

April 14, 2015

The Board of Finance on this date held a public hearing on the proposed budget for fiscal year 2015-2016 at 7:15 p.m. at the Stonington High School auditorium. Members present were Secretary and Acting Chairman June Strunk; Dudley Wheeler; Sandy Grimes; Bryan Bentz and Tim O'Brien. Also present Jim Sullivan, Interim Director of Finance; First Selectman George Crouse; Superintendent of Schools, Van Riley; Board of Education members, Town Hall staff and residents of the Town.

Mrs. Strunk opened the public hearing at 7:18 p.m. She reviewed the budget process for Fiscal year 2015-2016. The Recommended budget is presented with a 21.35 mil rate. She stated that the Board of Finance would hear comments with an expected end time of 10:00 pm and continue deliberations on Wednesday the 15<sup>th</sup> of April.

**Correspondence received 4/14/2015 submitted by Peggy Brissette, Farmholme Rd, Stonington supporting funding for the libraries.**

**Charles Young, Griswold St.** thanked the members for their support of the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center. He also thanked them for the funding for a new generator.

**Suzanne Canning, Old South Rd and Bill Turner** spoke in support of funding to the Mystic & Noank library.

**Margaret Victoria, Woodland Ct.** thanked the members for funding to the Stonington Free library.

**Beth-Ann Stewart, Executive Director** of the Stonington Community Center thanked the members for their support. She added that 40% of their annual budget is acquired through fundraising. Funding from the Town to the Como has flat lined for 15 years, she would appreciate the increase of \$10,000 to the requested budget. Multiple Town organizations use the Como space free of charge. For five years now at the request of the Highway Department, the Como staff has been mowing the soccer fields.

**First Selectman George Crouse** stated that the Stonington Free library budget should be \$140,000.

**Mary Andersen, Executive Director of COG** and the next eleven residents spoke in support of increased funding to the Stonington Community Center.

At this time, the Board reached Page 65 of the Recommended budget, the Stonington Public Schools Education Department summary. Mrs. Strunk stated that the Board has unanimously agreed to increase the budget by 3% over the 2014-2015 Adopted budget.

**Cindy Nadeau, Pawcatuck** asked that the Board change the Budget process allowing residents input prior to but by the Board of Finance. She asked that the Board of Education, Board of Finance and Selectmen all work together to change the Special Education mandates.

**Bruce Yarnell, Van Riley, Maya Bryant and Emily Kuhn** agreed with Ms. Nadeau to let the voters decide on the Board of Education budget.

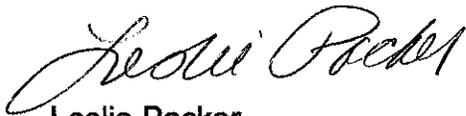
**David Brown, River Rd.** stated that there are many residents of the Town struggling. He thanked the Board for their service.

**Ellen Gilbert, Welles Ave.** supports the BOE. She stated the Town is losing students to Magnet schools. She believes the Town needs the schools to support growth.

**Jon Nickerson, Cronin Ave.** questioned the use of Fund Balance. Mrs. Strunk replied that in the past the Board has used the Fund Balance to offset the operating budget to lessen the impact on the taxpayers. The Town currently has an AA1 rating, similar to a consumer's credit rating. The Board has been advised by the Bond Council to use Fund Balance solely for Capital Improvement projects. The Town of Stonington currently has 2 months operating budget in it's Fund Balance.

There being no further comments for the Board, Mrs. Strunk closed the public hearing at 8:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Leslie Packer