

**BOARD OF FINANCE
TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR
11 RYE STREET
EAST WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT 06088**

MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING

Thursday, May 10, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.

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

Members Present: Jason Bowsza, Joseph Pellegrini, Danelle E. Godeck, Jerilyn Corso, and Kathleen Pippin
Members Absent: Marie DeSousa
Alternates Present: Paulette Broder and Sharon Tripp
Alternate Absent: None
Others: Catherine Cabral, Denise Menard, Alan Baker, Dale Nelson, Richard Pippin, James Richards, Chris Mickey, Teresa Kane, Cathy Simonelli, Carol Madore, Linda Sinsigallo, Dan Nadeau, Tom Muska, Sharon Muska, Josh Kapelner, Richard Morrison, and Steven Dearborn, and others
Press: Larry Smith (Patch.com)

I. Call to Order

Chairman Jason Bowsza called the Public Hearing to Order at 7:00 p.m., in the East Windsor High School Cafeteria.

Chairman Jason Bowsza thanked everyone for attending the Public Hearing and reminded anyone who would like to address the Board, a sign-up sheet was on the conference table and it was asked to write their name and address and limit their comments to three minutes.

II. Public Input

Mr. Josh Kapelner, Vice Chairman of the Economic Development Commission, addressed the Board. He first thanked the Board for putting forward a budget with the best intentions for the Town in mind; however, the results of Tuesday's referendum should tell the Board Members to encourage creative ideas to reduce the budget. He hopes the Town will not repeat history as in years past. He is here to represent the small businesses and residents who understand the difficult decisions the Board has to make during these tough economic times. A 6.5% increase or \$1.6 million dollar increase for the Board of Education is too high. It has to be politely explained to the Board of Education that the residents and small businesses are still feeling the facts of the downturn of the economy. He does support the Town

Government proposed budget and believes that cuts cannot always be taken from the Town Government side. He is suggesting that the Board present the next proposed budget not over a 2% increase to avoid having a third referendum.

Mr. Alan Baker, Selectmen, of 43 Spring Street, addressed the Board. He wanted to address the issue regarding the Public Works salary adjustment and the comments he has heard that it was wrong to give the raise and the Town cannot afford it. He indicated that he personally has not had a raise in over two years, but this is not the issue. The salary increase was given and in order to keep key employees, raises have to be given. The adjusted salary was given because that particular individual earned it. It is his opinion that 357 people voted to support the budget and the budget which was proposed was fiscally sound and to make cuts will cut services.

Mr. Richard Morrison, 29 Laurel Court, addressed the Board. He indicated he had spoken at the previous meeting held regarding the budget and he was the only one to do so. He commented that he has respect for all of the Board Members and for the job they have been doing; however, he indicated the Town has not reassessed the property and the property cannot be sold. He is suggesting telling the Department Heads to go back to the drawing board and reduce their budgets by 3%. He thanked the Board to allow him to speak and wishes the Board well during their negotiations.

Mr. Steve Dearborn, 144 East Road, addressed the Board. He indicated that the Board is asking the public ways to cut the budget, he suggested hiring responsible leadership. He has been in a dispute with the Town which is costing the Town thousands of dollars. The Town thought he would go away if they fought him in Court, but he is not going away. People do not care about the budgets and they do not come to meetings to find out about the budget, they watch TV. He owns a lot of property in Town and ten years ago he was paying \$12,000 and the bank was escrowing paying the taxes through his mortgage, he began to ask questions regarding his taxes and realized that he is paying \$26,000 and he wonders how this happens. He does not support an increase in taxes.

Ms. Sharon Muska, 216 East Road, addressed the Board. She wanted to respond to Mr. Dearborn indicating people do care and the only way the public can show their dislike in the Town is to register to vote and the only avenue is to deny the elected officials money. Before she had come to the meeting, she went onto Realtor.com and got the statistics on the houses for sale, how long the houses are on the market. She commented that she owns an orchard in town and she does not plan on moving out, but she has a concern on what happens within the town. She also raised a concern about the voting hours for referendum and only being able to vote from 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. She commented that there were many people who were upset about the voting hours. People are used to being able to vote from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., and they plan accordingly. She also suggested that the Town follow other towns who post online the check registers, bills and vendors for the townspeople to review. She does go online presently to read minutes of Board of Selectmen and Planning and Zoning so she can become informed on the goings on in the town.

Mr. Thomas Muska, 216 East Road, addressed the Board. He began speaking of how the Town of East Windsor, geographically, is business unfriendly. He gave a copy of a newspaper article to the Board Members. He read from the article which discussed the “2007 Great Recession” and in the last 20 years there has been no growth in the private sector but only in government approximately 28%. He discussed the union wages, health benefits and pensions which are far outside of what the private sector is offering their employees. He discussed how government cannot control costs and how General Motors was put out of business due to the unions and how General Motors was bailed out by the government. He remarked how the public sector is going away slowly.

Mr. John Simonelli, 71 Depot Street, addressed the Board. He indicated he was perplexed about the Town of East Windsor. He remembers when the storm in October crippled the Town and how the townspeople came together to help each other. However, now during the budget discussions, name calling and the bickering begins. He agrees that the budget has to be a compromise, but contractual obligations have to be made and not having an increase in the budget is unrealistic. Rumors have been going around town regarding roads and equipment needing to be repaired, but with the zero percent budget increase, those repairs cannot be made. He reminded everyone that in their own household budgets and how much inflation has played on those budgets. He suggested not making cuts to the budget because the Town needs the money.

Mr. John Mazza, 143 Winkler Road, addressed the Board. He indicated the threats that are made during the budget negotiations are to cut services because the funding is not available for services. He gave an example of how the cost of food has risen. He also mentioned the change in the voting times and the communication the town has with the general public is lacking. More information to the public is needed and should be in the newspaper. He mentioned that a recent raise to a town employee was in the newspaper. He remarked about the school budget and their request of an increase of a million dollars. The taxpayers do care about the education of the students; however, putting more money into the education does not necessarily produce better students. Lastly, he remarked about his recent assessment on his motor vehicle and a meeting he had with the Assessor’s Office.

Chairman Jason Bowsza wanted to clarify the issue of the voting times. He indicated that the voting times are established by State Statute acted upon by the Legislature. He has asked that the times be changed to the 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and hopefully it will be able to be done, but the process is very tedious and there is a possibility that it will not be able to be changed before the next scheduled referendum.

Mr. Parlos, 64 Prospect Hill Drive, addressed the Board. He commented that he and his wife moved to East Windsor back in 1985 and since that time he has seen a State income tax implemented and increased, gasoline tax increasing, and federal taxes increasing. However, he has not seen an increase in his wages. He works in

manufacturing and has not had an increase in some time and his pay cannot keep up with all of the increases which are occurring. He does like living in New England; however, the cost of living is very high. He indicated he has voted no because there is no money to go around. He thanked the Board Members for their service.

Ms. Fran Miller, 155 Wells Road, addressed the Board. She indicated that she recently moved to East Windsor from Windsor. She read in the newspaper that the insurance and benefits and miscellaneous expenses have very high increases. She would like to see the details of those categories. She has a background in finance and has worked for the Bank of America budget planning. She indicated that without details of the budgets and she needs more details before she can make a decision. She would like to sit down with someone and go over the numbers.

Ms. Denise Menard, First Selectwoman, 73 Miller Road, addressed the Board. First, she wanted to say that her door is always open to discuss the budget or any other issue. She indicated that all of the budget information is filed with the Town Clerk's Office, but the document is so big, it is not online. She can discuss the budget in basic terms and not accounting terms. She referred to the budget as a "bunch of buckets". She addressed Mr. Morrison indicating that she agrees with him regarding the issues of the voting times and she will attempt to have those times changed, but reminded everyone it would require a Board of Selectmen Special Meeting and a Town Meeting. She did comment that the voting in Broad Brook is at the Town Hall and she was in her office all day, and there weren't many people who were turned away due to the polls not being opened. She also agrees with the statements of the information not getting out to the public. She will be placing signs at the Town Hall and Town Annex in an attempt to get more residents to the polls. She did comment about a raise which was given to an employee recently. She reminded everyone that the employee who received the raise is a devoted, hardworking employee for the Town. She also reminded everyone that other towns which are comparable in size to East Windsor have a mill rate of 30 or more. Another comment she made was about a recent accusation by a speaker at this meeting indicating that the Town is suing him and spending \$100,000 to do so. The Town is defending itself from his lawsuits.

A brief discussion was held.

Mr. Charles Matteson, 87L Main Street, addressed the Board. He commented that he has been sitting at this meeting listening to the complaints. The 3.58% increase which was requested is reasonable considering the rising cost of fuel over the last year. There are many departments in the Town which use gasoline and diesel, which include the police department, fire departments, senior center, and other departments. He questioned what would be cut from the proposed budget – senior center, education or trash? He believes the residents need to become more realistic and he believes there should be no cuts to the budget and actually more money should be placed into the budget.

Chairman Jason Bowsza did want to speak briefly about the comments he has heard. He said the Board has to look at all of the opinions, for or against the proposed budget. Services have been preserved or increased for a better balance for all groups within the Town. The Board will go back to work on the proposed budget. There are no ill feelings and the Board has worked with the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education in an attempt to make a conscience effort in forming a budget which would be best for the Town.

No one else volunteered to speak.

III. Adjournment

The public hearing was closed at 7:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Denise M. Piotrowicz
Recording Secretary