



**TOWN OF BILLERICA
SELECT BOARD MINUTES
APRIL 24, 2023
Financial Working Session**

Members Present: Chair Michael Riley, Vice Chair Kimberly Conway, Secretary Andrew Deslaurier, Michael Rosa, and John Burrows

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Town Manager John Curran, Assistant Town Manager Clancy Main, and Director of Administrative Services Robert Maynard

Chair Riley stated that the meeting is a hybrid meeting with a Zoom option.

Call to Order 5:30 PM

Member Riley called the meeting to order.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

1. Select Board Financial Working Session

Mr. Curran stated that he has provided the Town with a comprehensive approach for financial planning and has projects for over 20 years out. The presentation included Revenue Capacity, Debt Stabilization Policy and the Current & Future Debt Stabilization with Recommendations. It also included the Capital Plan and Sewer Capacity. The potential projects include a DPW Facility (\$50M), Recreation Center (\$15M), Council on Aging (\$20M), Town Center (\$15M), Middle School (\$100M), Elementary School (\$60M), Sewer Contracts (\$80M) and North Billerica Fire Station (\$3M). We could use bonding for the Elementary School outside of SBAB but there will be an impact to the taxpayer for all the proposed projects and the Board needs to decide how much of an impact there will be. About 87% of the Town has sewer, so there are just over 1,000 residents that don't but the sewer for those 1,000 residents will require about \$80 million.

Mr. Curran stated that there are three major issues that need to be decided. What projects are the Select Board considering and wants vs. needs? Does the Board support increasing the Debt Levy Target (DLT) for all these projects? How does the Board want to address remaining sewer work?

Member Rosa stated that since the start of the sewer project, we were never going to get to 100% of the Town. \$80 million is a lot of money for 1,000 households and we should look at those parcels and communicate with the owners to see if they want sewer. The residents of Dudley Road didn't want sewer and it saved the Town over a million dollars by not installing the sewer down the street. We could also look at using the sewer betterment bylaw to save the Town close to 50% and to move the area up in the schedule. We need to do boot-on-the-ground research.

Member Rosa stated that on the wants vs. needs list, we need to cull that list down especially since we had a large tax increase for the residents this year and there will be another increase next year. The Town Center is a want, not a need and the cost of the DPW seems high, especially where a lot of the space is for parking of trucks. We should still look at an inter-generation center to save money on cross spaces. What is the square footage of the DPW and the proposed Recreation? Mr. Maynard replied the DPW is about 70,000 SF and the Recreation would be about 23,000 SF. Mr. Curran stated that the cost of the DPW is higher because they need to install wash bays, lifts and mechanical systems in the garage areas. Member Rosa stated that there has been disparity on the two structural analyses on the North Billerica Fire Station that needs to be addressed. There have been three schools built in the not too distant past and there is a significant increase over all the other town buildings and we should look at that. He would suggest scheduling a deeper dive into the financials and we need more information. This is the time to tighten our belts.

Secretary Deslaurier stated to clarify, the projected debt stabilization slide includes the increase for all projects listed. Mr. Curran replied yes, except for the two schools and any future projects not included. Secretary Deslaurier stated that he would probably be in favor of increasing the debt service responsibilities to include these projects.



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Vice Chair Conway stated that she is shocked that the chart did not include the school costs. Mr. Curran stated that the two schools would add about an additional \$500 a year. The yellow highlighted column in the Proposed Debt Stabilization slide shows the cumulative impact. Vice Chair Conway stated that the debt doesn't look like it is coming off. Mr. Curran replied it is dropping. Vice Chair Conway stated that today's numbers are not accounting for growth. She understands that the \$9 million is staying flat but now it's going up by 40% over the next 9 years and this is not good. Mr. Curran stated that this slide shows paying for the last two schools and the sewer project. Vice Chair Conway asked if we do all the projects, will that take us to the levy limit. Mr. Curran replied he doesn't believe it would because we have had great new growth but would have to check. Vice Chair Conway stated that we need to do wants vs. needs and get the information out to the residents. This is a lot to ask for. We need to have fairness and equity to all residents regarding sewer. Everyone should have access to our sewer system and if not, the Town should pay for a new septic system.

Member Burrows stated that we should stay within the budget when everything is good and remain level funded but what happens when the economy is not good? Mr. Curran stated that we don't take in new growth into the levy. Member Burrows stated that we need to look at reuse of the schools and not just tear them down. The Marshall Middle School could be renovated and host the Recreation and COA. The School Department needs to tighten their reins and look at what is needed for functionality versus what they would like to have.

Chair Riley stated that we have said no to projects but we need to be a functional town. We need to look at the DPW, COA and Recreation. We need to look at improving the Town Center and the Fire Station in North Billerica but we need to get real numbers. He also agrees that there should be a credit to those who do not have sewer availability. Are houses with sewer charged a higher assessment? Mr. Curran replied yes.

Member Rosa stated that we should also look at sewer volume. For example, 279 Boston Road was just a restaurant and then car dealer, now there will be 20 apartments and a restaurant and the volume of sewer is going to be increased greatly.

Mr. Curran asked that the Board members send their comments to his office and they will compile them and schedule another meeting.

MOTION - Secretary Deslaurier made a motion to adjourn the April 24, 2023 Select Board Financial Working Session at 6:50 PM. The motion was seconded by Member Rosa and unanimously voted 5-0-0.

*Respectfully Submitted by Dawn McDowell,
Recording Secretary*



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Exhibits for the Select Board Meeting – April 24, 2023 Financial Working Session

Call to order 5:30 PM

1. **Select Board Financial Working Session – Power Point Presentation – Financial Workshop dated 04/24/23**

Approved On: May 15, 2023