

## **BUDGET HEARING APRIL 16, 2007**

An adjourned meeting of the Town Council (adjourned from Wednesday, April 12, 2007) was held on Monday, April 16, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Wethersfield High School

Present: Councilors Drake, Forrest, Kirsche, Kotkin, Montinieri, Walsh, Deputy Mayor Fortunato and Chairperson Adil.

Absent: Councilor Cascio

Present from the Board of Education: Matt DeAngelo, Michael F. McKenna, Julie Montinieri,

Raul Rodriguez, Janis Malec, Penny Stanziale, Tristan Stanziale, Vice Chairperson Stacey Hodges, and Chairperson Gerri Roberts.

Also present: Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager; Patrick Proctor, Superintendent of Schools; Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk

### **Presentation of the Board of Education Budget - Dr. Patrick Proctor, Superintendent**

Dr. Proctor welcomed Town Councilors, Board of Education members, staff and residents. He thanked residents for their continued support of the education of the children in Town. He said that he is pleased with this year's Board of Education budget. It is a current services budget with a few, modest initiatives. He said Councilors have a copy of the power point presentation, a detailed budget summary, three years of savings information, and a comparison between the Town's Board of Education budget and the State averages, and the full budget book. All of this information is available on the website as well. He presented the following Board of Education Budget:



[Wethersfield Public Schools Recommended 2007-2008 Education Budget](#) [220 KB PDF\*]

In closing, Dr. Proctor said that he likes this Budget. He feels it provides a lot for the children of Wethersfield and is very friendly on the community.

### **Presentation of the Town Budget - Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager**

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager thanked everyone for being at the meeting. She said anyone not able to attend the meeting, can submit comments via mail, e-mail, and telephone calls to her office. She said that she is thankful for the support of previous referendums that have allowed the Town to improve its infrastructure. There was so much to get done. As an update on the Town Hall Library renovations, the Town Council just awarded the bid for phase II and in the contract it states that the work must be completed within 15 months. The contractor will be held to the date. She presented the 2007/2008 Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget.



[Town of Wethersfield 2007-2008 Proposed Budget](#) [88 KB PDF\*]

Chairperson Adil thanked the Town Manager for her Budget presentation. He reminded the Public that they would have 10 minutes to speak and asked that they sign up with the Town Clerk.

### **Public Comments**

Paul Pace, 26 Victory Lane, spoke in support of the installation of sidewalks along Two Rod Highway. He urged Council to appropriate \$75,000 in next year's budget so that sidewalks along Two Rod Highway can be placed on the to do list of the Capital Improvement Budget. It is not a question of aesthetics but rather public safety. There is broad support in the neighborhood for this improvement. He said that he submitted a petition to Town staff that will attest to this fact. There are no safe areas to cross the road. Cars gain speed along Two Rod Highway because there are no stop signs from Old Reservoir Road and the Berlin Turnpike. The curve in the road and dense trees make it more difficult because the view is obscured. There is also no safe place for children to stand and wait for the school bus. He urged Councilors to vote with their conscience and allocate \$75,000 for sidewalks on Two Rod Highway and have the foresight and initiative to continue installing sidewalks both north and south to the Newington Town line. The cost for this project and the need for the sidewalks will not decrease in the years to come.

Maggie Pace, 26 Victory Lane, reiterated that there is no safe place to stand and wait for the bus or cross Two Rod Highway. She said that the benefits go beyond that of safety by connecting neighborhoods to each other.

Paul Pace identified Richard Milluzzo, 110 Liberty Hill East and Lorraina Richard, 47 Kimberly Lane as being in the audience and supporting the sidewalks.

Lucille Domick, 204 Brimfield Road, President of the Friends of the Wethersfield Library, said that she misses so many aspects of the Library. She is hoping that the Library will open sooner rather than later. It is a core service of the Town. It is essential to the community to have the full scope of services. Library staff has worked hard to continue to provide services under difficult circumstances. It is to their credit that the Library has maintained a presence in the community. The public is anxious to see the final product and use the new Library. Anything that can be done to open a full functioning library as soon as possible would be to everybody's advantage.

Connie McGrath, 226 Prospect Street, said that she has lived in Wethersfield for 50 years and the Library has been her second home. The seniors have their own book club that they love. She is looking forward to the new library opening and feels the library staff has done a good job with what they have to work with. They have managed to put so much into that small space.

Lee Yarton, 226 Propsect Street, speaking in support of the Library budget, said that she has loved libraries for a long time. Libraries are very important to her and contribute so much to every member of the community. Wethersfield has an excellent library and deserves its funding.

Woody Warren, 9 Nutmeg Circle, said that this is a very mild budget and he has some recognition of it being acceptable. One of the biggest battles he has had in Town is to seek representation and to get responses for various initiatives. He said he has been preaching democracy ever since he came to this Town and he hasn't achieved it. Our children have to be monitored and controlled. Rules have to be constructive and strict. It is not being done that way. He would like the opportunity to speak on public television so that he can go into more detail on what can be done to make corrections. The Library, like all government, should be austere and share its resources. He asked if he could have a tape of the meeting for his own personal use.

Virginia Judson, 74 Cedar Street, representing the Town's Clean Energy Committee, said that the committee has requested \$5,000 for the purchase of clean energy- electricity produced by wind, landfill gas, or small-scale hydro facilities. She said that the Town currently uses 8,262,000 kWh of electricity for schools and municipal buildings and by the year 2010, the Town has pledged to use twenty percent or 1,652,000 kwh of clean energy. The Town will need to buy and install a significant number of photovoltaic arrays or buy a package of clean energy from a supplier to reach its goal. The Committee is recommending that the Town purchase 1/4 of this total this year. If the Town purchases the clean energy through one of two suppliers authorized to sell through the Clean Energy Options Program, the Town will receive credits to earn free photovoltaic arrays from the CT Clean Energy Fund.

John Miller, 45 Highland Street, said that he usually attends the Budget Hearing to support the Board of Education Budget because the goal of the Town is to have the best school system possible. Recently, the taxpayers have paid dearly to support the Board and Town budgets because of the flat grand list. This year's grand list was close to zero. There is a dramatic change in funding this year with the increase in State support, about 3 percent of the budget. It costs taxpayers \$3.00 in State taxes for the Town to receive \$1.00 in funding. He said that he doesn't think the Board of Education budget is a barebones budget. The budget increased by \$2,000,000; the same amount as the State funding. He asked where were the meaningful improvements for the students in this budget. The Board of Education should not look to add services because these increases become the base for next year's budget. The State increase in funding can be a false sense of security and won't work for many years. Budget woes are because of shortsighted decisions years ago. He said there are places where cuts can be made. He suggested not hiring a superintendent for a year. The Town has a very competent Assistant Superintendent. The local taxpayer has been tapped out.

Karen Rider, 31 Coleman Road, said that she is a Board member of the Friends of the Library and the Program Committee Chairperson. The Friends have been reorganizing itself and have been doing wonderful things in spite of the fact that the Library is essentially closed. The Library staff has made do with the bare minimum to accomplish its mission to serve its citizens, provide educational opportunities, entertainment and cultural opportunities where individuals can gather and be together. She said that she just heard that the Town Council is considering keeping the Library in its present location through Phase II of the construction and not reopening it until 2009. That is unacceptable. Please open the Library doors.

Kevin Sullivan, 79 Wright Road, said that he is speaking in favor of the Town funding the Clean Energy Goal that the Town Council set last year. He would like to encourage conservation and recycling as well. In general, sidewalks are a great thing for a livable community and another step to take to reduce energy is by walking. This generation of children are driven everywhere. Sidewalks will help to get children to walk.

Olivia Forunato, 28 Fairmont Street, said that she is speaking in favor of recycling at homes and businesses. She said that she has noticed establishments on the Silas Deane Highway do not have recycling bins. The Town should encourage businesses to recycle. If residents remove recycling from trash, it would save the Town money. Action can also be taken at the schools.

Frank Sena, 103 Eastern Drive, said that he commends the staff on the budget. He asked if it was true that the Town would do away with its dog pound and create a regional dog pound. The amount is minimal but the effect on the citizens is big. The Dog Park Committee raised over \$35,000 of non-Town funds for the park. It brought a lot of publicity to the Town and shows that dogs are a priority. The Wethersfield pound is not a kill shelter but a regional pound could become one. This would be a tragedy to our citizens. The location of the regional pound could also cause transportation issues for residents who need to pickup their animals. The food for the dog pound is donated. He can't see a significant savings in the regional dog pound. It would have an adverse effect on the citizens.

Tracy McDougal, 45 Nott Street, asked for the Town's support of the Library. She has been helping with fundraising for the Library. She uses the Library for many functions. It is such a wonderful resource and is used by so many. She is asking the Town Council to fund the Library budget request this year. She said that she hopes the Town Council will consider opening the Library sooner rather than later. Perhaps, the Library can share space needed for the Town Hall offices. Maybe space can be borrowed from the Police Station or Community Center, too. She also suggested using the empty schools during the summer for swing space or the Village Tavern.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, said .16 percent increase in the mill rate is outstanding. The citizens should know the increase is much greater than advertised because of the income tax increase of 10 percent over the next two years. In 1992, when Governor Weiker sold the idea of an income tax it was to be a temporary tax. The government takes such advantage of the citizens. It is a disgrace how much citizens pay the State and how little the Town receives back. The Town should be cutting its costs.

Edward Tevald, 894 Ridge Road, said that he was happy that the Mayor responded to speakers. He said that it shows that the Mayor is interested in what the speaker is saying. He said the Town budget is based on increased State funding from the Governor's proposed budget. Since the Governor is a Republican and the Legislature is Democrat we are not sure if the budget will pass. He wonders if the State funding doesn't come through if the Town Manager will reduce the budget or will the taxes be increased. Also, the Town Manager's budget proposes an average increase of \$100 to the average home owner. Does this include the Board of Education budget that shows a 5 percent increase.

Chairperson Adil said that the \$100 increase was for both budgets.

Edward Tevald said that he had two questions for the Board of Education. One was concerning the problem of non-resident pupils in Wethersfield. He would like to see a report on this issue. The taxpayers should not have to pay for kids that do not live in Wethersfield. The other issue is concerning a special education teacher that stole books from the Town and is suspended with full pay. He wondered if it was by law that the Board of Education had to place her on paid leave or if the Board of Education has any discretion in the matter.

Chairperson Adil thanked the public for their input at the Public Hearing.

## **Adjournment**

At 9:10 p.m., Deputy Mayor Fortunato moved to "**ADJOURN THE BUDGET HEARING TO THE NEXT BUDGET WORKSHOP ON THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 2007 AT 5:30 P.M. AT THE ELEANOR BUCK WOLFE NATURE CENTER**" seconded by Councilor Kotkin.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores Sassano  
Town Clerk

*As approved by vote of Council on May 7, 2007*

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\*These linked files are in Adobe's Portable Document Format. To view them you will need Adobe Reader installed on your computer. It is available for free download at:

