

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

**MINUTES OF BUDGET WORKSHOP – SPECIAL MEETING
Wednesday, March 31, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.**

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

Members Present: Jack Mannette, Danelle E. Godeck, Robert Little, Kathleen Pippin, Jason Bowsza, and Marie DeSousa
Members Absent: None
Alternates Present: Jamie Daniels
Alternate Absent: Thomas Baker
Others: Catherine Cabral, Timothy Howes, Mark Simmons, Chief Edward DeMarco and other townspeople
Press: None

Chairman Jack Mannette called the Budget Workshop Special Meeting to Order at 7:00 p.m., in the East Windsor High School, Board of Education Meeting Room, 70 Main Street, East Windsor, Connecticut.

Chairman Jack Mannette instructed the Board that at last night's meeting, the Contingency Fund Line 8410 was where the meeting stopped. Ms. Catherine Cabral gave all of the Board Members a copy of the charter wherein it discusses the contingency fund. According to Section 8-6(A) of the Charter it states: "The estimate of expenditures submitted by the Board of Finance to the Budget Meeting shall include a recommendation for a contingency fund which shall not exceed three percent (3%) of the total expenditures for the proposed fiscal year. No expenditure or transfer may be made from this contingency fund without approval of the Board of Finance, or as otherwise provided for in this Charter." Mr. Mannette indicated for years the contingency fund was listed at \$50,000, but currently being requested is \$150,000. He asked if the Board had any objections of leaving the \$150,000 in that line. No objections were made.

The next line item was cemeteries. The discussion began wherein it was indicated the Board of Selectman did not change the amount budgeted from last year and has kept this amount at \$18,000. Ms. Kathleen Pippin questioned the town funding the cemeteries. Mr. Mannette indicated for years the town has funded the cemeteries, but recently has cut those funds. Mr. Jason Bowsza mentioned this line item has been cut from \$30,000 to \$20,000 and now it has been cut an additional \$2000 to \$18,000. A report was issued by the government indicating the cemeteries can afford not being funded by the towns. Therefore, the cemeteries have agreed to accept a lesser amount. Ms. Kathleen Pippin thought the cemeteries should become independent as possible and support themselves considering their bank accounts and assets. Ms. Danelle Godeck indicated in the future,

discussion should be had regarding funding cemeteries. It was decided to leave the \$18,000 funding for cemeteries.

The line item Info Tech – IT was the next subject discussed. This is a shared service between the town offices and the Board of Education. There are two people who provide support, one of which volunteers most of his time. The amount of \$14,000 was added to this line to help support the police station. Chief DeMarco, who was in attendance, gave the Board a brief description of what services would be included in this figure. He also mentioned some funds coming from CROG. Ms. Cabral indicated this figure has always been in the budget, but it was moved from a different category.

A lengthy discussion was held between Ms. Godeck and Ms. Cabral regarding telephone and internet services. Ms. Cabral indicated the services were just reviewed and a new plan is in place; however, not much savings has been had.

The miscellaneous line item was briefly discussed. This category groups together the Historical Society and Historical Commission. Requests for these commissions are approximately \$1750, a decrease from \$2000. Board Members had questions of what the difference between Historical Society and Historical Commission. Selectman Mark Simmons answered those questions indicating the Commission is responsible for the older homes and structures in town and the Society is responsible for the history of the town.

Mr. Mannette asked the Board if they wanted to discuss the capital improvement budget requests. The East Road project was mentioned and allocating \$126,000 for the project; however, more information will be forthcoming. Mr. Bowsza and Ms. DeSousa indicated the budget requests are not unreasonable. Mr. Mannette wanted to know if any major capital requests which were not funded. Selectman Mark Simmons responded that all of the requests are needed just to keep up with maintenance. Additional projects were requested from Parks and Recreation, which were not entertained; such as, swimming pool and storage building. Mr. Mannette inquired if any of the projects which were rejected will affect North Road development. Mr. Simmons did not believe so. Mr. Mannette asked Mr. Timothy Howes, Superintendent of Schools, to elaborate in more detail his request for a van. Mr. Howes indicated the two vans which the Board of Education now has, both have over 200,000 miles. One van is a 1984 and the other is 1998. Mr. Simmons commented that after the public hearing, many townspeople were questioning the cost of the van. The van is ADA accessible and is capable of carrying fifteen passengers. This van is not a normal family van. Mr. Mannette inquired if any grants could be received to help fund the van. Mr. Howes indicated if there were grants to be had, he would apply for same.

Debt service was the next topic for discussion. Mr. Mannette indicated these figures really can not be changed. Ms. Cabral instructed the Board at a subsequent meeting this month, she will be able to give better projected amounts. She does not believe the amounts will be higher.

Ms. Cabral also wanted to instruct the Board that she had spoken with First Selectman Denise Menard regarding questions of the legal line in the Board of Selectman's Proposed Budget. Ms. Menard indicated the amount of pending law suits are lower than previous years; however, there are several outstanding matters pending. She did not feel the legal line could be reduced any further under \$150,000.

Mr. Mannette asked the Board to discuss the Board of Education Proposed Budget. He informed the Board that Mr. Timothy Howes, Superintendent of Schools, is present at this meeting and will answer any questions they may have. Ms. DeSousa asked Mr. Howes since he has submitted his budget and watching the surrounding towns struggle with their budget process, what areas could be reduced. Mr. Howes began talking about the SFSF Educational Grants. Mr. Howes gave the Board a brief explanation of how the monies are given to towns and how the funds are expended by the Board of Education. He recently attended a conference regarding the ECS budgets. Representatives from surrounding towns were in attendance. Some towns have put the grant monies in the general fund and others have a grant fund. Ms. Cabral indicated currently the town uses a grant fund. Questions concerning how this grant money is accounted for and which government body needs to be reported to. Ms. Cabral has asked Ms. Leslie Zoll of Blum & Shapario to give her a written opinion on how to report this revenue.

Mr. Mannette began to discuss the revenue report. Mr. Mannette wanted an explanation of the why the rental income has decreased. Ms. Cabral indicated there are several apartments which are not filled and rental income of the farmland is significantly lower. Mr. Mannette and Mr. Little voiced their concerns with the farmland rental income. Ms. DeSousa indicated that in previous years the intent to lease the land to the farmers, at a nominal fee, would keep the fields kept up. The farmers would be the caretakers of the land. Ms. Pippin inquired as to the length of the current leases. The issue of the rental income for the ambulance is only approximately \$3700. Mr. Mannette requested if Ms. Cabral could speak with First Selectman Denise Menard, and have a report compiled explaining in detail all of the rental income for the town. Mr. Mannette continued to go through the report including the Town Clerk's Office which is projecting a decrease in revenue. A discussion between Mr. Mannette and Ms. Cabral took place discussing conveyance tax revenue and the current economic conditions.

Mr. Mannette addressed the Board regarding a discussion which was held at last night's meeting, the issue of anticipated tax collection. Mr. Mannette remarked that it should be anticipated a shortfall in tax collection revenue. Historically a 97%-98% shortfall has been had. Mr. Mannette felt it is important to address this matter and to bring it to a conclusion. Ms. Cabral has given the Board Members a chart indicating revenue percentages and the revenue shortfall to be anticipated. A discussion was held between the Board Members ranging the percentage from 3% to 1.5%. Mr. Robert Little moved to range the collection at 2%. The motion was not seconded. Ms. DeSousa moved to gradually start at 99.5% and next year revisit this issue. Ms. Godeck seconded the motion. A discussion was held among the Board Members. Mr. Mannette didn't believe a .5% was enough and recommended an additional .5%. Ms. Cabral agreed with a

gradually implementing this plan. Ms. DeSousa suggested at the next public hearing scheduled for April 24, 2010, this subject should be addressed.

It was **MOVED** (DeSousa) and **SECONDED** (Godeck) and **PASSED** (3-2) that the Board of Finance recommends the anticipated tax collection should gradually start to project tax collection at 99.5% and next year revisit the issue.

Mr. Mannette again addressed the Board asking if any other questions or issues needed to be discussed. The first review of the budget has been completed and an additional \$363,000 has been added. Ms. Cabral indicated she would have new reports and figures for all Board Members at the next meeting. Mr. Mannette wanted to have a discussion with Board Members as how to approach the taxpayers of the town with the current budget and how will it be presented. Mr. Mannette requested a mill rate summary report from Ms. Cabral. Ms. Cabral indicated for the next meeting, she will compile reports regarding revenues, mill rate comparisons, tax increases, and charter default figures for the Board to review and discuss.

A discussion was held among the Board Members and Mr. Simmons regarding town forums and explaining to the community the budget process. Mr. Simmons invited the Board Members to any of the meetings scheduled within the town.

It was **MOVED** (Little) and **SECONDED** (Bowsza) and **PASSED** (U) that the Board of Finance adjourns the March 31, 2010 Budget Workshop Special Meeting at 8:17 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Denise M. Piotrowicz
Recording Secretary