

Minutes of the Tri Board Meeting of the Board of Finance, Board of Selectmen and the
Board of Education

Dec. 19, 2011 – Suffield Volunteer Ambulance Association Facility – 7 p.m.

Members of the Board of Finance Present: Justin Donnelly, Joseph Sangiovanni, Ryan Anderson, Chris Childs, Scott Lingenfelter, Brian Kost, Tracy Eccles Absent: P. Boyd, and E. Harrington

Members of the Board of Education present: Sue Porcello, George Beiter, Michele Zawawi, Lori D'Ostuni, Mary Lou Sanborn, Scott Scheider, Bob Eccles Absent: J. Gee, and Mary Roy

Members of the Board of Selectmen: First Selectman Edward McAnaney, Selectmen Brian Fitzgerald, Tim Reynolds and Joanne Sullivan Absent: Eileen Moncrief

Also present: Director of Finance Deborah Cerrato, Director of Fiscal Administration, BOE, Edward Basile, Treasurer Christine Davidson, Superintendent of Schools Karen Baldwin, and Bobbie C. Kling recording secretary, BOF.

Chairman Justin Donnelly called the meeting to order and he welcomed the newly elected members, and he introduced the members of the BoF. Sue Porcello, Chairman of the Board of Education, introduced the members of the BoE, and First Selectman McAnaney introduced the Board of Selectmen.

The Chairman noted that the Town Charter provides that the Board of Finance can call a Tri Board meeting to discuss the finances of the Town.

He noted the Grand List, in very preliminary stages, reflecting one half of one percent increase and commented on the upcoming Revaluation in 2013. He noted the past uses of the Undesignated Fund Balance. We cannot continue to tap the Undesignated Fund Balance for budgeting. Also discussed were the range of salary increases which will impact the budget. Other Post Employment Benefits, (OPEB) was discussed; this is the biggest debt of the Town. Mr. Donnelly noted that the new casinos to be built in Massachusetts will reduce our income from Connecticut. He also stated that the tax rate increase of 4.4% this current year is not truly indicative. The tax increase included the trash fees; remove the trash fees, and you have a increase of 1.1% The Contingency Fund has not been accessed as of today.

Mr. Kost distributed to the boards, a written report he prepared titled, Budget Outlook. He reviewed some scenarios for 2012-13 budget. He noted that if both boards had a flat operating budget, flat mill rate increase and normal inflation? If we did not spend any more money, it would be 2.7% tax increase. The second scenario stated if we did not want to have a tax increase, how much would we be able to afford to spend in the operating budget. We would have to cut our budget by 2%. What would be the tax increase be if we just increased for normal inflation, cover union contracts, health

insurance, etc, that would reflect a 6% increase. The Boards discussed this estimation of additional costs and the reflecting tax increases.

Board of Selectmen: First Selectman Edward McAnaney noted we have spent almost the entire \$1,066,000 authorized for the clean up efforts after Storm Alfred. If we want to keep the mill rate down, we have to address the increases. We cannot count on an increase of revenue from the State. He is taking steps to reduce expenses; specifically not filling some vacancies.

Board of Education: Sue Porcello, Chair, of the BoE noted that BoE is charged to provide services to all children. We will have new census projections forth coming. A major cost to the schools is unfunded mandates such as magnet schools, technical schools, and special education. She introduced Karen Baldwin as the new Superintendent. Bob Eccles indicated that in the past few years the Town has not needed to use the fund balance estimate in the budget because we have been too conservative. It was explained that the reason that has been the case is because we have had increases in the State Aid after the budget is set and unexpected revenues. Also not all of the departments spent their entire budgets at year end. These items are the reason the fund balance had not been touched.

It was noted that the BoF can only set the bottom line budget figure for the BoE; the BoF has no line item control.

Mr. Donnelly noted that the BoE budget sessions are usually 7:30 in the a.m.; he attends as the BoF representative. We need to communicate with each, and work with each other. The goal for the Town of Suffield citizens to pay no more than they absolute must. The goal is “flat spending”; Mr. Kost thought that a zero tax cannot be met; a 2% may be reasonable. Mr. Donnelly stated that at some point, the citizens may suffer the loss of some services. The First Selectman stated that we must address declining revenues from the State. There is a need to reduce the tax burden. He is exploring sharing services with other Towns; Suffield is sharing its Animal Control Officer with East Granby for a fee. The Town has to address its expenditures and the declining revenue.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bobbie C. Kling

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