

**BOLTON BOARD OF FINANCE
PUBLIC HEARING
April 22, 2014**

Minutes & Motions

The Board of Finance (BOF) held a Public Hearing on April 22, 2014 at the Bolton High School Commons. Members present were Chairman Bob Munroe, Judy Wilson, James Bruner, Kelly Regan (by telephone), Barry Stearns, Robert DePietro and Morris Silverstein (7:15 p.m.).

Also present were Finance Director Brenda Douglas, Superintendent of Schools Kristen Heckt, Administrative Officer Joyce Stille, First Selectman Robert Morra, members of the Board of Selectmen, members of the Board of Education and others.

The purpose of the public hearing was to hear comments on the proposed Board of Education and Board of Selectmen budgets for Fiscal Year 2014-2015, copies of which were made available for review.

Chairman Munroe opened the public hearing at 7:08 p.m. and asked the public who wish to speak to use the podium and identify themselves and where they live. He asked that the comments be limited to two minutes.

B. Munroe provided background for what was involved in the budget process.

First Selectman Robert Morra presented an overview of the Town budget and spoke to four major items for the increase: personnel, employee fringe benefits, other contractual agreements and the update of the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Vice-Chair of the Board of Education Matthew Guiffre of 81 Country Club Road presented an overview of the process of developing the Board of Education budget, stressing that the BOE is required to fulfill state and federal mandates. He said the BOE is adding curricular activities and electives to attract students from Columbia. He said there have been savings from higher employee deductibles for health insurance. He asked that any additional surplus in the Fiscal Year 2013-2014 budget be allocated back to the BOE budget.

B. Munroe said the BOF wanted to keep the tax increase to less than three percent. The FY 2014-2015 budget increase as proposed by the BOF stands at 2.97%. He explained how the revaluation of properties this year has affected the budget process. There are several pending assessment appeals as a result of the revaluation. He read into the record a letter from a resident in support of restoring monies to the BOE budget.

B. Munroe said the members of the Board of Finance (BOF) have the responsibility of determining the appropriate level of expenditure for the coming year. He opened the meeting to public comment.

Richard Treat of 8 Lyman Road thanked the BOS and BOF for their tireless effort for the town. He will vote for the 2.97% increase and asked the public to join him in passing the budget on the first time.

Peter Van Dine said there is a \$250,000 state grant for Lower Bolton Lake but continued expenditures will be required for lake maintenance and remediation and he would like a section in the budget for those expenses.

Donna Munroe of 24 Pond View Road said the proposed budget should not be increased. She recommended any BOE reductions not be made to cut teachers, but not to fund the new proposed positions.

Adam Teller of 23 Elizabeth Road would encourage the BOF to restore monies in the budget before referendum to give residents the opportunity to vote on what the BOE and BOS say is needed.

Several people supported giving residents the opportunity to vote at referendum on the original budget presented to the BOF by the BOE and BOS.

Michael McDonald of Deer Run Road concerned with the amount of cuts in the BOE budget. He commented that eliminating programs puts the students at a disadvantage when competing for slots at colleges.

Christopher Davey of 21 Mount Sumner Drive commented that he relies on the expertise of the people elected and hired by the town to determine what is needed for funding.

Other comments from residents included:

- Consider the cost of the state education mandates like Common Core. The town has to prioritize and put money back into the education budget.
- Get new business to come to town to alleviate some of the tax burden on residents.
- Make the budget document easier to read.
- A request that the BOF show \$500,000.00 in state grants awarded to the BOE as part of the budget document.
- The BOF should have been better able to forecast the negative effect of the recent property revaluation on the budget.
- The importance of maintaining the level of electives and honor courses at the high school and for the BOF to consider the cuts made to the BOE budget.

Several parents thanked the BOF for its work on the budget and spoke in support of the BOE budget. They urged the BOF to maintain the budget as originally presented.

Chairman Munroe concluded the hearing at 8:35 p.m. and thanked the public for attending.

Respectfully submitted by Linda H. McDonald, Recording Secretary

PLEASE SEE THE MINUTES OF SUBSEQUENT MEETINGS FOR THE APPROVAL OF THESE MINUTES AND ANY CORRECTIONS HERETO.