

April 13, 2011

The Board of Finance on this date held a public hearing on the proposed budget for fiscal year 2011-2012 at 7:00 p.m. at the Stonington High School auditorium. Members present were Glenn Frishman, Chairman; Andrew Rines, Secretary; John O'Brien; Dudley Wheeler and Sandy Grimes. Bryan Bentz was absent. Also present Maryanna Stevens, Director of Finance; Board of Selectmen; Superintendent of Schools, Leanne Masterjoseph; Board of Education members, Town Hall staff and residents of the Town.

Mr. Frishman opened the public hearing at 7:00 p.m. He stated the Board of Finance would continue to act with caution as the state budget unfolds; as we all have read in the papers of the uncertainty in Hartford.

He addressed the following highlights of the proposed budget: decreases in Health insurance; Pension, both regular and supplemental contributions; increases in MERF; the Debt Service decreased due to retirement of a series on the sewer bonds; decrease in Risk Mgmt and IT salary and GIS decrease. Mr. Frishman also addressed the Schedule C increases and PNC appropriation of \$20,000, this budget includes the reduction of two fulltime positions to Part time.

The total budget increase for FY 11-12 is \$515,552 or .94%, which constitutes a less than 1% increase from the current budget. To get to a zero increase they would need to cut an additional \$621,530.

The budget presented totals \$55,276,098. He invited all present to address any questions or comments.

Nancy Gibson questioned the two separate lines for school custodian on Pg. 66. Mrs. Masterjoseph explained.

Chris Clarkin, President of the Mystic River Ambulance wished to address the cuts to his agency. He explained that the MRA writes off costs for people with financial hardships.

Brian Chesebro agreed that we all have to do more with less but believes the Town could make additional cuts.

Glenn Riffe spoke in support of additional funding to the ambulance companies.

Don Chesebro questioned the Teachers pensions. Mrs. Masterjoseph stated this is for non-teaching staff. He asked and was told the actuary for the Town is Hooker and Holcomb. He stated that he would like to see a copy of the study. Mrs. Stevens explained how this is done through actuarial and market performance and stated she would provide the information requested.

Jonathan Butler, Westerly Ambulance spoke in support of additional funding. He stated that they also bill but there are many costs and about one-third of the calls

are not billed. Mr. Frishman asked about the base rate - it is \$600 with \$220 per call recouped.

Joe Larkin, Zoning Enforcement Officer read a statement and provided documentation in support of restoring his position to full time for FY 11-12. He added that The Day article was incorrect regarding the number of permits and complaints to date; he has data revealing that his office is well ahead of the pace of the past couple of years. In his documents he included a list of duties of the ZEO.

Ben Tamski read two letters from Robert Mercer, a local architect and William Bertsche, an architect and Professional Engineer supporting the restoration of the full time position of Joe Larkin as the Zoning Enforcement Officer.

Brian Chesebro read a letter from Sarah Moriarty in support of the restoration of the full time ZEO. He also commented on the fiscal difficulties and asked about raises and merit increases. First Selectman Ed Haberek stated that he has not approved any merit increases. Mr. Chesebro added that evaluations should be included in the bargaining units. Mr. Haberek invited him to meet with himself, the Director of Administrative Services and the Town attorney to discuss labor issues.

Norton Wheeler said housing is often the key to economic recovery and is in support of restoring the ZEO. He also read a letter from Richard Kelley in support of restoring the ZEO.

Andy Williams asked if the Town disputes Mr. Larkins' assertions regarding his workload. Mr. Haberek replied yes and read statements from multiple meetings that gave the P&Z office final word. Mr. Williams asked if he anticipates a delay in services. Mr. Haberek said that no he did not and he and the Department heads felt this was the best decision.

Harold Hefel, Dave Reagan and Martin Viscone spoke in support of restoring the ZEO.

Alan Druin was unhappy that there was not a copy of the budget available and spoke in support of restoring the ZEO.

Martin Viscone spoke in support of restoring the ZEO.

Mr. Larkin stated that due to Union restrictions the clerical staff in the P&Z office is not allowed to perform duties of a SPAA position.

Mr. Haberek stated that he was instructed to cut \$150,000 and after working with the Department heads the decisions were made.

Bob Montgomery asked about the License and Permits revenues.
Alan Whitford asked about work planned for the North Stonington Bridge. Mr. Bragaw, Public Works Director explained.

Russ Partridge of the WARM Shelter thanked the Town for their support.

Lucy Burr of Stoneridge has a petition in support of the Mystic & Noank Library with over 100 names.

Ruth Waller spoke in support of the Mystic & Noank Library.

Sarah Hillcanning spoke in support of the Mystic & Noank Library.

Don Maranell stated that he is in support of additional funding to the libraries and is grateful for funding they do receive.

Bill Brown stated that he too is in support of additional funding to the libraries and is grateful for funding they do receive.

Tom Flaherty asked for restoration of the \$10,000 for the unique Mystic & Noank Library.

Sally Sallecci asked for restoration of the \$10,000 for the Mystic & Noank Library.

Cindy Nadeau does not approve of funding to the libraries when the school had to make cuts.

Scott Bates of the Stonington Library thanked the Town for their support, the flood caused considerable damage.

Rob Marshall said that he is dissatisfied with frequent shut downs at the Westerly Library. He added that the library was not registered to solicit funds in November 2009 and would like to see funding reduced.

Kathryn Taylor of the Westerly Library stated that the library is now registered with the State.

Don Maranell asked that funding remain for the Meadow Avenue drainage.

Doug Rea asked about Collins Road damage and if this is being done for a private residence. Mr. Bragaw explained the need for the work.

There being no further questions or comments for the Board, Mr. Frishman closed the public hearing at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Leslie Packer

