

SPECIAL MEETING BOARD OF FINANCE

The Board of Finance (BOF) held a public hearing on April 19, 2007 in the Windham Middle School, 123 Quarry St, Willimantic, CT 06226 for the purposes of presenting and accepting the Board of Education, General Government, and Willimantic Service District budgets for the upcoming fiscal year.

Members present: Harry Carboni, Andrew Carey III, Hannah Clements, Peter McDevitt, Jr., Christopher Marot, Gordon Muir, and Joseph Underwood.

Note: The Chairman votes only to **make** or **break** a tie.

Chairman Andrew Carey, III called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Public Comment

Iлона Gabowski-Stone, Windham, asked the Board for fiscal restraint in the face of ever-increasing taxes. Wants the Board to consider the Town's ability to pay.

Paula Haney, Board of Education, spoke on behalf of the 7.9% increase to the education budget. Haney attributed the increase to a lack of off-setting revenue from the State and Federal government.

Tom DeVivo, Board of Selectmen, thanked the Board of Finance for its hard work, and spoke in favor of reinstating the blight officer position that was cut from the General Government budget.

Gina Potvin, Willimantic, remarked that community income has not risen as fast as taxes and that an increase would mean a considerable burden on the taxpayer.

Lynne Coleman, Windham, said she was concerned about cuts to the education budget and wanted the Board to reconsider the full 7.9% increase.

Doug Fleming, Windham, thanked the Board of Finance for its courage and spoke in favor of a 7.9% increase. Fleming asked if additional State monies would go directly to the Board of Education.

Dawn Niles, Board of Selectmen, noted that the State revenue figures look good to her. She said it was not funding, rather No Child Left Behind, that is failing our children.

Bob Rodriguez, Willimantic, said that Windham has good students, and many of them are scholar athletes. Rather than cut programs for these children, he wanted to see it increased to the full 7.9%.

Kathy Roberts, Willimantic, said the schools need the 7.9% for the future. Commented that it would help create and reinforce a positive image for Windham, which would result in jobs and growth.

After a brief recess, the Board of Finance reconvened at 8:00pm in order to take action on the following budgets.

Discussion and Possible Action – Board of Education Proposed Budget

Gordon Muir, seconded by Joseph Underwood, moved to set the Board of Education budget at \$40,273,771 – an increase of 6% over last year's budget.

Harry Carboni advocated for non-achieving students, saying that the full 7.9% increase was needed to make sure the Board of Education had no excuse for not reaching those students. Peter McDevitt said he supports 6% as long as any additional money from the State offsets taxes rather than increases the budget. Chris Marot said that the budget was a balance between educational needs and the limits imposed by the Town's ability to pay. Harry Carboni suggested that with mediocre budgets, the schools would always be mediocre. Gordon Muir refuted that statement, arguing that in fact the schools are quite good, noting that other factors come in to play when determining the success of any individual child in school.

Members voting **in favor** of the motion: H. Clements, P. McDevitt, C. Marot, G. Muir, J. Underwood.

Members voting **against** the motion: H. Carboni.

Motion **PASSES**, 5-1.

Discussion and Possible Action – General Government Budget

Gordon Muir, seconded by H. Clements, moved to set the General Government budget at \$14,069,613.

Members voting **in favor** of the motion: H. Clements, P. McDevitt, C. Marot, G. Muir, J. Underwood.

Members voting **against** the motion: H. Carboni.

Motion **PASSES**, 5-1.

Discussion and Possible Action – Willimantic Service District Budget

Gordon Muir, seconded by Hannah Clements, moved to set the WSD budget at \$8,647,428.

Members voting **in favor** of the motion: H. Clements, C. Marot, G. Muir, J. Underwood.

Members voting **against** the motion: H. Carboni, P. McDevitt.

Motion **PASSES**, 4-2.

Adjournment

Joseph Underwood, seconded by Hannah Clements, made a motion to adjourn at 8:35 p.m.

Motion PASSED unanimously

Christopher Marot, Board of Finance