

A special meeting of the Town Council held for the Town of Scituate on Thursday April 3, 2008 at the Chopmist Center was called to order at 1:07 PM. Council President Budway presiding.

After pledging allegiance to the flag of our country, Town Clerk Long called the roll. Roll call vote as follows:

Councilman Salisbury - present	Councilman D'Agostino - present
Councilwoman Knowlton - present	Councilman Winfield - present
Councilman Collins -present	Council Vice-President Farrar - present
Council President Budway - present.	

Council President Budway explained the reason for this meeting is to give the public a chance to ask questions and make comments on the 2008-2009 proposed budget. At this time Council President Budway reviewed the budget process for the audience.

Council President Budway said after the reading if any Council member would like to make a comment and then he will open it up to the audience. He said that this is the second in a series of three meeting throughout Town to review the budget in preparation of the Financial Town Meeting on Tuesday April 8, 2008. He said that the budget process started last fall with the School Committee meeting with the various schools to formulate their budget. He explained at the beginning of this year the Budget Committee which is comprised of the Town Council, Town Treasurer and Town Clerk reviewed the budgets. The Budget Committee told all Town Departments to submit a budget with no more than a three percentage increase. After all of the budgets were reviewed and tallied the projected expenses exceeded the projected revenues. In light of the budget tax increase cap imposed by the State the Budget Committee all Town Departments were told that they had to decrease their budget. The Budget Committee said that they told each department that their reduction has to be their proportion amount.

Wayne Carlow, Westcott Road said that he appreciates that the Council is trying to keep the budget increase low but what will happen at the Financial Town Meeting if a group wants to restore a line item that has been reduced?

Town Council President Budway said that Town Solicitor D'Agostino will answer that question.

Town Solicitor D'Agostino said that if the electors of the Town want to increase a line item another will have to be reduced, and if it is not then the Budget Committee will have to review the budget. At that point, the Town would have to run on last years budget. The maximum tax increase has already been proposed.

Vice-President Farrar said that in the past, the Town has tried to exceed the cap but the State will not allow it. There are only a very limited amount of reasons that the State will allow for the cap to be exceeded.

Gary Tracey , 57 Woodsong Drive asked the Council if it is safe to say that the Town will increase the taxes by the maximum allowed by law every year?

Council President Budway said that it is impossible to say what the increases will be from year to year, there are just too many variables.

Town Treasurer Przybyla said that the taxes will probably go up each year and unfortunately it is inevitable because of all the State mandates.

Richard Pincence, 17 Oakridge Road asked if the number that is being used as State aid is a firm number?

Ernie Marcure, Spruce Brook Road and a member of the School Committee said that number can be cut at any time.

Richard Petching said that the Town should look at restructuring Town Government and making it smaller. He said that when he moved to Scituate 30 years ago there were not that many fewer residents but the number of Town employees was considerably less.

Councilman Salisbury said that if we could stop the State from mandating services and benefits we might able to. In the light of these mandates it is very hard.

Andy Bowen, Pine Knoll Drive, Hope asked why don't we use the reserve to balance the budget.

Town Treasurer Przybyla said that it is very important to maintain a healthy fund balance to ensure a good credit rating. He said that this is used in case of an emergency situation. He said that if we applied the fund balance and then needed it we would have to ask for a supplemental tax to be imposed.

Dot Trahan, Central Pike asked three questions. First, how much of the total school budget goes for salaries and benefits? Second, what percent of the increase in the School Budget is for increased in salaries and benefits? Third, is it true that some teacher's only teacher 2-3 classes per day?

Ernie Marcure said that about 12.5 million is for teacher's salaries and benefits and about 80% of the School budget increase goes to those costs. He also said that there are teachers that teach only a few classes per day, but they are only paid for the classes that they teach. He said that the School Department has teachers that are only 2/5 or 3/5 teachers.

Richard Petching stated that are taxes are so low because we have the reservoir, not because the Schools are so frugal.

Council President Budway said that the PWSB pays 18% of our taxes but they own 42 % of the land in the Town. He said that only 1% of the Town is zoned for business. This is a big constraint on building our tax base with businesses.

Andy Bowen asked what are TANS?

Town Treasurer Przybyla said that they are Tax Anticipation Notes, which means that they help with the cash flow throughout the year.

Andy Bowen asked what Resolution #2 was comprised of.

Council Vice-President Farrar explained the different components. (list here within)

Councilman Salisbury explained that it is important to buy new cars on a regular basis therefore you don't have to replace the entire fleet at the same time.

Andy Bowen said that there seems to be a lot of police cars in the Police Station parking lot.

Chief Mack said that they have 7 patrol cars that are used at least 12 hours per day. He said that he has one car for every officer and the extra cars (the old ones) are used for details and that the Town gets fifteen dollars an hour when those cars are used.

Council President Budway said that the Town is investigating buying smaller cars, but the research still has to be finished. He said that the Town recently replaced the Director of Public Works vehicle for a less expensive model. He said that the Council is looking into ways of saving money and trying very hard to streamline the work. He said that things are only going to get more difficult in subsequent years with the tax cap decreasing.

Wayne Carlow, Westcott Road said that the School budget is the largest so far and there are people that do not have children in the school system. Should the people with children pay more?

Councilman D'Agostino said that he has two children that went to private schools but realizes that everyone has to share the cost of public education.

Council President Budway said that it would be very difficult to assess a fee for education because then you would have to do the same for all other Town provided services (i.e. trash pickup, rescue services, senior service and police services)

Councilman Winfield said that we have to invest in our children because they are the future for the Town, State and Nation.

Mrs. Burdet, Rockland Oaks wanted to thank the Council and the Town for what they do for the Seniors. She said that she lived in Scituate for over 50 years and was so glad to come back. She said that she enjoys the Senior Center and all of the services that are afforded to them. (i.e. transportation to doctors, food shopping and the Senior Center for lunch)

David Durfee, 52 Deerfield Drive said that each generation pays for the one before. He said that if this nation is going to compete we need to give our children the best public education that we can. He said that we have to "pay it forward", to allow the elderly and the children to have the best opportunities.

Council President Budway said that since there are no more questions he wanted to thank the audience for coming.

Motion made by Councilman Collins, seconded by Councilman Salisbury and voted by consent agreement to adjourn at 2 PM and to keep the minutes of the meeting previously closed to the public; closed pursuant to RIGL 42-46-4 and 42-46-5 and allow the Town Clerk 14 days to prepare the minutes of the meeting.

Attest:

Margaret M. Long, Town Clerk