

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

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING,
BUDGET WORKSHOP
April 6, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.**

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

Members Present: Jack Mannette, Danelle E. Godeck (arrived at 7:21), Robert Little, Marie DeSousa, Jason Bowsza, and Kathleen Pippin
Members Absent: None
Alternates Present: None
Alternate Absent: Jamie Daniel and Thomas Baker
Others: Catherine Cabral and Becky MacDonald
Press: None

I. Call to Order

Chairman Jack Mannette called the Special Meeting – Budget Workshop to Order at 7:16 p.m., in the Park Hill Community Room, East Windsor, Connecticut.

II. Appointment of Alternates

Chairman Jack Mannette indicated that all Regular Members are in attendance, except for Ms. Godeck who has indicated she will be late; however, Alternate Member, Jamie Daniel and Alternate Member Thomas Baker were unable to attend this meeting.

III. Budget Workshop Discussion

Mr. Mannette indicated the Budget Workshop Meetings will be held from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. He proposed to start the meeting with each Board Member to talk about the budget process and any suggestions they may have on reviewing the proposed budgets in preparations of the referendum. Mr. Jason Bowsza stated he would stand by his quote in the newspaper indicating he hopes to put forth a responsible budget. The Board should review the proposals to make sure any excesses or unreasonable requests are caught so the public has a responsible budget to vote on at the referendum. He commented about the Public Hearing which was held the night before, and how he was disappointed about the public comment and the lack thereof. He was expecting genuine feedback from the public. Mr. Mannette indicated it has been his experience a narrow band of the

public attends the first hearing. Ms. Cabral added that maybe because the budget proposal has been placed on the website, more people have access without having to attend the hearing. Ms. Kathleen Pippin commented that she attended many of the Board of Selectmen Meetings and is very pleased with the Board's actions in regard to their proposed budget and they tried to get their budget as close to zero spending increase as possible, however, due to contract obligations, it is not possible.

Ms. Danelle Godeck entered the meeting at 7:21 p.m.

Ms. Pippin continued to say she was also disappointed with the meeting last night. She was hoping to hear solutions about the budget. She would have like to have seen a zero spending increase, but it seems impossible and the Board of Selectmen did a fine job fine tuning their budget.

Ms. Marie DeSousa indicated she does not believe the Town will pass any type of tax increase. She would like the budget to pass on the first referendum rather than having three referendums and eventually going to a default budget. In her opinion, the Town Government proposed budget, the Board of Selectmen did what they had to do and are within what the surrounding towns are proposing. She indicated she was concerned about the CIP Committee's decision to request a lump sum of money rather than a project list. Mr. Mannette commented that an email has gone to Ms. Menard inquiring about current and reserves regarding CIP, Fund 8 account, and building account. Mr. Mannette indicated this subject will be discussed in detail later in their budget workshop meetings. Ms. DeSousa also commented that she doesn't want to take any jobs; however, if positions become vacant, a hard look should be made before filling that position. She understands that at the Senior Center a decision was made to merge two positions to save money. She does have some concerns about the Board of Education proposed budget and the State funding MBR. Mr. Bowsza commented the MBR is scheduled to sunset but a bill is presently being debated about same. Mr. Mannette indicated since it is still in existence, they are bound by it. A discussion regarding MBR took place between Mr. Bowsza, Ms. DeSousa, and Mr. Mannette.

Ms. DeSousa indicated she has questions regarding the education budget and questions some decisions, but she did not attend any meetings of the Board of Education so she does not have any answers to those questions. Mr. Mannette commented that all Board Members should have received an email regarding the concessions the teachers gave and those concessions have been absorbed in the education budget.

Ms. Danelle Godeck remarked she understands times are tough and some of the funding to the education budget should be geared toward building improvements.

She also had a concern about the accreditation of the high school. She is concerned if the town loses the accreditation it will drop the property values in the town significantly. Mr. Mannette commented he has asked about the accreditation and he has been told there are no problems. Ms. Godeck continued that she would like to know what recommendations were suggested during the accreditation process. If the Town is a penny wise and a pound foolish, it could be detrimental to the Town and could cost the Town significantly in the future. Departments were asked to come in a zero spending increase, and she is sure cushions are in place within the proposed budgets. This Board should really look to see what the requests are for and look to see if those requests are worthwhile. Ms. DeSousa agreed cushions are in place and gave an example of the money that was used for the snow removal of the Board of Education buildings. A discussion was then held between Mr. Mannette, Ms. DeSousa, Ms. Cabral and Mr. Bowsza on how the Board of Education funded the snow removal.

Ms. Godeck summarized that she would like the Board to review all the proposals to make any appropriate cuts. The Board of Selectmen seems to have done a good job going through all of the departments and her main concern with the Board of Education is the accreditation process and funding any recommendations which have been made. Ms. DeSousa reminded Ms. Godeck, that the Board of Finance does not have control of the Board of Education and how they allocate their budgets.

Mr. Robert Little remarked that the Board should look at the budget and try to get it passed on the first referendum. The target should be a zero percent tax increase in order to accomplish this. He has concerns about the projected revenues from the State of Connecticut. Ms. DeSousa indicated all indications are that the projected revenues from the State of Connecticut are going to be the same from last year. Ms. Cabral commented the revenue will be a little less due to the ARRA grants. Mr. Mannette reminded everyone that most like the projection numbers will change and the Board has to use the numbers which are given to them. Mr. Little indicated that nothing is safe while the Legislature is still in session.

A brief discussion was held regarding a bill which is being introduced which will require a passage of municipal aide package by March 1. This would start in 2012.

Mr. Mannette indicated that back in December, the Board agreed to send a joint guideline letter from the Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen to all departments asking for a zero percent spending increase for the upcoming budgets. The taxpayers last year strongly said no to any increases. He still feels the goal should be a zero percent spending increase and believes this goal can be achieved. He then began talking about a presentation which was held at the EDC last week by a gentleman named Josh. The presentation discussed the impact of

high taxes on businesses. He has contacted Mr. Mannette to inquire if he could present those facts to the Board of Finance. Mr. Bowsza opposed the idea as did Ms. Pippin. A brief discussion was held.

A motion was entertained by Mr. Bowsza and seconded by Ms. Godeck that the Board of Finance do not invite the gentleman, Josh, who presented the impact of high taxes on businesses at the EDC meeting, to a Board of Finance Meeting.

A vote was taken:

In favor: Danelle Godeck, Jason Bowsza, Marie DeSousa, and Kathleen Pippin

Opposed: Robert Little

Motion passed.

Mr. Mannette indicated he would contact Josh and let him know that the Board of Finance is not interested.

Mr. Mannette indicated that Mr. Bowsza suggested that the Board go through each and every department and see what changes, if any, will be made. No objections were made.

Ms. Catherine Cabral gave to all Board Members a preliminary budget builder document dated March 23, 2011.

The first department to be discussed was Selectmen (1010). Ms. Pippin indicated the only increase is in salaries at 3.24%. Mr. Mannette reminded everyone that Ms. Cabral has given a document which details salaries. He also indicated the budget builder report they are looking at will have to be updated due to some raises have not yet been adjusted and suggested delaying the discussion on salaries until the report is updated.

The Legal/Town Counsel (1015) was the next department discussed. Mr. Mannette voiced his concerns about the increasing legal expenses over the last three years. It is his opinion the \$150,000 request should be cut \$50,000. Ms. Godeck had concerns about cutting the legal budget. She indicated legal fees are very expensive and with the present economic situation, more people are more willing to sue. She understands that \$150,000 is a lot of money; however, the Town has to be protected against any potential litigation or emergency situation. Mr. Mannette began talking about in the past, not to far back, the legal account average approximately \$60,000 and if \$50,000 was cut from the request, it will make the Town consider the monies available to support a legal action and the Town may approach the legal action differently knowing it only has so much to spend.

The discussion continued regarding the legal account. Mr. Mannette suggested cutting \$50,000 and placing that money into the contingency account. If an emergency should arise, or the money will be needed to support a legal action, it could be transferred for that purpose. Ms. Pippin agreed with Mr. Mannette's suggestion. Ms. DeSousa indicated she agreed with the Town's proposal and commented that the Town does not control when and how it sues the Town. Mr. Mannette began speaking of a previous lawsuit where it was thought the Town had a slam dunk, but lost and it cost the Town a lot of money. He believes if the Town stands up to some of the lawsuits, it may be cheaper. Ms. Godeck indicated she was not against cutting the legal account.

A discussion was then held regarding the contingency account and how the account is supposed to slowly increase every year. The reasoning behind increasing the contingency account so the Town will be prepared if an emergency arises, it will be able to handle such emergency, such as, the snow removal. The account is not supposed to be used to supplement salary accounts and other accounts because those accounts are over budget.

Mr. Mannette asked if it was the consensus of the Board to move \$50,000 out of the legal account and move it to the contingency account. Ms. Pippin and Mr. Little agreed, Ms. Godeck and Ms. DeSousa agreed, with a comment "for now" until everything is completely looked at and Mr. Bowsza disagreed. Ms. DeSousa commended the Board of Selectmen for decreasing this budget by \$86,000.

The next department discussed was the Town Auditor (1020). Ms. Pippin inquired about going out to bid for these services. Ms. Cabral indicated the RFPs were sent and the bids are due by April 29, 2011. Mr. Mannette commented he is concerned about schedules being fulfilled. Ms. Cabral indicated the Board of Finance can make a decision on the bids at their May meeting, which is scheduled for May 15, 2011. The information does not have to be submitted to the State until June 1, 2011. A question regarding the OPEB trusts funding which is budgeted at \$16,000. Ms. Cabral indicated that was a set up cost. Mr. Mannette indicated \$16,000 is available in the Fund 8 account and maybe this is cut. Ms. Cabral indicated the Town is committed to a three year contract. Ms. Cabral indicated she would research this subject and comment same at the next scheduled budget workshop meeting.

The next department was Treasurer (1025). A brief discussion was held and the increase requested is approximately .03%. The office equipment is a little higher due to the cost of toner for the printers to print the checks. The next department is the Town Clerk (1030). Mr. Mannette indicated the Board of Selectmen went through the requests in detail and the increase for postage. It was noted that to date, the postage is very low. Ms. Cabral reminded the Board the postage is mainly used for dog licenses and that does not happen until the end of the fiscal year.

The next department was the Assessor (1035). Mr. Bowsza inquired about the re-evaluation. Ms. Cabral commented the re-evaluation will not be delayed. A short discussion was held regarding delaying the re-evaluation and the effects thereof. The Tax Collector (1040) department was then discussed. An increase of .16% is being requested. No changes were made.

Assessment Appeals Board (1045) was discussed. It has been decreased by 47.76%. Ms. Cabral indicated the salary was taken out. It was indicated the Board was being paid by the ordinance. The Registrar (1050) was the next department discussed. Ms. DeSousa inquired if three referendums were funded and she was told only one and half has been funded. Ms. Godeck inquired about the November election being funded. She was told it has been. Ms. DeSousa inquired about a primary next year. Mr. Bowsza reminded everyone next year; a Presidential Primary may be needed in March of 2012. After a brief discussion, it was decided to defer talking about this department to see what was discussed at the Board of Selectmen Budget Workshop Meeting regarding this department.

The Probate Court (1055) and Pension Fund (1065) were looked at and agreed to be kept the same. Advertising and Printing (1070) was discussed next. It was indicated this section was split between the Board of Selectmen's budget and Board of Finance's budget.

Town Property (1085) was discussed. Ms. Godeck wanted clarification of why the gas and oil lines were down. She believes it is because the reserves the Town has, otherwise, she believes this line would be significantly higher. Ms. Cabral explained how that line works and how it is used by many departments.

The Building Committee (1086) proposed budget was discussed. Mr. Bowsza indicated the committee does not meet six times per year, and they have not met since last May. Mr. Mannette suggested cutting the recording secretary request by \$500.00, and asked if that was the general consensus. It was. Mr. Bowsza questioned postage and what it is used for. He was told mailing members packets.

E.D.C. (1115) was the next department discussed. An ordinance was passed in January wherein it indicates funding the EDC one-twentieth of 1% of the grand list. Therefore, the EDC should be funded at \$5,390 and \$2,900 needs to be added to bring that funding to ordinance level. Mr. Bowsza commented that it is a good practice to finance according to the Town ordinance and the Board needs to make an effort and pay attention to the ordinance which was approved at a Town Meeting. It was decided to add \$2,900 to the E.D.C. budget.

Z.B.A. (1120) was discussed. The request is approximately 114% higher than last year. It was determined the spike was because the funding of the recording secretary was insufficient. No change was made.

P.Z.C. (1123) was the next topic. No changes made. Planning (1124) was looked at and no changes were made. Building Department (1125) was discussed. Ms. Godeck questioned the professional services line. Ms. Cabral indicated that is used if the building official goes on vacation and there needs to be an official in Town. Mr. Mannette remarked about the vehicle maintenance line, indicating the car is not running and the building official has been using his personal vehicle. He believes a car request may be in the CIP projects. A brief discussion was held regarding a replacement vehicle for the building official and the possibility of using an older vehicle from the police department.

Elderly Commission (1129) was the last department discussed. It was indicated that commission meets quarterly.

VI. Adjournment

It was **MOVED** (Little) and **SECONDED** (Godeck) and **PASSED** (U) that the Board of Finance adjourns the April 6, 2011 Special Meeting – Budget Workshop at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Denise M. Piotrowicz
Recording Secretary