

MINUTES

BOARD OF FINANCE - SPECIAL MEETING

2016-2017 ANNUAL BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

MONDAY, APRIL 18, 2016 – 7:00 P.M.

Pursuant to the Town of Oxford Charter, the Board of Finance held the 2016-2017 Annual Budget Public Hearing at Quaker Farms School on Monday, April 18, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. for the purpose of receiving written and oral communication concerning the 2016-2017 Budget.

Present for the Board of Finance were Chairman Jack Kiley; Tom Kelly; Robert DeBisschop; Lila Ferrillo; Sue Arpin; Dana Flach. Also present: James Hliva, Finance Director.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by BOF Chairman Kiley and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Chairman Kiley introduced the members of the Board of Finance to the audience.

This meeting will be a quick overview of the budget. Last year's budget was \$44,024,215; this year's budget increased by \$1,366,000 to \$45,390,000, up 3% from 2015-2016. The increases were in Board of Education (\$28,828,000) up \$715,000 from 2015/2016, 2.4% increase; Municipal budget is \$16,561,000 up from \$15,910,000, an increase of \$650,000, 3.9% increase. Municipal budget saw a large increase in Police Department. Board of Education is 70% of Town budget.

Diane Soracco, 17 Laurel Lane, Oxford, asked a question about an increase shown in the chart. Mr. Hliva responded that the increase represented bonded debt.

Amy Cote, 42 Newgate Road, Oxford, began a lengthy discussion regarding the Board of Education budget requests and increases. She requested that the full amount of \$29,259,048 be restored, as the BOF had reduced this budget to \$28,829,048. She said the original amount was requested to maintain what the district has currently and to help the schools move forward. She continued with the Capital plan budget which was also reduced from \$1,053,996 after two items were eliminated thus decreasing the Capital budget. She spoke about the new pavement which is needed at Quaker Farms School. She asked to have \$49,000 reinstated to replace two roofs at Center School.

Mr. Kiley also responded that after the facilities study the Board did not know which way to go. With regard to operating budget there were some new hires and added personnel. Some of the cut took out some of the personnel. He pointed out that hiring a person to the Town the base in the Town is increased by additional benefits to the salaries.

Jeff Haney, 579 Chestnut Hill Road, Oxford (Selectman), spoke to Ms. Ferrillo's concerns about the paving at Quaker Farms. He confirmed with Ms. Cote that there is no building going

on in the front of the school, only out towards the Public Works area, so he requested that the money be put back into the budget to have the paving/new sidewalks built.

Dave McKane, Tram Drive, Oxford, asked about the \$16,000 line item for legal fees in the Board of Finance budget. Mr. Kiley responded that that item is in contingency and has been in contingency for a several years. He explained that the fees are used in case of a conflict with Town Counsel with regard to legal matters. Ms. Ferrillo reiterated Mr. Kiley's explanation, but Mr. McKane disagreed with the explanations and maintained that it's a new line item.

Mr. McKane also addressed the budget proposal for a new hire in Public Works for Tuesday through Saturday. He said the union will not approve that proposal. Board members responded that the proposal was an attempt to control overtime at Public Works.

With regard to Board of Education, several other residents spoke to their own concerns as well as addressing Ms. Cote's concerns, with regard the budget restrictions, the demise of Center School, an issue with air quality at Center School and several other items. Mr. Kiley pointed out that the Board of Finance had not heard about many of the issues with the schools until they sat at the Facilities Study. He stated that none of the issues brought up that the presentation had ever been presented to the Board of Finance. Mr. Kiley explained that it is not the responsibility of the Board of Finance to police the conditions of all the schools in Oxford. Any issues should be presented to the Board of Education. There is a chain of command. Mr. Ferrillo continued to add to Mr. Kiley's explanation.

A question was presented by **Carrie Ouellette** with regard to the Board of Finance cutting the school building budget when there is an indoor air quality issue at Center School which has been brought to light by many parents. Mr. Kelly responded by saying that the Board will not finance items that might happen, but when something does occur there is an openness to fixing a problem. There is a process that needs to be followed with regard to fixing an issue. In this case, the Board of Education needs to decide what needs to be done at Center School based on the Silver/Petrucelli study. Mr. Kiley noted that capital requests come into the Board of Finance all through the year. Ms. Ferrillo added that it is the job of the requesting body to put together a request which then gets submitted to the Selectmen and ultimately to the Board of Finance. Requests by citizens are not presented directly to the Board of Finance.

Ms. Cote reiterated the comments from the Board of Finance members regarding the process. She then proceeded to discuss an example of an issue that was recently approved for funding by following the process.

Mr. Kiley said there needs to be a definite plan with regard to Center School.

Kristi Novin, 7 Kyle Court, offered a lengthy comment with regard to the situation at Center School. Someone from the Board of Finance should attend Board of Education meetings to be advised of the issues and needs.

Another resident, **Mike Koosa, 63 Old Church Road**, also spoke to the issues at Center School and explained to the Board of Finance that a parental push is coming to make Center School safe.

Mr. Kiley adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gynnette Steeves

16 MAY -2 PM 4:59
TOWN OF OXFORD, CT
Margaret A. West
TOWN CLERK