

April 10, 2014

The Board of Finance on this date held a public hearing on the proposed budget for fiscal year 2014-201 at 7:00 p.m. at the Stonington High School auditorium. Members present were Glenn Frishman John O'Brien, Chairman; Glenn Frishman, Secretary; June Strunk; Dudley Wheeler; Sandy Grimes and Bryan Bentz. Also present Maryanna Stevens, Director of Finance; Board of Selectmen; Superintendent of Schools, Van Riley; Board of Education members, Town Hall staff and residents of the Town.

Mr. O'Brien opened the public hearing at 7:00 p.m. The budget presented totals \$58,242,662 with a 20.37 proposed mil rate.

He addressed Page 11 of the Budget book showing the 2014-15 Proposed Revenue; indicating that 89.20% is from taxes. He added that Stonington receives very little assistance from the State. The pie chart on Page 12 shows the Proposed Expenditures, with the Board of Education at 58.49%. The goal of the Board is to keep 2 months funding over the operating budget. There has been a significant loss in growth of funds.

If they were to restore all funding to the Board of Education and BOE Capital Improvement budgets, the mil rate would be 20.97. He added that the School safety items could be placed in a separate bond. A total of \$577,514 in cuts were made to the General Government budget.

Mr. O'Brien informed the assembly that the Board of Finance would hear their comments with an expected end time of 10:00 pm and continue deliberations on Monday the 14th of April.

Correspondence received 4/10/14 submitted by John Miller, Church St Mystic highlighting damage resulting from flooding and poor drainage. He is in full support of maintaining CIP line item *Repair Drainage at Church St. Mystic*.

Paul Rohacik, Church St. Mystic addressed the drainage issues on his street and the frequency of flooding. First Selectman Haberek replied that \$160,000 has been allocated in the CIP budget and preliminary work is done on this project.

Henry Gourd, Grand St asked why there were cuts to the Police budget with increased responsibilities. Mr. O'Brien replied that there is a full department.

Marc Ginsberg, Montauk Ave spoke in support of the library.

Charles Young, Griswold St. stated he would like to restore funding to the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center due to the many services provided to the residents. He concluded stating that one in three residents are eligible to receive PNC services.

Lois Hiller, Suzanne Canning and John McHugh spoke in support of restoring funding to the Mystic & Noank library.

Michael O'Neill, Pequot Trail stated that he is the coach of the Stonington Crew. The program has eighty plus kids with many of the past participants still rowing in college, some with scholarships. He is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget to save sports programs.

Aurora Hutchins, Wamphassuc Rd asked for restoration of funds to the BOE to save teachers.

Susan Jones, Palmer St stated that she does not feel that the children of Stonington are being represented. She doesn't feel that Teachers should have to "make do". She asked why doesn't the Board of Finance inform the Board of Education, Board of Selectmen and residents of their intention to hold the budget to a specific percent increase? Why are no BOF members present at the Board of Education budget discussions that begin in January? It appears that the BOF meets with the Selectman prior to impending cuts. If the BOF has a subcommittee as stated by Mr. Grimes than what is the subcommittees function? Should not all OF members be available via email and internet? Why isn't a Comments from the Citizens item on the agenda? What is BOF backup plan for dealing with safety issues and the aging buildings in the school system? Please reinstate the \$1,524,979 and let the voters decide.

Cindy Nadeau, Pawcatuck is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget.

Steve Small, Riverbend Dr is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget. Please let the voters decide.

Stonington High School student stated that his parent chose Stonington as home to raise their family because of the schools. He is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget. Please let the voters decide.

David Brown, River Rd commended teachers and administrators on their fine work at a funding level sustainable by taxpayers. He believes this will continue no matter the outcome of the current budget referendum. He made two observations-enrollment in the schools has been flat for several years and we have been maintaining infrastructure, protecting the citizens, paying the bills and educating our children successfully. We are all in this together; we cannot have everything, there must be compromise.

Alicia Carroll, Moss St informed the Board that there were 1350 names on the petition requesting restoration of funding to the BOE.

Rob Marsiglia stated that he and many parents feel they are not represented; only Senior Citizens are thought of. He suggested that it be a priority or even a policy that the Board of Finance meet with the Board of Education at least three times to eliminate the annual anxiety of parents. He stated he would prefer full restoration but also suggested taking \$400,000 from the Reserve with \$250,000 going to Education and \$150,000 to the Town. With that two things need to happen, residents need to vote yes and once a decision is made it is crucial that all leaders support those numbers publicly. He is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE and Town budget. Please let the voters decide.

SPS Teacher stated that there is no Technology teacher and if there are additional cuts this will place them behind other towns. He is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget. Please let the voters decide.

Sarah Lewandowski, Walnut St asked why Stonington spends 58% on the schools, this is less than the statewide average of 63%. Why doesn't the BOF readjust the pie?

Mike Auerbach asked the members to state how long they have been on the Board and why. Mr. O'Brien replied that this is not the purpose of the meeting. He referred to page 5 income levels and distribution, Stonington had a 114% increase, in the top third of the wealthiest towns in CT.

Jack Morehouse, Boulder Ave also an owner Mystic Marina stated that he pays high taxes but doesn't understand why the Board wont support the schools. He believes there should be more collaboration in the Town.

Several SPS students spoke in support of the music and sports programs.

Steve Gilbert stated that he is considering moving, he added that there are programs in place to assist those that cannot pay high taxes. He is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget. Please let the voters decide.

Jennifer Wilson is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget. Please let the voters decide.

Jeff Anderson asked that the Board truly listen and hear what they are being asked tonight. He is aware they do not make the specific cuts to the BOE budget but this is the result. He is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget. Please let the voters decide.

Virginia McCormick Greenhaven Rd stated that she is a retired citizen concerned about expenses but supports the BOE budget increases; is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget. Please let the voters decide.

Julia Reed moved here from Hartford and is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget. Please let the voters decide.

Meredith Bogue takes care of her husband, a disabled veteran and is a paraprofessional at DMS. The budget should be about people not money and mil rates. She is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget. Please let the voters decide.

Christina Fullerton, Long Wharf Road read the State of CT Board of Finance guidelines to the Board as she believes they do not know them.

Bob Tabor, Boulder Ave used statistical data comparing Stonington to East Lyme with regard to Education Cost Sharing from the State. Both towns are very comparable, yet Stonington receives \$2million and East Lyme receives \$12 million. This should be looked into.

John Swenarton Back Acres Way is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget. Please let the voters decide.

Linda Anania Coveside Lane is in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget. Please let the voters decide.

Anna Bornstein Andrew McCauley Leslie Driscoll and Betty Pacelle are in support of the restoration of funds to the BOE budget. Please let the voters decide.

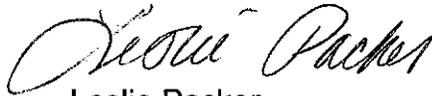
Ashley Belize Moss Street stated that it is not the responsibility of the taxpayers to vote for a budget they do not support.

Superintendent of Schools Van Riley offered some suggestions increase the mil rate, he believes it will pass, Use reserve fund of \$700,000. \$500,000 plus to BOE, \$70 to \$80,000 for outside agencies and \$100,000 for General Government, funding is there. The DMS roof doesn't appear that it will cost the full \$1.2 million funded. He added that he understands the \$1 million cut in the CIP and hopes to work with the Board soon to address bonding for the school safety items but the Town CIP has increased. Why not decrease the Town CIP 80% and bond this as well? He concluded stating that it is critical that all Boards meet prior to the budget process.

Mike Auerbach stated that the Board has heard for over three hours people asking them to restore the 2.96% to the BOE budget, he asked them why they would wait, do it now.

There being no further comments for the Board, Mr. O'Brien closed the public hearing at 10:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Leslie Packer