

Darien Board of Finance Proposes Slight Tax Cut, RTM to Vote in May

Author : David Gurliacci

Categories : [Government & Politics](#)

Tagged as : [Education Budget 2018-2019](#), [Town Budget 2018-2019](#)

Date : April 17, 2018



A slight tax cut, shaving eight cents per \$1,000 in assessed value in Darien property taxes, would go into effect if the Representative Town Meeting approves the package of budget and tax proposals just passed by the Board of Finance on Monday night.

The new mill rate would be 16.08 mills, or \$16.08 in taxes per \$1,000 in assessed value, due in two installments on Jan. 1 and July 1 next year. The current mill rate is 16.16 mills, and the proposed mill rate would be a reduction of about half of 1 percent.

Town officials said they wanted to avoid new programs in the budget, and keep a vice grip on hiring new staff. Capital projects involving construction were also minimized, with some new projects proposed for bonding rather than the operating budgets, spreading their cost into future years. Finance Board members said that with old bonds expiring in upcoming years, there's more room to borrow.

The Board of Finance voted unanimously to pass each part of the Fiscal Year 2018-2019 budget and tax package, with an annual operating budget \$145,171,660, including \$98,122,266 in spending for the school district and \$47,049,394 for the rest of the town's services.

The proposed budget package also includes \$4,235,036 for the Reserve Fund for Capital and Non-Recurring Expenditures, a much smaller figure than the current fiscal year's \$6,710,656.

The RTM is scheduled to vote on the budget on Monday, May 14.

The Finance Board cut nothing from the education budget except to correct a minor mistake in a budget document. The small reduction received no objections from the Board of Education and school district officials.

Borrowing for More Long-Term Projects

The town sometimes funds capital projects from the town budget and sometimes through bonds. Shortly before the Board of Finance voted on the budget package, it decided to move three proposed projects from the annual budget into a bond: a roof-replacement project at Holmes School (\$879,500) a skylight project at the same school (\$124,600) and a project to replace school turf fields (about \$575,000). Those projects total \$1,579,100.

For a project to be bonded, generally it should be something expected to last at least a decade and cost \$500,000 or more. The skylight project at Holmes School, considered by itself, is below that range, but Finance Board Chairman Jon Zagrodzky said it could be considered part of the project to replace various types of roofs on Holmes School.

The turf replacement project is expected to result in fields that won't need replacing for another 10 years or so, committee members said, although it was mentioned that turf fields sometimes don't last that long.

The RTM would need to authorize new bonding at a high-enough level in order for the money to be borrowed. The Board of Finance is proposing that the RTM authorize \$5 million in bonding, the same amount it authorized last May.

Unexpected Cafeteria Project Cost: \$200,000 More

The Board of Finance also discussed adding about \$200,000 to the high school cafeteria project in order to pay for unexpected costs involving the replacement of an electricity line with a new one, away from the school building.

Board members said they expected to approve a request to have the electricity line replaced, if the cafeteria building committee of the Board of Education requests it. That money may be added to the bond already authorized by the town for that project, although the additional funding will need approval from the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Representative Town Meeting.