

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

MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING, Wednesday, May 12, 2010 at 6:00 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 Daniel
Alternate Absent: Thomas Baker (arrived at 7:00 p.m.)
Others: Denise Menard, John L. Burnham, Richard P. Pippin, Jr., Mark Simmons, Gilbert Hayes, Catherine Cabral, Timothy Howes, Dale Nelson, and a approximately a hundred townspeople
Press: K. Loucks (Journal Inquirer)

Chairman Jack Mannette called the Public Hearing to Order at 6:00 p.m., in the East Windsor High School Cafeteria, 70 Main Street, East Windsor, Connecticut.

Mr. Mannette asked any person who wishes to speak to the Board of Finance regarding the budget issues, keep their comments brief and not to exceed three minutes. He also asked if they could sign their names and give their addresses on a list pad which was placed on the Board of Finance table. There were 28 names on the list.

Fran Lowell, 37 Graham Road addressed the hearing. She could not believe the outcome of the budget referendum yesterday, with an astronomical 2-1 voting no. She did not want to a repeat of last night's meeting, but wanted to know where the money was going to come from for the services in town, such as, fire department, police department, and ambulance. She has grandchildren in town attending the schools and she wants the best education for her grandchildren. Cutting from the Board of Education budget is not the solution. She understands the increases in salaries and benefits are contractual and nothing can be done until this summer when the contract with the teacher's union will be renegotiated. She then began speaking about the pot holes in town and whose fault it is going to be when her car gets damaged due to the pot holes. She explained she has lived in the town for 15 years and 5 years ago she and her husband had to make a decision to stay or leave East Windsor. They chose to stay. She understands the hard times everyone has been feeling, she has felt the hard economic times as well. She inquired if anyone had any answers or solutions to help the Board of Finance balance the budget.

Bob Maynard, 7 Blue Heron addressed the hearing. He inquired if the Board of Finance could add a second question to the ballot during the referendum to find out what the

voters want, rather than just a yes or no on the ballot. The second question should inquire if the budget should go up or down so the Board will have some idea of what the public wants. As far as the vote yesterday, he would like the proposed budgets of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Finance to be approved and not rejected.

Chairman Jack Mannette indicated to Mr. Maynard that Somers has put an advisory question on their ballots and that information will be sent over here so town officials can review same and possibly have the advisory questions put on the ballots next budget season.

Mel Speilberg, 244 Rye Street addressed the Board. He indicated he was at the hearing to support the Warehouse Point Public Library. He believes the Warehouse Point Public Library is a very important service to the town. He was there to represent his wife, who could not attend the hearing. He understands the importance of property values, but he believes there should not be any more cuts to the library. The library is an important part of the community for the children and senior citizens and every citizen in between, including the signers of the petition that was given to the Board a few weeks ago.

Bill Loos, 44 Melrose Road addressed the Board. He indicated he was happy that the budget was voted down. Many people in the town cannot afford an increase in their taxes, especially a 16 % increase. His suggestion was to close down the East Windsor High School and have the high school students go to surrounding town's high schools, such as, Windsor Locks or South Windsor. He believes the tuition for each student would be cheaper than the cost of running the high school. A question from the audience was asked if anyone spoke to Windsor Locks or South Windsor. Mr. Loos indicated Windsor Locks has been approached and would be glad to take East Windsor students. He indicated many school districts in the State of Connecticut are run very well and have large student populations. Those districts try to get athletes for their districts. He commended the Board of Selectmen for their efforts in keeping the budget only at a 2.1% increase, but is very upset that the Board of Education is looking for a 7% increase. He indicated the town cannot keep paying the cost of running the schools when the town is in need of road repairs, garbage pick-ups, and recreation. The school budget is stealing from all other departments. He again reiterated his opinion of closing the high school to save a lot of money.

Robert Cleveland, Melrose Road addressed the Board. He discussed that raising taxes is not the answer to solving the problem the Town of East Windsor has that it is only a band-aid. Unable to fix the problem of a shortfall of revenue; he feels it goes all the way to the US Senate and US Congress in Washington D.C. He believes that East Windsor along with all the other towns in the State of Connecticut, need to get together with Governor Jodi Rell and all the governors of all of the fifty states to bring this back around and pass regulation on the big oil companies. Diesel fuel is used for transportation across America for goods and services. The schools should be heated with diesel fuel and the heating bill would be cut in half along with the electric bill. If big oil was regulated, it would save the town a lot of money. He has lived in this town since 1952 and in 1955 the town decided to buy the property to build the high school. He told the town at that

time not to purchase the property and build. We must stand together or divided we fall. We must bring price controls to keep expenses down. He then spoke about what he read in the newspaper recently regarding current payrolls of some Board of Education employees. The newspaper indicated some payrolls are over \$100,000, he suggests to control the budget those salaries should be cut to a flat rate of \$50,000. He believes these salaries are too high.

Cathy Simonelli, 71 Depot Street, addressed the Board. She did not know where to begin. She is having trouble comprehending the results of the referendum on May 11, 2010 wherein the budget was defeated by a 2-1 margin. She drove through town today and saw signs on lawns supporting the East Windsor Ambulance yet the same lawn had a sign to vote no on the budget. She does not understand how the citizens can vote no for the budget, yet support the ambulance. She felt the citizens want all the services, yet do not want to pay for it. She voted yes for the budget. She is in the minority since the citizens have spoken and defeated the budget. She does not believe services should be decreased. In order to decrease the proposed budget, she suggests removing the 27th payroll line, remove the .5% tax estimate, remove the additional pension line, ambulance contract replace at zero cost since East Windsor does not want to pay for the service, close the Board Brook Library, stop garbage collection, and sell the new fire truck since the town cannot afford it. She does not want any cuts to the Board of Education. She is concerned with the accreditation review of the high school of NEASC. According to the report, underfunding the Board of Education, library space and resources, instructional supplies, science projectors, carpets replacement, technology plan, textbook updates, curriculum updates and resources are needed to be done and/or addressed.

Jerilyn Corsu, 23 Lindsay Lane, addressed the hearing. She attended some Board of Finance Workshop Meetings, not many, and saw how the Board and other town departments worked together to come up with a budget good for the town. She voted yes for the budget but unfortunately it did not pass and cuts have to be made. She understands the audit suggested the .5% tax buffer and 27th payroll, pension; however, it should not be done this year. Timothy Howes, Superintendent of Schools, has approached some teachers for early retirement and may be savings there. We need the police cruiser and the fire truck. The 16% increase was too high for the citizens, although trash collection increased 16%, maybe trash can be cut for a savings of \$832,000.

Marissa Simonelli, 71 Depot Street and Samatha Couture, Sullivan Farm Road, both 8th Grade Students at East Windsor Middle School, read from a letter addressed to the Board. The letter indicated they have seen the effects of program cuts in the schools, such as mock trials and other programs that could not be funded due to budget cuts. The absence of the programs in the schools will give students a disadvantage compared to other students at other districts who have such programs. Teachers talk about the budget and the importance of our parents and/or guardians to vote during the budget process and only 20% of the town population vote. Students are being forced to worry about funding of their schools and they believe they shouldn't have to. They were making a genuine plea to the Board of Finance to keep the students of East Windsor in mind when they make their cuts to the budget.

Cindy Herms, 12 Pamela Court, addressed the hearing. She wanted to echo what Ms. Cathy Simonelli had to say. She understands it is hard to pay for things during these economic times, but we have to pay for the services the town needs. She believes the town should wait until next year to do the suggested lines from the auditor. We have to invest in the future. She supports the town and she voted yes for the budget. She also discussed the NEASC recommendations of updating curriculum and textbooks, additional professional development for teachers, increase revenue to maintain facilities, and increase fine arts. Any changes to the budget must be reported to NEASC along with significant decrease funding, cutting teachers, administrators, and support staff. She doesn't understand how the town is going to accomplish all of those recommendations with a status quo budget.

Paul Anderson, 89 Main Street, addressed the hearing. He has been a citizen in the town for 40 years. He plans to stay in the town for the rest of his life and the town means a lot to him. He voted yes for the budget, he does not like that his taxes are going to go up, but the town needs to grow. He does not know how the town can grow without having to increase taxes to pay for services and other town needs.

Dean Rasmussen, 32 Treetop Lane, addressed the hearing. He has lived in the town for 42 years and has only attended three meetings in those 42 years. He understands the views of the people who support the budget; they are well meaning and have the best interest of the town. However, as a business owner, the businesses cannot afford an increase in taxes. His operating budget has decreased dramatically since the down turn in the economy. He has canceled service contracts and has taken other measures to save money. The town needs to do the same. Some services are going to have to be sacrificed. It is simple economics. The town cannot spend what it doesn't have. It may be even worse next year and the year after that. The town needs to be prepared. We are running a bankrupt business. He raised four children in the town and they are all graduates. Schools have not changed since they were in school other than the spending has increased and the staff has increased. He gave his opinion on how to fix the 23rd ranking for the schools by talking to the children and encourage learning, take the television and computers away, and teach real values.

Denise Menard, 73 Miller Road, addressed the hearing. She is the Selectwoman of East Windsor. She gave a handout entitled "Proposed Cost Savings Suggested by the Board of Selectmen after Consultation with Town Management". She had approximately 25 copies indicating she didn't realize there would be some many people attending this hearing.

Chairman Jack Mannette indicated a point of order and asked Ms. Menard if she was speaking as the Selectwoman or as a citizen. Ms. Menard indicated she was speaking as regards to the meeting the Board of Selectmen had last night to discuss possible cuts to the budget due to the failure of the referendum. It was agreed by the Board to let Ms. Menard speak to the public regarding the recommendations.

Ms. Menard indicated the Board of Selectman met last night to come up with recommendations to cut from the town budget. This morning, a meeting of management was held to discuss what cuts would be doable. By the end of the day, the sheet which was given to the Board is the recommendations that were decided upon. Those recommendations are: (1) add back the .5% revenue for 2010-2011 in the amount of \$135,501 and aggressively pursue delinquent taxes; (2) do not fund East Road Bridge project at \$126,000 and close bridge until funding is more readily available; (3) Cut \$25,000 from the Assessor line; and (3) do not fund the 27th payroll at \$162,435, proposed change was not an auditor's mandate but a suggestion. The total recommended savings in the amount of \$448,936.

Andrew Masters, 310 Rye Street, addressed the hearing. He was raised in the town and he is raising his children in the town. He works at the high school and he loves the town. It sickens him to see the town losing ground every year. The parks and recreation not receiving the proper funding, talented and gifted program not funded in the schools, and the lose of teachers in the elementary school and middle schools. He understands the hardships of the homeowners in town, but he has his own hardships in a single income family and he voted yes for the budget for the best interest of the town and the children in the town. He urged the Board not to make cuts to the Board of Education.

John Simonelli, 71 Depot Street, addressed the hearing. He indicated he sympathizes with the Board for the job they have to do. There were interesting ideas given to the Board thus far during the meeting but unfortunately, the Board only has one week to make decisions in order to have the second referendum. He understands the hard work it will take to come up with a budget acceptable to all. We owe a good education to the children, it is our obligation. He asked the Board, on bended knee, to be kind to the school budget when making cuts.

Marie DeSousa, 10 Rice Road, addressed the hearing. She was speaking at the hearing as a resident of the town. She has been involved in the East Windsor school system; three generations, foster children and foreign exchange students. She is concerned about the town battle. It is unnecessary. In good faith we all have to look in the mirror. We are all here to benefit the town. We know we are in hard times, but that does not solve the problem. We need more time to solve the problem, but we don't have the time. We shouldn't be worried about re-elections. This is a good group and they are trying to correct the errors of the past, including me. The town has to pay for services, including the fire department, teachers, medical benefits of town employees and other services. The townspeople have spoken and they can't afford it, the businesses can't afford it. Economic Development Commission has indicated it needs the increase in taxes to bring in new business to the town. The voters govern what happens with the budget and if the voters don't vote for the proposed budget, the Board of Finance has no choice than to make the cuts. It is not up for debate what is right for the town, because the voters have spoken.

Eileen Dell, 228 Scantic Road, addressed the hearing. She indicated she was disappointed and disgusted of the outcome of last night's vote. She has built a house in

town recently because she thought it would be a great time to live in. She feels the town needs to support the education budget for the children to progress in the future.

Jay Richards, 32B Rockville Road addressed the hearing. He has been serving East Windsor for the last 25 years. He discussed the sewer plan. The businesses work hard but the town has no growth. Federal funds and State funds have stopped coming and now towns have to supply services on its own. He believes the town is in trouble before started the budget season. He asked how the town is going to grow. The town should be run like a business with real revenue. Sewer project on North Road has to be addressed.

Craig Wentworth, 1E Town House Road addressed the hearing. He said he was happy with the outcome of the budget vote. He noticed all the signs in town regarding the decline of values of homes. In his opinion, the schools received too much of an increase. The Board of Selectmen budget with an increase of 2% is reasonable, but the Board of Education is too much.

Leslie Hunt, 105 Tromley Road addressed the hearing. She began by saying that the whole town is responsible for the education of the children. She doesn't have children and she has felt it is her responsibility for the last 25 years. Traditionally, towns in the State of Connecticut devote approximately 70-75% of the budget to education; East Windsor only devotes 48%. The town has the lowest taxes in the State. The town needs to invest in the children.

Jackie Shouldie, 15 Spring Street addressed the hearing. She moved into town about 18 years ago after her grandfather died. The family has been in town for many years. Her grandfather and uncle grew up in town. She has four children, two have graduated and two others are students in 5th and 7th Grades. Her daughter, Shannon, graduated from East Windsor High School as Valedictorian. Her grandfather was so proud that his great-granddaughter graduated from East Windsor High School, since when he was growing up East Windsor did not have a high school. He graduated from Enfield High School. She cannot believe there are 27 children in the 5th Grade classroom and textbooks are not readily available, having teachers copy text for the children. She lived in Suffield before returning to East Windsor, by the lake. She indicated when she lived there; she had to pay for trash collection, which might be a solution instead of cutting from the Board of Education budget.

Mr. Thomas Baker, Board Alternate, arrived at approximately 7:00 p.m.

Sam Karaglanny, LaNotte Restaurant, 17 Thompson Road addressed the hearing. He indicated they could go back and forth all night long. The businesses in town cannot afford more taxes. Between the Federal, State and Local governments, the businesses are paying 50% of taxes and he asked when is it going to stop? He asked of those who were present, how many went to school in East Windsor and how many of them had children in the school system presently. He believes that school starts at home. The schools should be closed. The schools have no discipline. His children go to South Windsor schools and he can't help them with the homework because it is too hard to understand.

It the taxes are increased, more and more businesses are going to leave the town. The industrial park is vacant because businesses can not afford to pay the taxes in the town. He is afraid, if the town increases the taxes this year; what is going to happen next year and the year after that. Is the town going to raise taxes again and again? No more taxes, enough is enough.

Brian Cullinad, 6 Sunview Drive addressed the hearing. He came to talk about the 16% tax increase which was recently proposed and voted against. That increase would be approximately \$702 additional taxes for his household per year or approximately \$1.92 per day or a cup of coffee extra in taxes. He figures if each family gave an additional \$5.00 per day for the budget, he could add an additional \$4 million dollars to the budget.

Tom Muska, East Road addressed the hearing. He indicated the budget increase can not happen by using simple economics. Maybe a slight tax increase, pursuant to the Charter, could be entertained until the economy improves. He has no suggestions on what to cut from, but he supports the no voters.

Richard Ellis, 41 South Main Street addressed the hearing. He indicated that he has lived in town all of his life. He believes that the Board of Education is out of hand. The Superintendent makes a lot of money and gives the teachers all of the money. He doesn't want to take away from the children.

Mr. Mannette asked if the comments are not directed to any specific individual.

Mr. Ellis continued to say that the town is messed up; the Board can not seem to get along. He will continue to vote no until the Board of Education makes cuts to the budget. He is a senior citizen in town and doesn't know how he and others are going to pay for this tax increase. The town needs services, such as, police, fire, ambulance, and trash collection. If the town doesn't want to pay for trash collection, then the town should supply a dump for the use of the citizens.

John Pica-Sneedon, 69 Depot Street addressed the hearing. He indicated he is the Chairman of the Board of Education. He was present to defend the Board of Education and the school system. He takes personal offense when attacks are made about anyone who works for the Board of Education, just to belittle those who work for the Board of Education just to make themselves look good. The East Windsor Board of Education is doing their best to support the children. If we loose the high school, families will move out of town. The two young ladies, who spoke earlier in the meeting, deserve to have the best education possible. In regards to the Superintendent salary, it is the business of the Board of Education. Chairman Jack Mannette interrupted calling a point of order. Mr. PicaSneedon indicated all salary information is public information, and anyone could call him and he will give you a job description for that job. He does two other jobs within the school system and in the long run, saving money. Take a good look at the budget. Some people in this town do not have a clue. Elected officials, we are doing the best we can.

Brain Turley, 4 Lindsay Lane addressed the hearing. He had to address the hearing. The two sides of the town have to work together and meet for a common ground. He doesn't want an increase in taxes; however, compromises have to be made. The Board of Selectmen need to work with businesses to entice them to town and the two groups that are fighting need to come together so we can be proud of the town.

George Snyder, 6 Helena Drive addressed the hearing. He has lived in the town for 45 years. He had a suggestion for the town highway department. He commented on the cost of using sand on the roads during the winter season and the cost of clean-up in the spring. He thinks if a salt mixture was used it would be cheaper to use and a cheaper clean-up. He understands the Board of Finance has to make cuts and he hopes the cuts are 60% to Board of Education and 40% from the town side. They should stick to that ratio since it seems fair.

A motion to adjourn was not entertained.

The meeting ended at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Denise M. Piotrowicz
Recording Secretary