

RTM meeting
Monday, May 4, 2020

The Call

1. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the estimate and recommendation of the Board of Finance, to adopt a budget for the Town of Westport for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable.
2. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance, to adopt a budget for the Town Railroad Parking Fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable.
3. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance, to adopt a budget for the Town Sewer Fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable.
4. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance, to adopt a budget for the Wakeman Town Farm Fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable.
5. To take such action as the meeting may determine, to require that property taxes for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, shall be due and payable in four quarterly installments, and to designate the dates of the first days of July, October, January, and April as the dates upon which such installments shall be due and payable, subject to any applicable tax relief deferral programs, and that all taxes in an amount of \$100 or less shall be due and payable in a single installment on the first day of July, subject to any applicable tax relief deferral programs.
6. To take such action as the meeting may determine to require that the motor vehicle tax shall be due and payable in a single installment.

Minutes

Moderator Velma Heller:

Good evening. This Representative Town Meeting is now called to order. We welcome those who are joining us from home. My name is Velma Heller and I am the RTM Moderator. I want to review the procedures for this electronic meeting because as you may be aware they are a little bit different. Pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order number 7 b, this meeting is being held electronically, live streamed on westportct.gov and shown on Optimum Government Access channel 79 or Frontier Channel 6020. Members of the public who wish to have their comments read during public comment for each agenda item may email their comments to rtmcomments@westportct.gov. We will make every effort to read comments if you state your full name and address and are received during the comment period for each agenda item. Public comments are limited, as always, to three minutes. Please note that meeting materials have been posted and are available at westportct.gov along with the meeting notice that was posted on the meeting list and calendar page. Now for our invocation. This evening we are happy to welcome Gail Lavielle for our invocation. As a member of the Connecticut House of Representatives, she represents the 143rd Assembly District which includes parts of Wilton, Norwalk, and, following redistricting in 2012, Westport. Lavielle, who is an assistant Republican leader is the house ranking member of the Connecticut General

Assembly's Appropriations Committee and serves on the Transportation and Education Committees.

Representative Gail Lavielle, invocation:

Thank you Madam Moderator. To Madam Moderator, Mr. Deputy Moderator and all the members of the RTM, good evening. I am very honored to have been asked to open your meeting this evening. And I'm sorry we can't be in the same place together but, here we are, nevertheless, despite all obstacles. The human spirit is capable of many surprising and unexpected things. The time that we are in is so strange but I think it calls for just a little formality even though we are all here in our houses. So let me use a formal term to begin. I salute you all. I salute you because you have the courage to come here every month in this bizarre and most uncertain time to make important decisions for your town. This is an exceptional time because worry and uncertainty and fear have come to dominate the national and local consciousness and people are not themselves. Every day, you are encountering strong opinions about what is and is not going to happen, what must and what must not be done and what is to become of us all. It's hard to answer questions with little reliable information is available. And it's harder than usual to carry the responsibility of decisions you must make under the circumstances. So, yes, I salute you. We entered this exceptional period at a time when public discourse had reached a shrill high pitch and civility, what is, surely, an unprecedented low. Along with the notion of respect for others, many people have lost the sense of responsibility to their communities and of holding themselves to high standards. Sometimes there seems to be no end to that path. But fear has a strange effect on people. The need for standards of responsibility have suddenly come to the forefront of our lives every day. That need may be melting that hard shell of constant antagonism away as all of us are catapulted into a common dimension of uncertainty. That's when gentleness is most welcome. Now, your leadership is more important than ever before. I wish all of you the insight, compassion, patience and resolve to make the best decisions possible for Westport in this most unfamiliar of circumstances and to exercise that leadership with a firm but, so importantly, gentle hand. You are giving a great deal of yourselves now when your minds must be turning to so many other things. And for that, once again, I salute you all.

Dr. Heller:

I'm sure we would all want to return the salute to you. Thank you so much for sharing your relevant and very thoughtful thoughts, Gail, once again.

I think we are all so grateful to Matt Mandell for putting together this Pledge of Allegiance. It's not quite so static as just looking at the flag. Certainly, having everybody who could be involved was a wonderful thing.

There were 36 RTM members present. Mr. Keenan notified the Moderator that he would be late; Ms. Gertzoff and Ms. Rea were also late.

Announcements

Dr. Heller:

If there are corrections to the February minutes, please contact Jackie Fuchs, Dr. Heller or Town Clerk Patty Strauss.

We send birthday greetings tonight to Peter Gold, Noah Hammond, and Kristin Schneeman. Happy birthday!

The next RTM meeting will be on May 5 for the Board of Education and there will be another meeting on May 6, if needed. The next regular meeting will be on June 2.

RTM announcements

Sal Liccione, district 9:

I'd like to talk about a friend I used to work with, Joe Saviano, and Andrew used to work with him. We lost him last week. He grew up in Westport and graduated from Staples high school. We lost him last week. Jimmy, if you'd like to say anything, too.

Jimmy Izzo, district 5:

Yes, Sal. Thank you for bringing that up. I think it was very nice of you to bring this up today. Sal asked me to say a few words about Joe. A lifelong resident of the town, the Saviano family [connection lost].

Andrew Colabella, district 4:

I can speak if you'd like me to. Joe Saviano was a Westport Department of Parks and Recreation maintenance employee for the past 20-something years. He was a Staples High School graduate, a pole vaulter who held the record for the longest time at Staples High School. He was 65 years old. He died unexpectedly in New Milford on April 19, 2020. Also, on this day, four years ago, we lost one of our greatest assets to the Westport Police Department. His name was Robert 'Bobby' Meyer. He was a Staples High School graduate. He was an intern with the Westport Police Department in 1991, became a full-time officer in 1992, climbing the ranks from Corporal to Sergeant working at the Marina Police Department. He wasn't just an asset to our town. He was an asset to humankind. It was a tragic loss on this day four years ago to everyone. Along with Mr. Liccione and Jim Izzo, I would like to request a moment of silence to honor these two members of the town who are no longer with us.

Matthew Mandell, district 1:

Two announcements: The first one is that the Chamber of Commerce has a new initiative and it is called *Zoom Westport Retail*. This will be a live-broadcast on Wednesday at 6 o'clock. It will be Facebook live; it will be on Zoom and it will also be on channel 79, which we are watching tonight. I thank the First Selectman for giving us this opportunity to help promote retail in our community under these dire circumstances. Essentially, it is the highlighting of 13 different retailers going into their stores via Zoom. There will be a musical act. There will also be a food demonstration and we have a special guest leading it off, author Jane Green. I am hoping that everyone will go and sign up on the Chamber to watch it on Zoom or, if not, they can watch it on Westport Front Porch which will be streaming it live, as well as channel 79. This will be our first attempt to try something different to promote our businesses that are obviously struggling. This doesn't take away from the issues that we have that there are people who were killed, people who are dying, people who are starving. That is really the biggest problem that we have but we do need to get our economy rolling again so I'm trying to give this a go. So that's Wednesday night. Second, everybody knows about

Supper and Soul, right? Supper and Soul, you go to the restaurant, you go to a show. Instead, we are going to change it to Stay Home and Soul. It's a takeout dinner and concert and that will be taking place on Friday, May 15. Here is the concept: What you do is you buy a single ticket, instead of going to the restaurant, you order takeout from the restaurant and pick it up curbside, you bring it home and we have prepared a concert starring David Wax Museum. We had them last year. It's a duo. A husband-and-wife team who will do a one-hour concert specifically for Westport for people who are doing it. Why do this? One, you are helping out the restaurants with takeout. Two, you are helping struggling artists who can't make any money because they can't tour. We came up with a way to get them this money and you are helping the Chamber continue its mission, which is to help out the town and its businesses. So, this Wednesday, Zoom Westport Retail and Friday night Stay Home and Soul. Back to you, Velma.

Jack Klinge, district 7:

I have some news about the Levitt Pavilion which I think is worth listening to. As you know, we are all disappointed it had to cancel its program for the summer. I got a call tonight at 7 o'clock from the Director, Freda Welsh. She had some wonderful news and I wanted to pass on to you all in the genre of good news for nice families. Her husband Brian spent 161 consecutive days in the hospital over the end of the summer and last fall. He arrived home just before the virus in Westport. He's now resting comfortably at home. Freda called me to update me on that situation and to mention how sorry she was about canceling the Levitt program for the summer but she hoped that we would support their budget request as it is necessary to move forward and leave flexibility open for the end of this year. So, our prayers and best wishes go out to Freda and her wonderful family.

Dr. Heller:

First we will be moving on to the business of the agenda. Please remember to mute yourself so we don't get interference as people are presenting. I'd like to quickly lay out the plan for the meetings tonight and tomorrow night because it's a little different arrangement from our usual meetings. On tonight's agenda, item #1 will be a review of the Town Budget. We'll also address any other items on this agenda. We will review the Education Budget tomorrow night and vote on the combined Town and Education Budgets along with any additional items not addressed tonight. If needed, we will meet again on Wednesday.

In accordance with RTM rules, no new agenda items can be addressed after 11:30 p.m. unless a 2/3 majority of RTM members present agree to continue past that time.

Here is a brief explanation of the agenda and procedures for these meetings: We will begin with a presentation of the Town side of the Budget, by the administration, then hear from the RTM Finance Committee, then turn to the public for comment, and then to the RTM for debate and voting. Typically, the only committee reports delivered verbally during RTM budget sessions are the Finance Committee report on the Town Budget, which will be presented tonight, and the Education and Finance Committee reports on the Education Budget, which will be presented tomorrow night. Other committee reports have been sent to RTM members in advance as part of the packet. If other committees wish to report verbally, they may do so when we turn to that section in the budget.

When we turn to the public tonight after we hear from the Finance Committee, members of the Westport electorate may address any individual area of the Town budget or the budget as a whole in an email received during the public comment period and including your full name and address which will be read by Deputy Moderator Jeff Wieser. When the RTM begins its review of the budget, if there is a motion with respect to any item in the Budget, I will open the floor back up to the public to comment on that specific item. When we turn to the RTM, I will be calling out each general budget area in turn. If any RTM member wishes to make a motion or discuss a particular area or any line item in that area, comments are limited to 10 minutes. If a committee wishes to report verbally, please raise your hand when we come to that area of the budget. If no one wishes to discuss that area, I will consider all of the line items in that area approved and move on to the next area. If a motion to restore or reduce is made and seconded, we will hear the committee report if the report addresses it, then hear comments from the public, and then turn to the RTM. A word about voting: The RTM may approve or decrease a budget line item by a simple majority vote. The RTM may restore an amount requested of, but not recommended by the Board of Finance by a vote of 70 percent of the RTM members present and voting, but, in any event, not less than a majority of the RTM, which is 19 votes. The RTM may not increase any budget item beyond the request to the Board of Finance. An abstention is not a vote and is not counted as a vote. I will ask the Finance Director Gary Conrad to please keep a running total. At the end of our review, we will vote on the first Resolution of the Town Budget. Regarding conflicts of interest, I'd like to remind everyone of the Town Charter provision on conflicts of interest. Charter Section C38-2 states that "No Town employee or any member, whether elected or appointed, of any Board, Commission, Agency, Committee, Department or of the Representative Town Meeting of the Town shall participate in any official capacity in the hearing or decision upon any matter in which such person has, directly or indirectly, a personal or financial interest. In the event of such disqualification, such fact shall be entered on the records of the commission or board." Article 6 of our own RTM Rules of Procedure adds the provision that "All members should be most sensitive to permitting an actual conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest to exist, even though a complete disclosure of all circumstances would show that an actual conflict did not exist in a particular case." Ms. Talmadge has recused herself from the Wakeman Town Farm and Earthplace budgets in committee. Are there any other RTM members who will be recusing themselves? Finally, while we may move through some areas of the budget rather quickly, it's important to note that, since so much of the RTM's work is done in the committee meetings in preparation for these meetings, RTM members have already spent countless hours over the past three to four months attending Board of Finance and Board of Education meetings and budget workshops, studying the budget, and conducting RTM committee meetings along with the town and school administrations and department heads, to make recommendations to the RTM as a whole. What you see tonight is the culmination of all of that effort, and I thank the RTM members, Committee Chairs, the Town and School administrations, department heads, staff, and Board of Finance and Board of Education members for all of this effort on behalf of the Town of Westport.

The secretary read item #1 of the call - To adopt a budget for the Town of Westport for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable.

Presentation

Andrea Moore, Board of Finance:

I am a member of the Board of Finance and I will be presenting the recommended budget for the fiscal year 2020/21. The headline before we start is that Westport is doing very well in a very difficult time. Our grand list increased 1.2 percent over last year, our reserves are strong at the upper end of our range of the nine to 11 percent and good fiscal management and negotiations over the past several years are starting to bear fruit. But, our town is facing some significant outside challenges. So, why don't we start with those. On COVID-19, obviously, a big impact everywhere and Westport was not immune to that. That impact is hard to quantify at this point. We have uncertainty of the global economy. We have a stagnant Connecticut economy both before our current situation and now there could be a wide impact given COVID services, funding and cost. We have changing demographics here that could impact our services. We have increased service demands because of these demographics and the impacts of COVID that we don't fully understand at this point and we have the cost of solid waste disposal and recycling which has been going up over the last couple of years and needs to be addressed now. This chart is one most of us have seen before. State funding to Westport after a sharp drop has stabilized at the \$1 million level over the last several years. At this point, I would say the town is at risk for further reduction of these numbers and potentially the reopening of discussions around teacher pension obligations which may be pushed down to the towns. This has been talked about several times over the years and we imagine we could see that discussion be reopened. Again, this is a chart we have seen before several times. This is our mill rate versus our neighbors. Westport is at the lower end of the range along with a few comparable towns, Darien and New Canaan, at 16.86 percent. That has been stable for several years. You also see other towns that I would look at as comps: Fairfield, Ridgefield, Wilton and Weston that are significantly higher. I would also highlight here that we have been stable because we have not increased our mill rate over the last four or five years. This table highlights the historical non-tax revenues by department. Parks and Rec. is by far the largest contributor to our non-tax revenues. Looking at the current fiscal year, we see some downside in those numbers because of the COVID-19 situation. It is hard to quantify those at this point but there will definitely be an impact in the current budget year and next year, as well. At this point, it's too early to tell what the impact will be on those numbers. Let's start off with some of the initiatives we see here in Westport currently and going forward:

- We have seen a lot of ADA accessibility work at Compo Beach and our residents are enjoying those, the bathrooms and lots of accessibility there;
- We have a new wing at the Senior Center which has been opened and, before the closure of everything, a lot of seniors were enjoying that. From everything that I have heard, that has been a great success.
- The library transformation is also behind us at this point. Again, hugely successful; significant increase of use of the library, much-needed meeting space being used and utilized so that has been a great thing for Westporters overall.

- We have seen LED light replacements for our streetlights in town be completed and that should be a five year payback. We'll start seeing those cost reductions help Westport.
- We've also seen a completed police pension negotiation

We have several initiatives that are in progress currently:

- Combining the dispatch with Fairfield, this is taken a little longer than we had hoped but that continues to move forward and we look forward to that being completed in the somewhat near future.
- The Coleytown Middle School rehabilitation is well underway; unfortunately being impacted by some sourcing issues and some staffing issues so that has been delayed but it continues to move forward and we look forward to seeing it through to have that up and running for a lot of our middle school students and teachers.
- Saugatuck and Greens Farms improvements are underway and we look forward to continuing to see those parking lots look better than ever.
- We are halfway through completing the turf field replacements. We had allocated funds for four fields. Two were done, one at Staples for the football field and the track and another one at Wakeman by Bedford Middle School. We look forward to doing the other two, the PAL field behind Saugatuck and Ginny Parker field behind Staples this summer.
- Lastly we've had some enhancements to the Riverside Park and the Wadsworth Arboretum. Those continue to go forward. These are some of the initiatives that we look forward to in the coming fiscal year.

We are commencing an initiative to address waste recycling costs and sustainability.

We are initiating and launching a Longshore Park plan, improving Senior Center data and adding technology needs there, providing the library with some program

development help, completing some of the park enhancements we've been discussing, maintaining quality standards of our town's roads, addressing continued opportunities

for shared services with the Board of Education, and supporting IT infrastructure and security. Also, we are equipping all of our police and EMS with cell phones for digital

recording downloads and feeds and that should help efficiency going forward. And

equally as important for everybody in Westport, we look forward to restarting the town. I

know that many people in town government are involved in this as well as various town

organizations and everybody is ready and willing to help in any way that they can. So,

with that backdrop let's get to the numbers: Overall, the town budget is up .48 percent at

\$212.7 million. That combines education and the town. The town is \$75.2 million which

is down 2.81 percent and education is \$131.4 million and up 2.41 percent. Other areas

which includes the Library, the Transit District, the Health District and Earthplace is up

1.63 percent. This is a table of the Town Budget overall. As we all know, education is a

big piece of that, 62 percent of overall town spending. Beyond education, the next two

largest pieces are public safety and pension OPEB insurance and miscellaneous. This

chart shows our historic budget and a breakdown, in another way, showing the town,

other, and Board of Ed in a table format over the last three years and going into next

year. Here's some detail on the town and the breakdown of its budget. You'll see the

biggest driver on this table is the pension OPEB and miscellaneous which is down

almost 17 percent. We'll talk a little bit more about that later but clearly the biggest

driver on this budget reduction. We see Information Technology here up 13 percent.

That's an area that is in need of improvement of IT infrastructure, security and

something the town is looking forward to doing next year. I would also highlight Public Works being up by 5.4 percent. That's driven by solid waste costs, safety needs at the dump and continued investment in our town roads. You see Human Services up similar amount, 5.5 percent. That's due to some new programming at the Senior Center and a few dollars for student outreach, as well. Then, we see some reduction in debt service, down 9.22 percent. I just would highlight that a lot of the Coleytown money that we are borrowing will not be rolling in this year. That will be rolling in the following year and we'll see that uptick two years out. On the other finance, you see an increase of \$1 million there. That's a transfer to the Capital and Nonrecurring Fund. Overall, the town is down, though, as I said, negative 2.81 percent. So, Public Safety, I wanted to highlight this one because it is 30 percent of the town budget. We have seen an uptick on the police side for equipping the police and EMS workers with cell phones for uploading video and reports. It should be really good for efficiency for those important first responders. If you look at the pension, OPEB and insurance contributions, basically, what we saw here is the good news is a result of a lot of hard work and negotiations in the past and we are starting to see some positives here. We see a significant reduction in the OPEB number, \$4 million because of lower contributions that is somewhat offset by an increase in the pension number of \$1.8 million but, also, we have a reduction in our health and liability insurance of \$2 million so net/net we are seeing a reduction in this piece of the town budget of 18.3 percent. What is important to note here on the OPEB side is it is not just a one-time accounting impact. This is something we should see going forward. This is going to be true savings for our budget going into the future. On other organizations, we talked about this earlier, the Library, we see 2.53 percent, Earthplace flat at \$95,000. I want to highlight, too, what which I should've said earlier, the Board of Finance came back to the town and the Board of Finance and asked for a one percent reduction on their original budget request. Both the town and the Board of Ed did come back with that. We asked the same thing of the Library and they came back and reduced their original request and the Westport Transit District, we asked them to reduce their budget down to the current run rate for the 2019/2020 level so that comes down by 9.75 percent. After the request of a reduction of one percent for the town and the Library and the Board of Ed, and the reduction of the Westport Transit District, none of those departments came back to us for restoration. This table shows us our long-term indebtedness. We've seen reductions over time and have seen those numbers tick up because of CMS and school investments that we need to have going forward. The good news is that number is still below the highs of the last 10 years and we are also at very attractive borrowing rates for school enhancements for Coleytown. So, in closing, in the short and medium-term we are pretty well-positioned, given all the uncertainty we are living with... Strong grand list, strong reserves and the positive impact of lower OPEB contributions is going to help us going forward. We are able to make some strategic investments this year to improve services this year to Westporters and invest in support of infrastructure needs but we all know we are operating in an uncertain time. The COVID impacts are still unknown. The likelihood of the state impacting our lives in Westport because of their fiscal issues before COVID and after will likely bear down on Westport; we'll see less funding and more costs but, while there is a lot that is unknown, our years of conservative fiscal management in Westport by the town bodies have us well-positioned; yet, we need to continue to be conservative and cautious.

Committee report**Finance Committee, Jeff Wieser, District 4**

Following many months of review, the Board of Finance and Board of Ed. Meetings, The Finance Committee continued its budget review obligations as outlined in the town code by meeting on Thursday, April 23 with school's Acting Superintendent Dr. David Abbey and Chief Financial Officer, Elio Longo, along with Board of Education Chair, Candice Savin and members, to review the BOE budget. We continued our review of the annual budget process with the town administration on Tuesday, April 28 (also via Zoom). First Selectman Jim Marpe and Finance Director Gary Conrad and Operations Director, Sara Harris along with Board of Finance Chair Brian Stern and Andrea Moore. Tonight's report is covering the Town Budget only and tomorrow the Education Budget will be presented. This is my annual chance to thank the Finance Committee of Jessica Bram, Seth Braunstein, Rick Jaffe, Greg Kraut, Christine Meiers Schatz, Stephen Shackelford, Lauren Soloff, and Cathy Talmadge for their time and effort in reviewing the budgets. And on their behalf, I thank all of the individuals, named and not named here, for their patience in helping us deal efficiently with the many intricacies of the budgeting process. Andrea, of course, went over many of the things so I will try to cut through some of this but, in reviewing the evolution of this final budget leading up to tonight, the role of the Finance Committee is to ensure that the budget balances the many priorities of our town which includes the maintenance of our superior educational environment and, this year, stabilizing that environment post CMS restoration; maintenance of our town services and safety; and maintaining our modest tax burden. In addition, we reviewed the appropriate funding of our future pension and OPEB obligations; the responsible maintenance of the Town's outstanding debt levels; and the effect on town finances of the coronavirus pandemic. As put it pointed out, the Board of Finance in approving the budget that we are seeing tonight "tasked" the town with reducing their original budget by one percent and, as Andrea pointed out, the administration met the challenge with cuts of \$500,000 in line item expenses and adding \$258,000 of revenues that they anticipate receiving through credit card use, mainly Parks and Rec. users and to increase winter boat storage, boat, and concession fees which total \$758,000 they were tasked with. With that, as Andrea pointed out, the budget comes in at \$75,225,309 and it is a 2.81 percent decrease from the current revised budget. It is a 1.6 percent decrease from the original budget that the RTM approved a year ago if you are all trying to balance the numbers. There were more appropriations that increase the revised budget. Also, it is only a one percent increase from the town expenses two years ago, 2018/19. It is a good result. She mentioned the cuts in the Library and the Transit District's budgets and that there were no restorations so that didn't take up much of our time. Andrea mentioned the health savings, the insurance savings of \$2 million and the OPEB savings of \$4.1 million. The reason for that OPEB adjustment was that the actuaries deemed that the future obligations not to be \$145 million, which it said last year, but \$117 million so the fact that the town, over the last 10 years, has built up the OPEB account, from \$0 to \$69 million; the OPEB account has, therefore, been 59 percent funded. Andrea was very generous in not taking credit for that but I think the fact that we have built that OPEB unfunded liability from \$0 to \$69.4 million in the last 10 years is one of the town's great successes and really deserves to be recognized as a source of discipline and strength provided by the taxpayers of Westport. The annual required contribution to the pension funds is up \$1.6 million, as Andrea pointed out, to \$8.7 million. It looks like a lot but it is netted out

because we did save money with the pension negotiations last year and that was a very positive sign for the future in our pension discussions. We viewed the budget request positively. We discussed, as Andrea mentioned, Information Technology is up a little bit more than usual to take account for some of the redundancies that are required and we thought that this money is very well spent. Public Works is up due to the problems in the single stream solid waste recovery process and in road maintenance, We think a little deferred maintenance is very, very positive. We liked the reasonable explanation of these requests and also loved the response by the departments of the proposed one percent board of finance cuts and appreciated the town's willingness to accept those cuts and to work hard to make the budget work. Among the largest issues we considered in the meeting were the effect of cost sharing on the part of the State of Connecticut, as Andrea mentioned. It doesn't seem to be affecting us this year yet but we must keep an eye on Hartford and watch them as they try to possibly look at municipalities to help fund what is an increasingly difficult state financial situation. We discussed the inevitable effects of COVID-19 on the Town's finances. We probably looked to be more aggressive in looking at those things but, as Brian Stern reported at the meeting, he said it might be a little clearer by the time the mill rate is set in the middle of May and so we agreed the budget could stand as is. No changes at the last minute because there probably aren't any significant changes but may be they are on the horizon. The other organizations, we looked at and viewed those positively with the percentage changes that Andrea mentioned and we agreed with all the recommendations. We voted unanimously 8-0 to recommend the full 2000/2021 budget, \$75,225,309, to the RTM: Jeff Wieser, Seth Braunstein, Cathy Talmadge, Lauren Soloff, Christine Meiers Schatz, Rick Jaffe, Jessica Bram and Stephen Shackelford voting on all items. We voted 8-0 to approve other organization expenses of \$6,117,571, an increase of 6.1 percent. We voted 8-0 on the benefit assessed budgets of the Sewer Fund, The Railroad Parking Fund and the Wakeman Town Farm fund which were all reasonably explained. None of those last three accounts affect the mill rate because they are all benefit assessed. So, we approved all of those and, just briefly, on to tax implications because it's good to say what this all means. If we approve the budget tonight, as is, tonight and tomorrow night, we would approve the total budget, as Andrea suggested, of \$212,772,828. These amounts represent the town budget which is 2.18 percent down from the adjusted budget; 1.6 percent down from the original budget. Other Organizations is up 1.6 percent; the Education Budget is up 3.12 percent of the total General Fund budget which is up a small .48 percent but .93 percent from the original budget last year. Once that budget is determined, non-budget expenditures consisting of pending labor and litigation settlements are taken into account in the Board of Finance meeting of mid-May. The total amount to be raised in taxes is reduced by non-tax revenue items. This number, totaling more than \$21 million, includes: Prior tax collections; Revenues from the Parks and Recreation Department; Licenses and Permits; State Grants; and Education Programs are added into the tax base. The Board of Finance determines what amount will be taken from the General Fund to augment the amount of revenue that the town can use to determine the mill rate. The General Fund is kept in a range of 9 to 11 percent which is kind of a range determined by the rating agencies to make sure we keep our very good credit rating and to make sure that we don't tax future needs or past needs and we keep that in a range. Then the Board of Finance sets the mill rate using the grand list, which in October 2019 was deemed to be \$11.436 billion. The stated goal of the Board of Finance is to maintain the mill rate at

16.86 or, as we said in the Finance Committee meeting, we hope this would be a year for the mill rate to be reduced. It would be a great thing for Westport to reduce taxes. It has been at 16.86 for the last four years and what that means to a taxpayer is if you own a \$1 million home, it will be assessed at 70 percent of that value or \$700,000, and, for the past four years, at a tax rate of 16.86, your taxes have been \$11,802. That has been the same tax for four years and if your house has maintained the same value in the last 10 years, your tax is 3.3 percent lower than it was in fiscal year 2011/12. As Andrea pointed out, there are only a few towns in Connecticut, Greenwich and Darien and a few towns in Litchfield County which have a lower tax mill rate than us. We also took into account the total debt outstanding. As Andrea pointed out, our high was \$177 million at the end of fiscal year 2006. At the end of this June, it will be \$115 million and that is after a \$34 million bond issue this month which will finance completely the Coleytown renovation and, as Andrea said, it would probably be a low interest rate. It will be right at or below two percent which will be wonderful financing for the town. Pensions are close to 90 percent funded which is a very positive thing for a town so we were very pleased with that. So, in summary, the town has benefited this year from some very unexpected events, as it has suffered from other unexpected events: The positive are that the 2019-2020 annual results should end in a modest gain over what the budget called for; The OPEB calculations have provided a wonderful \$4 million gain and as Andrea pointed out, it is an annual thing so it is a wonderful thing and a great point of discipline for the town; health insurance rates are \$2 million lower this year which is a very positive thing; the Grand List, in October of last year, was up by 1.2 percent which helps that mill rate get determined at a lower amount. With the historically low interest rates, it's a great time to be borrowing for the Coleytown Middle School; so, all of these should provide flexibility in generating the mill rate later this month. There remain concerns for the long-term financing strategy of the town. These include continuing to finance the excellent schools at a pace which over the last many years has far outpaced inflation; We've got to keep an eye on that in the year going forward; continuing upkeep of infrastructure of Town assets; we've got to recognize the difficult condition of the finances of the State of Connecticut; and we've got to maintain a vibrant town that attracts residents looking for the best place to live in the world. I am sure we are up to the task. So, thank you to the town administration, the Board of Finance and the school administrators. Thank you.

Members of the Westport electorate – no comments

Mr. Wieser read the resolution and it was seconded by Mr. Klinge.

RESOLVED: That the First Selectman's Budget items recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the Representative Town Meeting be adopted, and the sum of **\$75,225,309** for the First Selectman's Budget is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures and such sum shall be added to the amount appropriated for the Other Agencies and Organizations Budget and the Board of Education Budget.

Dr. Heller:

Thank you Mr. Klinge. It has been moved and seconded to approve the resolution just read.

Before we review the budget by category, are there any RTM members who would like to address the budget as a whole? Seeing none, we are working from the expense summary and I will read each category of the budget one by one. If there are any comments, questions or motions on the category that is read, please raise your hand. If not, we'll move on to the next one. This is the Finance Department expense summary that was in your packet and was forwarded to you again.

General Government	\$ 6,653,054
Public Safety	\$ 22,448,674
Public Works	\$ 11,559,196
Human Services	\$ 1,399,701
Parks and Recreation	\$ 6,478,298
Pension, OPEB, Insurance	\$ 20,308,795

Wendy Batteau, district 8:

I have a question. Next year, because we will have paid down this \$4 million. Will our next year's arc be based on hundred \$111 million? In other words, will we be seeing decreases year after year or will our arc continue to be calculated on \$115 million?

Mr. Wieser:

The \$117 million is the estimate of future liabilities of the program so it might be recalculated but it won't be affected by the amount that we pay or don't pay this year, necessarily. So, we are 59 percent funded of all future liabilities. I believe Andrea is saying that if we make the same payment into that fund for the next many years, that will satisfy the need for funding.

Mr. Stern:

In terms of answering Jeff's question, we go to the actuaries every year. There are assessments of how long people live, for example; what are medical costs, for example; what has the stock market done to our assets; all those things are put into this massive model that no one's brain can figure out. It is put into that model and out pops a number that the actuaries agree is what we are required to do next year. The big change is a structural change. It is because over the last few years we have changed the structure of the medical plans and our retirees in that period have made choices as to which plans they select. The answer to that question is the new number. I hope that helps.

Ms. Batteau: It does. Thanks. Great.

Debt service	\$4,009,426
Other Financing Use	\$2,368,165
Special Appropriation	-----

The Board of Finance recommendation for the First Selectman's budget is \$75,225,309. By roll call vote, the motion carries unanimously, 35-0.

The secretary read item #2 of the call - To adopt a budget for the Town Railroad Parking Fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable.

Dr. Heller:

I'm sorry. What I wanted was the 2nd section of the first resolution. Hold onto item #2. We are not there yet.

What we are voting on now is Agencies.

- We deal first with **Health**. The amount is **\$ 590,811.**
- Secondly is **Library**. The amount is **\$5,111,360**
- **Earthplace** **\$ 95,000**

Mr. Mandell: I need to recuse myself from this vote [Earthplace].

Cathy Talmadge, district 6:

I rotated off from the Board of Earthplace so I am no longer a trustee and I won't recuse myself from that.

- **Westport Transit District** **\$ 320,400**

Dr. Heller:

Ms. Gertzoff is here. We now have 36 members present.

By show of hands, the Other Agencies budget passes unanimously. 36-0. Mr. Mandell recused himself from the Earthplace budget.

Dr. Heller:

We have now reviewed the Town Budget exclusive of the Board of Education budget. What is the total, Mr. Conrad?

Gary Conrad, Finance Director:

The total Town General Fund Budget including the outside agencies equals \$81,342,880 million.

The secretary read item #2 of the call - To adopt a budget for the Town Railroad Parking Fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable.

Presentation

Foti Koskinas, Police Chief:

Mr. Conrad will give you the actual dollar amount. We don't have the same budget book that you guys have. He will give you the total amount and he will also give you revenues. Then we can discuss from there, please.

Mr. Conrad:

For the Railroad Parking Fund, the expenses are \$1,946,441. The revenues are \$2,180,150.

Mr. Wieser:

I'm just checking to see if there is any comment which there is not.

Mr. Wieser read the resolution and it was seconded.

RESOLVED: That the Town Railroad Parking Fund Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, as recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the Representative Town Meeting, be adopted and the sum of \$1,946,441 is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures.

Members of the RTM

Mr. Liccione:

This is for Foti: Foti, are we going to be looking at loss of revenue at the parking lots of Saugatuck and Greens Farms Railroad Station because of the coronavirus?

Chief Koskinas:

We are currently experiencing loss of revenues. That is correct. Both in the daily parking, but certainly the permit fees were paid as of last year. Our permit renewal is starting again at the end of May going into June. We had discussed going to the Board of Selectmen for an increase of \$25 of both the \$325 fee and the \$450 fee. We are delaying that to see how it's going to go, to implement that after Labor Day when we see the numbers of how many of our permit holders and heavy usage that we normally monitor after Labor Day. We have already taken action with the Selectman's Office and have certainly held back on the railroad activities currently. I don't want any of you to think we are not making adjustments going forward. We have cut down on security. We have cut down on civilian attendants. We have cut down on the traffic post that you see on the bridge at Riverside and anywhere else we can. Additionally, I can assure you that, in addition to the Selectman's Office, the Board of Finance and the RTM, we are being closely monitored by State DOT which is also watching to see what kind of impact the train stations will have and will they be able to sustain their operation. So, as we see possible declines in revenues, we are certainly making adjustments and we will continue to work off our waitlists if we see a decline in the daily parking and increase the number of permits there. But, I would be remiss to not tell you that, yes, like everybody else, you can see by driving by the train station, where it is empty, there is loss of revenue.

By show of hands, the budget of \$1,196,441 for Railroad Parking is unanimously approved, 36-0.

The secretary read item #3 of the call - To adopt a budget for the Town Sewer Fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable

Members of the Westport electorate – No comments

Mr. Wieser read the resolution and it was seconded.

RESOLVED: That the Town Sewer Fund Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, as recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the Representative Town Meeting, be adopted and the sum of \$5,179,221 is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures.

Dr. Heller:

We have a motion that has been moved and seconded by Mr. Klinge.

Members of the RTM – no comments

By show of hands, the budget of \$5,179,221 for the Town Sewer Fund is unanimously approved, 36-0.

The secretary read item #4 of the call - to adopt a budget for the Wakeman Town Farm Fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable.

Members of the Westport electorate – no comments

Mr. Wieser read the resolution and it was seconded.

RESOLVED: That the Wakeman Town Farm Fund Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, as recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the Representative Town Meeting, be adopted and the sum of \$352,023 is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures.

By show of hands, the budget of \$352,023 for the Wakeman Town Farm is approved unanimously, 35-0. Ms. Talmadge recused herself.

Carla Rea, district 8:

I just wanted to say I am very pleased that I live very close to Wakeman Town Farm. I go by twice a day, not lately, and it's a wonderful organization and, as Westporters, we offer something so unique, which is not unusual, and I'm very, very happy that we have an organization like they are. I'm very proud of them.

Ms. Talmadge:

All I wanted to say is, for the new people, all they are seeing is the expenses but there is no impact on the General Fund. We are a separate fund and our revenues cover our expenses.

The secretary read item # 5 of the call - To require that property taxes for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, shall be due and payable in four quarterly installments, and to designate the dates of the first days of July, October, January, and April as the dates upon which such installments shall be due and payable, subject to any applicable tax relief deferral programs, and that all taxes in an amount of \$100 or less shall be due and payable in a single installment on the first day of July, subject to any applicable tax relief deferral programs.

Members of the Westport electorate – No comments

Mr. Wieser read the resolution and it was seconded.

RESOLVED: That property taxes for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021 shall be due and payable in four quarterly installments and the dates upon which such quarterly installments are to be due and payable shall be the first days of July, October, January and April, subject to any applicable tax relief deferral programs ; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That all taxes in an amount of \$100.00 or less shall be due and payable in a single installment on the first day of July, subject to any applicable tax relief deferral programs.

Dr. Heller: It has been moved and seconded.

By show of hands, the motion passed unanimously, 36-0.

The secretary read item #6 of the call - To require that the motor vehicle tax shall be due and payable in a single installment.

Members of the Westport electorate – No comments

Mr. Wieser read the resolution and it was seconded.

RESOLVED: That the motor vehicle tax shall be due and payable in a single installment, subject to any applicable tax relief deferral programs.

Members of the RTM – no comments

By show of hands, the motion passes unanimously, 36 – 0

Dr. Heller:

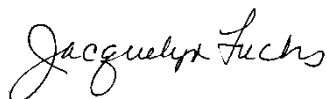
Before we call our meeting to a close, I want to give our thanks to the First Selectman, all of the Department Heads, all of the people on the Board of Finance, all of the committees who have worked so hard because you really have done a very thorough job and presented things clearly in such a way that I think it made things possible for this body to go through these budgetary items and come to conclusions in very, very sound fashion. Thank you, again, for all that you do for the town and thank you for providing what you have for us to review this evening. Now it is time to adjourn the meeting. I hope to see the RTM people tomorrow night and I'm not going to say have a safe trip home, rather, stay safe at home!

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia H. Strauss

Town Clerk



by Jacquelyn Fuchs

ATTENDANCE: May 4, 2020

DIST.	NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT	NOTIFIED MODERATOR	LATE/ LEFT EARLY
1	Richard Jaffe	X			
	Matthew Mandell	X			
	Kristin M. Purcell	X			
	Chris Tait	X			
2	Harris Falk	X			
	Jay Keenan	X		X	Arr. 7:40 pm
	Louis M. Mall	X			
	Christine Meiers Schatz	X			
3	Mark Friedman	X			
	Arline Gertzoff	X			Arr. 8:30 pm
	Jimmy Izzo	X			
	Amy Kaplan	X			
4	Andrew J. Colabella	X			
	Kristan Hamlin	X			
	Noah Hammond	X			
	Jeff Wieser	X			
5	Peter Gold	X			
	Dick Lowenstein	X			
	Karen Kramer	X			
	Greg Kraut	X			
6	Candace Banks	X			
	Jessica Bram	X			
	Seth Braunstein	X			
	Cathy Talmadge	X			
7	Brandi Briggs	X			
	Lauren Karpf	X			
	Jack Klinge	X			
	Ellen Lautenberg	X			
8	Wendy Batteau	X			
	Lisa Newman	X			
	Carla Rea	X			Arr. 8:15 pm
	Stephen Shackelford	X			
9	Velma Heller	X			
	Sal Liccione	X			
	Kristin Schneeman	X			
	Lauren Soloff	X			
Total		36	0		