

**BOARD OF FINANCE
TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR
11 RYE STREET
BROAD BROOK, CONNECTICUT 06016**

**MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING
Wednesday, May 24, 2017, 7:00 p.m.**

DRAFT DOCUMENT – *These minutes are not official until approved at a subsequent meeting*

Regular Members Present: Jerilyn Corso (Chairman) Cindy Herms, Kathy Pippin; Jim Richards, Steve Smith, and Bill Syme,

Regular Members Absent: All Regular Members present.

Alternates Present: Paulette Broder.

Alternate Absent: Danelle Godek

Others: **Interim Town Treasurer:** Gayle Carolus; **First Selectman:** Robert Maynard; **Deputy First Selectman:** Richard P. Pippin, Jr. **Selectmen:** Jason Bowsza; various members of Town Staff or Department Heads were present in the audience: **Department of Public Works:** Len Norton, Director; Joe Sauerhoefer; Operations Manager; **Parks and Recreation:** Melissa Maltese; Director; **Human Services/Senior Center:** Kristen Fromanek, Director; **Assessor:** Carol Madore.

Press: Anthony Branciforte, Journal Inquirer

1. Call to Order:

Chairman Corso called the Public Hearing to Order at 7:00 p.m. The Board stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Time and Place of Meeting:

Wednesday, May 24, 2017, at 7:00 p.m. at the East Windsor Town Hall (11 Rye Street, Broad Brook, CT.)

3. Public Participation:

Chairman Corso opened discussion to the public.

Kathy Bilodeau, 343 Scantic Road: Mrs. Bilodeau indicated she was going to make her remarks brief as she wants to attend a Board of Education meeting which will begin shortly, but, she wanted to raise a couple of thoughts for the public. She noted the budget has gone through 2 referendums, which have failed substantially. She feels the people think the 2% is the magic number in the charter that it should be and we have tried to work around that. She has voted no twice; she feels we need to get to the town's people the accurate dollar value that was sent to the Board of Finance originally. Mrs. Bilodeau

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felt the people need to see that if nothing else it's going to be the 3rd referendum and who knows? She doesn't know if it will pass but they will have an opportunity to vote on what was presented after all the departments submitted their budgets. Mrs. Bilodeau reported she is specifically speaking about the Board of Education. They did a lot of work getting the budget down to what they presented. Substantial cuts were made before it was submitted to the Board of Finance.

Mrs. Bilodeau spoke to the request of the Broad Brook Library. She reported she has never been to the Broad Brook Library because she doesn't live on this side of the river but to keep a \$1 in for the Broad Brook Library for a just in case; she doesn't see where that should be a big deal for them and Paul (Anderson) is here advocating for them tonight. It doesn't mean you will spend more than \$1 ever but if things ever change it's worth keeping so that they don't have to fight over it again.

Mrs. Bilodeau reported In particular she is here to see how much they can keep in the school district. So many good things have been happening. She doesn't want to see that go away. She wants to see the kids that are struggling and those that are superior keep making progress going forward. They have been doing a good job of it and she is very proud of that.

Paul Anderson, 89 Main Street, Broad Brook: Mr. Anderson is asking that the Board of Finance reinstitute the line item for the Broad Brook Library for the 2017 -2018 Fiscal Year. In the 2016 budget the line item was "libraries" – plural – and both libraries were listed. In 2015 the Board of Finance approved a budget which included the Broad Brook Library. The POCD (Plan of Conservation and Development), which is our 10 year plan for the Town, includes on Page 74 as an action item support for both libraries, not just the Warehouse Point Library. Mr. Anderson reported that as President of the Broad Brook Library he can not vote yes for this budget until this is changed. Mr. Anderson reported we went to a lot of trouble to put together a Plan of Conservation and Development; to ignore its contents is a mistake.

Kate Carey-Trull, 28A Folkstone Road, Broad Brook: Mrs. Carey-Trull reported she is also on the Board of Education. She feels it's important that people understand that they did a lot of cutting to get to about 4%, and to see it slashed to less than 2% and to go before the town for that is very disappointing. She would echo Kathy Bilodeau's remarks; they have been improving things in the schools. To have our high school named one of the top 30 was a really big thing for them and she would like to support the programs they have been supporting and not slash them left and right. Mrs. Carey-Trull thanked the Board.

Bill Loos, 44 Melrose Road: Back in the late 70s we had 1900 students, now we have 1100, now we got 800 less. They had one superintendent, never an assistant, 1 principal, no assistants; we have too much overhead in the school for administration. We can get rid of 3 principals and the assistant to the superintendent; we don't need them. The

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superintendent gets \$5,000 for travel; for what? To go back and forth to the schools? We don't need that either; take that out of that budget.

And, the second thing he has is the police budget. We have an officer making \$90,000, he's going to retire, we're going to put in another guy for \$60,000. We can take out \$30,000 out of that budget with no problem at all. They are also looking for an animal control officer at \$40,000, a pistol-carrying animal control officer. There are 4 officers on duty at any one time – one in each district plus a sergeant. If we need an animal shot one of those officers shoots him. We don't need a special officer at \$40,000 to take care of that. Mr. Loos suggested we can take \$70,000 out of the Police budget. Mr. Loos also thanked the Board.

Marie DeSousa, 10 Rice Road: Mrs. DeSousa is a little concerned with the lack of information that has been put out to the people about the budget. It used to be that the Treasurer and Carol Madore put together a document about what the budget actually was and what it equated to for a tax on that, what the overall mill rate increase would be. And then they did a comparison of different properties in town so the residents would know what they could anticipate if the budget was passed. Mrs. DeSousa reported she hasn't seen that in several years. She suggested it's too late for this year but do that for next year in advance, and advertise well in advance. She felt people will have a better picture of what's happening. Right now the rumor is that if it fails 3 times it goes back to last year's budget plus 2% and for the schools that's more money for them, for the other departments, that's more money for them. She has problems with that mentality out there because this year we know we took over \$400,000 out of contingency just to balance the budget. If we revert back, to her, that's layoffs. Which one of our people in town do we want to lay off? Our one town clerk, our one first selectman, our one assessor? We can't do that. So what's going to happen? We're going to start looking at the things this town has always taken pride in, the Park and Recreation Department and what they do for the youth in this town, we take pride in our senior center and what our seniors are able to do and she's hearing rumors that the senior center has been discussed to stop that. We're not going to do our children or our elderly any justice if we take away their quality of life and you will be taking away their quality of life.

But if this budget doesn't pass, and with the uncertainty in the State, you will have to make drastic changes and it will be hurting people it shouldn't be hurting. Mrs. DeSousa apologized to the Board, she knows everyone put in a lot of hours on the budget, and she has a lot of respect for the Board, but she feels we didn't get the right information out to the people this year to make an informed decision. Mrs. DeSousa noted we have a group out there that are putting up signs with a different number, and she's not saying that number was wrong the way they computed that, but it's confusing to the people. Is it 2.4 or 2.9 percent; what is it? They get confused, and the Town is losing. We need to clarify that in the future because of we don't change that we might just as well regionalize and that would just destroy her. Mrs. DeSousa felt we won't survive the way we're going.

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Mrs. DeSousa also requested that the Board put back the \$1 for the Broad Brook Library, especially with the 250th Anniversary coming up and we're looking at historical properties. That's an historical property. If you can't fund it this year put it back as a line item. If you have money come in next year or the year after they could get something. They are relying on what they have and that's dwindling quickly.

Kathy Bilodeau, 343 Scantic Road: In response to Bill Loos, back in the 70s things were very different. She hears his point and she gets it and she doesn't think he is ridiculous making those statements but there is a very different environment that our teachers and administrators and professionals have to contend with now.

Sarah Andrews, 144 Main Street, Broad Brook: Mrs. Andrews reported she is speaking as the parent of an East Windsor High School student. The Board of Education presented a 4.7% budget increase, which includes what could be added to the school system regarding curriculum and the arts; pretty much all the current programs could be maintained. It seemed reasonable. When the Board of Education budget went to referendum it was a 1.55% increase, not even half of the 4.7% increase, and the Board of Finance removed an additional \$100,000. Mrs. Andrews reported she is speaking in support of the East Windsor schools; she is asking that the Board of Finance spare the Board of Education going forward to the next referendum and she asks the Board of Finance to strongly reconsider re-implementing the \$100,000 to the Board of Education budget. She know it seems like a lot, but seriously? She mentioned when she spoke previously she gave some scenarios of what's happened over the years in the school – of negative impact on the kids. She cited the parents of the elementary school and the middle school could probably give the Board ideas of what their kids need, but from a high school perspective those kids need courses to get into college and if they lose stuff in the high school that will affect them getting into college. And also sports and drama are good resources for college scholarships. She cited those and music and drama courses are good financial tools to get into college. You can take the money and programs away but the kids don't go away. She is asking the Board of Finance to consider those 2 options. Mrs. Andrews thanked the Board.

Richard Ference, 29 Grove Street: Who on the Board of Finance decided that when the budget failed the first time that \$14,000 coming off that would suffice for the second budget proposal? Isn't that kind of stupid? Isn't that ridiculous? Mr. Ference was expecting an answer, Chairman Corso cited the protocol for public participation – there is no back and forth discussion. Mr. Ference suggested that rule was stupid. Mr. Ference then questioned where the cuts were made, did you cut the school athletics, music and arts? We have beautiful kids in the schools, he sees the kids mixing with other schools, what's wrong with the kids/teams in our schools; what's wrong? And you can't cut the seniors, and the kids; this isn't right. And if you don't cut more than \$14,000 this time he guarantees it will fail again and you will do what you want to do, and that isn't right either. Thank you.

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Bill Loos, 44 Melrose Road: cited the Board of Education budget was \$23,000,000; with 1100 students that's over \$20,000 per student to educate our students. Mr. Loos felt that was higher than other towns in the area, which he estimated was around \$18,000 per student, so, we are way over budget in our school system. It's the administration, not the students.

No one else had signed up to present their remarks. Chairman Corso queried the audience for additional comments. No one came forward.

The Board took a short break prior to calling the Special Meeting to Order.

Respectfully submitted,

Peg Hoffman, Recording Secretary, East Windsor Board of Finance.