

The Board of Finance held a special meeting on May 11, 2010 in the Courtroom of Windham Town Hall, 979 Main Street, Willimantic, CT 06226

Members Attending: Barbara McGrath, Leo Santucci, Jeffrey Smith, Charles Pennewill, Anita Sebestyen, Thomas DeVivo

Chairman, Barbara McGrath called the meeting to order at 9:00 p.m.

### **Public Comment**

Lori Jeffers of Willimantic commented that by four votes we will build a multi million dollar magnet school and by nineteen votes you will cut the Board of Education budget.

Ernest Eldridge of Willimantic thanked the Board for all the worked they did by getting the budget so they would show well to the voters.

### **Discussion and possible action to Adopt Revenues for Fiscal Year 2010-2011**

Upon a motion by Thomas DeVivo, seconded by Charles Pennewill, the following direct revenue estimate was adopted for the 2010-2011 fiscal year:

Willimantic Service District:     \$3,921,011

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Discussion and possible action to set the Mill Rate for Fiscal Year 2010-2011**

Upon a motion by Thomas DeVivo, seconded by Anita Sebestyen, the following mill rate was adopted for the 2010-2011 fiscal year:

Willimantic Service District         9.81 mills

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Discussion and possible action on all 2010-2011 budgets(note: required if budget fails).**

Barbara McGrath commented the Town mill rate is based on the General Government budget and the Board of Education budget. The General Government budget passed and Board of Education budget did not pass. We need to figure out our plan for the next step. Barbara McGrath requested the Board of Education attend next week's meeting to present recommendations on their budget. She would like to have their input before making a decision.

Jeffrey Smith questioned if there was ruling by the attorney general that we are not suppose to separate the Board of Education budget and the General Government budget. Barbara McGrath commented it may be in respect to the mill rate and she will look into it.

Thomas DeVivo asked if the Board could receive more detail on the Board of Education budget than four pages.

Mark Doyle asked the Board how much detail would they like to have?

Thomas DeVivo commented on having a joint meeting to make a decision the night of the meeting.

Barbara McGrath commented the Board of Education does not need to take action because the budget was presented to the Board of Finance so this board will make the decisions on their budget. She would like the Board of Education to make a recommendation on their reductions but will not promise to accept the recommendation. The Town Charter was reviewed to see if there is a time limit before another referendum can be scheduled. The Board of Finance can revise the budget and send it back to a Town meeting and then to a referendum.

Jeffrey Smith commented he is not opposed to cutting an amount like \$50,000 or \$25,000 from the Board of Education budget and sending it back to the voters.

Charles Pennewill commented that it is not a good idea. We need to really look at this budget and analyze it. To just come up with a figure is not a good idea.

Jeffrey Smith commented our job is not to make policy decisions for the Board of Education. Our job is to present a budget to the citizens at a level they will adopt. What the voters are looking for is a lower number not necessarily eliminating programs.

Barbara McGrath commented the voters who voted in favor of the budget want to know the impact of what the next cut is. That is why she would like some insight from the Board of Education.

Jeffrey Smith commented it would be reasonable to give the Board of Education a number and have them come back with where the reduction would be made.

Thomas DeVivo commented the Board of Education is underfunded and an increase wouldn't hurt.

Jeffrey Smith commented he would propose something that is low enough so it wouldn't really hurt the Board of Education any more than it has to. He would rather propose an increase than a reduction.

Charles Pennewill commented the only thing that would not hurt the schools is to eliminate the school resource officer.

Thomas DeVivo commented that would put the burden on the service district residents.

Leo Santucci commented a decision should not be made tonight and the board should think about this. We really need to think about how to go about it. If we go to low that is not good and if we don't cut enough we will be back here doing the same thing.

Anita Sebestyen commented having the Board of Education come to the meeting and be on television to let the public see what a struggle it is.

Barbara McGrath asked if Mark Doyle could attend the meeting on Wednesday and advise the board what impact a \$50,000 reduction will have and what impact a \$100,000 reduction will have.

Mark Doyle commented we have done that in the past. He will work with the administration to see what the impact would be with a series of reductions. There won't be enough time to do a revote with the teachers union.

Leo Santucci commented maybe we are looking in the wrong places and maybe we should go back and look at outsourcing the cafeteria, merging finance departments, merging the information technology departments, and have group purchasing.

Barbara McGrath asked if there is a range we want to ask the Board of Education to come back with.

Leo Santucci commented we need to know what impact the reduction will have on the budget.

Thomas DeVivo asked about having a public hearing.

Barbara McGrath commented we could notice a public hearing for 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday May 19, 2010 so it will be before the regular meeting.

Charles Pennewill asked if the Board could receive more detail on the Board of Education Budget.

Barbara McGrath commented Tom Pesce will work with Jeff Nelson to get more detail on the Board of Education budget.

### **Public Comment**

Teri Santucci of Willimantic commented the idea of more detail is a very important. We all need to know what we are looking at and the public needs to know. We have a little bit of taxation without representation going on. There were three people in the room that vote on the service district mill rate and it is not their money.

Barbara McGrath commented she owns property in the service district the Charter does not separate districts for the Board of Finance.

Teri Santucci commented it is inappropriate.

Lori Jeffers of Willimantic commented she liked what Leo had to say. Some administrators need to be cut as that is what people complain about the most. In regards to the combination of the Board of Education and General Government budget, she thinks Rich Cody said they could be kept separate but did not see any written results. In her opinion, board members should not be voting on the Willimantic Service District budget because regardless if you live or own property in Willimantic they were elected in part by people who live in the Windham Service District.

Upon a motion by Thomas DeVivo, seconded by Charles Penewill, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Karen Williams, Clerk