Preston Board of Finance
Special Meeting
Thursday, May 28, 2020 at 7:30 P.M.
Teleconference Call

Call to Order – John Moulson called the meeting to order at 7:31 P.M.

1. Roll Call

Members
John Moulson – Chairman
Bob Congdon - Vice Chairman
Stacey Becker - Clerk
Andy Depta
Denise Beale
Zachary Maurice

Alternates
Matthew Davis –
Vacancy

Also Present
Sandra Allyn-Gauthier – First Selectwoman
Jerry Grabarek – Selectman
Ken Zachem - Selectman
John Spang – Financial Director
Sean Nugent – Chair of the Board of Education
Dr. Roy Seitsinger – School Superintendent
Chief Tom Casey – Fire Department
37 other members of the public

2. Public Hearing – see Minutes

3. End Public Hearing – This ended at 9:46 pm.

4. Reconvene Board of Finance Special Meeting at 9:46 pm.

5. Discussion of Public Comments and Questions from the Public Hearing

Stacey Becker noted that the comments seem to run the gamut for and against or be mindful of the times when making decisions; and there was no real majority.

Andy Depta agreed with Stacey’s comments.

Bob Congdon stated it still comes down to our job being to look at the numbers and figure out what numbers are the best for the town.

Stacey pointed out that people feel strongly one way or the other and they have genuine concerns about the decisions being made.
Andy Depta stated that he was disappointed that Roy Seitsinger didn’t address students meeting State Standards and the curriculum. Andy stated his concerns that 35% of the students are not meeting the standards. Dr. Seitsinger spoke with a lot of emotion; but not of the curriculum and students meeting goals/standards and how they will be addressed.

John Moulson felt that there was no discussion of the impact that the cut would have on their budget.

Stacey Becker reminded him that Roy mentioned a few possibilities – opening contracts, pay to play, cutting programs or teachers; but until they know the exact number, they cannot finalize those decisions.

6. Act on proposed FY2021 Board of Education Budget

Bob Congdon stated that he feels we’ll be revisiting this in September when we know more. I recommend taking the proposed Board of Education and General Government budgets and $690,000 from surplus; which would mean a half mill increase.

Bob Congdon motioned to accept the Board of Education as presented with a $363,000 decrease; which is a 1.78% increase over last year. Zach Maurice seconded the motion. After discussion, this motion was rescinded.

Bob Congdon motioned to allow that all members of the Board of Finance be able to participate in the discussion of the motion on the table. John Moulson seconded the motion. After discussion, this motion was rescinded.

After these two motions there was a fast-paced discussion about both and the purpose of the June 10th Meeting that was stated in the Public Notice as a Virtual Town Meeting. There was also a discussion of what needed to be completed tonight so the public has the information they would need to be informed before the June 10th meeting.

The Robert’s Rule motion was the first to be discussed. Stacey Becker pointed out that the topic was not on the agenda for this Special meeting and as such needed to be dealt with later meeting. She suggested June 10th.

Bob Congdon stated that when you’re elected you should have a voice, and that an alternate should be allowed to be part of the discussion. He then rescinded the motion.

Moving onto the matter of the budget, Stacey Becker asked John Spang if he could have the latest Financial Report with Town Revenues so that we have the most up to date numbers possible for the June 10th meeting.

John Spang said that he could have that ready and out to members to review before their June 10th meeting.

Bob Congdon asked with the Board of Education and Board of Selectmen budgets and the State and Local Revenues and no surplus what would the mill rate be? He then stated that we need to act on these budgets and the revenues so that citizens have an idea of what the mill rate will be.
Kim Lang asked for clarification of motions on the table.

Bob Congdon stated that he had rescinded both.

Matthew Davis asked for clarification of the Board of Education budget. He reasoned that there are contracts that cover 95% of the budget and every year, they get a raise. Wouldn’t eventually the teacher’s contracts be all that the board of Education budget covered?

Roy Seitsinger said that would not happen we would have to eliminate a teacher or position.

7. Act on proposed FY2021 General Government Budget

Bob Congdon motioned to accept the proposed General Government budget of $3,858,605. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Denise Beale stated confusion that there was action on Agenda item number 7 before action on number 6.

Bob Congdon motioned to accept the proposed Board of Education of $12,603,319. Andy Depta seconded the motion. John Moulson, Bob Congdon, Andy Depta, and Denise Beale voted yes; while Stacey Becker and Zach Maurice voted no. The motion passed 4 to 2.

8. Act on FY2021 Revenue Budget

Bob Congdon motioned to adopt the proposed State Revenue Budget of $4,387,482 and the Local Revenue Budget of $342,916. Denise Beale seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Jerry Grabarek commented that you need to set a number out of surplus, so the public know the mill rate.

Ed Gauthier asked if the State Revenue Budget numbers could be checked.

Stacey Becker stated that they are correct and include TAR and LoCIP and equal the total state aid.

Bob Congdon stated that we need to take funds from surplus to keep the mill rate reasonable for taxpayers. He suggested $690,000. He asked how much that would increase the mill rate.

Stacey Becker stated that with what was already approved that $690,000 out of surplus would put the mill rate at 26.94.

Bob Congdon stated that we’ll need a healthy surplus the next 3 years and that $690,000 is the highest amount we can go this year in these desperate times.

Stacey Becker stated her concerns of raising the mill rate with so many people out of work. She also told the group we need better final numbers to work with.

Bob Congdon motioned to take $690,000 out of surplus to add to FY2021 Budget increasing the mill rate to 26.94. Zach Maurice seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.
9. Public Comment

Jill Keith thanked the Board for their time and efforts to do what is fair and equitable for all citizens of Preston. She also stated that the Board leader needs more basic understanding of the process and more confidence in running the meeting and be more resolute in his actions to give taxpayers confidence in their elected officials.

Pat Biggins felt that the Board used appropriate logic in their decisions tonight.

10. Adjournment

Andy Depta motioned to adjourn at 10:43 P.M... Bob Congdon seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kimberly Lang

Recording Secretary
Bob Congdon motioned to accept the Board of Education as presented with a $363,000 decrease; which is a 1.78% increase over last year. Zach Maurice seconded the motion. After discussion, this motion was rescinded.

Bob Congdon motioned to alter Robert’s Rules of Order so that all members of the Board of Finance be able to participate in the discussion of the motion on the table. John Moulson seconded the motion. After discussion, this motion was rescinded.

Bob Congdon motioned to accept the proposed General Government budget of $3,858,605. Andy Depta seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

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