

**Board of Finance
Budget Workshop – March 23, 2016**

**TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR
BOARD OF FINANCE**

BUDGET WORKSHOP

Wednesday, March 23, 2016

7:15 p.m.

Town Hall Meeting Room
11 Rye Street, Broad Brook, CT. 06016

Workshop Minutes

Board of Finance:

Jerilyn Corso, Chairman
Kathy Pippin
Cynthia Herms
Steve Smith
Bill Syme
Jim Richards
Alternates:
Paulette Broder
Luis Valdez

ATTENDANCE: Jerilyn Corso; Steve Smith, Bill Syme; Kathy Pippin; Jim Richards;
Cynthia Herms; Alternate Paulette Broder

GUESTS: Board of Education: Theresa Kane, Superintendent; Kathy Simonelli, BOE
Chair; Andy Paquette of TMS LLC, Business Management Consultant
Board of Selectmen: Jason Bowsza; Richard Pippin, Jr.
Treasurer: Kimberly Lord

Call to Order:

Chairman Corso called the meeting to order at 7:15 in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 11
Rye Street, Broad Brook, CT.

Cynthia Herms arrived at 7:17 p.m.

Budget Discussions:

Board of Education- 910900

Ms. Kane, Ms. Simonelli and Mr. Paquette were available to answer questions.

Mr. Syme asked about the \$590,000 increase in medical benefits. Ms. Kane said it was due to
the Affordable Care Act; the schools have to offer medical benefits to paraprofessionals now.

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The BOE budgeted for all 67 paras to receive benefits with a cost of \$6,227 per person. She noted that the overall Special Education budget has decreased due to bringing more programs in-house, but there have been salary increases due to the change in programming. There were savings found in the unemployment line to offset salary increases elsewhere.

Ms. Herms asked why it was described as a “level-service budget” when there are new positions in the budget. That is not the definition of “level-service”. Ms. Simonelli said the savings in unemployment benefits will offset the salary increases. Ms. Kane said the new positions are for a custodian at Broad Brook School to accommodate the new classrooms and a data collection clerk to assist parents with registrations and provide information for grant applications.

Ms. Herms asked questions about several additional line items and Ms. Kane responded to the questions.

Mr. Richards asked what the BOE would do if the increase was reduced to three percent, two percent or zero percent.

Ms. Kane said she would recommend the BOE look at the medical benefits, which has been budgeted based upon a worst-case scenario, assuming every paraprofessional will sign up for benefits. The likelihood that all of them will sign up is slim, so she would be willing to gamble on that line. Any further cuts would require the BOE to cut existing services.

Ms. Herms asked about the music program. Ms. Kane said they were able to reinstate the program due to savings generated from new hires. The BOE is investigating leasing of musical instruments to stabilize costs. Mr. Smith asked about leasing computers. Ms. Kane said the computers are replenished on a regular cycle with E-Rate reimbursements and Medicaid reimbursements, rather than using tax dollars.

Ms. Herms asked if new aides were hired for the high school. Ms. Kane said the new special education programming required hiring new aides, but costs for outplacement has decreased, reducing the cost of special education overall.

Mr. Smith asked about the increase in instructional supplies. Mr. Paquette said that the previous purchases came from grant revenue. Mr. Smith asked about summer school- the town hasn't had it for a few years, why bring it back?

Ms. Kane said that lower-functioning general education students lose ground over the summer. Reinstating summer school has been a priority of the BOE. Mr. Smith asked for specific numbers and Ms. Kane said she would get that information to him.

Mr. Syme asked what was covered by the “Service Contracts” line. Mr. Paquette said leasing for copiers, business consulting, records retention and human resource software.

Mr. Syme asked about the increase in building repair for Broad Brook School, considering all of the projects being funded by the grant and modular project. Ms. Kane said the budget for the Middle School Nurse's suite, which has been completed, has been transferred to Broad Brook School for a vestibule to connect the new classrooms to the main building.

Ms. Herms asked why that expense was not in the CIP budget. Ms. Simonelli said they thought at the time of CIP requests that the vestibule would be covered by the grant, but it will not be.

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There was a lengthy discussion of special education procedures and due process, which is handled in accordance with state law.

Mr. Smith asked the student-teacher ratio in the schools. Ms. Kane said it varies by grade, course, and content area, but the average in Broad Brook School is 20:1.

Ms. Kane responded to a question asked at the public hearing regarding food services. She said that food service is run independent of town dollars and is funded by State, Federal and participation funds. The program was in the black this year, due to a new director and great staff.

She also said the budget is a site-based budget. The management in each cost center was instructed to create a level-service budget. The budget is the result of a group effort.

Ms. Herms reiterated that “level-service” means something different to her. New positions do not equal a “level-service” budget. Ms. Kane said she believes it is “level-service” because she’s still using the same “pie” but cutting it up differently. The savings found in unemployment will fund the new positions.

Ms. Corso called for a five minute break.

The meeting came back to order at 8:22 p.m.

Ms. Corso asked Treasurer Kim Lord to discuss revenues. Ms. Lord went over the revenue lines and discussed a significant decrease in state grants. Mr. Richards asked about the fire district mill rates on the revenue page. Ms. Lord explained that the mill rates were set up to keep the cost of fire service equitable throughout town.

A motion was made by Jim Richards, seconded by Cynthia Herms (for discussion purposes) to remove the Warehouse Point Fire District mill rate and to include the Broad Brook Fire Department expenses in the town-wide mill rate.

Mr. Bowsza said the fire district issue and a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the change has been turned over to the town attorney for review and opinion; the Board should wait before making any decisions.

Ms. Corso called the vote, and the motion failed with Jim Richards in favor, and everyone else opposed.

Ms. Corso asked the board members to share their thoughts on the budget as presented.

Ms. Herms said the budget reflects what the town needs and they should give it a shot. Ms. Corso asked Mr. Bowsza if the Board of Selectmen had unanimously approved the request, and he said, no, it had passed 3-2, with Dearborn and Bowsza opposed.

Ms. Broder said the town can’t afford a 5% increase but nothing is happening at 2%.

Mr. Richards said he wants to fund infrastructure; the Board has to look at lines such as EDC, libraries and parks and recreation carefully.

Mr. Smith said the town should look into regionalization to find cost savings.

Ms. Pippin said the police department should be looked at carefully.

Ms. Corso asked what percentage increase would be palatable for the first referendum.

Mr. Smith: 3.5 %

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Mr. Syme: 3%

Ms. Herms: 3.5%

Ms. Pippin: 1.5%

Mr. Richards: 2.5% BOE and 0% Town

Ms. Broder: more than 2% but less than 5%

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kimberly Lord, temporary clerk