

The Board of Finance held a special meeting on **April 20, 2011** in the Meeting Room of Windham Town Hall, 979 Main Street, Willimantic, CT 06226

Members Attending: Barbara McGrath, Charles Pennewill, Anita Sebestyen, Leo Santucci, Anna Crawford, Nina Ricardez

Chairman, Barbara McGrath called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Public Comment

Joel Meyers commented on parking

Jeffrey Viens commented that higher taxes won't bring jobs. We need a zero budget.

John Monohan commented the budget needs to pass for the kids. Were the teachers that were hired able to teach. Do we have time to teach our kids.

Peter Quercia questioned if Governor Malloy mandates that school budgets be lowered if there was a decreased in the number of students attending.

Lori Jeffers commented student population did go down. Increase in taxes will cause an increase in blight. What will happen when the magnet school is built? Community is divided.

Adrian Mandeville commented the State of Connecticut runs tech schools. The State cut funding for sports in tech schools, so booster clubs were created and sports are in the schools today. Raising taxes will drive out business and new business will not come to town. Let the state take over. State mandates are the state responsibility. We can't afford higher taxes.

Kristen McGregor commented people are for and against the budget. We need to find other ways to educate our students. We can't afford the tax increase from this budget.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Upon a motion by Charles Pennewill, seconded by Anita Sebestyen, to approve the meeting minutes from April 13, 2011.

The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and possible action on the 2011-2012 Board of Education Budget

Mark Doyle commented the student daycare is paid for by grants. Health care is also grant funded. Substitute custodians are for the summer. Legal services are necessary and required, stipends positions that are by contract. The rental buildings are on Boston Post Road and the preschool and Kramer Building. State agency placements are when the state places a student in the school system.

Barbara McGrath questioned since the legal services line was reduced this year can it be reduce some more.

Jeff Nelson commented this line is also used for expulsions, union grievances, union negotiations.

Barbara asked if there is any new information from the State. The Special Master is scheduled to arrive in June.

Mark Doyle confirmed the Special Master is to arrive in June and the 1 million dollars is just an estimate. The Special Master's salary is paid for by the State. For the past two years, taxes have not gone up because of the Board of Education budget.

Leo Santucci questioned what the union negotiations accomplished.

Mark Doyle commented the union moved to a blended healthcare and will contribute an additional ½ % per year. There are no increases in steps or salaries this year but there will be a 2.5% increase next year. There will be a lengthened school day of 15 minutes next year, and another 15 minutes the year after.

Leo Santucci questioned what the school board is doing about the unfunded mandates.

Mark Doyle commented Windham is part of CJEF that is suing the State for funding.

Leo Santucci questioned are there certain mandates to roll back.

Ana Ortiz commented certain mandates need to be paid for even if they are not in the budget.

Anita commented about talking with the public and not receiving a return on investment. The Fire Department and Police Department have taken cuts. There are retirees having to put their house up for sale.

Mark Doyle commented Windham is 13th in the effort to meet the budget, and in the 40's for what is spent on education.

Barbara McGrath commented there shouldn't be a Board of Finance and the Town Council should make the decisions and not just policy decisions. It not just about the kids, it's also about the tax base. If the Special Master cannot work with the Board of Education, there will be consequences next year. We need to make the investment.

Charles Pennewill commented if had the choice he would not move back to Connecticut. The educational system is not good. He supports the education budget but if it does not pass then cuts need to be made.

Upon a motion by Nina Ricardez, seconded by Charles Pennewill, moved to set the Board of Education budget at \$43,457,854.00

The motion passed with Anita Sebestyen opposing.

Discussion and possible action on the 2011-2012 General Government Budget

Barbara McGrath commented the medical costs were reduced in the budget.

Town Manager Neal Beets spoke on the percentage allocation for the PILOT allocation. Colleges & Hospitals, and Eastern are 30% Town and 70% Willimantic Service District. The PILOT from the Willimantic Housing Authority is 70% Town and 30% Willimantic Service District. All other PILOT allocations are 50% Town and 50% Willimantic Service District.

Upon a motion by Leo Santucci, seconded by a Anna Crawford, moved to set the General Government budget at \$13,259,077.00

The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and possible action on the Willimantic Service District Budget

Upon a motion by Leo Santucci, seconded by Anita Sebestyen , moved to set the Willimantic Service District budget at \$8,663,519.00

The motion passed with Nina Ricardez abstaining.

Discussion and possible action on the 2011-2012 Ambulance Budget

Upon a motion by Leo Santucci, seconded by Anita Sebestyen, moved to set the Ambulance budget at \$1,444,660.00

The motion passed with Charles Pennewill and Nina Ricardez opposing.

Discussion and possible action on the Capital Improvement Plan

Town Manager reviewed the Capital Improvement Plan and explained his understanding approving the capital plan.

Capital plan was approved last week and there are no changes

No action was taken.

Town Controller's Report

Town Controller's report was presented by Thomas Pesce.

The current year revenues and expenditures were reviewed. The General Government revenues should have a favorable variance. The Willimantic Service District budget is tight. There is a shortfall in revenues but there will be a surplus in expenditures. The School Resource Officer funding in the revenues will not be received but there will be no expenditure for the School Resource Officer. There will be an overall surplus. The Willimantic Service District budget has been discussed with both the fire chief and police chief.

The auditors will be in next week to complete the audit. The audit should be completed by the beginning of May.

Great West will be submitting the final version for pension plan.

Discussion and possible action on cell tower lease proposal

The current vendor is SBA Communications. Currently we are in a lease that will expire in 19 years. We receive \$2,000 per month with a 3% escalator. Two other proposals were received but were not as attractive. One was for a \$197,253 payment with additional sq ft around property. Another was for a 99 year term lease for \$202,000. All vendors are looking ahead 10 to 12 years. Lump sum payment is what they view are the returns. With any contracts the tenant can break the lease at any time. The current vendor has invested in the tower that was currently on the site.

Charles Pennewill questioned are there any businesses in Town that use the tower? Will there be any loss in property?

Tom Pesce replied no to both questions.

Upon a motion by Anna Crawford, seconded by Charles Pennewill, moved to recommend to the Town Council that the Town Manager execute an amendment to the lease between the Town and SBA Properties, said amendment extends the term to 55 years from the execution date, provides a lump sum payment of \$200,000, and a \$775 per month rent with a 3% per annum increase. The lump sum amount will be deposited into the town wide Reserve for Capital Improvement fund; the monthly revenue will be deposited to the town wide general fund.

The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and possible action on the time, date, and place of the Annual Budget Meeting

Upon a motion by Charles Pennewill, seconded by Anita Sebestyen, to set the Annual Budget meeting for 6:45 p.m. on Tuesday May 3, 2011 at the Windham Town Hall auditorium.

The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and possible action on the time, date, and place of the referendum vote

Upon a motion by Anna Crawford , seconded by Charles Pennewill , to set the referendum vote for Tuesday May 10, 2011 with the 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and two locations to be determined by the registrar.

The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion and possible action regarding memo from the Board of Education, about creating a Tri-Board to improve communication in general and in particular to interface with the State Department of Education and its proposed Special Master for Windham Public Schools

Mayor Ernie Eldridge commented that at last night's Town Council meeting the only action was for the Town Manager to formulate a resolution to form the tri-board with an agreement and principal.

Barbara McGrath questioned does the Board of Finance want to adopt an agreement and principle.

Upon a motion by Leo Santucci, seconded by Anna Crawford to adopt an agreement and principal in forming a tri-board with the Board of Education and Town Council. The town manager will draft a resolution.

Charles Pennewill commented he feels this is a good idea

The motion passed unanimously.

Any other business appropriate to come before the BOF

Charles Pennewill commented on hiring a consultant for dispatch and would like to have one for ambulance. Where does the ambulance budget belong? If we can get it settled early, we won't have questions next year.

There will be a report on ambulance next month.

Public Comment

Mark Doyle presented the Board an invitation to Natchaug School for a bilingual program.

Mark Phelps thanked the board for their work and for not cutting the budgets. He urged the board to support the budget and get it passed the first time.

Kevin Hoxie commented on safety in Town and the government and service district budgets getting cut. The Ambulance service serves the public in the entire Town. Ambulance calls are expensive. It is crazy to cut dispatch funding. The people in Dispatch know the town, the fire and police officers. Kids need to be challenged in school. What is tougher a teachers job or police officers job? Police, fire and ambulance need to be taken care of.

Bernie Dauteuil thanked the board for doing their job. Town will be getting bigger. The new Generations building, new apartments by the Frog Bridge will bring more people into town. As the town grows there will be the need for police officers and fire personnel. Eastern will

continue to grow also. Kids need to be educated and should go to school in the summer. Magnet school will shut down Natchaug School.

Lori Jeffers questioned making non-profits pay. They are businesses that make money. Stop bringing in affordable housing. PILOT funds and sewers charges are paid mostly in the Willimantic Service District. Where are the polling places? Need to become one town or become two separate.

Henry Crane hopes the Board of Education is finding a way to get the voters out to support the budget.

James Flores commented budget is for the people and let the voters decide on the budget. People who rent do pay taxes through the rent they pay.

Upon a motion by Anna Crawford, seconded by Leo Santucci the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Attest: _____
Thomas Pesce