

**Town of Newtown Legislative Council Special Meeting  
Wednesday, May 22, 2013  
Town Hall South, 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, Interim Schools Superintendent Dr. John Reed, Ron Bienkowski, Debbie Leidlein (BOE), Laura Roche (BOE), John Vouros (BOE), Keith Alexander (BOE), 12 members of public, 3 members of press, Jan Andras (Clerk)

Chairman Capeci called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. He noted that this is a special meeting with only one item on the agenda.

**VOTER COMMENT:** Michelle Ku, Platts Hill Road - we have to be good stewards of the children's education and that should be the primary concern in Newtown. She believes that a \$150,000 reduction will get the budget passed.

Karen Holden, Berkshire Road – agrees with Ms. Ku's statements. The education portion of the budget was defeated by only 52 votes which does not warrant another major reduction. Any reductions now will impact services to the schools.

Laura Terry, Robin Hill Road – asked for clarification about what happens with the contingency that has been passed and police officers in the schools? Ms. Jacob replied that money is in contingency to be used for security. How that plan is laid out depends on the grants and their requirements.

Amber Mason, 29 Taunton Ridge – supports full day kindergarten.

Michelle Hankin, Equestrian Ridge – there is a lot of misunderstanding that what is in the budget and what is not. The Council members have connections and should get the word out. We need our leaders to support and explain the budget. The interpretation of the advisory questions is important. There was a smaller margin of defeat this time.

Alicia Brown, 9 Bayberry Drive – there is no reason why members of the council or those on the Board of Education cannot promote support for the budget since they are volunteers and no tax dollars are being spent.

**FY 2013/2014 Budget**

Interim Superintendent Dr. John Reed stated that he understands when a referendum fails, reductions follow. There are a lot of challenges facing our school system right now. The average budget increase over the past four years has been 9/10 of a percent. People believe that there is a lot of money available to the schools from donations, but there is actually only \$28,000 in the Board of Education's control. And we will have to rely on grants for additional school security. Due to reductions, he will be recommending that all new positions, many part time, be eliminated.

BOE Chairman Debbie Leidlein advised that they are already struggling to deal with reductions thus far. Any further reductions will be very difficult. She asked that all Council members advocate for voters to come out and support the budget.

Mr. Wiedemann moved to reduce the education budget by \$300,000. Motion seconded.

Mr. Wiedemann feels that this will reflect a 3.97% increase which is something he can support. It is still almost a \$2.7 million increase. He wants to set a budget number that will pass a referendum.

First Selectman Pat Llodra stated that in the past few years, the BOE budget has not been enough to address technical upgrades and keep up with building maintenance issues. This will be too big a reduction and will undermine the directives given to the BOE to handle these matters.

Ms. Jacob moved to amend the motion by reducing the education budget by \$150,000. Motion seconded and failed: 9 NO – 3 YES (Jacob, Honan, Lundquist)

Mr. Lundquist moved to amend the motion by reducing the education budget by \$200,000. Motion seconded and failed: 9 NO – 3 YES (Jacob, Honan, Lundquist)

MAIN MOTION CARRIED: 9 YES – 3 NO (Jacob, Honan, Lundquist)

Several Council members took umbrage to the comments made during public comment that they do not go out and advocate for the budget, giving examples of the means they use to do so.

**VOTER COMMENT:** Laura Terry, Robin Hill Road - we know that there are 2,000 people who always vote NO. We need to get enough voters out to exceed those and pass the referendum. The PTAs are doing their part and have had a phone bank urging parents to vote.

Michelle Ku, Platts Hill Road - no one is to blame for a budget not passing. Everyone needs to come together to get people out to vote. She would like to take out an ad in the Newtown Bee in support of the budget that will include names of everyone who gives a \$5 donation. She will send out this offer to other boards and PTAs.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** The third referendum is tentatively scheduled for June 4, 2013.

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:43 p.m.

Jan Andras  
Recording Secretary

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