**Town of Washington Annual Town Budget Meeting**

Bryan Memorial Town Hall, Washington Depot, CT

May 18, 2017 at 7:30 p.m.

Moderator: Henry Martin

Clerk: Sheila Silvernail

First Selectmen, Mark Lyon, welcomed everyone and requested nominations for Moderator. David Werkhoven nominated Henry Martin with second by Jay Hubelbank. With no other nominations and unanimous approval Henry Martin was selected Moderator.

Moderator: Welcome to the Town of Washington Annual Town Budget Meeting. Sheila, as the clerk for this meeting, would you read the warning please.

Clerk: WARNING - TOWN OF WASHINGTON

ANNUAL TOWN BUDGET MEETING

The voters and electors of the Town of Washington are hereby warned that the Annual Town Budget Meeting will be held on Thursday, May 18, 2017 at 7:30 p.m. at Bryan Memorial Town Hall, Washington Depot, Connecticut to consider and act upon the following:

1. To consider and act upon the proposed General Fund Expenses and Transfers for the 2017-2018 fiscal year.
2. To consider and act upon the proposed Nonrecurring Capital Expenses for the 2017-2018 fiscal year.
3. To consider and act upon an appropriation of an additional Nonrecurring Capital Expense for road repair and reconstruction.
4. To consider and act upon an amendment to Town Ordinance 505.
5. To consider and act upon an amendment to Town Ordinance 509.
6. To consider and act upon an amendment to Town Ordinance 511.

Dated at Washington, Connecticut this 4th day of May 2017.

Mark E. Lyon, David Werkhoven, Jay Hubelbank

Board of Selectmen

Moderator: Thank you, Sheila. If anyone didn’t see them, on the table at the entrance there are copies of the warning and the six resolutions if you’d like to have hard copy. For each of these six items, I’m going to ask for a resolution or motion. I’m going to ask for a second to the motion. Then we’ll have a discussion on the subject. I typically start by asking the First Selectman or expert on the issue to explain it to us. When discussion is over we have a vote and move on to the next one. During the discussion session after motion has been explained, you’ll have an opportunity to ask questions, make comments, pro or con. Please raise your hand if you have something to say. I’ll recognize you. When I do, remember to state your name and street address for the recording clerk. Are there any questions? Anybody here that’s attending their first town meeting? A couple? Welcome, happy to have you hear. On to the first resolution, Mark, would you read it please?

M. Lyon: **RESOLVED: To approve an amount not to exceed $5,023,719.00 for General Fund Expenses and Transfers for the 2017-2018 fiscal year.**

Moderator: Thank you, Mark. Could I have a second to that first resolution?

J. Hubelbank: Second.

Moderator: Thank you, so we are now in the discussion session. Do you want to kick it off or go into question and answer?

M. Lyon: I’ll give a brief rundown. First off, we were reaped the benefit of a slight population change in the region which diminished our regional education contribution by $300,000 this year. We gave a 2% pay increase. We have adjusted some of the wages. We had our tax collector and town clerk become certified so they received an small increase. We did not budget for the teacher’s retirement fund that the governor has proposed. If that does come through in the legislature, which everyone says it’s not going to happen, we will have to have a special town meeting to appropriate those funds. We did 100% on the resident trooper. We’ve made the fire marshal’s position a full-time position. We’ve been trying for three years to get part-time help for him to fulfill all the duties of his office. We’ve hired people twice. One stayed for a month and another for six weeks then left for a full-time job. Those are the big changes in our budget this year. That and a 16% increase in our health insurance benefits.

Moderator: Thank you, Mark. Any questions or comments on the first resolution? Joan?

J. Lodsin: Joan Lodsin, 12 Tompkins Hill Road. I do have a question about the resident trooper. Last year you said that you’d explore other options. I wonder if that was done and why there can’t be other options such as doing away with the resident trooper program. I don’t know if it was explored. As far as the fire marshal, you know I don’t think it’s necessary to be full-time, but I don’t know as much as you do. I would like to suggest that if it becomes a full-time town position with all the benefits, that it should be advertised. An interview should be held. The job should be awarded to the most qualified person. I’m wondering if the raises across the board are merit raises. Does anyone evaluate the performance of these people? I’m referring to the town employees.

M. Lyon: We don’t have a formal evaluation where each individual is evaluated on a certain date. All our town employees are on an ongoing evaluation. Our 2% raise was mostly just to cover the cost of living which was 1.7% increase. I can get out some figures about the fire marshal about what we based our decision on. It’s in that stack over there. I’ll find it if you like.

J. Lodsin: I’m not going to belabor the issue. I don’t think that’s necessary. I just again don’t feel it’s necessary. I’ve looked at other towns around and they don’t have full-time fire marshals and their people are able to get the job done. So I don’t understand what the problem is here. That’s my dilemma, but, no, I’m going to ask you to do that. Thank you. By the way, I think the town employees do a great job. I just wondered if there was some kind of structure to these raises.

M. Lyon: If we’re going to have constables, we have to have a resident trooper. If we make the decision not to have our constables, then we don’t have to have a resident trooper. As long as we want to have more than just one person, be it a resident trooper or anybody, we have to have a resident trooper. That program enables our constables to have access to the police infrastructure as well as having a place to take someone arrested, to run license plates through the state police, and so on. We have looked into sharing troopers. So far we haven’t been able to put that together. I’ve talked with Litchfield. The problem with Bridgewater and Roxbury, which would be a perfect setup, is that those two towns are in a different troop. The state police won’t allow sharing between two different troops. It’s ongoing. I’m working through state CCM subcommittee. Another thing we’re looking at is having a regional police force that can still work through the state police, but that probably involves a legislative change at this point. It’s not a dead issue. As costs keep going up, I have to keep pursuing it.

J. Lodsin: Thank you.

Moderator: Any other questions? I’m not seeing hands raised. Are we ready to vote? All in favor of the first resolution which is to approve an amount not to exceed $5,023,719 for the General Fund Expenses and Transfers for the 2017-2018 fiscal year, please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposed?

Audience: Nay.

Moderator: Just one, two, three? Ok, just two opposed. Thank you very much, the resolution passes**.**

Moderator: On to the second resolution.

M. Lyon: **RESOLVED: To approve an amount not to exceed $1,565,922.00 less grants of $320,000.00, net cost $1,245,922.00 for Nonrecurring Capital Fund Expenses for the 2017-2018 fiscal year.**

Moderator: Could I have a second to that motion?

D. Werkhoven: Second.

Moderator: Dave, this time. Mark, do have anything on that one?

M. Lyon: I believe the capital expenses are on the back side of the handout. They are self-explanatory I think. If there’s any questions, I’m willing to try to answer them.

Moderator: Any questions on the second resolution? I see no hands. Are we ready to vote? All in favor of approving resolution number two to approve an amount not to exceed $1,565,922 less grants of $320,000 leaving a net cost of $1,245,922 for the Nonrecurring Capital Fund Expenses for the 2017-2018 fiscal year, please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposed?

Audience: [Silence]

Moderator: That wasn’t a no over there? You didn’t say no, did you? I heard something that I want to make sure wasn’t a nay. The motion carries unanimously.

Moderator: On to the third resolution.

M. Lyon: **RESOLVED: To approve an amount not to exceed $600,000.00 for additional expenditures from the 2017-2018 Nonrecurring Capital Fund for road repair and reconstruction.**

Moderator: A second?

J. Hubelbank: Second.

Moderator: Mark, anything you’d like to say?

M. Lyon: No, that’s fine.

Moderator: Let’s go straight to questions. Any questions on resolution number three? Are we ready to vote? Yes, you have a question? Please identify yourself.

A. Sandals: Alan Sandals, 25 River Road. Why is the item in the third resolution not already included in the Nonrecurring Capital Fund?

Moderator: Good question.

A. Sandals: Late entrant?

M. Lyon: No, not at all. Our highway director came to the Selectmen and the Board of Finance four years ago with concerns about our highway reconstruction budget and the fact that we were falling behind on keeping roads in good condition. He laid out a plan that was about four to five million dollars to do them all at once. The Board of Finance opted to do this $600,000 per year for five years at which time we would assess the value if we were making a difference and catching up on road reconstruction and repair. This is the fourth year of a five-year plan, but it’s a separate item on purpose by the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen.

Moderator: Any other questions? Are we ready to vote on resolution three? All in favor of the resolution to approve an amount not to exceed $600,000 for additional expenditures from the 2017-2018 Nonrecurring Capital Fund for road repair and reconstruction, please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposed?

Audience: [Silence]

Moderator: Thank you very much, the resolution passes.

Moderator: On to resolution four.

M. Lyon: These next three resolutions have to do with ordinances that pertain to tax collection. They were recommended to the Board of Selectmen by the Tax Collector to make the job more efficient and to bring us in compliance with the state.

**RESOLVED: To amend Ordinance 505B to read: Pursuant to the provisions of Connecticut General Statute 12-142, 1958 revision, the tax on real property for the town shall be payable in two semi-annual installments, the first, on which one-half of the tax levy shall be payable, shall be due on July 1 in each fiscal year, and the second, on which the second half shall be payable, shall be due on January 1 in each fiscal year; provided, however, that, nothing herein contained shall be deemed to prevent payment of both installments when the first is due; and, further, provided that, any tax not in excess of $100.00 (changed from $40.00) shall be due and payable on July 1 in each fiscal year. Effective July 1, 2017, per Connecticut General Statute 12-144.**

Basically, if you had a tax bill for $99, you have to pay it July 1st. It used to be $39. So it’s just a change. Our mill rate isn’t quite that low, but basically a change for the minimum amount that you’d have to pay for a single installment goes from $40 to $100.

Moderator: I need to have a second for that motion now.

D. Werkhoven: Second.

Moderator: Thank you, Dave. Mark explained it already. The timing of payments hasn’t changed, just raising the threshold from $40 to $100 for requiring one payment on July 1st. Any questions on this? Are we ready to vote? I’m not going to read it since Mark just read it and it’s in the handout. We are ready to vote on resolution four. All in favor of that resolution please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposed?

Audience: [Silence]

Moderator: Thank you, the resolution passes. Resolution five, Mark?

M. Lyon: **RESOLVED: To amend Ordinance 509 to read: Single Installment Payment of Motor Vehicle Tax and (Add: Personal Property Tax). In accordance with Connecticut General Statute 12-142, the property tax levied by the town as it applies to motor vehicles shall hereafter be due and payable in a single installment on July 1 in each year, starting July 1, 1972. Add: The personal property tax levied by the town as it applies to personal property shall hereafter be due and payable in a single installment on July 1 in each year, starting July 1, 2018.**

Moderator: We have a motion, would you like to second it?

J. Lodsin: Yes.

Moderator: Joan Lodsin seconds. I think the resolution is self-explanatory, does anyone have any questions on it?

J. Lodsin: Joan Lodsin, 12 Tompkins Hill Road. Why doesn’t this payment start until 2018, just curious?

M. Lyon: We have about twenty people that pay property tax in excess of $100. Some of them are considerably in excess so the tax collector will send notices over the summer to prepare them for next year. Anything over $100 can still be paid in two payments.

Moderator: Any other questions on resolution five? Yes?

A. Sandals: I’m a relative new comer, Alan Sandals, 25 River Road. What is the personal property tax levied on and is it a new tax?

M. Lyon: It is not a new tax. It’s on personal property, mostly commercial businesses that declare equipment, stock, that type of thing as personal property. They have to pay a tax on it.

Moderator: This doesn’t affect residential property owners. Any other questions? Are we ready to vote? All in favor of approving resolution five which you have in front of you and was just read, please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposed?

Audience: [Silence]

Moderator: Resolution passes. One more to go, number six.

M. Lyon: **RESOLVED: Waiving Property Tax Less Than $5.00 (changed from $2.00). To amend Ordinance 511 to read: To waive any tax due in the amount less than $5.00 (changed from $2.00) in accordance with Connecticut General Statute 12-144c. Effective July 1, 2017.**

If the tax bill is less than $5, you won’t receive it. Currently, if it’s $3 now, you’re going to get a bill. This is going to be a change for this billing cycle.

Moderator: As I understand the main rationale behind this is just efficiency?

M. Lyon: Yes, and the fact that if you have a refund of less than $5, you don’t get it. If your tax is less than $5, you don’t get a bill.

Moderator: First of all I need a second.

B. Carey: Second.

Moderator: Thank you, are there any questions about resolution six? Ready to vote? All in favor of approving resolution six which you have in front of you and Mark just read, please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: Any opposed?

Audience: [Silence]

Moderator: The resolution passes. We’ve completed the business identified in the warning. I will take a motion to adjourn.

Audience: [Multiple voices and seconds]

Moderator: Thank you. Any questions? Yes, Peter?

P. Tagley: I could have asked before, but I waited until now. What is the Finance Committee doing for the preparation of the financial events that will occur for the AgStem program which the Board of Education passed? How are they planning for the impact of that decision, if at all?

Moderator: This is Michael Jackson, Chairman of the Board of Finance.

M. Jackson: I had the opportunity when I ran into Pat Cosentino [Superintendent of Schools] yesterday to ask her what her plan B was. She said she didn’t have one. They hadn’t thought about it. They wanted to only focus what they were looking for and I suggested to her there might be an alternative strategy she might want to consider. We have no right and no authority over the Board of Education as you know. So we can only suggest that there’d be a plan B, but there isn’t one in existence.

Moderator: Did you all hear that? Paul?

P. Frank: Paul Frank, West Shore Road. The kind of notice and information about these meetings that appears on the town website, there was a very small notice that there was going to be an annual town meeting. The principal event talked about on the current screen is the invitation to bid on the Lake Waramaug dam valve replacement which I have a great interest in and that is important, but I don’t think it’s as significant as the fact that there have been several meetings dealing with the budget. I hope that the Selectmen would consider giving more emphasis on the website. If you were trying to find the text of the budget on the website, it’s rather difficult. It’s down at the end of the page of quick links, but it certainly deserves more emphasis than that and perhaps it would increase the interest of town residents in attending.

Moderator: Yes, you’re not the first person to complain about the utility of the website to get information out to the people. As I understand it, we have a technical limitation to push email blasts out to everybody to let them know on a more affirmative basis about a development in town. The same issue keeps coming up.

M. Lyon: We are aware of that. I know somebody commented that it was listed just as changes to ordinances without explanation. We did add that, but it was late. So to your point. The other thing is that you are going to get a sheet in your tax bill asking you to list name and email address. The point of that is to generate an email list that we can use to disseminate general information. There’s also a quarterly newsletter coming from the Washington Business Association and Economic Development Committee. That will be sent out the same way. To your point, Paul, you’re right. We should be doing a better job.

P. Frank: I think if you look at other towns’ websites they do a much better job.

Moderator: Don’t we already have an email list that everyone had to submit for the emergency services?

M. Lyon: That is for emergency messages. We try to keep that system in place for emergency announces rather than just general announcements. Those are the phone calls residents receive and that will still be in place for emergency messages. This will be an “email blast” system to send monthly, weekly, town meeting announcements, and things people want to know about in town. We’re working on that. You’ll get a slip with your tax bill. If you provide that information, we’ll get that created.

P. Frank: Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you, Mark. Thank you, Paul. I think it’s much better for the town to reach out so people can get this information passively without having to take initiative to look on website themselves. Some may remember to do and some may not. Joan, you had your hand up?

J. Lodsin: We all know that there’s no newspaper that covers Washington, but they are very agreeable to receiving a press release and putting it in the paper. When things are going on, such as this meeting, it doesn’t take long to write the press release, email it to them, and it would be in the Spectrum or the Voices. It’s just another avenue. Granted, they should be here, but they’re not so we have to figure something out. Thank you.

Moderator: Thank you. Leslie, did you have a point that you wanted to make?

L. Anderson: Leslie Anderson, Tompkins Hill Road. I just want to say that even though you could use an email blast, I’d still like to see an announcement on the first page of the website.

Moderator: Absolutely, I’m not saying either/or.

L. Anderson: With an email blast, a lot of it goes into junk mail and people don’t read emails. We established the website for a reason so let’s start using it, messages, announcements, etc.

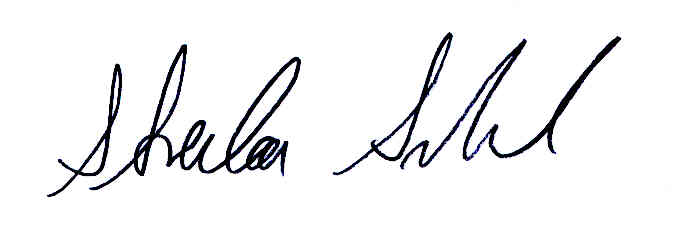
Moderator: Thank you, any other comments? We do have a seconded motion to adjourn. Ready to vote to adjourn? All in favor of adjournment, please say aye.

Audience: Aye.

Moderator: We are adjourned.

Meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

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I, Sheila Silvernail, certify to the best of my ability the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the Town of Washington’s Annual Town Budget Meeting on May 18, 2017.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Dated at Washington, CT this 19th day of May 2017.