

The Board of Finance held a public hearing on **April 13, 2011** in the Auditorium of Windham Middle School, 123 Quarry Street, Willimantic, CT 06226

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

Chairman, Barbara McGrath called the public hearing to order at 6:50 p.m.

Public Comment

Jeffrey Veins commented the Board should not be asking for an increase at all. Surrounding towns have a zero mill increase or less.

Jim Handfield is concerned with the public works section of the budget. Asked for a copy of the State Roads Report and compared Windham other towns. Why does Windham need 22 workers. He also questioned health insurance costs.

Peter Quercia commented on home values and assessed values on real estate. He also commented on Board members wanting an increase in the budget when many people can't afford it.

Diane Rayhall commented she would like the Board to not reduce dispatch and to wait until all information is received by the State which will be later in the year.

David Walenicewicz commented on sports in the middle school and supports funding the program. How much worse has it gotten in the past 6 years. Other schools mandate kids participate in sports. He would like it mandated that kids participate in sports in the middle school.

Henry Crane commented the State stepped in because the kids failed. The State needs to pay for the mandates. Discipline the kids in school and keep the kids in school. We need money to fix schools.

Angela Messick commented the basic problem is the kids do not have the basics in reading writing, and math. How many students don't know cursive writing? Students would be appreciative for the basic needs and could go on to college.

Lori Jeffers commented on the reports from the State. The teachers, administrators, the Board and the State failed. Taxpayers are not willing to pay for a failing school system. If we need more money ask the staff for give backs. Why don't the kids have books? Most towns do not have bilingual language as a program.

Alona Stone commented she cannot support the budget. If fourth and fifth graders can't read, then there is a problem with the teaching. We need to work together. She asked the Board to

present something that people can afford.

Doug Lary commented he is satisfied with the services he gets from the budget. He suggested sending the Board of Education budget out as requested and let it fail.

Bernie Dauteuil commented this is an investment in our town and children. We don't know what the test scores are. He wants to be able to decide where his tax payment goes and would like to see what other people would say.

Julie Potvin commented she would not support the Board of Education budget as it is.

John Ware commented he supports middle school sports. Today's youth need sports in the school system. It will benefit students.

Kevin Hoxie commented that a \$1.9 million increase is a lot. The cuts are from the bottom and not the top. Programs like sports, arts, etc are the first to get cut. Discipline needs to get cleaned up. He supports school sports.

Ernie Eldridge commented he supports the Town and Willimantic Service District budgets and hopes the taxpayers will also. The town is moving forward.

Paul Johnson commented on Windham sports and would like to have a sports program in the Kramer building. He feels the kids will show up and participate.

Paula Haney commented the Board of Education meetings are open to the public and hopes the Board will support the Board of Education budget. There has been a decrease in funding and part of the problem is the lack of resources. Administrators have decreased. The Board of Education supports physical education and sports in the schools. The school system is losing teachers to other districts.

Ken Folan commented the increase in the Board of Education budget is to help close the gap in test scores and to educate the children. He wants the kids to have the best in life. He is asking the Board to fully fund the budget as requested. The Board of Education needs the resources.

Pamela Veins commented if you haven't read the assessment reports please do. Columbia students shouldn't be going to Windham schools.

Steve Morlino commented he discovered school through sports. He feels the Windham public schools have done wonderful things and the City of Willimantic is a good place to live.

Ron Doucette commented the city is great and there is a lot to do here. The tax base is being destroyed and we need to do more with less.

Dave Perry commented he moved here because the tax base was low. He cannot support the Board of Education budget.

A Tax Payer supports the sports program for the middle school.

Dennis Kronan supports the Board of Education budget. It is an investment that is worth it.

Neida Rosado supports the sports program and the budgets. She also commented that two family dwelling assessments are less than some single family dwellings so the taxes are higher for the single family homeowner compared to a multi family dwelling.

.

Barbara McGrath adjourned the meeting at 7:42 p.m.