

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE

The Board of Finance held a public hearing Thursday, February 18, 2016 in the Council Chambers at the Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT. Chairman James Gaston called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

**Present:** Kelley Johnson, Sandy Roussas, Aaron Carlson, James Gaston, Mark Boland, John Godin

**Also Present:** First Selectman Pat Llodra, Finance Director Robert Tait, BOE Chair Keith Alexander, BOE Business Director Ron Bienkowski, 45 members of the public and 2 members of the press

*Public Comment on the Town of Newtown Budget and Newtown Board of Education School District Budget*

Tracy Jaeger, 3 Honey Lane – PTA president, stands behind Dr. Erardi's budget. She asked for it to stay in tacked. The right thing to do is let the voters decide.

Tammara McMahon, 16A Pole Bridge Road – Has been a resident for 22 years. She voted the budget down last year and was grateful it didn't have an increase. She asked that they do some soul searching and get the budget down again. She doesn't think it will pass as is.

Karen Roszman, 13 Stonewall Ridge Road – Asked that the BOF send the BOE budget through as is with no reductions. Dr. Erardi is an expert on how the school district needs to run. He made difficult decisions to make the budget reasonable. The 3.67% increase for the BOE budget is justified.

Paul Murphy, 17 Greenleaf Farms Road –The population of the schools is going down and is predicted to continue. He can't see a justification for the increased spending with reduced enrollment. He would like to see the BOE budget increase be in line with the BOS increase of 1%.

Julia Conlin, 11 Old Castle Drive – This is a complicated budget season because of the expiring grants. The increase in the BOE budget is due to fixed costs. It is easy to look at the number and say it is too high. You need to look at the details and what the purpose of the proposed increase is. She cannot vote yes for a budget that decreases the proposed school budget any further.

Laura Terry, 64 Robin Hill Road – You are deliberating the BOE budget which is an increase of 3.67%. She questioned that snow removal is captured in the BOE but not in the BOS. It would be in our best interest to reduce these cost in the BOE and increase them in the BOS. Technology is a concern. Our children are taking standardized tests on computers. The BOE has presented a budget that is reasonable.

Kristen Bonacci, 12 Meridian Ridge Drive – She is the Hawley PTA president. Technology is important to our children in elementary schools. Every time there is a significant cut we are putting ourselves into a hole that we cannot dig ourselves out of and the children suffer. Keep the budget as presented.

Melissa Belouni, 7 Stonewall Ridge Road – She was happy that the BOE increased the BCBA position to a fulltime position. She is the mother of a special needs child and very grateful for the special education services in the town. She expressed concern regarding Head O'Meadow School. There are only 2 third grade teachers instead of 3. The concern is that there are 4 children that have behavior therapists. How is the teacher going to have 23 children plus 2 special needs with each of those children having behavior therapists? There isn't enough room in the class. Her plea is to say that the budget needs more money for additional third grade teacher Head O'Meadow.

Sushi Gupta, 7 Lincoln Road – The BOE is asking for too much money. The enrollment has gone down and continues to go down. The BOE signed a contract for teachers for 5% over the next three years; everywhere else they are getting 1 or 2%. Social security has not increased again this year. How can you justify 5% over 3 years? The seniors need a place to go, exercise and socialize but there isn't enough room at the current Senior Center. He cannot vote for this BOE budget.

Kristen Alesevich, 16 Fieldstone Drive – She has sat in at almost every BOE budget meeting for the last 6 months. Our teachers are working very hard and deserve to be compensated. Our Serv grants are expiring and we need to pick that up. Please do not cut the budget, Dr. Erardi and the BOE have done an amazing job.

Joanna Rosen, 60 Suger Lane – Supports both budgets and doesn't fully understand either of them. She believes that if that is their expertise, it is vetted out and there have been educated debates. Everyone is working with little and presenting a budget with their expertise.

Paul Murphy, 17 Greenleaf Road – Dr. Erardi's name has been mentioned many times, is he in the room? Is he a Newtown resident and pay taxes?

John Vouros 29 Main Street – He has been on the BOE for 4.5 years but is speaking on behalf of himself, not for the BOE. He was elected for the BOE because he worked here for 35 years in the school system. He represents the children and the professionals in this town. While sitting on the board they hired Dr. Erardi who one of the finest superintendents in the town if not the country. He has provided a budget that is about the children and there should be no one that feels that this budget has money in it that is not necessary.

Paul Parvis, 18 Leopard Drive –Mrs. Llodra has done a great job increasing the budget for the roads in town but is that enough? It behooves this town to increase spending on infrastructure.

Bob Merola, 22 Ashford Lane – Heard all the comments tonight and respects the BOE and the administration for all the work they do. They are interested in doing the best for our children. The large concern is that the education budget continues to increase at an alarming rate. It is his

observation is that we have not done much to mitigate declining enrollment. He suggested reducing the budget from last year by \$180, \$1 for each student that we lost.

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:48pm

Respectfully Submitted,  
Arlene Miles, Clerk