

**BOARD OF FINANCE  
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PUBLIC EXECUTIVE BUDGET HEARING**

**MARCH 28, 2013**

Pursuant to the call and written notices, the Public Executive Budget Hearing of the Board of Finance was held on Tuesday, March 28, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. in Seminar Room 300, Board of Education Administrative Offices, and 501 Kings Highway East, Fairfield, CT.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Thomas Flynn, Chairman, Robert Bellitto, Jr., Vice Chairman, Ken Brachfeld, Christopher DeWitt, James Brown, James Walsh, Mary LeClerc, Robert Stone, and Cathy Albin.

**BOARD OF SELECTMAN**

Cristan McCarthy-Vahey, Selectman Kevin Kiley, Robert Mayer, Chief of Staff/Chief Fiscal Officer, Fairfield Ice Hockey Co-Op Team and their Coaches.

**ALSO PRESENT**

Caitlin Bosse, Clerk of Board of Finance, Linda Gardiner, Budget Director, Dr. David Title, Superintendent, (BOE), Greg Hatzis, Headmaster, Fairfield Ludlowe High School (BOE)

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Flynn.

Chairman Flynn noted Selectman Tetreau will not be at this meeting due to a family emergency.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by

**3. SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

The Board of Finance (BOF) and Board of Selectmen (BOS) honored and gave recognition to the Fairfield Ice Hockey Co-Op Team for winning the Division II State Championship.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. David Title introduced the Team to the Boards. The Board of Finance recognized the hockey team for their outstanding achievement followed by the Board of Selectmen issuing a proclamation to the Fairfield Warde High School and Fairfield Ludlowe High School players and coaches.

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After winning the last three state tournament games, the hockey team was honored for its first state championship in ice hockey with a final score in the championship game of 4-3 in overtime.

Chairman Flynn noted he had great pleasure of being present at the Boys State Ice Hockey Championship game; it was a well-deserved and hard fought victory.

James Walsh and Mary LeClerc arrived at 7:20 p.m.

**4. PUBLIC EXECUTIVE BUDGET SESSION – FINAL DELIBERATIONS**

Mr. Mayer presented this item and produced the following updated reports to the Board.

- Municipal Finance Department staff comparatives for the towns with the most population, this includes all towns which are between 55,000 and 86,000 in the in State of Connecticut.
- Adjustments made to the budget to address the reduction in the contingency account by the RTM last year.
- Fairfield Woods Library Analysis.
- Variance Analysis for past eight months ending February 28<sup>th</sup> .

Following discussion:

Mr. Mayer informed the Board that the \$3.5 million in adjustments can be made to the budget, dropping the initially projected 6.38 percent tax increase to 4.8 percent. The updated increase is the result of updated information on healthcare costs and experience, revisions from department heads, and adjustments to the contingency fund and the fire department's payroll to adjust for retirements, replacements, new hires, and vacancies. The major adjustments are in the health insurance accounts for both the Town and BOE employees.

It was noted, the decrease in insurance costs is attributed to many factors, including going out to bid for a new carrier and a better claims experience in the last several months.

Mr. Mayer noted due to the preparation of the variance analysis report a \$500,000 in savings was based the savings on an average of having, at any time during the year, about ten empty positions, and assigning them an average salary of \$50,000.

Chairman Flynn stated that cost estimate should not include the Fire Department, which goes over its overtime budget every year. The department has minimum manpower requirements, and the contingency has been a cushion to deal with that overage.

The Board questioned the certainty of some of the insurance cost estimates.

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Mr. Bellitto addressed the fluctuation in costs because the town is self-insured and might be the best argument for switching to being fully insured. If the Town was fully insured, they would pay five to ten percent more, but would have cost certainty.

Mr. Brachfeld felt uncomfortable with relying on savings based on the latest report of February's claims experience, because there is no guarantee the favorable claims experience will continue.

Mr. Mayer noted it's a dilemma produced by the budget process. They are the best and latest numbers available at this time.

Mrs. Albin stated this Board has an extremely important decision to weigh next Tuesday. Although they have to try to get the tax increase as reasonable as possible to please taxpayers, if we go too deep, and affect services, the RTM cannot rectify what this Board does. We can get ourselves down to a minimal tax increase but there are some difficult choices to make.

Dr. David Title addressed and answered questions from the board focusing on school staffing levels. He noted the number of administrators in the district has remained relatively flat for the past ten (10) years, while the town's student enrollment and teacher staffing level have grown over the last decade. He also said there are additional state mandates regarding core curriculum, new testing and new teacher evaluations that will increase the administrative workload.

Mr. Bellitto questioned once the new core curriculum is put in place several years down the road, if staff like curriculum leaders would still be needed.

Dr. Title stated the state core standards are being phased in by subject and there is continuous work down the road. He also pointed out that while the public may perceive anyone who is not in front of a classroom as an administrator, that isn't necessarily the case. Deans, curriculum leaders, and guidance counselors are not administrators.

Chairman Flynn thanked Mr. Mayer for the reports.

**.5. ADJOURN**

There being no further business to come before the Board, Robert Bellitto *moved* and Robert Stone, *seconded* to adjourn the meeting at 9:56 p.m. *Motion passed unanimously.*

Respectfully Submitted,

Josephine M. Keogh