

RTM Senior & Disabled Tax Relief Committee
Wednesday, March 4, 2020
Sullivan Independence Hall, 2nd Floor Conference Room
7:00 PM

Call to Order – Jill Vergara called the meeting to order at 7:09 pm. Roll was taken by chair Vergara. In attendance; Jill Vergara, Mark McDermott, and Cindy Perham

Excused: Marcy Spoylar

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes from Organizational Meeting on February 3, 2020
Motion made by J. Vergara, seconded by M. McDermott. Passed Unanimously.

Discussion of Board of Finance subcommittee recommendations

The discussion started with the changes to the total cap on Senior & Disabled Tax relief in section 95-11. At this point the BOF discussion is adding 400K to the Revenue loss.

March 11 is the next date for the full BOF meeting. We will verify that Ross Murray will be attending as well.

One of the items that the BOF subcommittee is recommending is full 4506 copies or 4506 T transcripts, which is a line by line print out of specific information on Tax returns for those applying for relief.

We discussed the 1.6% cap, and that would be a total cap of \$4,186,000.

Public Comment was asked for at this time.

Urb Liemkuhler, 83 Spruce Street, was concerned that the BOF meeting would not give the changes to S & D Tax Relief the attention it deserves. Will it even get to be brought up? As a community, we need to be mindful of economic apples to apples comparison to other towns. Urb continued to explain that the FSA (Fairfield Senior Advocates) is split on sweetening the program. Should we be focusing on other ways to help seniors? What drives seniors to stay or leave? Much higher incomes should be considered and addressed going forward. He also felt the Deferral program needs more study and evaluation.

Bernie Lynch, 20 Middlebrook Place, asked, “What is Fairfield’s median income? We can work backwards from that figure to see what these individuals need to stay in town.

Deborah Crowley, Fairfield, Disabled person can have their own issues, different from seniors. “We need to make our assets last as long as possible.”

Urb agreed that all recipients of relief are important, but focusing on seniors, there are 6000 households in town with 9000 senior residents. 29% of our town households have seniors living in them. They may not all be owners of their own home, based on those statistics.

Bernie Lynch feels that the BOF subcommittee needs to conduct more purposeful outreach and promotion. At the very least, we need to make all those who could benefit, aware of what is available to them.

Discussion of Next Steps

The committee then talked about promotion of Senior & Disabled tax relief. The postcard reminder was a good move last year, in April, reminding residents of the deadlines and the programs available.

M.McMermott asked if maybe doing a town wide voice mail or call could be a good reminder. Is this allowable for non-emergency

information such as a reminder to apply for Senior & Disabled Tax relief? We need to find out.

Discussion of Priorities Going Forward

a. List remaining issues and prioritize

Here are some of the items we as a committee what to explore as important issues

Hardship appeal process (JILL)

Deferral program changes (MARK)

QTAV

Vs.

Assessment Limits (JILL)

Income Limits for Credit program (MARCY)

Qualifying income definition (MARCY)
(See Westport's program on that)

Long Term Resident Benefit (MARCY)

Can Fill able forms be used to apply for relief (JILL)

Mailers (CINDY)

More Public Outreach (CINDY)

Develop a plan to advertise our current relief programs
(i.e. tax mailings, church bulletins, and public forums)

Public Comment

Ron Correnti, 52 Riverview Circle was there to support the Senior & Disabled tax relief.

Urb Leimkuhler also mentioned that it would be important that those who deliver “Meals on Wheels” might know of those who can apply for relief (not sure if there is a privacy issue with this initiative) Do pharmacies who cater to seniors have a way to have contact with seniors who might need more info about the benefits of relief for them.

Bernie Lynch, felt that we need to truly analyze what happens to the town budget when seniors move out and a family with 2+ children move in. Can we conduct exit interviews to those who are moving away? (i.e. privacy issues?) What about a long term resident benefit?

Motion to adjourn made by J.Vergara at 9:27 pm. Seconded by M. McDermott. Passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cindy Perham
Secretary – Senior and Disabled Tax Relief.