

Town of Newtown Legislative Council Special Meeting
Tuesday, April 30, 2013
3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT

PRESENT: Jeff Capeci, Mary Ann Jacob, George Ferguson, Joe Girgasky, Paul Lundquist, Bob Merola, Daniel Honan, Kathy Fetchick, Neil Chaudhary, Dan Wiedemann, Dan Amaral, Phil Carroll

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman Pat Llodra, Finance Director Robert Tait, Police Chief Michael Kehoe, John Kortze, Harry Waterbury, Joe Kearney, Dr. Janet Robinson, Ron Bienkowski, Debbie Leidlein, John Vourus, Cody McCubbin, Keith Alexander , 4 members of media, Jan Andras (Clerk)

Chairman Capeci called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

VOTER PARTICIPATION: Michelle Assante, 16 Wendover Road – because of the binding bifurcated budget process, she voted NO to the Selectmen’s budget because she felt it would be the only way “to protect the BOE budget”. The BOE budget is too low to deal with our situation at this time. She gave suggestions for reductions to the Selectmen’s budget: a) remove \$570,000 from Contingency for security and use the fund balance to cover the gap if grants are not received, b) add an additional \$600,000 in revenue for motor vehicle supplemental, c) reduce the \$1 million for road repairs, c) reduce amount for elderly tax relief since the reval could lower the value of smaller homes.

Daniel Kormanik, 178 Hanover Road, retired, five children went through the Newtown school system. Feels increased spending has to be limited. He will continue to vote NO on both budgets until the increases slow down – 1.8% - 2.0% would be more acceptable.

Michelle Hankin, Equestrian Ridge, feels better communication is needed to get budgets passed the first time. We are being watched by the world and need to show that we support our children and each other. The voters need better explanations as to why increases are needed.

Rich Fennaroli, 63 Tomahawk Trail - the number of town employees has grown tremendously. There are too many people making too much money. No other employees should make more than police officers. Teachers work nine months each year with a 5 hour schedule.

Amy Roman, Taunton Hill Road, feels that the referendum results do not indicate a lack of support for school security. Do not put school security at risk. In order to get voters to get out and approve, the PTAs need to know that the elected officials support this budget.

COMMUNICATIONS: None noted

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Town of Newtown FY 2013-2014 Budget

Ms. Llodra advised that the budget as originally passed by the Board of Selectmen requested only a 1.9% increase year-over-year, most of which was due to contractual

obligations. After 12/14, the Board of Finance increased the budget by \$570,000 to reflect provisions for security and safety for schools, which changed the increase to 3.32% over last year. Ms. Llodra, Mr. Tait and Chief Kehoe gave possibilities for reductions.

- 1) \$100,000 from Contingency for an additional SRO at the Reed School. Chief Kehoe feels that they can cover the time when the current SRO, who is also the Youth Officer, is needed away from the school with current officers.
- 2) Mr. Tait feels confident that there is sufficient reserve in the self-funded insurance account to be able to hold off on contributions for new positions this year (\$30,000).

Mr. Chaudhary moved to reduce the Board of Selectmen budget by \$150,000, with \$130,000 to come from Contingency (and not to affect school security), and \$20,000 to be determined by the First Selectman. Motion seconded.

Mr. Lundquist moved to amend the motion by reducing another \$100,000 from Contingency (additional motor vehicle revenue and possible grant funds). Motion seconded and amendment failed: 11 NO – 1 YES (Lundquist)

MAIN MOTION CARRIED: 11 YES – 1 NO (Amaral)

Ms. Fetchick moved to reduce the Board of Education budget by \$750,000. Motion seconded. This is still a 4.37% increase over last year. One possible savings would be not to hire another principal at the high school which could result in savings of \$150,000 each year. She feels that the reduced enrollment issues have been addressed at the elementary level but not at the high school. Mr. Merola agrees, stating that staffing was increased at the high school based on the highest enrollment projections and remained at that level even though enrollment did not increase and has been decreasing.

Board of Education Chair Debbie Leidlein and Superintendent Janet Robinson stressed that the loss of this amount would seriously impact the ability to provide necessary building maintenance, technology and as full-day kindergarten program.

Ms. Jacob moved to amend the motion by reducing the BOE budget by \$500,000. Motion seconded and failed: 8 NO (Ferguson, Girgasky, Merola, Fetchick, Capeci, Amaral, Wiedemann, Carroll) – 4 YES (Chaudhary, Lundquist, Jacob, Honan)

MAIN MOTION CARRIED: 9 YES (Carroll, Wiedemann, Amaral, Capeci, Fetchick, Merola, Girgasky, Chaudhary, Ferguson) – 3 NO (Honan, Jacob, Lundquist)

Ms. Fetchick moved the FY 2013-2014 Town of Newtown budget at \$110,249,825 and to authorize the Finance Director to make any minor mathematical adjustments if necessary. Motion seconded and carried: 11 YES – 1 NO (Jacob)

Appointment of Building Committee for Sandy Hook School

Ms. Jacob moved to appoint the Public Building and Site Commission as the Building committee for construction of or renovations to the Sandy Hook School. Motion seconded and unanimously carried.

Special Appropriation from Sandy Hook Special Revenue Fund

Ms. Jacob moved the resolution providing for a special appropriation in the amount of \$102,148.88 to be funded from the Sandy Hook Special Revenue Fund for the following stated purposes: \$50,000 Mental Health Psychiatrist/Advisor; \$20,000 Facilitator/Consultant for school project; \$9,400 new fence for Victory Garden; \$22,748.88 "Other Purposes" category. Motion seconded and unanimously carried.

Transfers

Ms. Jacob moved to transfer FROM Contingency \$7,000 and FROM Liability/Auto/Property \$13,000 and FROM Lake Zoar Authority \$7,000 and FROM Payroll \$15,000 TO Election Workers \$4,000 and TO Uninsured Losses \$13,000 and TO Worker's Compensation \$12,000. Motion seconded and unanimously carried.

VOTER COMMENT: Laura Terry, 64 Robin Hill Road – has reviewed 10 years of voter data and there are approximately 2,000 NO votes every year. The bigger issue is getting more people out to support the budget. Residents need to hear from town officials that this is the correct amount. We need communication and support from the leadership on both sides of the budget.

Michelle Hankin, Equestrian Ridge – there are a lot of school safety elements that are not eligible for grants. Will the Council consider using money from the Contingency, if necessary, to ensure that the security measures are implemented? Ms. Llodra advised that would involve a request for special appropriation from the Board of Education to the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance and Legislative Council.

Michelle Assante, Wendover Road, feels that the Council shows more "passion" about reducing the BOE budget than the BOS budget.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: The next referendum will be held on May 14, 2013 from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm.

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

Jan Andras
Recording Secretary

These are draft minutes and as such are subject to correction by the Legislative Council at the next regular meeting. All corrections will be determined in minutes of the meeting at which they were corrected.