

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

MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING, Wednesday, May 26, 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
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: J. Silvia (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 17 names on the list.

Wayne Norman, 3 Eastwood Drive addressed the hearing. He indicated he was disappointed that the budget referendum failed once again and the reason he felt that it has failed yet again is due to town politics and personal agendas. He has been a resident of the town for 21 years and can't believe all of the hatred between people, especially on the Board of Finance. He wanted to address an incident which occurred outside of the polls on Tuesday which involved his neighbor, Ed Bowsza. Just before 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, in the parking lot of the town hall, Ed Bowsza was having a conversation with John Burhnam. Robert Little, member of the Board of Finance, walked by John Burnham and Ed Bowsza when John asked Robert if he knew Ed. Apparently, Robert shook Ed's hand and commented "deepest sympathies". When Ed asked him why, Robert remarked you're the father of Jason Bowsza. This statement shocked Ed. Jason is a hardworking individual who stands up for what he believes in. Mr. Little merely wanted to embarrass Jason and Ed. Mr. Norman continued to say he was upset about particular Board Members, specifically, Mr. Little for their personal agendas rather than thinking for the good of the town. He felt this attitude is not good for the town and is classless. He believes it is unfair to the town for the proposed budget not to pass the first

or second time. He has three children in the town school system and he does not want his children or children of the town to grow up uneducated and ignorant like Mr. Little.

Chairman Jack Mannette indicated to Mr. Norman his last comment was out of order and just disrespectful. Mr. Norman apologized for his last comment. Mr. Little remarked he was not at the meeting to argue.

Matt Schmitt, 52 North Main Street addressed the hearing. He remarked that he believed the people of East Windsor have spoken and requests a zero percent tax increase. He indicated the citizens of East Windsor have no more money to spend and encouraged the Board to listen to the voters.

Craig Wentworth, 1 E Town House Road addressed the hearing. He indicated he was not hear to argue or to finger-point. The vote yesterday was a landslide, a 2 – 1 margin against the proposed budget. The voters do not want a tax increase; even at the 2% default budget is a tax increase of 10.89%. He shutters to think what if the 16% tax increase was passed. All of the citizens are willing to pay their taxes, realistic figures not 16% increase. People in the town want to have good schools in town, but can not afford such high increases and eventually those people are going to leave the town. He inquired about a grant the Board of Education received in the amount of \$5,000, which was spent on a juggler presentation, not on textbooks and other supplies.

Jerilyn Corso, 23 Lindsay Lane addressed the hearing. At the last meeting, it was indicated if the vote was against the proposed budget, services were going to suffer in town. She voted for the proposal and she feels she is in the minority in town. She suggested cutting trash removal in town at a cost of \$800,000. She believes it is unfair to have the Board of Education's budget come in under zero percent increase. Last year, the Board of Education budget was cut approximately \$1.2 million. She was recently at a public hearing regarding the Connecticut Studios in South Windsor. The executives who spoke indicated they support education and the Town of East Windsor will be lagging behind if education is not supported. She doesn't understand why people attack the salary of the Superintendent of Schools considering he has performed three jobs: Superintendent of Schools, Assistant Superintendent, and Principal of the high school. She feels he has saved the town over \$120,000 in salary costs.

John Simonelli, 71 Depot Street addressed the hearing. He indicated he was not at the hearing to plead with the Board. He has sat through the hearings and felt a lot of people had good ideas to cut spending, for example, treatment of the roads in the winter and trash collection. He is not at the hearing to personally attack anyone on the Board. He believes this budget process is not a game, such as, poker. He commented the whole town will lose if the budget is not passed that will fund programs and services the town is in need of. He gave an example of a fire which was on Depot Street recently and indicated the town has to work together and compromise to find a solution and not work against each other. He suggested the next budget process; a committee should be formed of private citizens, with no hidden personal agendas, to help the town move forward.

Dean Rasmussen, 34 Treetop Lane addressed the hearing. He indicated he has lived in the town for 42 years and has been on several committees throughout the years. He also wants to get the citizens of the town to work together to benefit the town. He gave an example of some current projects, such as, North Road Sewer and the prospective business of Lowe's moving into the town, where he admits the town dropped the ball and those projects have been put on the back burner. Most people don't want a tax increase, however, he indicated town is paying for last year's budget and how the town is in a huge hole from years past budget problems and he feels the town is continuing to slide down a slippery slope. He quoted figures of the town's population from the last census of 2000. He indicated the population is approximately 9,800 people, 4000 households, and 2500 families. The average household income in East Windsor is approximately \$51,000. The town employees are earning double that figure. Businesses in town don't have positive income. The tax system in town is very poor. He indicated the 2% spending increase default budget will increase taxes 10%. This town has to attract new businesses, as did Suffield. The town must give businesses an incentive to come to the town.

Tom Muska, 216 East Road addressed the hearing. He indicated he was reluctant to speak this evening due to all of the negativity. He indicated the reason he is at the meeting is personal economic survival. He began telling a story of when the State wanted to put a nuclear dump site in East Windsor. People from East Windsor, South Windsor, and Ellington all got together to lobby against the dump. Bummer stickers were made which read: "When People lead, Leaders will follow". He feels all of the citizens of the town need to step up to the plate, including the Boards, to propose a zero percent increase. He reiterated the economy is bad, businesses are suffering, people are being laid off and do not have the money to pay more taxes. There is no economic growth in the State or East Windsor. The State of Connecticut is very unfriendly to businesses. He has heard others talk about giving up daily coffee or weekly pizza to make up the different of the tax increase; however, is that action going effect the job of the minimum wage earner who works at the coffee shops and pizza parlors. He wanted to echo what Mr. Rasmussen's thoughts and suggested at zero percent increase.

Cathy Simonelli, 71 Depot Street addressed the hearing. Due to the 2-1 margin vote of the last referendum, she is concerned the wording of the proposed budget was misleading. The budget has to be decreased and she is suggesting cutting from all departments across the board. She believes that cutting trash collection should be considered. She also inquired why when talking about cutting services to the town; the senior citizen center is never mentioned. She believes they should feel the pain as well as everyone else. She then gave an example of a prospective home buyer who was looking for property in East Windsor; however, once they did their research regarding the budget and Board of Education, they decided not to look in East Windsor any longer. This town does not support education and until it does, we will never attract new businesses or new families. All of the surrounding towns of Suffield, Somers, Enfield, and Windsor Locks support their education and they continue to attract businesses to their town.

Nichole DeSousa, 10 Rice Road addressed the hearing. She commented that in order to make money, you have to spend money. If the town cuts jobs and/or education, it looks

good financially, but who suffers. The students of East Windsor suffer. Someone suggested closing the high school and sending students to other schools, but the town will still be responsible to pay for those students. More people need to realize that we are voting for a budget for the future of the children.

Paul Scavotto, 32 Rye Street addressed the hearing. He just heard someone suggest making cuts to the senior citizen center. He is opposed to this suggested. The senior citizens built this town and to take away from the senior center would be terrible. He inquired as to who runs the Board of Education. Does the Board of Education or the teachers? He said the teachers in Ellington have given concessions for the sake of budget constraints and questioned why the teachers in this town have not. He wonders how many people get an automatic 3% raise every year in the private sector. He believes if teachers cared about the students, they would volunteer more of their time or agree to a pay freeze and/or step up freeze and give back some of the money to the town for the schools.

Bill Schultz, 9 Lindsay Lane addressed the hearing. He commented he was not at the hearing to argue, however, teachers salaries were negotiated through a contract and that contract is protected by Federal Law and binding arbitration. Next year the contact will be renegotiated with the teachers. The tax increase is good for the town. If the budget is reduced, many departments will suffer. The high school is in jeopardy of loosing it's accreditation due to lack of funding. If this happens, property values in town will decrease approximately 30%. He would like the Board to think about the success of the town and to look out for the community in general.

Cynthia Herms, 12 Pamela Court addressed the hearing. She told a story of how her daughter asked her today who won the budget. Her reply to her daughter was not her. She believes it is very sad that the budget did not win approval considering the town is inadequately funding for the schools and services. She believes the town needs to focus on the issues and advocate for the future. She also believes the citizens of the town have been misinformed and are not receiving all the facts. The elected officials need to be crystal clear and give the true and best information so the public can make the best decision for the town.

Bob Lyke, 80 Rye Street addressed the hearing. He has been a resident of the town for 42 years and he has been friends with the Chairman of the Board of Finance, Jack Mannette and has been video recording the Finance meetings, in particular, the one which was held on May 12, 2010 which lasted about 6 hours. It was his opinion that meeting was a fascicle. The officials were fumbling over numbers. The budget process is broke and it needs to be fixed. He believes the town would be better off if it hired professional administration to run the town, as does the Town of Ellington has. He also inquired what the five year game plan was of the town, where will the town be in the future. He reiterated he would like to see a Director of Finance be hired to run the whole town.

Elyse Speilberg, 244 Rye Street addressed the hearing. The two referendums have failed by a 2-1 margin. She doesn't understand why this town does not support education and

understand the value of a good education. Why the town should cut \$63,000 out of the Selectmen's budget. Why does the education budget be cut? The misrepresentation of words regarding the tax increases in the newspaper is incredible. The library and education is an investment for our future. The \$63,000 should be put back into the Selectmen's budget to pay for the bridge repair. But how can we value a bridge versus education or libraries. It is totally incomprehensible how bridges and businesses are more important that student learning and education.

Tom Behliy, 18 Lindsay Lane addressed the hearing. He indicated he was at the meeting just for the mere entertainment. This is his second time he has been to a budget meeting. His wife is a teacher of four years in Enfield. He wanted to clarify that his wife does not make nearly what she could make in the private sector. He also indicated that her day does not end when she leaves the classroom, but she goes home and works for a few hours on her next day's lesson. She is very passionate about her job and her students. For those who voted not and do not want a tax increase are probably those who do not have children. He is in favor of the Board of Education and believes you have to pay for the school system, however, he doesn't believe an 16% tax increase is the answer.

Danelle Godeck, Lindsay Lane addressed the hearing. She believes the citizens could do a better job making a decision when going to the polls if they had all of the facts and not just bits and pieces. She discussed the article in the Journal Inquirer wherein salaries of town officials were listed. She indicated the Superintendent of Schools is not highly paid considering all of the different jobs he has performed. She told the public to research what other Superintendent's make in surrounding towns, it is public information. She understands the budget process is a very difficult one. She has done her research and compared East Windsor with surrounding towns, for example, Windsor Locks. Windsor Locks budgets \$10 million more for education than East Windsor, approximately \$1,000 more per student. If the high school is closed and students would have to attend Windsor Locks Public Schools, the town would be responsible for the cost of each student. Their cost per student is \$2,700 wherein East Windsor is \$1,700. She doesn't believe Windsor Locks will accept \$1,000 less per student. We must work as a community and get involved and informed before we vote. The Charter won in November and the Committee who drafted the Charter felt that if the budget failed after three referendums, automatically 2% spending increase above the previous budget would be put into affect.

Denise Menard, 73 Miller Road addressed the hearing. First Selectwoman Denise Menard wanted to address some comments which were made previously. She wanted to address Mr. Simonelli's comment that the political process was broken. She thought that was nothing further than the truth. She indicated it was a continuous process. She advocates for both sides of the budget, the town side and Board of Education side. She felt that Ms. Godeck, who spoke previously, had a good idea in comparing surrounding town's budgets to East Windsor's budget. All towns have a higher budget than East Windsor does. She is not suggesting the town play catch-up all at once, but to make little steps and strides to eventually grow. She also wanted to clarify a statement which was said that she does not support education. She has been in contact with the Superintendent and she is very concerned about education and understands its importance. She remains

neutral. She is advocating for the town government spending, but she is not against any other departments, including but not limited to, education and public safety.

She began speaking about the Board of Selectmen's proposal from the Special Meeting which was held last evening. However, Chairman Jack Mannette indicated that information should be reserved for the Special Meeting which will be held following the hearing. Ms. Marie DeSousa indicated she wanted to speak about the Board of Selectman's recommendations, and Mr. Mannette indicated to her if she did, he would call her out of order.

Marie DeSousa, 10 Rice Road addressed the hearing. She indicated she was speaking as a citizen of East Windsor and not as a Board Member of the Board of Finance. She can not believe the public display during this hearing. After every workshop meeting or public hearing, she has asked to see the letters and emails which were sent regarding how upset people are about the Board of Education spending. No one is willing to share this information with her. She has received one letter recently. She understands the public has spoken by a 2-1 margin they do not want higher taxes. She agrees with statements that the State and Federal Government are not helping the municipalities funding, however, in order to change what the State does, people need to go to the State Capital Building and become involved. She tries to every chance she gets. She recalled years ago of a man named Bill Jones, who was elderly and he would try to get buses to go to Hartford to lobby for education, but he couldn't get the busses filled. She begged the public to write to their representatives in Hartford and Washington DC to support the municipalities and education. She began talking about the Chairman Jack Mannette giving information to the Board of Selectmen; she was unaware of the information which was being shared. Democrats and Republicans need to work together for the good of the town and stop finger-pointing, walking out of meetings and willing to be professional. This State has recently lost a serviceman overseas who devoted his time and youth for this country and we can not work together and for the benefit of the town.

A motion to adjourn was not entertained.

The meeting ended at 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Denise M. Piotrowicz
Recording Secretary