

**Town of Colebrook
Board of Finance**

Minutes to Meeting of March 1, 2017

Members Present

J. Millar, Chairman
R. Carfiro
T. Corvo
D. Johnstone
M. Klimkosky
M. Neal

Absent

None

Others Present

C. Johnstone

The meeting was called to order at 6:27 p.m. by Chairman J. Millar.

1. Briefly discussed a draft of the 2017-18 budget proposed by Region 7. It totals \$21,091,199, which is an increase of 3.0% over 2016-17. Most of the increase is due to contractual salaries, benefits, and an influx of special education students. The amount assessed to Colebrook will increase by 3.7% because of a small change in Colebrook's relative share of the students. Region 7 has scheduled a budget workshop on March 8 at 6:00 p.m. in their library, and the first of the budget presentations to towns will be at 7:00 p.m. on March 15 in the cafeteria of the Botelle School.
2. Discussed several mill rate options to deal with the 50.6% cut in state aid proposed by the Governor, and to address the spending increases proposed by others:
 - a. The loss of state aid will, by itself, require a 6.7% mill increase, even if all other expenditures are flat to last year.
 - b. If the budgets proposed by the Boards of Education and Selectmen and Region 7 are accepted as is, and if the legislature approves the Governor's cuts, the mill rate will increase by 9.5%.
 - c. A third option – keep the Boards of Education and Selectmen flat to last year, cut the capital appropriation by \$50,000, and assume that the Region 7 budget is approved at referendum – still requires a 7.0% mill increase.

None of the three options was seen as attractive by the Board, but there does not appear any way to avoid a large tax increase. Some loss of aid is likely, given the financial situation of the state. Moreover, the budgets proposed by the Boards of Education and Selectmen and Region 7 are all in line with expectations, and there was even a sense that the Selectmen's budget may be too low, as discussed at last week's meeting. Reluctantly, the Board decided by a vote of five to one to recommend the proposed budgets and a 9.5% tax increase. T. Corvo, the nay vote, felt that 9.5% is simply too much to ask of the town. It was, however, noted that the Board has authority to reduce the mill rate, even after the referendum, if any or all of the state aid is restored.

3. The Board deferred action on a town wide e-mail about the budget and acknowledged that the Selectmen oppose the idea.
4. T. Corvo moved to accept the minutes of February 22, 2017. Second, R. Carfiro. Passed unanimously.
5. M. Neal moved to adjourn. Second. D. Johnstone. Passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Martha F. Neal
Secretary