

The Board of Finance held a special meeting on **April 1, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.** in the **Bellingham Auditorium at Town Hall, 979 Main Street, Willimantic, CT 06226**

Members Attending: Lynne Ide, Tyler Griffin, Paula Haney, Anita Sebestyen, Thomas White, Ken Folan, and Nectalis Martinez

1. Call to Order

Chairman Lynne Ide called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Public Comment

Al Korzinski commented on the Board of Education budget and perception is reality. If the board does not want to add funds to the budget then something needs to be done with the school system. He does not want to see a cut to arts or music.

Nicole Kratitz commented the board needs to stand up for the budget. Think about the kids.

Bill Powers commented he is a retired teacher of 17 years. He asked the Board to not cut the Board of Education budget and find a way to add funds. What is best for our kids is what is best for Windham.

Steve Dupont commented he supports the Board of Education budget. He is impressed with the college experience kids are getting at the high school.

Kevin Hoxie commented the Board of Finance works hard at what they do. They have a job to get the budget out to the voters.

Mary Galucci commented the school budget is lower than it legally should be. The Board of Education budget can only be reduced at the bottom line. She would like a million dollars added to the budget.

Elizabeth Osthal, on behalf of June Henderson, commented to not reduce the Board of Education budget. Children's needs are beyond the reading writing and arithmetic and they need the arts and music. She does not want to see the budget reduced.

Kim Swartz commented she does not want to see the budget reduced.

Joanne Haddad commented she is a life long resident and veteran teacher. We need to make education a priority. She recalls there was only one time when the budget passed the first time. Members of the board support the budget and feels we are at a new beginning.

Rebecca Bolin commented her family has gone through school system and we need to pass the budget the first time. It's not okay for teachers to be photo copying text books.

Nathan Cuson commented the community is shouting to get the budget passed. Students complain they are not getting what they need.

Henry Crane commented this is a small town and we need to sacrifice and get the budget passed. The Willimantic Service District budget process has changed. The Board shouldn't cut the budget before the voters say no.

Anne Clark commented she supports the Board of Education budget. Ask for what you want and maybe you'll get what you need. Don't cut the budget before the voters have a chance to vote.

Dennis Kronan commented referendums should not be held during the summer as parents are not around. Some parents are not involved in the political process.

Marissa Kopley commented transparency and communication is important. If cutting the budget, think about where the cuts might be and who is going to get hurt. Our teachers are valuable.

Katherine Gregory commented cutting the Board of Education puts students at a disadvantage when it comes to going to college. She is impressed with what teachers do with what they have.

Darin Molin commented she is a high school teacher and will work many jobs to help kids. We need to show that kids are important.

Emma Vining commented she is involved in drama, writing, and working on a magazine. She asked the board to please pass the budget as it is.

Bernie Dauteuil commented on the Willimantic Service District and police overtime. Why do police officers leave the department. We need to bring someone in to look at this. Drug testing should be done police officers.

3. Board of Finance Comment

Lynne Ide thanked everyone for coming to speak. We will be discussing the Board of Education budget tonight and may or may not make decisions. There will be a meeting next week on the General Government budget, and on April 15th there will be a Public hearing at 6:00 p.m. followed by the regular Board of Finance meeting. The Town meeting will be on May 5th and budget referendum is May 12th. April 21st is the last day to make changes.

Thomas White commented we need to work together to get the budget passed.

4. Discussion and possible action on the 2015-2016 Proposed Board of Education budget

John French commented there are positive changes at the schools.

Dr. Garcia commented this is an efficient budget and we have to do more with less. This budget will barely meet the goals of the students.

Thomas White questioned if there will be cuts made to teachers and custodians.

John French commented that we are looking at efficiencies like workers comp and we have done well with health insurance. We need to prove to the towns people that we are going in the right direction.

Dr. Garcia commented we run an efficient school system. We are looking at 10-12 retirements that will mean fewer teaching positions so we will be looking at class sizes. There will be interviews on April 17th for a Principal at Barrows.

Nectalis Martinez congratulated Dr. Garcia on the job she has done and asked what is being done to engage parents to vote for the budget.

Ken Folan questioned how many administrators are on staff and how many are paid by grants.

Paula Haney commented she supports the school budget. She would like some information about the central office – a breakdown by position by what they do. If the Board of Education can explain what support people do then maybe people will understand.

Christian Johnson explained that on Page 21 of the Board of Education Budget, a footnote gives a breakout.

Anita Sebestyen commented on programs at the high school like the ECHO program – how many students are participating and what is being done to get more students to come to Windham.

Dr. Garcia commented 40 students are in the program.

John French commented this type of program is what is needed.

Tyler Griffin commented on page 21 special education.

Special education is tricky and is projected based on what we have now.

Anita questioned what the homeless increase is for.

If a Windham student is homeless and is staying in a shelter in another town Windham is responsible.

Request for math text books and algebra program at the Middle school for \$500,000. Technology at high school, 2 smart board – 50 for 250,000, upgrade building – Windham center cafeteria \$25,000-\$30,000.

Thomas White commented a lot of school systems do not have a communications director. He would still like to see the \$100,000 used somewhere else.

Thomas White supports the budget and wants to see the schools succeed and it is headed in a good direction.

Upon a motion by Thomas White seconded Tyler Griffin to leave the Board of Education budget as it is and send it to the Town meeting.

Anita Sebestyen asked if questions can be added to the ballot.

Ken Folan commented to ask if the Board of Education budget is funded at a good level or under funded.

Paula Haney commented to be careful of wording of questions, we don't want people to vote no because they feel it is underfunded.

Lynne Ide thanked the superintendent and the Board of Education for all their work on the budget.

The motion passed unanimously.

Upon a motion by Paula Haney, seconded by Ken Folan to appropriate \$500,000 for math books and an algebra program at the Middle School, \$250,000 for technology at the high school, and \$30,000 for upgrading the Windham Center School Cafeteria with the funding coming from the Town's undesignated fund balance.

The motion passed unanimously.

5. Discussion and possible action on the 2015-2016 Proposed General Government budget.

Fire Chief, Marc Scrivener commented on the ambulance services and 25% is in Windham, 73% is in the Willimantic Service District, and 2% is for out of town services – mutual aid.

Thomas White questioned if ambulance services are included in the Willimantic Service District. Ambulance services are only in the ambulance budget and are not in Willimantic Service District or Windham First Taxing District.

For Dispatch Services, State police calls were not counted. If a call for the state police comes into dispatch the call is transferred to Troop C.

Currently the Town has a 2007 and 2012 ambulance. The Fire Chief would like to purchase a new ambulance and use the 2007 ambulance as a backup. There were 250 missed calls which could have generated \$80,000 in revenue. There would be no additional staff with the third ambulance. The ambulance would be parked and would be put into service if a call went out. There could be calls when all three ambulances are out at the same time.

The funding for the new ambulance will come from the RCIP – Town fund.

Upon a motion by Thomas White seconded by Tyler Griffin to approve purchasing an ambulance and using RCIP - Town funds.

The motion passed unanimously.

6. Discussion and possible action on the 2015-2016 Willimantic Service District budget

The Police and fire department budget were discussed.

Jack Reed, Robert Buckner, and Roberto Rosado from the police department presented the Board with a handout for their budget.

Officers leave the department to go to another department for more money and or better pension. The department has gotten another officer from another Town and this person won't have to go through the police academy.

Thomas White commented on the parking authority and parking permits. When people are paying a fee for a permit to park in the parking lots, the funds from the parking permit should go to the Town. He would like a projected revenue on permits.

A new phone system is needed. The software application for phones is a \$1,600 initial fee and the \$100 per month charge or \$1,200 per year.

Discussion and possible action on the 2015-2016 Capital Improvement Plan

Fire Department is requesting a new vehicle for the Fire Chief.

The police department is requesting 3 cruisers. A cell block study will be done but we need to use the existing floor print. We cannot go up to the second floor.

Upon a motion by Thomas White seconded by Ken Folan to approve \$281,000 from the Willimantic Service District undesignated fund balance for the Willimantic Service District projects listed on the 2015-2016 Capital Improvement Plan.

The motion passed unanimously.

7. Future agenda items

Town budgets will be discussed at the meeting on April 8th

8. Public Comment

James Flores thanked the chair for the article in the newspaper. He apologized to the Board and asked for forgiveness from the people who have supported him as a Town Council member.

Kevin Hoxie commented on the Board of Education budget and overstaffing in the central office. What do central office employees and administrators do. He is all for education but not administrators.

Adjournment

Upon a motion by Thomas White, seconded by Tyler Griffin the meeting was adjourned at 10:19 p.m.

Attest: _____
Thomas Pesce