

**COMBINED BOARD OF SELECTMAN AND BOARD OF FINANCE
PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING
MINUTES OF MEETING
MARCH 2, 2010**

Pursuant to the call and written notice, the Public Budget Hearing of the Board of Selectman and the Board of

Finance was held on Tuesday, March 2, 2010 directly after the adjournment of the Board of finance Regular

March Meeting in the Board of Education Administrative Offices, Seminar Room 300, 501 Kings Highway

East, Fairfield, Connecticut.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chairman Thomas Flynn, Robert Bellitto Jr., Ken Brachfeld, James Brown, Christopher DeWitt, Mary LeClerc,

Robert Stone, Michael Tetreau

MEMBERS ABSENT

Kevin Kiley

ALSO PRESENT

Sherri Steeneck, Board of Selectmen

Paul Hiller, Chief Fiscal Officer and Clerk of the Board of Finance

Linda Gardiner, Budget Director, Town of Fairfield

Bonnie McWain, Director of Finance, Board of Education, Town of Fairfield

Richard Felner, Chief, Fire Department, Town of Fairfield

Arthur Reid, Deputy Chief, Fire Department, Town of Fairfield

Richard Popilowski, Chairman, Police Commission, Town of Fairfield

Susan Barrett, Police Commissioner, Town of Fairfield

Charlene Lebo, Police Commissioner, Town of Fairfield

Chairman Flynn called the meeting to order at 9:06 p.m. and he informed the Board that this meeting would end

at 11:00 at the latest.

The budgets were reviewed as follows:

4010 Fire Chief Felner and Deputy Chief Reid presented this item to the Board. Chief Felner reported that

he had been requested to produce a report on the reorganization of the Fire Department but since that

reorganization only lasted 5 weeks, due to the cancellation of the ladder truck program initiative, he

didn't feel it was necessary to submit the report. Deputy Chief Reid informed the Board that one of the

department's goals this year is to lower the ISO rating, which currently is 3, to a 1. Deputy Reid also

distributed handouts to the Board and reviewed them. Deputy Reid stated that there is only 7% of the

total budget that is operational and the remainder of the budget is bound by contract and regulations.

Deputy Reid also informed the Board that most training is accomplished as on the job training.

Chairman Flynn asked Mr. Hiller is he is comfortable with the budgeted amount in this budget.
Mr.

Hiller stated that he has some concerns with the following line items:

- OT – Vacation

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- OT – Sick Relief

- OT – Vacancy

Mr. Hiller also stated that the giveback was not achieved for the vacancy for the person to be on the

ladder truck.. Mr. Hiller further stated that the Fire Department currently has 2 vacancies, each one

carrying a value of \$58K and the costs to cover those 3 vacancies cost more that what is budgeted

because overtime wages are paid for those coverages. Several Board members remarked that OT is

under funded every year and this situation creates a problem every year so Mr. Hiller was asked to take

all compensation lines for this budget item and project them through June 30, 2010, compare those

figures to the amounts recommended by the Board of Selectmen and the 2010-2011 Fire budget request

to develop a true picture of the status of those accounts.

Chief Felner stated that by keeping the 3 vacancies on the payroll account, the benefit costs are saved

and those savings outweigh the expense of paying employees overtime to fill those positions with

existing employees.

Mr. Hiller noted that the Town Auditor, Ms. Nolfi, did an analysis on the cost savings of vacancies some

time ago and she has updated that report which will be made available to the Board. Deputy Reid informed the Board that grant applications are made for any grant that might be applicable but

they are

always competitive in nature and the Town is seldom awarded grants since other municipalities have

smaller budgets and more need.

Chairman Flynn asked Mr. Hiller to provide the Board with copies of a report done by the first Selectman analyzing staffing in 12 various towns. The Board also requested that the chart in the personnel summary be updated to show positions instead of people.

In a discussion of Capital Improvement Projects for this department, Chief Felner stated that he is not

comfortable with the BOS cuts =that were made to Item #5.

Public Comment

Susan Barrett – Police Commissioner

She suggested that for the next budget cycle, it might be beneficial to budget for the actual number of firefighters and keep all vacancies separate.

4090 Hydrant and Water Chief Felner and Deputy Chief Reid presented this item to the Board. Deputy Reid explained that Aquarion Water Company gives the numbers to the Chief and they are

regulated by the DPUC. Deputy Reid also reported that Aquarion is asking for a 16% increase this year.

Public Comment

Mary McCullough – RTM District 3

How many hydrants are out of service at any given time and how expensive are they to repair?

Chief Felner responded that the Town and Aquarion work together well to keep the hydrants operating well and he is not aware of any safety issues.

4110 Emergency Management Chief Felner and Deputy Chief Reid presented this item to the Board.

This item has received a grant from Homeland Security that contained both State and Federal funds.

Public Comment

None

4150 Emergency Communications Deputy Chief Reid, Deputy Chief Gary McNamara of the Police

Department, and Captain Smith of the Police Department presented this item to the Board.

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Deputy Reid explained that this department is under the prevue of the Police Department and most of

the increases are due to personnel costs. Deputy McNamara reported that they are not comfortable with

the BOS cuts to OT – Replacement since the cuts will not cover the expected costs.

After some discussion about the costs, it was suggested that perhaps some of these items could be

covered by the contingency account in the future.

Public Comments

Unidentified person

A member of her family made an emergency call on a cell phone to 911 while at a location near Fairfield beach and the responding call came from Long Island then it was transferred to Fairfield.

Captain Smith explained that cell phone calls are routed differently depending on the location of the towers and that may have been what happened in that instance.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 p.m.