

April 10, 2019

Board of Finance Adopts First Selectman Tesoro's 2019-2020 Budget with Minor Changes; Approved in Bipartisan Fashion

On Monday night, The Board of Finance (BOF) unanimously approved a municipal budget of \$174.9 million for the new fiscal year, modifying the proposal submitted by First Selectman Vicki Tesoro by \$63,000, less than half a tenth of 1%.

For the second straight year, Tesoro, faced with challenging internal and external financial conditions, delivered a budget with only modest increases in spending and taxes. Last year, the tax increase was 1.9%. This year, including the Board of Finance's \$63,000 increase, the tax burden—should it be approved and finalized by the Town Council next month—will be about 2.2%.

"The budget I submitted funds public safety and education, addresses the proposed State actions without resorting to contingencies or dipping into the town savings, and does so with only a small increase in taxes. The minor changes made by the BOF are a confirmation of the conservative approach taken by my administration," Tesoro said.

Some information was unknown to the First Selectman at the time she issued her budget, such as a shortage of lifeguard applicants. The BOF was able to address this issue during deliberations Monday evening. "That's how bipartisan collaboration is supposed to work. I was pleased to see the BOF address this situation in a unified fashion to ensure our town residents will be adequately served." Tesoro stated.

The school system's budget was particularly challenging because Governor Lamont has proposed state budget changes that may cost the town \$1.2 million. Specifically, Lamont's administration has proposed a reduction to Trumbull's Educational Cost Sharing allocation by \$656,000 and imposed a new expense of \$511,000 to help pay for teacher pensions. Tesoro felt it was sound fiscal practice to incorporate this \$1.2 million expense into the budget. In addition, the school board requested an increase in spending of \$4.3 million, or 4.3%. Given the circumstances, Tesoro reduced the requested increase to about \$2 million.

Tesoro's two-year aggregate increase in school-system funding is 5.1%, compared to the last two years of the previous administration where the funding increase to the schools equaled 3.2%.

The BOF passed Tesoro's recommended \$105,607,462 budget for the Board of Education with a bipartisan vote. Republican member Scott Zimov moved to add \$1.2 million back to the school budget, but following a constructive dialogue, Republican Chairwoman Elaine Hammers and Republican member Steve Choi voted with Democratic members Lainie McHugh and Marty Isaac, defeating the proposal, 2-4.

Had the BOF approved the amendment and added the \$1.2 million funding to the school budget, the tax increase would have been nearly a full percentage point higher, nearly 3%. "Such a tax increase would put an unfair burden on all our residents," Tesoro stated.

"I am pleased to see the BOF made only minor changes to the budget I submitted. The department heads and I worked diligently to create a budget that keeps our Town safe, our schools competitive, our services strong and our taxes stable," said Tesoro.

"We now have to work together to convince the State to eliminate or lessen the \$1.2 million impact of the state proposals," stated Tesoro. "Should we succeed in doing so, we plan to apply these funds to both increase school funding and reduce the tax rate."