

**Board of Selectmen
Board of Finance
Board of Education
Town of East Windsor
11 Rye Street
East Windsor, CT**

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING,
November 30, 2011 at 6:30 p.m.**

These minutes are not official until approved at a subsequent meeting.

Board of Selectmen

Members Present: Denise Menard, Alan Baker, Dale Nelson, Richard P. Pippin, Jr.,
and James C. Richards

Members Absent: None

Board of Finance

Members Present: Jason Bowsza, Marie DeSousa, Danelle Godeck, Kathleen Pippin,
Joseph Pellegrini, Jerilyn Corso, and Paulette Broder (Alternate)

Members Absent: Jamie Daniel (Alternate)

Board of Education

Members Present: Cathy Simonelli, Chris Mickey, Bill Raber, Nichole DeSousa, Bob
Maynard, and Bill Schultz

Members Absent: Leslie Hunt

Others: Theresa Kane, Catherine Cabral, John Burnham, Lois Noble, Dave
Menard, and others

Press: L. Smith (Patch.com)

I. Call to Order

First Selectwoman Denise Menard called the Special Joint Meeting to Order at 6:32 p.m., in the East Windsor Town Hall.

II. Attendance

Ms. Menard thanked all who were in attendance. She indicated she would like to turn the meeting over to the Chairman of the Board of Finance, Jason Bowsza to conduct the meeting. She explained that the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen both sign the letter going to the departments regarding the budget process for the next budget season.

III. Public Participation

Ms. Menard asked if anyone in the audience had any public comment or input in regards to this meeting. No one responded and Ms. Menard turned the meeting over to Mr. Bowsza to conduct same.

IV. Discussion of 2012-2013 Budget Guidelines

Mr. Bowsza indicated this meeting is the first of many meetings which will discuss the upcoming budget season. The three Boards which are present today are being brought to together to outline the goals of each Board and to improve communications between all of the Boards during the budget process. In years past, the budget process was not a smooth one. The approach this year is to work together and share the goals of each of the three Boards.

He gave to each of the Board Members from each of the Boards, a copy of the budget letter which has been sent to the departments in the last two years. Ms. Menard and Mr. Bowsza discussed the contents of the letter briefly. He asked each person at the meeting to voice their thoughts on the letter. The comments began with Ms. Dale Nelson, Selectwoman. She indicated the letter is specific referencing no increases and to make sure any expenses are documented. The present economy is still the same as it has been in the past two years and expects it to be the same way for this coming year. Ms. Danelle Godeck, Board of Finance Member, agreed with Ms. Nelson saying in the past couple of years it has been a difficult economy and this year is no different. Budgets should be at a zero growth without sacrificing services of the Town. Ms. Jerilyn Corso, Board of Finance Member agreed. Mr. Joseph Pellegrini inquired as to what is the projection from the State as to funding. Mr. Bowsza gave to all who were in attendance a sheet indicating the projections for State funding for the upcoming year. He indicated that according to today, flat funding is expected for the upcoming year and should be the same as last year approximately \$5.9 Million.

The discussion continued about projected revenues of the Town and the Grand List. Ms. Menard indicated it was too early to project the Grand List figures, but reminded everyone last year's tax collection rate was excellent at 103% collected, however, some of those collections were from delinquent taxes collected and that revenue will not be there this upcoming year. She also explained it is challenging trying to plan budgets before the actual numbers are confirmed.

The conversation continued with Mr. Bowsza and Ms. Cabral speaking about revenues and State funding. Mr. Bowsza indicated that funding for municipal aid will be flat funded. Although Ms. Cabral cautioned that in speaking with Mr. Ben Barnes from the State of Connecticut, he has been speaking of mid-term changes in monies for municipal aid and it may not be the same and may affect the ECS Grant as well. Ms. Menard remarked she has spoken to a representative from CIRMA who spends a lot of time at the Capitol and he is hearing about surplus; however, she is cautious of anything that is said.

The discussion continued about current contracts and possible increases those contracts have. Ms. Menard indicated two contracts are frozen salaries and the clerical union has an increase, however, that increase is very conservative. She inquired about the teachers'

contract. She was told that last year the teachers did not take an increase, but the upcoming year the increase is 1%. The question regarding the insurance benefits, such as health care and what the projects might be for that cost for the next budget season. Ms. Menard indicated she has spoken to the insurance broker and she has asked about a project in health insurance costs. The broker will try to lay out a fair plan without additional costs and the teachers' insurance is set with no changes to be made. Ms. Cathy Simonelli, Member of the Board of Education, indicated that this year is the same but next year a slight increase of co-pays is expected. The discussion continued around the health insurance and the negotiations of same.

Mr. Bowsza remarked that the general consensus of everyone was that increases due to contractual obligations will be entertained and level services budget should be requested of all departments. Dr. Theresa Kane, Superintendent of Schools, commented that this is her first budget season and she is new to the procedures of the Town. It was explained that letter which is signed by both the First Selectman, representing the Board of Selectmen and Mr. Jason Bowsza, Chairman of the Board of Finance, will sign a letter addressed to all departments, Boards and Commissions regarding the budget season and what is expected for the upcoming budget. Ms. Menard will bring a draft of the letter to the Board of Selectmen for their approval as will the Chairman of the Board of Finance share the letter with his Board for their approval as well. The letter will give a timeline for the budget process, which is dictated by the Town Charter. Budget requests are asked to be filed electronically to save on paper and copying costs. Level service budget seems reasonable to start the process. Maintaining the services of the Town is the main priority.

A question was asked by a Board of Education Member regarding State mandates and how those mandates are going to be met. A reminder of the current MBR problem which the Board of Education is currently dealing with the State of Connecticut Department of Education and how to avoid same in the future. Ms. Menard indicated that at the next Board of Selectmen Meeting on December 6, 2011, Mr. Kevin Chambers and Mr. Brian Mahoney will be attending that meeting to address questions and give an explanation of the MBR accounting.

The discussion continued regarding the Charter and what the requirements are of Boards and Commissions in reporting their finances, in particular, departments having over \$15,000 in funds must produce an audit to the Boards. In the past, some departments have not been forthcoming with their audits. It is Charter driven and those audits must be given to the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance before any budget requests are entertained.

Ms. Marie DeSousa, Member of the Board of Finance spoke. She indicated she agrees with 95% of what has been said at this meeting; however, she has a couple of concerns. Those concerns being the Town's infrastructure, funds for emergency situations,

attracting businesses to the Route 140 corridor and giving more money to the EDC to assist in attracting new businesses. She also agrees with comments made by Mr. Pippin regarding the audits and those departments which have not been forthcoming. She is not accusing those who have not given audits as doing any wrong doings; but gave examples of certain entities giving an audit and showing financial statements of monies which are held in savings.

Concerns regarding MBR and being in compliance with the mandated MBR and how the Board of Education will meet those requirements in the future were discussed. The timeline issue of when the State of Connecticut advises municipalities of how much money is required to be in compliance.

A discussion was then held regarding the Charter driven 2% budget increase after three failed referendums and what the goals of the Boards are in presenting a budget to the public. The thought of presenting a budget just under the 2% increase was discussed. It was mentioned the reason for the Charter driven 2% was to keep the operational budget increased, even if only slightly, throughout the years. It was also discussed that any budget proposals that are presented to the public need to be presented as a unified group and the budget needs to be justified to the public. Mr. Bowsza explained the opportunity to sell the budget to the public begins at the first public hearing wherein the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education present their budgets to the public and to the Board of Finance. At that hearing, the public has an opportunity to comment regarding the proposals. It was mentioned by Ms. Nichole DeSousa that the presentation to the public should explain the spending increase and the tax increase. Mr. Bowsza suggested that the Board of Selectmen should try to incorporate in their budget regionalization of services development. If the opportunity arises, any services which can be shared with other towns to lower expenses should be explored.

Ms. Menard indicated she agreed with a level service budget, but reminded everyone of the past year and all the emergencies which have happened including the snow storms, hurricane, and the most recent snow storm and all of the debris removal which was unexpected. The emergencies have to be paid for and usually come from the contingency account. The account needs to be replenished and plans need to be made for future emergencies and/or unexpected expenses. She also agreed with the suggestions made by Mr. Pippin and Ms. DeSousa regarding the audits for departments with budgets over \$15,000 and will request same in the budget letter. It was indicated those audits are addressed in the Charter. It was suggested if the audits are not submitted, funds will be withheld from those budgets until an audit is received.

A brief discussion continued regarding the Charter and the request for a level service budget.

Mr. Bowsza thanked all who attended the meeting and hopes to continue such an open dialog between the Boards during this upcoming budget season.

V. Adjournment

It was **MOVED** (DeSousa, M.) and **SECONDED** (Nelson) and **PASSED** (U) that the Board of Selectmen/Board of Finance/Board of Education adjourn the Joint Meeting of November 30, 2011 at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Denise M. Piotrowicz
Recording Secretary