

May 11, 2022

The Board of Finance Public Hearing was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman, Robert Salisbury. Other members' present-Jim Molodich, Neil Delmonico, Steve Offiler, and Tracie Adams. Staff present-Joyce Gustavson.

There were approximately 23 people present at the hearing.

Robert Salisbury welcomed and thanked everyone for joining us and read the legal notice into the minutes.

R. Salisbury stated if the budgets are enacted as they are presented tonight there will be no increase in the tax mil rate.

R. Salisbury stated the purpose of this hearing is to publicly present the budget proposals and hear questions and comments. Any other topics regarding town or school issues should be brought to the proper board or administration during their regular meetings.

The Board of Education will present their proposed Fiscal Year 2022-2023 budget first and after the presentation we will have a question and answer period.

Item 1: Itemized Estimates for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Board of Education Budget: Susan Rourke, Interim Superintendent, presented the Power Point Presentation along with Courtney Brannon, Business Manager. S. Rourke explained that the proposed budget is an itemized estimate for the upcoming year. What you see and what you hear tonight is based on actuals, where we are at now and where we expect to be. S. Rourke stated that the proposed Board of Education budget for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 was created on a zero-based budget process. Historical Budget Data from the last six (6) years was reviewed. Grant Revenue including School Readiness Grant, Title I, Title II, Title IV, IDEA, ESSER Grants and REAP were discussed. Other items covered include: budget updates, the data and details by function and object, budget assumptions, enrollment data, preliminary high school acceptances and staffing levels. (The Power Point presentation can be found on the Sterling Community School website).

S. Rourke asked if there are any questions or comments.

Jackie Angelone, 879 Gibson Hill Road, teacher and resident, stated that in the proposed budget she sees six (6) certified teachers, but only counts five (5). Another special education teacher is needed. J.

Angelone asked if at all possible, could we add another special education teacher to our budgetary needs.

S. Rourke stated that the special education department needs to be re-evaluated. With the budget being an itemized estimate, there is always opportunity to make moves.

Both S. Rourke and C. Brannon will check into the number of certified special education teachers in the proposed 2022-2023 budget.

Frank Bood, 230 Harris Road asked about the amount of money from the current budget going back to the Town. Pending the audit, \$909,000 prior to \$165,000 +/- going into the 248a account, \$287,000 +/- going into the special education account to max it at the cap of \$500,000 and the SCS account is currently at \$190,000.

C. Brannon stated that pending the audit these estimates are correct.

F. Bood also asked, in the proposed budget, are we not expecting any of that to be returned to the Town because we are that tight.

S. Rourke stated, yes, we are that tight.

F. Bood stated that in the past few years, the school has over budgeted by more than \$500,000 and that this year's current budget is the tightest he has ever seen and hopes the Finance Board is aware just how tight it is.

R. Salisbury asked if anyone else had any other questions or comments. There were none.

Item 2: Itemized Estimates for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Board of Selectmen Budget: Link Cooper, First Selectman, stated that the Board of Selectmen's proposed budget is flat and represents a zero-mil tax increase. Last year's mil rate was 31.94 and the proposed 2022-2023 mil rate remains at 31.94. L. Cooper reviewed anticipated revenues stating the proposed change in prior taxes is the result of the collection of back tax money. Other items covered include: Line items as percent of the total budget, proposed budget expenses, the components of the grand list with real estate being the largest at 67.9%,

budgeted school expenses, such as the yearly purchase of one (1) bus or van, and projected capital improvement projects.

L. Cooper asked if anyone had any questions or comments.

J. Angelone expressed her gratitude to the current Board of Selectmen for the work they are doing in trying to address the variety of needs in Town. She thanked the Board for adding Sterling Family Day as a budget line as donations have decreased. The Family Day Committee is working diligently to perpetuate Family Day after 2022. Multiple major supporters have not been able to support Family Day as in the past.

L. Cooper asked if anyone else had any questions or comments.

F. Bood commended everybody. He stated that the fiscal responsibility has gotten this town to a point where most towns wish they could be. We are flushed with money. Frank also stated that he was hoping for a mil rate decrease but based on the upcoming projects he understands why the budgets stayed as is, retaining the current mil rate.

F. Bood asked if the Fund Balance, after the audit, will be roughly \$3.2 million. Is there a level of comfort where we need to be? Are we concerned that the State is going to come back and ask us to reduce the Fund Balance again? Is the generation of capital that we are taking from the taxpayers anywhere near that level because it appears dollar wise, we are back to where we were a few years ago.

R. Salisbury stated that the audit is not complete. The numbers may appear to be what they are but sometimes until the audit is finalized, we may be chasing rainbows as to what we actually have. The fund balance should be substantial. The Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance have had discussions regarding upcoming projects that need our attention. Until the priority list gets finalized, we do not know what is going to happen in the future.

F. Bood asked to ease that comfort level, what do you see would be necessary? A 10-year plan, a 20-year plan?

R. Salisbury said yes, future fiscal planning.

L. Cooper stated that to replace the heating ventilation system at the municipal building a good portion of the money would come from the fund balance which puts us in a rare situation where we will not have to borrow money.

R. Salisbury asked if there were any other questions or comments. There were none.

Item 3: Estimates of the Fiscal Year 2022-2023 Local Capital Improvement Plan and Budget:

L. Cooper explained that every year the State gives the Town approximately \$40,000 that can be used on a variety of things. The money is to be used for non-reoccurring capital projects; such as a new building or paving.

L. Cooper asked if anyone had any questions or comments. There were none.

R. Salisbury asked if anyone had any other questions or comments.

John Mackie, 10 Logans Way asked the Board of Education if students are home schooled as eighth graders, who is responsible to pay for their education if they go to high school?

S. Rourke stated that the Board of Education is responsible.

Item 4: All Persons will be Heard Regarding Any Item of Expenditure They May Wish for the Board of Finance to Consider for Inclusion in the 2022-203 Budget: There were none.

The Town Meeting for the proposed budgets is scheduled for Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 7:00 p.m. at the Sterling Town Hall/Municipal Building Gym and the Board of Selectmen will adjourn the Town Meeting to a vote by referendum scheduled for Wednesday, June 1, 2022 from noon to 8:00 p.m. in the gym.

The public hearing closed at 8:14 p.m.

May 11, 2022

I. Call to Order: The special meeting of the Sterling Board of Finance was called to order at 8:16 p.m. Roll was called: Robert Salisbury-present; James Molodich-present; Neil Delmonico-present; Steve Offiler-present; Tracie Adams-present; and Christine Farrugia-absent. Staff present-Lincoln Cooper, Jack Joslyn, Sherri Soucy, and Joyce Gustavson.

II. Consider & Act on Public Hearing Comments on the Proposed 2022-2023 Board of Education Budget: S. Offiler made a motion, seconded by N. Delmonico to keep the proposed Board of Education Budget as it was presented this evening in the amount of \$8,255,285 and not make any changes to it. All voted in favor of the motion.

III. Consider & Act on Public Hearing Comments on the Proposed 2022-2023 Board of Selectmen's Budget: T. Adams made a motion, seconded by J. Molodich to keep the proposed Board of Selectmen Budget as it was presented this evening in the amount of \$3,288,083 and not make any changes to it. All voted in favor of the motion.

IV. Consider & Act on Public Hearing Comments on the Proposed 2022-2023 Local Capital Improvement Plan and Budget: N. Delmonico made a motion, seconded by S. Offiler to keep the proposed Local Capital Improvement Plan and Budget as it was presented this evening in the amount of \$41,658 and not make any changes to it. All voted in favor of the motion.

V. Consider & Act on Public Hearing Comments Regarding Any Item of Expenditure to be Considered for Inclusion in the Proposed 2022-2023 Budget: No other items were requested.

VI. Consider & Act on REVISED Revenue Collector's Suspense List for FY 7/1/2021-6/30/2022: Sandra Lisee, Revenue Collector apologized to the Board of Finance for submitting incorrect figures at the April 2022 meeting. S. Lisee submitted the revised Suspense List for action by the Board of Finance to approve the transfer of certain uncollected taxes to the Suspense Tax Book as follows: Motor Vehicle Supplement Suspense List 2019, FY 7/1/2021-6/30/2022 in the amount of \$6,053.54, Personal Property Suspense List 2019, FY 7/1/2021-6/30/2022 in the amount of \$14,110.04, and Motor Vehicle Suspense List 2019, FY 7/1/2021-6/30/2022 in the amount of \$31,966.20. All voted in favor of the motion.

VII. Adjournment: J. Molodich made a motion, seconded by T. Adams to adjourn at 8:24 p.m. All voted in favor of the motion.

Attest: _____
Joyce A. Gustavson, Board of Finance Clerk