



BOARD OF FINANCE

Clifford J. Hurgin Municipal Center, 1 School Street
Bethel, Connecticut 06801 Telephone: (203) 794-8501

Minutes of Public Hearing

Monday, March 23, 2015
7:30 P.M.

Bethel Middle School Auditorium, Bethel, CT 06801

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TOWN OF BETHEL
TOWN CLERK

Present: Bruce Cornwell, Chairman, William Kingston, Timothy Draper, Bruce Cornwell, Gary Reagan, Patricia Smithwick, Claudia Stephan, Eileen Freebairn. Also in attendance were Comptroller Robert Kozlowski, Board of Education Chairman Larry Craybas, Superintendent of Schools Christine Carver and Board of Education Director of Fiscal Services Theresa Yonsky.

Bruce Cornwell opened the Public Hearing at 7:30 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance and provided an overview of the Board of Finance actions regarding the budget process thus far.

Public Comments:

Anne Marie Heering, 4 Honey Hollow: Among other comments, she discussed the tax relief programs for the Veterans, elderly homeowners, disabled and blind residents. She has received phone calls in the Assessor's office stating that programs are being denied for deserving residents and she wanted to dismiss these remarks. She has also received phone calls wanting these programs to be cut from the budget and she said it is the duty of our community to support these programs and the budget being proposed.

Billy Michaels, Fleetwood Avenue: Among other comments, questioned what the Affordable Care Act and minimum wage would have on the budget.

Mary Liquori, 58 Old Hawleyville Rd: Among other comments, she shared that her son had a very positive interview and it was because of his transcript from Bethel High School and resume. She supports the budget as is and asked no cuts be made.

Bill Hillman, 86 Walnut Hill Rd: Among other comments, he felt that taxes were too high and wants to see an increase in the budget that would produce a zero change in the mill rate.

Cynthia McCorkindale, 19 Elgin Avenue: Among other comments, she was upset that an email went out through the school reminding everyone of the Public Hearing. She did not like that an email would be sent out that wasn't sent out to the entire town. She also wanted an explanation of how the school was trying to save money.

Eileen Goodrich, Aunts Patty's Lane: Among other comments, she thinks it is important to support the Town and Education budget. She and her husband have made a choice to retire in Bethel and it is because of the community and amenities. She wants to see the budget continue to support the schools and the library. Investing in the town is investing in community and this is the kind of wealth that is important to her.

Irene Drake, 5 Pleasant Rise: Among other comments, She introduced herself as the teacher union vice president and a third grade teacher at Rockwell school. She thinks students need better technology. The students have more social and academic expectations placed on them than ever before and more unfunded mandates. This is not something we should be fighting over on a local level. Support the budget and go to the state level to fight.

Kim Romero, 114 Chestnut Ridge Rd.: Among other comments, she is very pleased with the education her children get in the Bethel school system. She is concerned that if the budget does not pass then the student class size could be affected. She supports the budget.

Philip Gallagher, Sunset Hill Road, Among other comments, he thinks the charter change that allows the budget process to start earlier in the year will cause problems and should be thought through.

Courtney Martin, 38 Star Lane: Among other comments, she shared her respect for the Board of Education and the Board of Finance. She stated that the town taxpayers vote our Board of Education into office and the Board of Finance should trust and respect the budget they have decided on and let the town vote on it.

Jennifer Larson, 28 Grassy Plain St.: Among other comments, she asked if the student population was increasing or decreasing and was told that unlike surrounding towns it has remained stable. She was also interested in knowing if free lunches has increased and was told it had. She stated this was another reason why we needed to support the budget.

Bob Legnard, 11 Evergreen Drive: Among other comments, he stated that this is a good budget and it should go to vote. People move here for schools, good roads and our police. We pay for what we get, don't cut the budget and leave it- as is.

Matthew Knickerbocker, 10 Colonial Dr.: Among other comments, reminded everyone that both sides of the budget are important. The town budget includes school maintenance and debt service. The top three increases in our budget is employee health insurance, contract salary adjustments & highway department.

John Kelly, 74 Walnut Hill: Among other comments he questioned how the Affordable Care Act affected this budget.

Scott Clayton, 36 Linda Lane: Among other comments he stated that he grew up in Bethel and went through the school system. He shared that there are 80 unfunded

mandates that the school system are responsible for. It is frustrating but unfair to take out on students of Bethel. If we support the budget it will only be a long term benefit.

David Glahn, Elizabeth St., Among other comments, he questioned if the State of Connecticut owes the town money and if the town attorney was involved.

Mary O'Leary, 11 Terry Drive: Among other comments, she was disappointed that non government agencies had been cut from the budget. William Kingston, Board of Finance member, stated that he plans to propose restoration at the Board of Finance meeting.

Anna Marie Jone-George, 9 Hopkins Ct.: Among other comments, she said she supports the Bethel school system. She has a son on the spectrum and he is getting a quality education in Bethel. The schools have personally helped her and her family.

Susanne Rodgers, Westview Dr: Among other comments, she explained she is a 4th generation Bethel High School graduate and that she supports the school system. They provide a quality education and continue to give kids opportunities.

Paula Antolini, Jacobs Lane: Among other comments, questioned if seniority of a teacher affected whether they would have to be reallocated and asked if arts and music were a top priority in the budget.

Jeff Poklemba, 129 Grassy Plain Street: Among other comments, he questioned how much of the health insurance cost were paid by the teachers and town employees.

Cynthia McCorkindale, 19 Elgin Avenue: Among other comments, she questioned how much of the 85% increase in the school budget is for teacher's salaries. She was told it was 65% of the 85%.

Billy Michaels, Fleetwood Avenue, Among other comments, he questioned bonding and how much had been spent on road recovery.

As there were no further comments, Bruce Cornwell closed the Public Hearing at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dionne Craig, Recording Secretary