

**COMBINED BOARD OF SELECTMEN AND BOARD OF FINANCE
PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING
MINUTES OF MEETING
MARCH 18, 2014**

Pursuant to the call and written notice, the Public Budget Hearing of the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance was held on Tuesday, March 18, 2014 at 7:30 pm in the Board of Education Administrative Offices, Seminar Room 300, 501 Kings Highway East, Fairfield, Connecticut.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Thomas Flynn, James Brown, Christopher DeWitt, Catherine Albin, Robert Stone, David Becker, James Walsh (7:36), Mary LeClerc (7:40)

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ken Brachfeld

OTHERS PRESENT

Michael Tetreau, First Selectman, Town Of Fairfield
Cristin McCarthy Vahey, Board of Selectmen, Town Of Fairfield
Kevin Kiley, Board of Selectmen, Town of Fairfield
Robert Mayer, Chief Fiscal Officer, Town Of Fairfield
Linda Gardiner, Budget Director, Town Of Fairfield
Selma Cohen, Chairman, Human and Social Service Commission, Town Of Fairfield
Teresa Giegengack, Human and Social Services Director, Town Of Fairfield
Sands Cleary, Director of Health, Town of Fairfield
Joanne Ryan, Nursing Supervisor, Town Of Fairfield
Chief Gary MacNamara-Police, Town Of Fairfield
Deputy Chief Christopher Lyddy, Police Department, Town of Fairfield
Captain Donald Smith, Police, Town Of Fairfield
Captain Josh Zabin, Police, Town Of Fairfield
Sergeant Ed Weihe, Police, Town Of Fairfield
Dr. David Title, Superintendent of Schools, Board of Education, Town Of Fairfield
Phillip Dwyer, Chairman, Board of Education, Town Of Fairfield
Paul Miller, Animal Control Officer, Town Of Fairfield
Chief Richard Felner, Fire, Town Of Fairfield
Deputy Chief Art Reid, Fire, Town Of Fairfield

Chairman Flynn called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Chief MacNamara and D.C Reid led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Flynn, noting that tonight's meeting contained Public Service Departments, asked for a moment of silence in honor of all our fallen Police, Fire and Emergency responders.

HUMAN AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Teresa Giegengack, Director of Human and Social Services, presented an overview of the Human and Social Services programs, services and updates on the Senior Center.

Selma Cohen, Chair of the Human and Social Services Commission, addressed the Board expressing a desperate need for a full time Senior Center Director, which was initially requested in this year' budget.

Mrs. Giegengack noted that all but 2 employees down at the Senior Center are part time employees, including Social Workers, and they require supervision, which takes up @ 50% of her time, while programs and events at the Senior Center require more attention. In her 6 months there, much work and changes have been done at the Senior Center, however, the daily operations of the Senior Center take away much of her time that could be spent On Human and Social Service issues; fundraising , new programs and pursuing Grants.

Chairman Flynn noted that it was not included in the budget presented, and it was noted that this position was cut by the First Selectman.

First Selectman Tetreau informed the Boards that he was very cautious with this budget with added full time positions, but that he supports this position in the future.

In response to questions from the Boards, Mrs. Giegengack noted that she would prefer phasing in this position with ½ of the appropriation in this year's budget, having the full salary in next year's budget rather than having this position being funded on a part time basis.

Board members suggested that the Town look into hiring someone from the outside for Grant Writings.

Mrs. Giegengack informed the Boards that her Repairs and Maintenance line item has been reduced as requested form the Boards.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Bruce Carter (member of Human and Social Services Commission)

Asked that the Boards invest in the Senior Center and support the request for the full time Senior Center Director. Mr. Carter also noted that the Senior Center is underutilized and encouraged more usage of the Center to other groups.

Gerry Stuhlman (President, Fairfield Senior Partners)

Noted that the Senior Tax Relief and Human and Social Services budget equates to 1.7% of the town budget and asked for more support for out every growing Senior population and also to look for a new vision for a new vision for our Seniors and to consider what happens to our town as our Seniors leave.

Carol Way (RTM-District 5)

Noted how her own taxes have constantly increased in her 18 years as a resident which resulted in her selling her home. Also noted that she has served on the Senior and Disabled Tax Relief Committee and that Fairfield is losing diversity as seniors can no longer afford to stay in Fairfield.

Ms. Way noted what a great work Mrs. Giegengack is doing however she is doing much more than any one person should be doing.

Ms. Way noted that looking at the total dollars spent on Administrative Salaries throughout our Town budget it is a shame that this town does not have a full time Senior Center Director.

Nancy Legarri (member of Human and Social Service Commission)

245 Unquowa Road (Moss wood Condos)

Noted that this budget is only asking for a moderate increase this year and asked the Boards to support and fund the full time Senior Center Director position in this year's budget.

Ms. Legarri also noted that all the dollars that we budget for all the non-profit organizations are unaccountable.

Barbara Marcel

324 Rowland Road

Noted that only "60 years old" enjoys her first program at the Senior Center- the new "Pickle Ball" program, which is extremely popular at the Center and provides Senior with much needed physical activity and requested that the Boards full fund the Senior Center.

Ron Atwater (volunteer at Senior Center)

134 Millard Street

Noted that this budget is a reflection of the values of our community in which we spend @\$15,000 per student for education and no money is allocated to our seniors for the Senior Center.

Mr. Atwater also noted what a great job Mrs. Giegengack is doing and praised all the changes being done at the Center and asked the Boards to support the request for the additional position of Director of the Senior Center.

Palma Senator
42 Pilgrim Lane

Commented that Fairfield's oldest are being treated like 2nd class citizens; Seniors are vital tax payers who merit the same considerations as the younger residents in this budget, however only slightly over 1% of this entire budget is allocated to our Seniors, which is deplorable and asked for the support of the Boards for increase in this budget area.

Jennifer Hochberg (RTM District 7, former member of Human & Social Service Commission)

Commented that the Senior Center Director position is essential to the Town and noted what a difference Mrs. Giegengack has made at the Senior Center- it is once again vibrant. Asked the Boards for support in funding this position in this year's current budget.

Linda DiLorenzo (member, Human and Social Services Commission)
210 Rowland Road

Noted that the elderly is the fastest growing population and that every community in this area has a full time Senior Center Director and asks the Boards for full funding and support this position in this year's budget.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Sands Cleary, Director, presented an overall of the Health Department Budget, noted that he has not had any increases (excluding contractual) in his previous 5 years budgets and has asked for a moderate 2.6% increase in this year's budget to fund 3 part time positions in response to much needed work at the school nursing level. Mr. Cleary noted that changes in the 504 legislation and the loss of clerical assistance throughout the school have added much more work to our School Nurses.

Joanne Ryan, Supervisor of Nurses also addressed the Boards in regards to additional work load on our school nurses due to student medical issues, homebound programs and lack of clerical support.

In response from questions from the Boards, Mr. Cleary noted that funding for School Nurses must be under the Health Department and in the Town side budget (versus school budget) per State Statues. Mr. Cleary also noted that 70% of his Health Budget is solely designated to School Health programs.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Chief Gary MacNamara presented an overall review of the Police Department budget and overall services to the Boards.

Deputy Chief Christopher Lyddy, Captains Donald Smith and Josh Zabin and Sergeant Edward Weihe accompanied Chief MacNamara in his presentation.

It was noted the changes in law enforcements have added demand for services.

The Board has asked for actual fiscal year by year breakdown of the salary line increases (5.5% total) due to contract settlements.

It was noted that one Detective is currently assigned to Homeland Security in which the Town is in the midst of a 2 year Grant which helps cover the cost of this Detective.

Discussion ensued on various line items such as clothing and dry goods, fees and profession services travel and meetings, all of which are variable amounts due to what has been spent in the past.

Board members questioned accurate costs for new cars and their equipment and were informed that these are the best estimates provided by the dealers and those costs of computers for these cars are not included.

The Board requested follow up on the following items:

- Salary differentials by fiscal year
- Capital outlay 2011 versus next years
- Special departmental supplies (it was noted that these costs include fingerprinting supplies)

SCHOOL SAFETY UNIT

First Selectman Mike Tetreau began the overview of this new proposed unit and budget, noting that this program was created after updated State Guidelines were in place and after reviewing procedures and policies being considered in surrounding communities.

Chief MacNamara noted that school security has not just become an issue over the last two years in response to Sandy Hook but it has long been a concern for law enforcement agencies and discussions have been ongoing for over 15 years as to how to address school security issues. Chief also noted that this is just the first step in the school safety program and with have a collective approach with school personnel and parents going forward for a measured effective response program.

Chief MacNamara informed the Boards that Sergeant Edward Weihe has been assigned solely to the School Safety Unit since September 2013 and has been working with the BOE in performing security surveys of the schools, training and lock down drills in the schools and working to determine a town wide measurable approach to provide services for school security. Dr. David Title, Superintendent of Schools, praised the work being done by Sgt. Weihe in the schools.

It was noted by all how extremely exposed portable classrooms are at our school for breaches of security and funding should be supported going forward to alleviate this vulnerability.

It was also noted to the Boards that each school is required to have its own Safety Committee, made up of parents, teachers and one police officer- currently Sgt. Weihe.

In response to questions from the Boards, Dr. David Title, Superintendent of Schools, noted that the \$160,000 funded in the BOE budget for school security was designated for "infrastructure" for the schools (improvements to buildings, video surveillance etc.) which is still in the developmental stage, however, he has no objections to the Boards suggestion that infrastructure expenditures being bonded and these designated funds being re classified (by the BOE) for this funding. Dr. Title also noted that future school construction projects will be subject to mandates on infrastructure enhancements in order to be eligible for State reimbursement.

It was noted to the Boards that this entire item was a new funding request and is not currently in this year's budget. In response to questions from Board members as to why this is being brought forward as a supplemental budget and not included in the Police Department Budget request, Frist Selectman Tetreau responded that they were not comfortable including this plan without confirmed numbers and information as the plan itself was just finalized over the last months. The Board noted that this proposal is very similar to the last year's proposal.

The Police Department noted that this new budget request would increase their full time personnel by 2-which include a new full time IT person who would replace a certified Police Officer whom is currently handling these needs.

Board members suggested that the Town consider evolving this new IT posting into a Town Safety IT position that would service Police, Fire as well as ECC departments as well.

It was also noted that additional funding for this new program is being supplied by from the Asset Forfeiture fund.

Members of the Police Department noted to the Boards that the \$94,000 funding for training and equipment would benefit the entire town population not just schools as situations could occur in many various places throughout the Town that require these Police tactics.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Phil Dwyer (Chair, Board of Education)

2607 Congress Street

Encourages Boards of Finance and Selectmen to fund this program and expresses continued support to enhance this vital program.

Stephanie Goldman (parent/Business Owner)

33 Pansy Circle

Expresses support for this proposal and noted that her children have already participated in lock down drills at the schools and how well prepared she feels her children are after participating in these drills.

Kristen DeWitt

289 Davis Road

Comments on how valuable these incentives are and thanks the Police Department, First Selectmen and all the Boards for implementing the programs and asks the Boards to support this proposal.

Kristen (?)

34 Lalley Boulevard

As a parent, always worries about possible threats in the schools and has attended school safety meeting and training and feels it is a vital program and asks Boards to support complete funding request.

Neil Fink (Chair, PTA Council)

70 Crest Terrace

Commented on school security issues on rise and parent's concerns should be taken seriously and asks the Boards to support this funding.

ANIMAL CONTROL

Paul Miller, Animal Control Officer, presented an overview of budget to the Boards and noted that the only increase is to obtain a new vehicle to replace one with over 100,000 miles.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION CENTER

Chief Gary MacNamara, Deputy Chief Chris Lyddy, Deputy Chief Art Reid and Captain Donald Smith all were present to address and answer any question from the Boards. It was noted that the major driver of this budget (besides contractual obligations) was the requests for capital items:

Replacing 6 mobile Police computers (essential to Police officers and some have outlived their service life)

Battery Backup- this is in addition to the new micro grid (which does not provide backup upon power outages) which is vital for operations to continue.

The Board requested more information on the Radio Receiver Site.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Chief Richard Felner and Deputy Chief Art Reid presented an overview of the Fire Department Budget. Chief Felner noted that he wishes to maintain the quality service levels and has made every effort to keep line item increases close to zero.

In response to questions from the Boards, Chief Felner felt there is no space in his budget for any cuts if we are to maintain services. Chief also noted that social security expenses have increased as new employees have come on board due to retirements and thus these expenses increase.

In response to questions from the Board as to the Training Center project, Chief Felner noted that the project is moving along; Chief Reid noted that this project is almost ready to go out to bid and then more progress will be made and seen.

It was noted that line item for fees and professional services has increased due to software costs being absorbed from the IT Department.

Members of the Board inquired how the process to moving to IPADS is coming along and vented concern that no progress was being made as big savings have resulted in other community budgets when acquiring the use of IPADS into their process. Board members asked for more follow up on this item to be presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

HYDRANT AND WATER

Chief Richard Felner and Deputy Chief Reid presented this budget request to the Board, noting that Aquarion rate increases drive this budget, and upon questions from Board Members, it was stated that it costs \$265,000 for one new fire hydrant.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Chief Richard Felner and Deputy Chief Art Reid presented this budget to the Boards and it was noted that this budget receives a \$26,000 State Grant each year –Board Members ask for follow up how this Grant is accounted.

Deputy Chief Reid also noted that it is becoming increasingly harder to obtain funding in this area.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

On a motion by Mr. Brown, seconded by Mr. Dewitt, the meeting was adjourned at 12:10 am, March 19th.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine S. Boccamazzo
Recording Secretary

