

The Board of Finance held a special meeting on **May 10, 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, Jeffrey Smith, Nina Ricardez

Chairman, Barbara McGrath called the meeting to order at 8:35 p.m.

### **Public Comment**

Jeffrey Viens commented he would like a million dollars taken away from the Board of Education and asked the Board to not play games with referendums.

Doug Lary thanked the Board for putting the Board of Education budget as presented to the voters and now that it has failed the budget should be cut heavily.

Adrian Mandeville commented the Town and Willimantic Service District budgets passed and if the school system was better that could help with bringing new businesses and jobs to Town. The Board should cut the budget to the minimum and move on.

Lori Jeffers commented people are hungry and on a fixed income. The budget is too high.

John French commented CBS reported Connecticut pays the highest taxes. The Board needs to make a major cut.

Henry Crane commented many people came out to vote. The school system needs to be fixed. When the master arrives, more money will be needed to fix the system. He would like State taxes to go towards education.

Thomas DeVivo commented we need an education system. The Board needs to be progressive and don't make a million dollar cut. We don't want people to leave our community.

Charles Kratt commented people are hurting. We need to fix the quality of education.

### **Discussion and possible action to Adopt Revenues for Fiscal Year 2011-2012**

Tom Pesce presented a handout to the Board regarding potential changes of State Aid to municipalities. There were potential cuts based on the Governor's Plan B budget. There are both education and non-educational reductions.

No action was taken.

### **Discussion and possible action to set the mill rate for fiscal year 2011-2012**

No action was taken.

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

Barbara McGrath reviewed the information provided by the finance office which included a schedule of suggested meeting dates, a table showing the impact on the mill rate if reductions to the Board of Education budget are made. The budget cannot be reduced to a zero mill increase due to the changes in the revenues. The Town will be fined by the State if the Board of Education budget goes below the Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR).

Upon a motion by Anita Sebestyen, seconded by Leo Santucci to reduce the Board of Education budget by \$1,586,343.00.

Anita Sebestyen commented this reduces the Board of Education's request to the MBR, the minimum budget required by the State of Connecticut. She feels this is the amount the voters can afford.

Nina Ricardez commented she cannot support the reduction because we need to pay for the future of our children; they are the future of America.

Charles Pennewill commented he is not ready to take any action now and wants to wait to see if better information on the State budget becomes available. The reduction will hurt the town and education system.

Anna Crawford commented to wait until the next meeting and was concerned about the State's ability to continue its commitment to fund the special master and provide additional resources to our school system.

Jeffrey Smith commented we can wait to take action but the fact is that budgets are often adopted locally before the final State revenues are known. He cannot support this motion but could support something else.

Leo Santucci pointed out that the difficulty we are facing now is because of years of ignoring the sustainability of revenues from all levels of government while continually expanding services and mandates.

Barbara McGrath commented that while recognizing the need to reduce the Board of Education budget significantly, she felt it was better to wait until next week.

Leo Santucci and Anita Sebestyen voted yes. Charles Pennewill, Nina Ricardez, Anna Crawford, Jeffrey Smith, and Barbara McGrath voted no. The motion did not pass.

Upon a motion by Leo Santucci, seconded by Jeffrey Smith to reduce the Board of Education budget by \$650,000.

Anna Crawford commented number a being pulled out of the air.

Jeffrey Smith commented the \$650,000 is higher than he would like but this type of reduction is what will be needed to pass the budget. The Board will need to make a significant reduction.

Nina Ricardez commented the special master will be coming in to work with the school system. We have the opportunity to help our kids and community.

Anita Sebestyen commented the special master be able to say where things are needed. Why give a budget we can't sustain.

Leo Santucci commented the revenues have to equal expenditures. What can taxpayers afford?

Leo Santucci and Jeffrey Smith voted yes. Anna Crawford, Nina Ricardez, Charles Pennewill, Anita Sebestyen, and Barbara McGrath voted no. The motion did not pass.

Upon a motion by Anita Sebestyen, seconded by Leo Santucci to adopt the schedule as presented which will be to schedule a public hearing on Wednesday May 18, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. followed by the regularly scheduled Board of Finance meeting; to schedule a town meeting for Wednesday June 1, 2011; and to schedule the next referendum on the Board of Education budget for Tuesday June 7, 2011.

The motion passed unanimously.

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

No action was needed.

### **Discussion and possible action on the 2011-2012 Willimantic Service District Budget**

No action was needed

### **Public Comment**

Bernie Dauteuil suggested additional questions be on the ballot concerning under what conditions the voters would be in favor of the Board of Education budget. Talk to the kids and parents and show them that the education system can be fixed.

Henry Crane thanked the board for waiting to make a decision on reducing the Board of Education budget.

Jeffrey Viens commented that local budgets will not be sustainable if the State cuts aid to the Town.

Adrian Mandeville commented that giving more money to the schools is not going to make them better. If we give more money this year what is going to be asked for next year.

Charles Kratt commented the Town should support Connecticut Conference on Municipalities in their efforts to restore funding to the Town. He also thanked the Board for their time.

Lori Jeffers commented the Board didn't listen to the voters. She will not support the Board of Education budget when they cannot show they will improve education.

Kevin Hoxie commented there is nowhere to turn except to the tax payers. The Town cannot afford the requested increase.

Doug Lary commented that many people have less money than they use to and we need to spend money more appropriately. He has not supported the budget and encourages alternative education strategies such as longer school days, more regionalization, and self-directed education.

Upon a motion by Jeffrey Smith, seconded by Charles Pennewill the meeting was adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tom Pesce