task they've been elected to do and request funds to cover it. J. Bruner

agreed, saying the BOE zero-bases their budget every year. J. Wilson agreed, and said if this was the last bad year, she might agree with 6.9%. But as it was they had to keep some control over the rise.

R. DePietro asked for reasoning behind the concern over multiple referendums. R. Rousseau said they are charged with proposing a number they think the town may accept. Historically 3% is closer to what passes. R. DePietro asked how they justified action counter to opinion at the hearing. R. Rousseau said their job is to have a reasonable number for the town. J. Bruner said they have to look at taxpayer needs. About 3,300 voters turn out who were not all represented at the hearing, and the BOF needs to represent the spoken and unspoken. The Chairman said that this year and next year are the worst in the debt schedule. In these years, debt service will exceed 1 million. He understood concern that BOE cuts may lower tuition, but both Columbia enrollment and the choice program are risks. The debt is definite.

The motion failed 2:5:0.

M. Silverstein moved to go to referendum with a budget of \$19,934,753, which decreased the requested budgets by \$975,555. Discussion followed.

B. Stearns said it covered neither the debt nor the mandated trooper program. The Chairman asked M. Silverstein for explanation. M. Silverstein said it backed up to last year's \$1 million in capital improvement, reduced the contingency, kept BOS the same, and was the BOE budget less \$27,000. The \$27,000 was 9 students (9 less enrolled in schools this year) multiplied by \$3000 as permitted by statute. He said the BOF has developed bad habits by considering returns as artificial revenues to prevent cuts, and it was inflating the budgets. He said it was illegal to use returns as revenue because it altered the budget that was approved by the town, and the town trusted the budget would be used as proposed. The Chairman could not support a number that would barely cover the debt.

The motion failed 2:5:0.

Discussion turned to current allocation of the cuts (roughly 55/45), which were received with confusion at the hearing. J. Wilson reworked it for a ratio near 60/40. Retaining the BOE amount, she lowered the BOS to 180,000 for total reductions of 558,000.

J. Wilson moved to reallocate cuts as follows: \$280,000 to BOE, \$180,000 to BOS, and \$98,000 to Capital, for a mill rate of 36.89 and tax increase of 4.37%. The Chairman seconded. Discussion followed.

J. Wilson clarified that the \$45,243 would offset a proportional BOS cut. R. DePietro asked, if contracts are an issue, why the BOF would go forward with the budget amount. J. Wilson said after budgets are cut, the boards rework them to cover necessities first, so the contracts can be covered. B. Stearns did not want the budgets that low but said he would vote for it so they don't go down.

The motion failed 3:4:0.

J. Bruner moved to apply the \$45,243 to lower the tax increase, for a 4.04% increase. M. Silverstein seconded. The motion passed 5:2:0.

**5. Discussion and Action RE: Ballot Question for May 12, 2015 Budget Referendum**

B. Stearns moved that the ballot question read as follows: "Shall the Annual Budget for the Town of Bolton, Connecticut for the fiscal year 2015-2016 as recommended by the Board of Finance in the amount of \$20,302,308 be adopted?" J. Bruner seconded. The motion passed 6:1:0.

**6. Adjournment:** B. Stearns moved to adjourn. R. DePietro seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Benitez, Recording Secretary

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