

East Windsor Board of Finance
Budget Workshop Draft Meeting Minutes
April 1, 2013
7:00 pm
East Windsor High School Cafeteria

Board of Finance workshop called to order at 7:05pm

Members present: Jason Bowsza, Joe Pellegrini, Jerilyn Corso, Kathy Pippin, Danelle Godeck, Sharon Tripp, Gilbert Hayes

Members absent: Paulette Broder

Others: Cathy Cabral (Treasurer), Bill Schultz (Board of Ed. Member), Alan Baker (selectman), Jim Richards (selectman)

I. General Overview at the Outset

The board members relayed their impressions of the work done by the Boards of Selectmen and Education, as well as the public feedback from the public hearing of 3/27. It was noted that there was significant public support for the budget as presented, particularly among parents with school-age children. There was also considerable support among Board of Finance members for support of infrastructure maintenance and upgrades.

There was concern voiced about the overall percentage of spending increase as presented, with frustration vented about the elements that drive our budget that are out of our control, as well as a continuing perception of a management heavy school district.

There was considerable agreement to use public feedback received by the board as a guide throughout the budget process, as well as concern about the pressures imposed by the 2% provision in the charter that can prevent decisions in the best interests of the town from being made. Additional concerns were expressed about the potential for confusion due to the implementation of the property revaluation this year. There was discussion about possible efforts to better educate the public on what the actual impact on their property would be after revaluation.

Questions were raised about state revenues as presented currently and any potential changes to them as the state budget gets worked out. Treasurer Cabral briefed the board on information provided to her at last week's GFOA meeting regarding state revenues.

II. **Board of Education**

Members of the board began to discuss the Board of Education and budgetary issues that have caused the BOE and Town to come into conflict over the past 12 months. There was explanation about the disputed prepayment of expenses from FY 12 to FY 13 and the ongoing disagreement, as well as steps that need to be made to prevent the situation from occurring a second time. Discussion was held regarding the 1% contingency option available to the BOE under state law that has, to date, not been requested. Outreach would be made to the Board of Education to determine whether this has been resolved in this new budget proposal or if the issue needed to be corrected.

A brief explanation of the underfunding of last year's Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) issue and subsequent added appropriation was held, and questions arose pertaining to what the actual benchmark for this year's MBR was. Again, the intention by the Board of Finance was to not have the same misunderstanding in the next year as was had this year. Treasurer Cabral was to inquire with the State Department of Education to determine what the MBR was for FY14.

No decisions on the Board of Education budget were made, as it was decided to wait until those questions could be clarified.

III. **1010 Budget Line (Selectmen's Budget)**

It was ***moved by Kathy Pippin, seconded by Sharon Tripp***, to restore stipends for members of the Board of Selectman in the amount of \$2,000/person/year, with the Deputy First Selectman receiving \$2,500/year. Discussion ensued. Gilbert Hayes stated that the stipends had been in place in the past, but had been removed because of tensions between past Boards of Selectmen and Finance. He did say that selectmen invest a considerable amount of time and effort. Jerilyn Corso pointed out that, while selectmen do invest a lot of time and have some frustrations because of their roles, compensation doesn't eliminate those frustrations. Joe Pellegrini noted that the Board of Selectmen did not feel compelled to include the stipends in their recommended budget. The motion was defeated 1-4. (in favor – Pippin; opposed – Pellegrini, Corso, Godeck, Tripp).

IV. 1015 Budget Line (Town Counsel & Legal)

No change

V. 1020 Budget Line (Auditor)

No change

VI. 1025 Budget Line (Treasurer)

No Change

VII. 1030 Budget Line (Town Clerk)

No Change

VIII. 1035 Budget Line (Assessor)

No Change

IX. 1040 Budget Line (Tax Collector)

No Change

X. 1042 Budget Line (Tax Relief)

No Change

XI. 1045 Budget Line (Assessment Appeals Board)

No Change

XII. 1050 Budget Line (Registrars of Voters)

Upon review of the Registrars of Voters line, a question was asked as to whether or not there was a need to fund a local primary line in coming fiscal year, as there are no state or federal primaries during the fiscal year.

XIII. 1055 (Probate Court)

No change

XIV. 1065 (Pension Fund)

No change

XV. 1070 Budget Line (Advertising and Printing)

During past budget cycles and during last week's public hearing, there were comments made about the need to better inform residents of votes and hearings surrounding the town budget. The Board of Finance discussed whether or not additional funds should be included in the budget for advertising/communication/community education efforts. After a good discussion, low or no cost options were identified, such as the use of recent Eagle Scout projects, marquees, press releases, inserts into the Reminder News. There was no action taken to increase the advertising line.

XVI. Budget Line 1085 (Town Property)

There was discussion of whether or not the vacant maintainer position could be eliminated. After a brief discussion, no action was taken.

XVII. A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9pm.

Jason Bowsza