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TOWN OF NEWTOWN

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2016
NEWTOWN MUNICIPAL CENTER, NEWTOWN, CT
2016-2017 ANNUAL BUDGET

PRESENT: George Ferguson, Dan Wiedemann, Chris Eide, Neil Chaudhary, Judit DeStefano, Ryan Knapp, Paul Lundquist, Mary Ann Jacob, Dan Amaral, Tony Filiato, Phil Carroll, and Dan Honan.

ALSO PRESENT: First Selectman Pat Llodra, Director of Finance Bob Tait, Public Works Director Fred Hurley, Police Commission members Brian Budd and Joel Faxon, Board of Ed members Michele Ku, John Vouros, Andy Clure and Keith Alexander, Dr. Erardi, Economic Development Coordinator Betsy Paynter, Grants Coordinator Christal Prezler, 41 public, 2 Press.

CALL TO ORDER: Ms. Jacob called the hearing to order at 7:00 pm.

The council held the public hearing for the purpose of hearing voter comments on the 2016-2017 Annual Budget of The Town of Newtown.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Connie Sullivan, 67 Great Quarter Road, spoke to the proposed reductions to the SSO budget. She feels the Board of Ed, Sandy Hook School and the police department should have been consulted and does not agree with reducing SSO's when they are transitioning to the new school. Two SSO's are needed to cover the inside and outside of the school. She is requesting the SSO's not be reduced for the safety and peace of mind of the staff, families and students of Sandy Hood School.

Joel Faxon, 38 Old Farm Hill Road, Chairman of the Police Commission, commented on the line item Contractual Services being reduced from \$15,000 to \$1,000 for traffic engineering and consulting. They are the traffic authority for the town and they do not have an engineer on the commission so the item is critical. They are asking the item not be reduced.

Rec'd. for Record 3.29.2016
Town Clerk of Newtown 8:30am
Debbie Annelie Halstead

Brian Budd, 9 Rose Lane, Vice-Chair of the Police Commission, echoed Mr. Faxon's comments. A professional is needed when issues regarding safety and traffic are brought to the Commission. They need the resource for research facts.

Robin Walker, 11 North Branch Road, supports the comments of Connie Sullivan. She spoke to Head of Security Mark Pompano who confirmed Sandy Hook School receives a hugely disproportionately higher number of pranks and calls than the other six schools.

Lynn Monahan, 40 Bennett's Bridge Road, stands behind Ms. Sullivan and Ms. Walker's statements and requests the Council keep the 2 SSO's for next year.

Aaron Cox, 31 Pond Brook Road, stated our society runs on technology. Everyone uses it and therefore so should our education system. He does not want technology reduced. He also does not think the health insurance should be reduced as the Employee Medical Board has said it should not be reduced. He asked the Council put forward the Board of Ed's original budget or increase by at least \$200,000 over the Board of Finance recommended budget.

Steve Rosenblatt, 50 Watkins Drive, spoke to the Minimum Budget Requirements (MBR/HB1709). Since 2006-2007, the Board of Ed budget has increased 13 million while enrollment has decreased by 1,108 students. He asked the Council to act on behalf the taxpayer and correct the imbalance of spending more money on less students.

Sayward Parsons, 10 Checkerberry Lane, stated part of the new normal at school is to check surroundings for perceived threats. She spoke to needs of maintaining security at the schools. She requested no further reductions be made.

David Beylouni, 7 Stonewall Ridge, does not believe the level of security at the schools should be reduced. Our schools need to be protected at all costs.

Karen Holden, 68 Berkshire Road, doesn't think reductions should be made to the health insurance as the Medical Board has said the money is needed, no reductions to transportation as Dr. Erardi stated the buses are needed, and no reductions to technology as the Board of Ed is "playing catch up" due to past reductions. She does not want to see security reduced. She believes the recommended reductions are not in our best interest and would like to see funds reinstated.

Kristen Bonacci, 12 Meridian Ridge, spoke on behalf of the PTA presidents stating they stand behind the proposed Board of Ed budget. They are requesting the Council leave the budget intact and let the voters decide.

Julia Conlin, 11 Old Castle Drive, requested the Council reject all recommended cuts to the education budget and the SSO's. She echoed previous comments regarding security, health insurance, transportation, and technology. She stated if you don't give teachers increases for

years, eventually you have to make it up. If the reductions are made, she will be voting no on the budget.

Bob Merola, 22 Ashford Lane, stated the 13.27% increased teacher contract is a significant raise when compared to private industry and people on fixed incomes. As salaries and taxes go up, while enrollment is decreasing, the tax burden becomes unsustainable. Had MBR been invoked, the education budget would be at 67 million. He is suggesting using last year's budget minus \$1 for each projected student lost (\$180).

Lisa Ashla, 33 Taunton Lake Drive, requested the original Board of Ed budget be reinstated to not compromise the greatness she has seen.

Carla Kron, 4 Clapboard Ridge, is a retired senior with no children in the schools and believes Dr. Erardi should make the decision regarding security. She believes the health insurance and transportation should not cut. Would like the reductions put back.

Leslie Gunn, 13 Valley Field Road South, supports her fellow teachers regarding security at the schools. She does not believe the security should change during the transition; it would be detrimental to teachers, families and students.

David Freedman, 4 Laurel Road, noted during the last two years, when the education budget had no increase, programs were added and they were able to sustain our school system as one of the best. This is a significant budget increase. He stated the budget can be reduced while sustaining services.

Karen Roszman, 13 Stonewall Ridge, would like the council to reject all recommended reductions to the education budget and school security. She believes the Allstar contract needs to be addressed, but would like to see no buses cuts next year. Technology should not be reduced because of rapid changes to technology, past underfunding and state mandated testing. She fears cuts will come from the classroom and programs. She asked what has changed to justify reducing SSO's. The opening of Sandy Hood School will trigger emotional stress. She stated the relationship between the budget and enrollment is not necessarily linear. Dr. Erardi has made reductions to staff.

Jay Mattegat, 1 Sealand Drive, agrees security should not be reduced. He believes it is important we retain our seniors in town, many who are on fixed incomes.

Kristin Alesevich, 16 Fieldstone Drive, believes the budget should go to the voters without reductions and let them decide.

Nancy White, 14 Butternut Ridge, she supports the original education budget less the fuel savings.

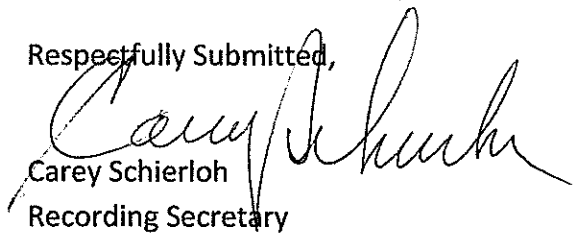
Laura Terry, 64 Robin Hill Road, will vote no on both budgets with the recommended reductions. She does not want reductions made to security or education. She would like to see a third party look at transportation.

Joanna Rosen, 60 Sugar Lane, spoke about chronic PTSD and that is where many students, teachers and parents are right now. The upcoming transition and talk about reduced security has caused an uptick in her office. She feels the issue of security is paramount and the amount of the recommended reduction in security is very small.

Allison Boughan, 34 Woodbine Lane, supports the Board of Ed budget as proposed. She will vote no if the reductions are made.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further comments, the hearing was adjourned at 8:10pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carey Schierloh', written over the typed name and title.

Carey Schierloh
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.