

Answers to Questions from “Pre-Caucus” Select Board Meeting of 1/23/13

Question: Why was the Fire Department charged \$4,946.46 for diesel fuel in 2012?

Answer: The Select Board established a fuel allocation formula in 2011 for use in 2012. We used that formula to make the fuel cost calculations for each Department in 2012. The result for the Fire Department is the one shown in the Town Budget for the Fire Department. Our Department Heads agreed to a modified fuel allocation formula for use in 2013. The \$4,500 budgeted for the Fire Department for 2013 reflects the effects of the new formula.

Question: When did the Town become aware that there are funds remaining in the “Dump Capital Reserve Fund” and the “Salt Barn Capital Reserve Fund”?

Answer: A report of the balances in all accounts maintained by the Trustees of Trust Funds is required each year. During a review of that report we observed that fund balances existed in these accounts. We believed that these funds were no longer needed for their original purposes and the existing purposes should be changed to move those funds into the Buildings Capital Reserve Fund. Since that time we have learned that the “Salt Barn Capital Reserve Fund” was closed by vote of the Town in 2010. The balance in that account should have been transferred to the Town General Fund at that time. Since this was not done, we have requested that the Trustees of Trust Funds transfer the balance in the “Salt Barn Capital Reserve Fund” into the Town General Fund immediately. We will then ask that these funds be transferred to the Buildings Capital Reserve Fund at Town Meeting.

Question: Why do we conduct a continuing Cyclical Revaluation of Town properties each year? And what impact does that revaluation have on the assessed value of my property?

Answer: Cyclical assessing is conducted over a three year period. During the first year, one third of the properties in Town are visited, measured, listed, and recorded. During the next year, the second third are visited, measured, listed, and recorded. In the third year, the process is repeated for the remaining one third of the properties in Town. As long as no changes have been made since the property was last assessed, no changes in its assessed value will be made during this phase of the process. During the fourth year, the revaluation is completed. At this time, new values are applied to all properties, based on the information gathered during the three previous years.

Question: What portion of the expenses of the Library should be accounted for in the financial report of the Town and what portion in the financial report of the Library?

Answer: The DRA was consulted regarding this question. They advise that any monies paid from the Town's General Fund, in support of the Library, should be accounted for in the same manner as are all other Town expenditures. Since salaries for Library employees are paid from the Town's General Fund, the accounting for those salaries should be maintained by the Town.

Question: What role does the Avitar property tax software play in the assessment of property values?

Answer: The short answer is none. What the Avitar program does do is create all tax reports, property cards, tax warrants, and tax bills. All data entered into the system must to be created by a qualified assessor.

Question: Why would we want to increase the Elderly Exemption knowing that any reduction in the property taxes paid by that group will have to be paid by the rest of us?

Answer: This is a judgment call for each of us that must be based on our individual sense of fairness. The Elderly Exemption limits have not been changed in Nelson since 2006. We have proposed increases in the Elderly Exemption for 2013 that are excerpted from those provided by our surrounding Towns in 2012.

Question: Why didn't the Town Buildings Committee consider bonding as a way of financing building projects for 2013?

Answer: The Town Buildings Committee held numerous Public Forums to determine the wishes of the community relative to the projects that the Town wished to complete and the plans and funding that the Town supported for those projects. Their meeting on November 17 was specifically devoted to a discussion of funding options and the proposed language for the 2013 Town Warrant. At no time during any of those meetings was bonding suggested by anyone as a desired way to finance any of the projects being considered. At this time, we have concluded that the determination of the best mix of possible funding options for our building projects, annual property taxes, long term bonds, grants and donations, is too complicated a study to be completed before Town Meeting. We will encourage the Town Buildings Committee to continue the project funding discussion with the community using its Public Forums during 2013.