

**Town of Boscawen
Select Board
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, November 21, 2023, at 2:00 PM**

In Attendance: Matt Burdick, Lorrie Carey, Bill Bevans, Katie Phelps, Nicole Hoyt, Kellee Easler

Guests: Barbara Randall, Loren Martin, Tama Tillman, Shawn Brechtel, and Mary Estee

Chairman Matt Burdick called the emergency meeting to order at 2:00pm.

This emergency meeting is being held in accordance with RSA 91-A:2 II. The purpose of the meeting is to set the tax rate. The town has received a preliminary tax rate from the Department of Revenue Administration.

Town Administrator Katie Phelps notified the board that the preliminary tax rate issued by the Department of Revenue Administration is \$19.63, which is down from \$30.97. The board needs to discuss and vote on an amount for overlay and whether to make any contribution from the unassigned fund balance to reduce taxes. TA Phelps provided some examples for how the rate would be affected by different overlay amounts and fund balance contributions. Discussion ensued. Selectwoman Lorrie Carey noted that historically the board had tried to decrease the tax rate as much as possible, therefore reducing the unassigned fund balance to the minimum allowed per policy. This practice leaves the town vulnerable to any tax rate fluctuations that may occur.

TA Phelps noted that per policy the Town aims to keep at least 8% of the unassigned fund balance retained, while striving to increase that amount to 10-17%. NH Government Finance Officers Association recommends a minimum of 8% and a maximum of 17%. Keeping the tax rate stable year after year helps residents and those who escrow taxes. Selectwoman Carey asked TA Phelps if Finance Director Kate Merrill had any recommendations. TA Phelps noted that FD Merrill recommended trying to build our fund balance given that we are in a revaluation year and the tax rate is decreasing.

Chairman Burdick explained that his initial concern is for the homes that doubled in assessment value with the revaluation. He is concerned with finding a happy medium for all taxpayers. Selectman Bevans noted that he calculated his taxes with different scenarios but mentioned that with the items approved at town meeting this year it could be expected that there would be an increase of 8-10%. Discussion ensued. Selectman Bevans noted he is leaning towards \$92,500 in overlay and \$100-\$150,000 in fund balance to reduce taxes. It would leave 11% retained.

Loren Martin from Avitar Associates explained that the lower income homes are going to see a tax increase. She initially recommended an overlay of \$92,500 based on pending appeals and potential abatements during the update year but noted that the town should be safe at \$60,000.

She doesn't expect big changes but won't know until people receive their tax bills. Ms. Martin wouldn't recommend depleting the fund balance to the minimum allowed. She would recommend some contribution, such as \$150,000, from fund balance to assist the lower end homes that will see increases. She said the school district is about two years behind the revaluation update. Discussion ensued.

Planning Director Kellee Easler recommended keeping the fund balance as high as possible. She doesn't remember a rate this low. Ms. Martin noted it's because values are so high. She recommended keeping the tax rate level. Selectwoman Carey suggested a policy to maintain a level tax rate.

The board discussed overlay and the amounts they were comfortable with. Ms. Martin discussed pending appeals and abatements. She noted that \$92,500 was a worst-case scenario. Likely appeals submitted wouldn't be heard until 2025 or 2026. Residents have until April 1st to file for abatements; the town has until July 1st to respond and if they were to file appeals it would be by September 1st. It's limited exposure for 2024. Treasurer Tama Tillman said that she recommends maintaining more fund balance. She expressed concern with cash flow and bill payment requirements in order for the town to operate.

Discussion ensued regarding pending legislation to require school districts to submit their paperwork to DRA earlier. The delays affect the towns and their operations.

Motion made by Selectman Bevans to approve using \$150,000 from the unassigned fund balance, setting overlay at \$75,000 and a tax rate of \$19.43 with 11% unassigned fund balance retained. Seconded by Chairman Burdick. All in favor. None opposed.

Chairman Burdick motioned to adjourn at 2:42PM. Seconded by Selectman Bevans. All in favor. None Opposed.

Respectfully submitted by Katie Phelps