

Minutes

Public Hearing

Board of Finance

Special Meeting

April 17, 2023

Attendance: Chairman Jack Kiley, Dana Flach, Susan Arpin, Paula Jensen, and Jim Hliva (Finance Director).

Chairman Jack Kiley opened the meeting at 7:32

Chairman Jack Kiley addressed the audience by discussing the Proposed Budget for the 2023/2024 year. He went on to say that there are many considerations working on the budget. We believe it is a fair budget. Inflation is up, interest keeps going up. Also our Bonded debt is up.

We need to Take care of projects that are necessary. Those projects are in the Capital Plan. They are the pool heater at the high school, the sewer pump for Water Pollution Control Authority, the roof at Great Oak School, the driveway at Great Oak School, the bathrooms at Great Oak School, the boiler at Public Works, the oil separator at Public Works, and the vehicle for the Fire Marshal. Some of these are urgent repairs or replacements. The Capital Plan is 1,325.000.

High school pool heater \$500.000

WPCA sewer pump \$400.000

Great Oak School roof \$150.000

Great Oak School driveway \$80.000

Great Oak School bathrooms \$120.000

Public Works boiler \$20.000

Public Works oil separator \$5000

Fire Marshal Vehicle \$50.000

Chairman Jack Kiley discussed the Grand List is \$1.7 billion with an increase of \$48 million. 1.3 million is what it accounts to. \$54,960,000, taking 1 million out of the surplus. 2.1 million has been pledged. We need to keep \$5 million if we have to bond, this gives us a lower rate.

In 8 years the mill rate didn't go up. This would be a .3% increase of the mill rate, 25.12 would be the mill rate.

With the budget we want to keep low taxes, public safety, and education as a top priority.

Bill Miller questioned the mill rate. 1.77 based on spending is over 2 Mills. Mr. Miller is concerned about the spending.

Chairman Jack Kiley stated each department has had raises, insurance costs are up, pension costs are up, certain expenses. We would like to be more computerized for the town. To do that we must spend the money. Education is up \$1 million dollars. Their request was for more. Last year we did not do any Capital Projects. We have let many projects go. Now many of those projects need to be done, maintenance needs to be done, with some of the new projects we have to go backwards and fix an issue before the new project can be done. Expenses have risen and we have tried to do our best.

Victor Tomporowski asked if we received a grant for heating and ventilation.

Chairman Jack Kiley stated the town cost for this project would cost the town 20% of the cost. There is money to fix the schools.

Mike Koosa from 63 Old Church Road spoke on the Board of Education, stating the board's request was for \$34,427,822. There was a special request before the meeting for special education funds for an additional \$250,000.

Superintendent Robert Miller stated that our budget is not packed, it's transparent. We are looking at what to cut. He went on to say that as of now they are preparing for the worst case scenario. 15 to 20 positions possibly being cut.

Would like the Board of Finance to be aware of what we are looking at. We are here for the children. We are concerned how it will impact the children.

Chairman Jack Kiley praised the Board of Education for how they present their budget. They do a thorough job and we thank them. There are always ways to cut some things out. We have looked at other towns and we are in tune with them. We have obligations on the town side we need to finish. We will consider the \$250,000.

Victoria Konopka, 14 Woodside ave stated she is supporting the library.

Selectman Arnold Jensen asked the Board to check line item civil preparation's meals, believing there is an error.

Director of library Robbie Costigan discusses the importance of the service of the library and positions. She asked the board to reconsider their decision. They are a main resource for children. Taking away will remove access to services for adult patrons. This would sever your ability for research. This is a critical part, and would have a negative effect on the community.

Chairman Jack Kiley asked if any services are being duplicated.

Director Robbie Costigan stated no services are being duplicated with the school.

Kathrine Hellman 33 Hawkeye rd discussed the importance of the adult services librarian, \$5,000 to \$10,000 is donated to the library that is not in the budget. Friends of the library won't be able to support the library if we don't have this liaison. She asked the board to reconsider taking the position away.

Fire Chief Scott Peletier thanked the Board of Finance and discussed cleaning services. He discussed how training has gone up, and the call volume is higher. Asking the board to take another look at this before their final decision. As volunteers they do their very best.

Amy Sarris 120 Freeman Rd. Discussed she has two children in the town school system. Stated she has concerns where the budget is going. There is no librarian in the middle school or the high school. If education isn't maintained and growing,

we will end up with bigger issues. She asked the board to reconsider their decision.

Bob Wheeler 17 Maintook rd told the board that he supports the Board of Education budget and asked the Board of Finance to reconsider.

Dave McKane 11 Tram Dr asked about the 10th of the mil being 1.7 to move the budget. He is in favor of adding back the librarian position. He also asked for the cleaning services to be put back for the fire department. Stating it won't change the mill rate at all.

Superintendent Roger Miller discussed that there is no librarian in the middle school or the high school for the last two years. When we go for accreditation this will be a problem. He went on to say that they do not have many areas to cut. Reductions would put the children at risk. He asked the board to reconsider before their final decision.

Chairman Jack Kiley asked if the library was used for research.

Mr Miller discussed whether it is a combination of both. Books and digital research is done to find Content to answer questions for research papers. This is vital for the schools.

Sharon Labanski 400 Boulder Pass rd discussed how she is a new member of the community. Her family moved in during the past summer. Her family came here for the education her children would receive. She stated resources are barely holding together. She went on to say children's needs change on a yearly basis. Library does impact her son a avid reader. He depends on the school library to check out books. Her daughter goes to the library and enjoys taking out books. She asked the board to not cut the resources for the adults or the children. We need both.

Chairman Jack Kiley reminded the Board of Education of the capital projects we are doing. We are maintaining your buildings.

Debbie Sherman 7 Perkins rd asked about bathroom funds.

Chairman Jack Kiley stated it will come out of general funds. This is a \$1.4 million project that never got finished. Funds were used for other things.. We did put funds last year for the bathrooms, to have the bathrooms completed. The funds given were not used for the bathrooms to be completed.

Lisa Suttile 1 Sarah Dr asked where the funds were going to come from for the roof, driveway in the bathrooms.

German Jack Kiley stated out of the Capital Budget.

Chairman Jack highly thanked everyone for attending.

Chairman Jack Kiley motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 PM, this was seconded by Dana Flach.
Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted By

Kathleen Sundstrom

Kathleen Sundstrom

Clerk

2023 MAY -1 AM 10:18
TOWN OF OXFORD, CT
Dana Flach
TOWN CLERK