

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

**MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING
Wednesday, May 29, 2013, at 7:00 p.m.**

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

Members Present: Jason Bowsza, Jerilyn Corso, Danelle Godeck, Joseph Pellegrini, Kathleen Pippin, and Sharon Tripp.
Members Absent: All members were present.
Alternate Present:
Alternate Absent: Pauline Broder, and Gil Hayes
Others: Catherine Cabral, Town Treasurer; Selectmen: Denise Menard; Richard Pippin; Jim Richards; Board of Education: Teresa Kane, Superintendent of the East Windsor School system; numerous residents, please see speakers noted below.
Press: Gail Montany, Journal Inquirer; Ted Glanzer, Patch.

I. Call to Order:

Chairman Bowsza called the Public Hearing on the third proposed budget to Order at 7:02 p.m.

II. Time and Place of Meeting:

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

III. Public Participation:

Chairman Bowsza greeted residents and asked that those people who wish to speak to come forward and provide their name and address. He noted that due to the large number of people in attendance that he would ask people to limit their comments to 3 minutes to give everyone time to present their suggestions.

Chairman Bowsza opened discussion by noting signs around town suggesting a 5% and 20% tax increase – which was misleading. He offered the audience the following comments – which represent real numbers derived by the Board of Finance - with regard to the proposed budget:

- Average assessed value of property has been reduced by 14.5%
- At least 50% of the tax payers would experience a decrease in their tax bill.
- Average decrease in property tax bill per household is approximately \$200
- Average change in a property tax bill would have been approximately \$27/month
- The average difference in the mill rate between last year and this year is 4.32 mills - without any increase in spending.

- The difference in the spending proposed under the budget presented yesterday was .76 mills
- Total amount of money raised via property taxes under the budget proposed yesterday was a 2.87 mill increase.

Chairman Bowsza queried the audience for those wishing to comment:

Angelo Sevarino, 26 Barber Hill Road : Mr. Sevarino reported he has been a resident of East Windsor for 12 years after moving here from West Hartford where he lived for 23 years. Mr. Sevarino suggested there's a big difference in the two communities but he likes the small community that is East Windsor. He indicated he's not excited about the budget proposed because the education budget will have a miniscule increase; schools need to be funded. Mr. Sevarino reported he has voted for the past two budgets but if the Board makes many changes tonight he may vote against the next budget. He felt the budget proposed was a reasonable budget; he was surprised it didn't pass.

Jack Mannette, 15 Old Ellington Road: felt the comments made during the previous Board of Finance meeting were condescending to the residents. Also, with regard to the 1.98% increase – last year that turned into 2.7 % increase because several members voted for a fire truck as an additional appropriation. Mr. Mannette suggested he felt the Board of Education will get \$400,000 from the Town budget which doesn't reflect an additional \$200,000 from the State ECS money – they will be getting \$600,000 after a failed budget. Regarding the comments made about a 20% increase for this tax year – he doesn't know anywhere that he said it would affect this tax year. Mr. Mannette reiterated how he arrived at his calculations – which involve taking the previous value and revaluation value of your home and running it through the previous mill rate and the proposed mill rate and then subtract one from the other you get certain figures - which Mr. Mannette maintains is a 20% tax increase. Mr. Mannette suggested a resident might not see it this year but next year it's where you start out.

Bill Shultz, 9 Lindsay Lane: Mr. Schultz reported he is on the Board of Education. He felt this budget request is a reasonable request and we can't go lower. Mr. Schultz suggested he would like to stay in East Windsor but - many houses can't sell, we don't fix our roads or take care of our schools; we let it all go. Mr. Schultz also indicated the ECS money goes to the Town not the school.

John Simonelli, 71 Depot Street: Mr. Simonelli reported he has lived in town almost 30 years. He suggested he has been advocating for the budget but he must have done a bad job because it hasn't passed. Mr. Simonelli indicated he would ask that people stop the bad politics in town; that belongs in Washington. You have people who don't like the budget – he would like to know what the long term goal is for those people? He suggested you must spend money sooner or later. It's like maintenance on your house or your car; if we don't increase incrementally along the way there will be a huge budget increase down the road. You have to pay the piper sometime; you can't have a zero budget growth year after year.

Mr. Simonelli reported he is involved with the Emergency Management Council for East Windsor. If there is another disaster like last year they should open a shelter at the high school but we can't fund a back-up generator, they can't purchase an enclosed trailer to move cots to the high school. Mr. Simonelli suggested we've got to start spending money on something; zero growth for many years doesn't work. Mr. Simonelli reported he supports a reasonable increase so the town doesn't die on the vine.

Denise Friedman, 40 Windsorville Road: Ms. Friedman reported she is employed by the school system but is a taxpayer as well. She suggested more needs to be done to get people out to vote. Ms. Friedman indicated she understands people don't want their taxes increased but she agreed with Mr. Simonelli – we must move forward. The budget fails time after time; it costs thousands of dollars each time it goes to referendum. Ms. Friedman suggested there needs to be some understanding in town, the politics in town The truths need to be the truths and not what people want it to be.

Bea Corrado, 1 Lindsay Lane: Ms. Corrado thanked the Board of Finance for their hard work and hours spent on the budget. She suggested the Board of Finance has put together a reasonable budget – it's baffling to see it fail. The Board of Education and the school system have so many things to celebrate but we are losing kids all the time; there are other alternatives for them. We need to become competitive in school. Ms. Corrado suggested we need to keep the class size down; she reported she has been teaching for 20 years and a higher number of kids in a classroom does affect what they learn. Ms. Corrado noted we also have kids coming through with greater needs than ever and we need to be able to give them the education they deserve. She requested the Board take into consideration no further cuts for the town or the school.

Chris Willey, 19 Perri Lane: Mr. Willey thanked the Board members for their hard work; they spent a lot of time working on the budget. Mr. Willey noted everyone on the Board was selected to do this job and under the Charter it says we need referendums; it's confusing. The Board puts its best effort forward and he struggles to understand why the taxpayers who've elected you to do this job then vote against it; people have different agendas. Mr. Willey reported he doesn't see any specific suggestions as to what people don't like in the budget – tell us what roads you don't want fixed. He felt people vote no because they don't want to pay more taxes – thank God we have a 2% minimum. Mr. Willey reported he supports the budget.

Sharon Muska, 216 East Road: Ms. Muska reported she's one of the crotchey no voters. She agreed – it's disgraceful. Ms. Muska reported she is standing here for the taxpayers that can't – or won't – pay more. Ms. Muska suggested some people are voting no because they don't like what boards and commissions have done; the referendums are the only way to say when the town or a board isn't doing well. Regarding the houses not selling, that's the economic times. She also didn't like the comments made when the Board voted last time; the taxpayers pay the checks and pay the taxes and deserve respect. Ms. Muska suggested the Board is comprised of the people who know how the money should be spent; look at the town and if you must cut more to satisfy the taxpayer do what you have to do.

Kendra Ritchie, 7 Lindsay Lane: Ms. Ritchie indicated she feels like a salmon swimming upstream. Ms. Ritchie noted there are a lot of good people and families that volunteer their time to get the town to move forward – she cited frustration – people move their kids to magnet schools which hurts East Windsor. Ms. Ritchie reported she is a nurse and is on her own fixed budget - she hasn't had a raise in 5 years, her health benefits have doubled so she understands but..... Ms. Ritchie asked that no more cuts be made to the schools.

Daniel Bell, 228 Scantic Road: Mr. Bell reported he has lived in East Windsor 16 years; he loves it here. Mr. Bell suggested he loves that New England rural feel of the community that he wants to raise his kids in. Every year we are in the same position – arguing about the budget. He would like the numbers broken down more - how much more in dollars and cents will it cost to give his kids a good education and make them want to come back to East Windsor to give back to the community? How much are we short to keep the fire trucks and the town safety items; what's the number to get the town back on target? How much per week will these things cost him? The budget numbers are confusing. Is it 10 – 15 – 20 dollars per week and the taxpayers can budget for that. He's just a guy who wants to stay in East Windsor; why can't we all get together to make that happen? How much more out of our pockets to put this back on track – does anyone know?

Chairman Bowsza clarified that the Board isn't supposed to interact with the residents during the Public Hearing, but he would be happy to discuss this after the close of the Public Hearing.

Bob Little, 55 Rockville Road: Mr. Little suggested that people saw \$50,000 in the Capital Improvements budget for an ambulance – are we talking about buying an ambulance? That's what people thought. Chairman Bowsza reiterated he would address that question after the close of the Public Hearing. Mr. Little continued that his biggest objection was what we are paying to salaries and benefits and creating new positions in times like this. People don't realize the cost of health benefits. Mr. Little questioned recent transfers; he indicated he didn't see a line item budget – just a budget by department.

Kathy Bilodeau, 343 Scantic Road: Ms. Bilodeau reported she has lived in East Windsor for 17 years; she also loves the community and spends time volunteering on the Board of Education. Ms. Bilodeau noted she recently worked as a monitor at the referendum; she was appalled at the misinformation the people had accumulated before coming to vote. They didn't understand the referendum process completely; she sent several to the Town Clerk's Office and the First Selectmen's Office to get information on the budget. She cited that we went in with a 1.98% budget yesterday which is below the 2% (stated in the charter), she questioned if the 2% gets voted down what do the people want? Maybe they voted no because they want a bigger budget; if 2% is the default why would you say no to 1.98%? Ms. Bilodeau suggested she understands the issue of fixed incomes, yet she supports this budget, and an even higher budget.

Melissa Fisher, 14 Simone Drive: Ms. Fisher indicated she echoes many of the things already said; she also loves the community. Every year at this time she is embarrassed at what goes on with the referendums. She supports the budget and hoped the Board will not make any more cuts.

Rick LeBorious, 16 Church Street: Mr. LeBorious suggested he didn't think it mattered how long someone has lived in East Windsor. He suggested he has lived here for 16 years and his wife's family has probably been here 100 years but it doesn't matter because we are all one community and we should be the best we can be. He thanked the Board of Finance for going over every line item and every investment. It doesn't matter if you're a Democrat or a Republican because once you're elected you work for the people of East Windsor. Mr. LeBorious felt the Board should go back with the same budget; he indicated he didn't understand why anyone would vote against the proposed budget. Some people are saying no just for the ability to say no. Mr. LeBorious supports the proposed budget and would like to see it go higher. He has no one working in town, and supports public education; he felt we need basic services like having our roads plowed, and if we go with a budget that doesn't meet the basic requirements we are going backwards.

Patrick Mulkern, 17 Emily Road: Mr. Mulkern indicated he agreed with Mr. LeBorious, he has recently returned to town and he is embarrassed by what's going on. Mr. Mulkern reported his girlfriend wants to work in East Windsor and he questions why? A zero percent increase is unsustainable. Mr. Mulkern reported he was in this room in 2005 and gave a similar speech; he is asking for approval of a budget that sustains the town. He would like to come back to East Windsor to live. He hoped the Board understood that the recent budget was voted down because people want a higher budget.

Cathy Simonelli, 71 Depot Street: Ms. Simonelli reported the budget isn't high enough to sustain the Town, the town needs more. She is asking the Board not to cut more and to even go the other way.

Chairman Bowsza queried the audience for other people who wanted to speak; no one else came forward. Chairman Bowsza thanked everyone for coming to the Public Hearing.

XIII. Adjournment:

Chairman Bowsza ADJOURNED the Public Hearing at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: _____
Peg Hoffman, Recording Secretary, East Windsor Board of Finance