

Board Of Finance
Annual Budget Public Hearing
April 18,2022

The Annual Board Of Finance Meeting convened at 7:00PM.

In attendance representing The Board Of Finance was Chairman Jack Kiley, Dana Flach, Paula Jensen, Susan Arpin, Diana Sorocco. First Selectman, George Temple.

Chairman Jack Kiley opened the hearing with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Jack Kiley began the hearing with the legal announcement that was publicly published to the town website and newspaper notifying residents of the day and time of public hearing.

Chairman Jack Kiley discussed the proposed budget increases, Benefits for employees, union contracts, and capital projects.

The meeting was then opened up for public comments and questions.

Margaret West-Mainer / Town Clerk

Discussed her career experience and duties pertaining to her position, and achievements. She went over the difficulties keeping up with the demand on her department and workload and what it takes to complete according to ordinance. From elections to land deeds. Margaret West Walker asked the Board Of Finance to put back the \$1000. 00 extra hours cost and the \$20,000 for training a replacement position that was deducted from her requested budget request.

Kathy Johnson, 68 Dorman RD stated she understands how difficult it is to prepare budgets. She confirmed the Town Clerks' concerns. She also asked to take another view of the First Selectman's Budget, Library and Cultural arts before making a final decision.

Charlene Yacovelli, 229 Riggs ST requested to keep the Board Of Education Budget as high as possible as our children are important.

Wayne Johnson, 68 Dorman RD asked a question concerning Cultural Arts. He stated their requested budget was not asking a lot when you look at the entire town budget. The department does a lot with funds requested. He went over the numbers requested.

Chairman Jack Kiley responded stating he was hoping the funds would come from the power plant, some from the Selectmen's Budget. He will do his best to find the funds.

David McKane, 11 Tram DR asked why \$30,000 was taken from the Selectmen's salaries instead of from the entire budget. He also had concerns for the deductions to the library and culture Arts Departments stating cutting staff is a disservice.

Linda Czaplinski, 30 Freeman RD asked about the source of revenue.

Chairman Jack Kiley responded that revenues come from the power plant, and contracts.

Linda Czaplinski then asked about how the fireworks are paid. Then inquired about the \$10,000.00 wage increase for the Dog Warden.

Chairman Jack Kiley responded stating the Dog Warden is on call 24 hours a day and he has an assistant. The job description changed that warranted the decision.

Linda Czaplinski then inquired about the 20% increase to the Grant Writer Salary.

Chairman Jack Kiley stated they are paid for additional hours.

Linda Czaplinski stated she was looking at Grant Writer wages. Were we underpaying? Is that the market wage?

Chairman Jack Kiley stated it's based on the ability of the individual's hours of work.

Michael Koosa, 63 Old Church RD stated he understood cuts from the board but went over what would be sacrificed with the budget cuts. The cuts would affect many aspects of the operations to the schools. They feel they put forth a lean budget and wanted to raise awareness as to what the budget cuts could result in in operations to the overall district.

Chairman Jack Kiley recognized how prepared the Board Of Education was with their budget. He stated a good part of funds are going to Education and capital requests. Stating money has been put away into contingency due to the surge of inflation, gasoline, oil, insurance and electricity. We are looking into state funding. He commented that the BOE presented a very well prepared budget but we have to consider the town as a whole. The mill rate must go up from the 23 mill rate. We have to think of all the citizens of the town.

David McKane 11 Tram Dr stated he is the parent of a special needs child and making cuts could be a slippery slope. It takes only one child. What the BOE is asking for as an increase only equates to 1/8 of a mill. The increase barely rates.

Jack Kiley stated the town is taking 1.8 million to cover the cost. We would like to keep 10% of our operating budget as a cushion and surplus. it's \$20000.00 here and \$20000.00 there. It actually could be 1.3 million to cover and there is only so much that can be covered before the money runs out.

Rachel Crisuolo 2 Tall Pines DR advocated for the BOE Budget. Special education numbers are increasing not only in our town but everywhere. The teachers work very hard. Anything you can do to support them, we should. She went over cutting staff and hiring less qualified staff sounds great but the benefit of keeping the qualified staff is better in the long run.

Jack Kiley stated we will not cut special ed, we have no plans to cut special ed.

Unidentified speaker representing the Board of Education stated there are only so many cuts we can make. Do we cut sports, special education programs? No good options. The money must come from somewhere.

Paula Jensen stated per legal we can not cut pt, speech for special education students.

Rachel Crisuolo agreed hours can't be cut. She stated when you have a Group of five children it is very difficult to get anything done. It really needs to be one on one instruction.

Tanya Carver 1 Old Moose Hill RD thanked the board for their time going over the budgets as she sat in most meetings. She also sat in the meeting with the Board of Education. She understands their requested budget. She asked why there was any need for a superintendent assistant. The salary is very high. Eliminating that position would free money to help with the board of education's concerns of where they would have to cut their budget. She also asked about the first selectman salary. Stating there was an \$84,000 max salary cap and Make sure we are following their tenure and not past history.

First Selectman George Temple responded. Praised the board of education for the jobs they do in the budget they presented. He assured everyone that as a town much is contributed to the schools. Example, the new school that was built. All that money came from the town side. Unfortunately we have to pay that check now. We need to encourage business development in the appropriate places to increase revenue. We have a good workforce. We have patience and it is going to hurt a little. The Board Of Finance does a great service and made cuts where they could. We are looking for a grant for the HVAC systems for the schools, fixing the bathrooms. We are doing well. But there are things that have been neglected and now must be addressed. We have had to increase our police department. We have officers at our schools. We purchased a new fire truck. These things cost money and had to be done.

Amanda Burlinson 339 Chestnut Tree Hill RD, Stated she supports the proposed BOE budget. That 75% of the budget is contractual. Leaving only 25% where cuts can be made. Cutting the budget would result in hardships to our children. Staff and teachers need proper funding. Asked the cuts be put back as much as possible and the importance of this. Noting the effect it would have on the children and staff. Stated most elementary schools have a Principal and a vice principal. Oxford does not. Asked for reconsideration of the cuts made.

Jack Kiley responded, noting the surplus in the past years.

Christopher Mainor 10 Sioux DR discussed the Town Clerk's Office. Stating how well it's run. Understands the tough times, decisions have to be made. Asked for reconsideration of the minimal cuts that were requested from the office.

Mary Beth Nelson 80 Coppermine RD Asked if the Board of Ed haste add one or two students in August that have to go out of district where does the money come from? Does the Board Of

Ed have to come up with the money or is it refunded to them from the state. Talked about the quality of the schools in the town.

Paula Guillet 175 Good Hill RD Stated she supports the town budget and the education budget. Pointed out: The town budget is scrutinized and education salaries are higher than town hall employees. The enrollment is 15% lower. But administration salaries of the board of Ed, is 75% higher.

Rachel Crisuolo 2 Tall Pines DR discussed how teachers and parents are furnishing supplies for students. Teachers are making less than what is stated on the budget due to them purchasing supplies for their classrooms.

Jack Kiley noted they do not have control of the operating budget of the Board of Education. They are given one lump sum and they do with it as they need,

Dr. Robert Miller 21 Hogs Back Rd -BOE REP (superintendent) discussed salaries of staff. Added positions, supplies.

Paula Guillet 175 Good Hill RD wanted to clarify her previous remarks, she was not saying previously that she was not suggesting teachers are overpaid. Just there is a difference from other towns. When she discussed salary she was including the superintendence salary with the Finance Director combined are 75% higher than what they were a decade ago.

Jack Kiley talked about school enrollment is down, you still need the special classes. Class size may be smaller. But we need to offer them.

Charlene Yacovelli 229 Riggs ST discussed enrollment. Stating enrollment seems to be picking up in town.

Jack Kiley addressed all in attendance that the board will go over the budget and encouraged people to vote. Thanked everyone for their time.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm

Submitted By



Kathleen Sundstrom
Clerk

22 MAY 16 AM 11:13
TOWN OF OXFORD, CT
TOWN CLERK
Christina A. West