

April 18, 2012

The Board of Finance on this date held a public hearing on the proposed budget for fiscal year 2012-2013 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; Sandy Grimes and Bryan Bentz. 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 that he has received many emails with a common theme, why such a large fund balance? He explained that a healthy fund balance helps maintain the good bond rating, added flexibility to handle emergencies and helps save the taxpayers' money when refinancing existing debt. The current budget calls for \$500,000 from the reserve fund.

The budget presented totals \$56,983,696 with a 16.10 proposed mil rate. The Board of Education budget is 58% of the total Town budget. This percentage has increased each year for six consecutive years. He added that to date the BOE has \$9.7 million unexpended. Allowing for payroll through June this still leaves a significant overage. The current cut to the BOE Budget of \$33,056,600 is less than .05%. Mr. Frishman asked how many residents were present to discuss the BOE budget; as there was a significant number he began there.

**John Nickerson** referenced page 13 and wants to use more of the reserve fund. He feels the Town should use money to support services instead of letting it grow. Director of Finance Mrs. Stevens explained that using a larger portion of the undesignated fund balance could have a long-term adverse impact.

**Rob Marsiglia** was in support of restoring \$156,215 to the BOE budget.

**Chrissa Anderson**, West Broad-West Vine St. School PTO was in support of restoring \$156,215 to the BOE budget.

**Doug Rea** asked about the Town's bond rating and how long it has been this high and could it be higher. Mrs. Stevens replied that it has been AA1 since 2009 and with our demographics this is most likely the highest rating. Mr. Rea added that on page 13 of the budget book we are \$2,247,308 over two months operating, he feels the Town should use more of the reserve fund. He wants this money used for services the taxpayers pay for such as the roads and schools. By cutting services the BOF ultimately makes the taxpayers spend more.

**Gail MacDonald**, BOE Chairwoman asked that the BOF restore their budget. She referenced Mr. Frishman's comments regarding funds left in the accounts stating that there are considerable upcoming expenses. At this time she read an excerpt from a letter from Stephen Coan, President and CEO of Sea Research citing the decline in property values in the Town as well as the need to focus on students and their education.

**Sue Jones** was in support of restoring \$156,215 to the BOE budget.

**Rachel O'Dell** asked when there wasn't a surplus in the reserve fund, adding that she is frustrated with both the BOE and the BOF. The BOF says it cannot affect BOE line items but then the BOE has to handle the budget cuts. She is in support of restoring \$156,215 to the BOE budget.

**Todd Farrell** was in support of restoring \$156,215 to the BOE budget using the fund balance.

**John Menard** was in support of restoring \$156,215 to the BOE budget.

**Suzanne Lopresto** was in support of restoring \$156,215 to the BOE budget.

**Cindy Nadeau** was in support of restoring \$156,215 to the BOE budget and even increasing their budget.

**Michael O'Neill** a parent and SHS Crew coach was in support of restoring \$156,215 to the BOE budget. Please help keep costs to participants down.

**Faith Leitner** BOE member and parent thanked the BOF members.

**Catherine Ellis** stated that though she is not a parent of a student she works in the school system and supports restoring \$156,215 to the BOE budget.

**Christina, SHS student** was in support of restoring \$156,215 to the BOE budget.

**Sarah Buck** was in support of restoring \$156,215 to the BOE budget.

Several more residents spoke in favor of restoring \$156,215 to the BOE budget.

Mr. Frishman continued with the remainder of the budget.

**Rob Marsiglia** spoke as Planning Zoning commission chairman stating that in the next two years they would be working on the Plan of Conservation and Development; keeping a Director of Planning as well as a Town Planner would be extremely beneficial.

In response to a query regarding a reduction in the Cemetery Upkeep line in the Department of Public Works budget, Director of Public Works Joe Bragaw stated that the Highway department now has equipment to help with upkeep and the cemeteries are in good shape.

**Russ Partridge** of W.A.R.M. thanked the Town for their continued support.

**Neal Bobruff** spoke in support of the Mystic & Noank Library. He asked for funding equal to that provided for the Westerly Library.

**Scott Bates**, President of the Stonington Free Library thanked the Town for their support that allows for the continuance of their popular summer reading program.

**Lee Hisle** spoke in support of additional funding for the Mystic & Noank Library. **Kathryn Taylor** of the Westerly Library also thanked the Town for their support.

**John Nickerson** stated that these are the services- libraries, WARM Shelter that could use additional funding from the reserve fund.

**Doug Rea** spoke in support of all CIP projects as they are an investment in the Town.

**Rob Marsiglia**, P&Z Commission thanked the Town for their support of the POCD.

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

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Leslie Packer".

Leslie Packer