

**MINUTES
PUBLIC HEARING
BOARD OF FINANCE – 2018 / 2019 BUDGET REVIEW
QUAKER FARMS SCHOOL
MONDAY, APRIL 23, 2018 – 7:00 P.M.**

Present: Chairman Jack Kiley; Robert DeBisschop; Paula Jensen; Sue Arpin; Dana Flach; James Hliva, Finance Director. Absent: Jeff Grant

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Kiley at 7:00 p.m. and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mr. Kiley gave an opening statement regarding the goal of the Board of Finance to achieve a 2018/2019 budget.

The total spending amount of the budget is **\$47,826,358** and is broken down as follows: Board of Education: \$29,929,048; Municipal (Town Government) budget: \$15,876,083; Roads: \$750,000; Capital Budget: \$1,271,227 (most requests were passed).

Revenues projected include: Grand List: \$35,072,383; Other (includes money from State, Town fees, licenses): \$10,253,976; \$1,750,000 out of Fund Balance (to relieve taxpayers). This has been done for a couple of years. Began the year with \$16MM in fund balance. Town is required to have 10% in fund balance (\$4,700,000).

State reinstated \$ 3.7MM along with an additional \$489,000.

Points of interest: Board of Education was looking for \$1.3MM (4.49% increase requested). Actual increase to BOE is \$600,000 (slightly less than 2% increase).

Town spending has gone up. Capital projects were reduced for this year (\$1.2MM). Mill rate is going up. Last year State took \$5MM. With a big fund balance, the State will cut again.

State has threatened to make Town pick up teachers' pensions in future. Town currently does not pay for teachers' pensions (approximately \$1.3MM).

Debt balance is approximately \$29MM. New school will cost over \$33MM (will be bonded); the library \$2MM excess. There are still repairs to be done to Great Oak Middle School and Oxford High.

Town is growing. All departments are growing (i.e., Police, Fire Department, Public Works) thus there is more demand for services.

Mr. Kiley introduced the Board of Finance members to the audience. The changes to the budget can go up or down, but once the budget reaches the Town Meeting, the amount can only go down. At this point, Mr. Kiley invited audience members to speak.

Scott Pelletier, 222, Christian Street, Oxford, CT

Mr. Pelletier is the Oxford Fire Marshal and Fire Chief. He is asking that the Fire Marshal/Fire Chief Clerk be reinstated. The department has been requesting that this position be made full-time. The volunteer clerk would like to leave the position and the full-time position be revisited.

Regarding the Fire Marshal's budget, he asked to have the \$8,000 for the third deputy be reinstated. He also requested that \$300 be reinstated for Publications and Computer software. This \$300 is for State codes.

Tanya Carver, _____ Road, Oxford, CT

Ms. Carver did not represent any department, but spoke as a private citizen. She presented a question regarding the reason for the increase in mill rate and increase in salaries.

Mr. Kiley repeated his earlier explanation regarding the increase. There is a \$200,000 increase in total spending for the Town. He explained that \$1.75MM will be going into the budget from the General Fund. The mill rate is going up 2.07 mills. This is the difference between what went into the General Fund last year (\$6MM) and what is going into the General Fund this year (\$1.75MM). Spending did not go up; General Fund went down.

Ms. Carver's second question was regarding the increase in salaries. She noted dramatic increases in wages (i.e., Dog Warden from \$12,000 to \$40,000, Town Clerk). She questioned cuts to Economic Development, Grant Writer.

Mr. Kiley explained that the increases were put in after the approval of 2017/2018 budget; the amounts were not budgeted and are not in the 2018/2019 budget. Last July 2017, six (6) people split between twelve (12) non-union people \$174,000. Some people got \$20,000 increases. This was presented to Board of Selectmen and over to Town Meeting but never came to Board of Finance. The Board of Finance had nothing to do with increases.

Ms. Carver asked if there would be an opportunity to decrease salaries. Mr. Kiley stated that the Board of Finance does not have the power to deal with salaries. They do, however, have the power to not fund positions to make up the decrease.

Ms. Carver asked why the difference in selectmen salaries. Mr. Kiley responded that Mr. Haney has been in office for 7 years and Mr. Flaherty has just been elected.

Victor Tomporowski, 20 Hawley Road, Oxford, CT

Mr. Tomporowski is speaking as a member of the Board of Education. He questioned the reason for the cut to the requested increase. He spoke to the upcoming needs to the schools districtwide.

Mr. Kiley explained that Mr. Tomporowski is referring to the Operating Budget, which takes care of all general expenses of the schools. The Town contributes to the Capital Budget. The new school, the computer system are all part of the Capital Budget. The BOE budget is 70% of the Town budget.

Mr. Tomporowski continued his comments regarding the needs of the schools, regarding technology needs, safety, programs. He also stated that he did not believe that the Board of Finance had no knowledge of the wage increases.

Mr. Kiley reiterated that nothing came to the Board of Finance. Ms. Flach also commented that the increases were not included in last year's budget and the overages were put into the Selectmen's budget. The Board of Finance has nothing to do with the increases.

Amy Cote, 42 Newgate Road, Oxford, CT

Ms. Cote is a member of the Board of Education. She noted that the budget decrease is \$600,000. She would like to see the Social Worker put back into the budget. She also discussed what the increase to the budget would be if people decided to take the medical.

Mr. Kiley explained that the Board of Education can always come back to the Board of Selectmen and the Board of Finance if they find any shortfall. He also explained that some assistant positions were not funded.

Paula Guillette, 75, Goodhill Road, Oxford, CT

Ms. Guillette commented that she did not see anything set out in the Town budget for Education. Superintendent Ana Ortiz noted that the BOE budget is on the BOE website. The Board of Finance clerk provided Ms. Guillette with a copy of the Board of Education budget. She commented the townspeople do not have a say with how Board of Education money is spent.

Steve Kozek, 8 Evergreen Lane, Oxford, CT

Mr. Kozek is a member of the Board of Education. He noted that the budgeted \$600,000 increase does not cover contractual increases. He discussed all the upcoming needs for all the schools and students including technology, curriculum and teachers. He stated that Oxford is about 10 years behind other districts. He is asking for reconsideration of increasing the budget.

Mr. Kiley pointed out that Ms. Arpin, BOF Board member, is a former educator in Shelton and Mr. DeBisschop is a past Chairman of the BOE. He explained the expenses for other departments.

Linda Czaplinski, 33 Freeman Road, Oxford, CT

Ms. Czaplinski spoke as a resident of Oxford. She noted that money is not always the cure, that the Town historically has done better with less. If the Town is falling behind there are several

other issues to be looked at, i.e., accountability, quality of personnel, overall management and what comes from the State. She asked to not make everything about money.

Ms. Carver spoke again about the Education budget. Mr. Kiley assured her that the BOF returns to meet to discuss any comments presented at the Public Hearing. The next step is Town Meeting and if the budget is approved, it moves to Referendum.

Ms. Guillette returned to request about a line item for Administration in the Board of Education budget. Ms. Ortiz pointed out that there is a line in the budget for Administration and each school has line items breaking out Administration. Ms. Guillette questioned whether there is an actual total line item for total Administration and Ms. Ortiz stated that that has not been done for the last four years.

Marni Soss, 50 Ancient Highway, Oxford, CT

Ms. Soss is the Fire Department Clerk. She referenced the part-time Clerk to whom Mr. Pelletier referred. He is an 82 year old man who is looking to stop working with the Fire Department. Ms. Soss respectfully requested that the BOF restore the full-time clerk position to the budget.

Scott Flaherty, 265 Chestnut Hill Road, Oxford, CT


Mr. Flaherty is currently a Selectman for the Town. He expressed his concern regarding the Floater position which was cut from the budget. He feels it is advantageous to have this position. He also requested to have the Assessor position restored.


Mr. Kiley reiterated that the two part-time positions that were cut were not included in the previous year's budget. Therefore, the positions were not actually cut; they never existed. They were added after the budget. Mr. Flaherty requested that the positions be returned and Mr. Kiley told him that he needs to follow procedure, i.e. present to Board of Selectmen, so people have actual budgeted positions.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mr. Kiley made a Motion to adjourn. Ms. Flach seconded the Motion. All in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Lynnette Steeves, Clerk

18 APR 24 PM 4:05
TOWN OF OXFORD, CT

TOWN CLERK