

Town of Sherman  
BOS Special Meeting  
Setting the Mill Rate  
May 9, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.  
Via ZOOM

Member's Present: First Selectman Don Lowe, Selectman Bob Ostrosky, and Selectman Kevin Keenan

Member's Absent: None

**Audience & Invited:** Treasurer Eric Holub, Business Manager Liz LaVia, BOE Chair Kasey Diotte, and town citizens via Zoom teleconferencing.

**Clerk:** Margaret Beatty

**Call to Order/ Pledge of Allegiance:** The meeting was called to order promptly at 10:00 a.m., followed by the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

First Selectman Don Lowe addressed the public, describing the format for the meeting. The three items up for discussion and approval are as followed, 1) Town Budget, 2) School Budget, and 3) Setting the Town Mill Rate. He went onto acknowledge that with the current economic unknowns associated with the virus, he advocated that the Universal Pre-K program be deferred and revisited in the next budget cycle. He went on to explain that suspending the Pre-K program would equate to a decrease in Mill Rate from 19.18% to 19.11% and add a projected amount of \$51,750 back to the Town revenue. This change would also result in a tax decrease from 3.2% to 3.6%. First Selectman Don Lowe opened up discussion to both Selectman Bob Ostrosky and Selectman Kevin Keenan for comment.

Selectman Kevin Keenan offered comment and would be willing to go either for or against excluding Universal Pre-k. He also added that he was surprised at the backlash from residents eliminating the program. He believed that there are many factors involved and should be considered. He wasn't necessarily convinced in the argument that offering this program would attract new, younger families to town.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky also provided input on the topic. He also expressed the same sentiment that society is facing an unknown with the virus. He also commented that this could affect future issues in town in the coming months and that many residents were left uneasy not having the ability to provide their own input/ feedback on the topic.

First Selectman Don Lowe in turn responded that the BOS is in agreement to defer the Pre-K program for a year. The topic will be taken under consideration when the BOS votes on the Mill

Rate. He also opened up the conversation to the board member's to inform him of any procedural methods missed that can be applied to the meeting.

Treasurer Eric Holub offered a comment that the current estimated amount of money allocated for universal preschool for the 2020/2021 of \$51,750 was estimated from enrollment of the current school year. He went on to conclude that the town is operating on many unknowns for enrollment. Selectman Bob Ostrosky also agreed that the town is operating under to many variables that can affect future outcomes.

Board of Education chair Kasey Diotte commented that she understood and respected the decision of the BOS to defer Universal Pre-K to the next budget cycle. She also went on to explain her position that the need for the program and little to do with enrollment but rather in the best educational interest for children. She further reasoned that the earlier children integrated into our school system it provided an enhanced mechanism for our specialist staff to identify any special education needs. This could potentially lead to future savings.

First Selectman Don Lowe thanked Kasey Diotte for her comment and reiterated the uncertainty our town could face with the current virus climate and was willing to revisit come next budget cycle.

First Selectman Don Lowe motioned to approve the Town Budget of \$4,866,283.

**Motioned by:** First Selectman Don Lowe

**Seconded by:** Selectman Bob Ostrosky

First Selectman Don Lowe opened up discussion to the motion. None.

**All in Favor:** Unanimous

First Selectman Don Lowe motioned to approve the School Education Budget of \$9,380,589

**Motioned by:** First Selectman Don Lowe

**Seconded by:** Selectman Bob Ostrosky

First Selectman Don Lowe opened up discussion to the motion.

Selectman Kevin Keenan commented that he appreciated all the efforts put forth by the BOE. He felt overall that there could be more work done. He also appreciated that the budget was at a zero percent increase and that the school has returned a fair amount of money back to the town in the last few years.

First Selectman Don Lowe replied that he wasn't sure were the town stands on future enrollment. He further analyzed that the town may accrue potential expenses if the landscape of education changes and the town finds itself learning remotely. He is reluctant to ask the BOE to make any new changes to the budget.

Selectman Bob Ostrosky also was very thankful to the BOE for all their hard work, he felt that BOE satisfied all the questions he had. He agreed with the budget but agreed that the town can face some uncertainty moving forward.

**All in Favor:** First Selectman Don Lowe and Selectman Bob Ostrosky

**Oppose:** Selectman Kevin Keenan

The motion passed 2 to 1.

Last point of discussion is setting the Mill Rate. Based on discussion, as per the meeting, the new Mill Rate is set at 19.11 last year's Mill Rate was at 19.81. This would translate to a 3.6% tax decrease for residents.

First Selectman Don Lowe made a motion to pass and accept the Mill Rate at 19.11%

**Motioned by:** First Selectman Don Lowe

**Seconded by:** Selectman Kevin Keenan

Opened to discussion. None

**All in Favor:** Unanimous

No further discussion on any topic.

First Selectman Don Lowe entertained a motioned to adjourn the meeting, Selectman Bob Ostrosky motioned to adjourn at 10: 18 a.m.

**Motioned by:** Selectman Bob Ostrosky

**Seconded by:** Selectman Kevin Keenan

**All in favor:** Unanimous

Notes respectfully submitted by Margaret Beatty May 13, 2020