

A special meeting of the Town Council held for the Town of Scituate on Saturday, April 5, 2008 at the Scituate High School, 94 Trimtown Road was called to order at 10:07 AM. Council President Budway presiding.

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

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

Council President Budway explained the reason for this morning's meeting is to give the public a chance to ask questions and make comments on the 2008-2009 proposed budget. He explained to the audience that the budget is composed of two different segments, Municipal and School. He said that the budget process started in the fall with the School Department meeting with the various schools. In the beginning of January all departments in the Town presented their budgets to the Budget Committee which is composed of the seven Town Council members, Town Clerk Long and Town Treasurer Przybyla. The municipal departments were instructed that their budgets could not exceed a 3% increase. When the budgets were added together there was still a substantial shortfall. The Budget Committee instructed the Department Managers to cut their budgets in proportion to what percent of the budget there department comprised. At this time there are no further cuts that the Council is planning on. He said that the proposed budget will be presented to the electors of the Town on Tuesday, April 8<sup>th</sup> at 8 PM. Council President Budway said the Council will now entertain questions concerning the budget.

Don Stinchfield, 189 Elmdale Road asked what would happen if the Town did not have 5% in the reserve account.

Town Treasurer Przybyla said that he likes to keep between 5-10 % in the account. He said that it is important to receive good interest rates on our bonds. He said that the rating agencies that this account very seriously. He said that if we did not have a sufficient amount in the account it would have a negative impact on the Town. He said that the reserve is between 6-7% for the Town.

Michael Marcello, 874 Chopmist Hill Road said that he would like to compliment the Town Council for holding these meetings. He said that it is a good way to open up the process. He said that he has questions on the 2006 audit. He said that in that year the total reserve was only 4%. He also asked questions concerning the projected revenue; he asked if these numbers were hard numbers or guesses.

Town Treasurer Przybyla said that the numbers are educated guesses; he said there is no way of determining the number exactly.

Representative Carol Mumford said that the General Assembly will determine on Tuesday the percentage of the motor vehicle tax the cities and towns will receive. She said that she feels that they will get at least 98%.

Michael Marcello said he would like to know what line items on the school side are not being completely expended. He had asked to get this information at one of the budget hearing, but never received it. He said that he is interested because he wants to know if certain line items are being inflated. He said he would have thought that the Council would want to know that.

Council President Budway said that the budget process is not 100% accurate.

Mike Marcello said that at the end of 2006 fiscal year the Town only had \$10,000 left over; this indicates good budgeting whereas the school is left with hundreds of thousands of dollars. He also asked where the reserve is invested.

Town Treasurer Przybyla said that by law municipalities can only invest in treasury bonds.

Don Stinchfield, Elmdale Road asked if we need a superintendant that requires such a large amount of money for his salary. He said that maybe we should try to save money by hiring someone without us much longevity.

Ernie Marcure said that it is important to have a superintendant that has full knowledge of the history of the School Department. He said that he makes around \$140,000 and is worth every cent of it.

Carol Mumford said that currently there are 13 school departments that are taking the Town to court to demand more money for education. She said that we are very lucky that we have a wonderful relationship with the School Department. She also said that if we did let him go he would be scooped in a minute.

Don Stinchfield, Elmdale Road said sometimes if you have a person in a position for a long time they tend not to think outside of the box. He also said that he agrees that Mr. Lescault is wonderful with finances but feels he could improve how he communicates with others.

David Durfee, 52 Deerfield Drive said that the Cranston superintendent makes less than Dr. Lescault and that is a much larger school district. He asked why Dr. Lescault has been deemed such a financial wizard, because he maintains such a good reserve account. He said that he over budgets for the special education children he will always have a fund balance.

Mike Marcello said that he read an editorial in yesterday's paper that mentioned that several Rhode Island towns are investigating the possibility of sharing town services. (i.e. public works and police) Mr. Marcello wanted to know if the Town is thinking of doing the same thing.

Council President Budway said that the Council is investigating ways to streamline government. He has requested all of the department heads to come up with ways to make government more efficient and less costly.

He also said that the Council has made several attempts to save money; one is replacing the Director of Public Works vehicle with a less costly one and one that is better on fuel. He said that they are also investigating the possibility of buying smaller and less expensive police cars. He said that he has spoke with the School Committee and they are also going to investigate cost saving measures.

Council Vice-President Farrar said that we have been trying to save money, for example bidding the garbage removal contract with the Town of Foster thus saving money. He said that we are going to incorporate EMA back into the Public Works Director job description also saving money.

Mike Marcello said these are good ideas but only the tip of the iceberg. He said that the Town has to make fundamental changes such as combining services with other Towns to really save money.

Council President Budway said that the Town does not spend any more than they have to spend. He said that there was a group of several cities and towns that lobbied at the State House to give the local government's control back to be able to raise taxes as the general population see fits. He said that it is impossible to please everyone in Town and we always have to compromise.

Ernie Marcure, Spruce Valley Road said that the School Department does have areas where they share services with other Towns (i.e. special education services) he said the schools buy there basic supplies thru the West Bay Collaborative.

Lisa Girard, 18 South Woodland Road said that after reviewing the budget she is very disappointed to see that the music program was cut but there were no cuts to the athletic budget. She said that she saw that the teachers and administrators are getting a healthy raise when programs are being cut. She also asked why Mr. Lecault went from \$134,000 last year to \$140,000 this year and also asked why his schedule is listed under the bus line item. She said that it was almost impossible to find.

Mr. Marcure said that he will get her that answer.

Council President Budway said that the reason for the raises are the collective bargaining agreements. He said that we are currently in the last year of a three year contract. He said that historically the Town has given its non union employees a comparable raise to the union employees.

Natalie Robillard, 356 Bungy Road asked how long Mr. Lescault has been superintendent. She remembers Mr. Brown being the superintendent several years ago. She also said that she is not pleased with Mr. Lescault as the superintendent.

Ernie Marcure said that he will start to negotiate with the teachers union later this month. He said that they are thinking of not looking the administrative raises with the teachers in the future.

Don Stinchfield, Elmdale Road thanked the Council for having this meeting and allowing the public to ask questions prior to the financial Town Meeting. He also said that a good report to review is the expenditure report which shows how much money has been expended.

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

Motion made by Council Vice-President Farrar, seconded by Councilman Salisbury and voted by consent agreement to adjourn at 11:25 AM 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