

TOWN OF EAST WINDSOR BOARD OF SELECTMEN

BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

February 7, 2017

6:00 p.m.

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

BOARD OF SELECTMEN/BOARD OF EDUCATION **Budget Public Hearing Minutes**

***** *Draft Document subject to Board Review/Approval* *****

Board of Selectmen:

Robert Maynard, First Selectman
Richard P. Pippin, II, Deputy First Selectman
Jason Bowsza, Selectman
Steve Dearborn, Selectman
Dale Nelson, Selectman

ATTENDANCE: **Board of Selectmen:** Robert Maynard, First Selectman; Richard P. Pippin, II, Deputy First Selectman; Jason Bowsza; Steve Dearborn; Dale Nelson. .

GUESTS: **East Windsor School System:** Dr. Theresa Kane, Superintendent; Dr. Christine DeBarge, Assistant Superintendent; **Board of Education Members:** Cathy Simonelli, Chairman; Kathleen Bilodeau; Nicole DeSousa, William Raber.

Call to Order:

First Selectman Maynard called the Meeting to Order at 6:05 p.m. in the Town Hall Meeting Room, 11 Rye Street, Broad Brook, CT.

Budget Presentations:

Town of East Windsor, presented by First Selectman Maynard:

First Selectman Maynard offered a PowerPoint presentation of the Town of East Windsor proposed budget for the Fiscal Year 2017 – 2018. First Selectman Maynard indicated that if you review the Fiscal Year 2016 – 2017 Budget you will see that the total budget amount was *about*

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\$37,000,000. That total figure was broken down to about \$22,000,000) for the Board of Education and about \$15,000,000 for Town Government. Approximately 60% of the funding was allocated to the Board of Education, while approximately 40% funded the Town side. If you assume a 2% increase over the current Town budget of \$15,000,000 the Town could expect an approximate \$300,000 increase for Fiscal Year 2017 – 2018; a 4% increase would generate \$600,000 in additional funding for the same period. First Selectman Maynard reported that this year health insurance increased by approximately \$180,000; this increase must be paid as it's a contractual obligation. A new position was created in the Public Works Department at a salary of approximately \$50,000, which is another contractual obligation. Other contractual salary increases will require funding in the amount of about \$216,000. These obligations will require an increase of about \$450,000 in funding. First Selectman Maynard also noted an additional \$130,000 will be required to fund withholding taxes for pensions. The Pension Commission had expected a 7% projected increase on investments, however, the actual return was 6.5%, and therefore the pension contribution must be increased by the \$130,000. The total cost of these required funding increases is about \$575,000 for FY 2017 - 2018

Taking into consideration a 2% increase, First Selectman Maynard reviewed Government expenses and is recommending the following reductions or cuts. He reduced funding for road maintenance to the amount funded last year because the Town recently bonded \$2,000,000 for road repairs. He also reduced the Capital Improvement Projects budget as we recently spent approximately half a million dollars from the Fund balance. First Selectman Maynard also noted he dropped small CIP requests under \$20,000. First Selectman Maynard noted if the Board of Finance or the Board of Selectmen choose to add to the proposed budget that can be done. First Selectman Maynard noted he excluded funding requests of \$26,000 for the Warehouse Point Library, funding of \$12,000 for the Broad Brook Library, funding of \$10,000 for the Town Planner, funding of over \$400,000 for the Warehouse Point Fire District to make it equitable with the Broad Brook Fire Department, and funding of \$3,500 for signage for the Parks and Recreation Department. That's another \$452,000 that the Board of Finance or the Board of Selectmen can restore, or they can choose from other items.

Taking that into account, First Selectman Maynard reported the total proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2017 – 2018 for the Town budget is \$15,201,923, which represents an increase in spending of 2.11%

First Selectman Maynard advised the public the complete/detailed Selectmen's Proposed 2017 – 2018 Budget is available on the Town website in the following areas: 1) On the Board of Finance page, including department statements supporting budget requests, and 2) On the front page of the website under NEWS. The summary document presented this evening, is also available under the Board of Finance Page (included in the Proposed Budget); paper copies of the summary are also available at this meeting. –

First Selectman Maynard noted Dr. Theresa Kane, Dr. Christine DeBarge, and various members of the Board of Education have joined the Board this evening. Cathy Simonelli, Chairman of the Board of Education (BOE) advised everyone they are present to hear the public's *comments*.

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The Board of Education Budget has been prepared but has not yet been presented to the BOE; they have not seen the budget yet, therefore they have nothing to present to the Board of Selectmen this evening. She reported BOE Budget Workshops will occur on February 13th and February 14th; she noted the workshops are open to the public and urged anyone interested to attend. BOE Chairman Simonelli suggested the BOE Budget is a level-service budget which funds the services they have today. She noted they will have similar increases in insurance, the cost of transportation, etc.

First Selectman Maynard opened discussion to the public:

James Barton, 158 South Water Street: Mr. Barton reported the \$400,000 funding for the Warehouse Point Fire District should be “restored” to the budget as it was the amount removed last year after the District resumed levying a Fire Tax after many years of inadequate funding. This allowed the BOF to claim a 1.8% increase in spending even though the Town’s overall spending started \$400,000 under the previous year’s spending. Mr. Barton suggested the Fire District taxpayers continued to augment the Town overall budget by approximately \$400,000 in a now unbalanced spending condition to fund fire services townwide. The Town should fund the Fire District in an amount equitable to the Broad Brook Fire Department while the District taxpayers fund additional expenses necessary for fire services as they see fit at the District’s budget meeting.

Bob Lyke, 80 Rye Street: As a general comment he suggested 60/40 really isn’t what most towns pay for education/town budgets, he felt it was more like 65% or 67% for education. Mr. Lyke also noted the Treasurer’s office is proposing a \$219,000 increase which represents a 4% increase; he recently read the Town Treasurer is leaving to work in Manchester. He suggested it would be nice if we didn’t have a political plume appointed position but he felt it would be better to hire someone with specific certifications – which he believed is the case with the current Treasurer. Mr. Lyke also noted that under the Culture and Leisure section of the Proposed Budget, there is no funding for the Broad Brook Library. Under Boards and Commissions, EDC (Economic Development Commission) carries a funding balance of \$4,000, which is a 0% increase. Mr. Lyke suggested the only way to balance a budget is to increase the revenue or cut costs, and he is for increasing revenue, not only through increasing the Grand List but we should take advantage of the developable land we have and have a full time developer to “sell” the Town for taxable property. The Veterans Commission is requesting funding of \$1,200; Mr. Lyke noted that Commission is working hard on a big fundraising project. They are trying to reach a fund-raising goal of \$60,000 to \$70,000, and are doing so without paid contracted services to help raise those funds. They need the \$1200 for secretarial services and to help with communications. Mr. Lyke noted the legal fees were criticized at a previous meeting; he noticed they have been reduced. That’s good to see.

Bill Loos, Melrose Road: Mr. Loos reported that today (Governor) Malloy recommended that small towns consider doing away with superintendent of schools positions; he would like to see the school board consider that. He felt it would save money on administration costs. Mr. Loos reported he feels a business manager would be a good choice working along with the *principals*

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as the principals are doing a great job. Mr. Loos suggested we might save a quarter million (dollars).

Wendy Parker, 171 Greenwoods Lane: Ms. Parker reported they (The Youth Center) submitted a budget request of \$12,602 to cover the cost of building expenses; they raise operating expenses through fund raising. Total expenses for the Youth Center are \$16,081.90. They have been open since October, 2015 and have survived with those expenses but it's draining on the volunteers who have full time jobs and children. They have not been able to implement some of the programs they would like to. They are hoping for use of a Town building rather than incur the monthly rental expense; maybe they could share space with Senior Services.

Sarah Andrews, 144 Main Street: Ms. Andrews reported she has spoken at BOE Meetings and sometimes at BOS's Meetings. As Mrs. Simonelli said, we hope to maintain (services), if we could look at the town and the finances and the different boards and what they do, and if something is going to impact the BOE in a negative way and take away from our kids. Please really consider; let's hope those horrible decisions aren't before us this year and let's hope for a good voter turnout. Ms. Andrews felt the schools are in the best place they have been in a long time; she feels there is some consistency right now. There are a lot of good things happening; we have momentum and are moving forward. The kids have access to a lot of programs and we have a superintendent who rolled up her sleeves probably eight years ago and it wasn't always easy; Ms. Andrews hoped if we can maintain that. Let's see how we can grow. There are also a lot of good things happening in the high school.

No one else from the public requested to speak.

Selectman Nelson questioned BOE Chairman Simonelli for an explanation of Governor Malloy's intention regarding an article she read today. BOE Chairman Simonelli indicated she hadn't read the article but felt the Governor wanted to consider a philosophy to be digested before he publishes a list of changes to town funds. Selectman Nelson thought they spoke of the wealthiest not getting as much, and using the Husky A Card; Selectman Bowsza gave a brief explanation of the formula for eligibility for lunch programs. Dr. Kane suggested we may be "held harmless: if we are still called an "Alliance District"; BOE Chairman Simonelli suggested that determination for East Windsor was not yet known. Dr. Kane suggested while not everyone might feel that way the reference to "hold harmless" was if you are an Alliance District then NPR would still stand, that would be the threshold for the State. Selectman Bowsza questioned then if we aren't (an Alliance District) then NPR wouldn't apply; Dr. Kane felt that's what Governor Malloy is suggesting. She hoped this would work to the Town's advantage because currently we have 40.9% who qualify for free or reduced lunch; she felt the number would go up using Husky. She suggested the formula currently hurts EW as we are considered a "land rich" community; regarding the funding East Windsor is considered a relatively wealthy community. Everyone considered an Alliance District got close to a million dollars; at our height we were just over \$300,000. Mrs. Bilodeau suggested that regarding the 40.9% Dr. Kane referenced when we go around East Windsor there are a lot of McMansions and you wouldn't believe the poverty level in town. Discussion followed regarding the process for involvement in the free or

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reduced lunch programs, the residents reluctance to confide this information, the confidentiality involved in participation in the program, and the anonymity of use of the program.

Selectman Dearborn questioned that he heard the Governor wants the towns to pay 30% of the teacher's pensions? BOE Chairman Simonelli indicated she understood that currently the State contributes 100% to the teachers' pensions; they now want the towns to pay. Selectman Dearborn questioned what if we don't? Selectmen Bowsza suggested the only thing in favor of that is the towns aren't considering pension obligations during collective bargaining agreements so the towns aren't looking at the whole picture of the pension obligations; this way the towns would have to consider that. As an example, when Greenwich – or Avon or West Hartford - sets the teachers' salaries in collective bargaining agreements they are obligating the State to something without considering if the State can pay for them. Discussion followed regarding inconsistency of salaries throughout various towns. BOE Chairman Simonelli suggested the differentiation of salaries isn't currently considered; she suggested a Greenwich teacher presumably received a higher salary than an East Windsor teacher. She suggested there had been discussion of the inequity of East Windsor's taxes paying for the pension of a Greenwich teacher. She felt perhaps Governor Malloy was trying to even that out. Selectman Bowsza suggested it would make more sense if East Windsor paid 1/3 of its teachers' pensions rather than all 169 towns paying 1/3 of the bill for pension obligations. Mr. Loos suggested doing away with pensions and initiate 401K plans for new hires; discussion turned to statutory requirements and the process for change of same.

Selectman Nelson noted the Broad Brood Fire Department has decided to put on 3 new firefighters and the Warehouse Point Fire Department will be doing the same because of safety issues. She noticed the Broad Brook Fire Department is asking for a funding request of \$419,000, which is a 20% increase. She wanted to point out that what we do for one department we should do for the other to make sure we protect our people, whether it's fire, police, or emergency aid. Selectman Nelson suggested the departments are currently operating with a deficit of firefighters, and when we fund additional people it requires equipment and gear. She suggested it's a huge expense but a necessary one, as is education. Selectman Dearborn cited a recent increase in the Grand List of .72%; he questioned what that equated to in money? First Selectman Maynard paused to research that information.

At that point the BOE members and staff exited the Budget Public Hearing as they were due to open their own meeting within a short time.

The Budget Public Hearing adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Peg Hoffman, Substitute Recording Secretary