



MINUTES of the regular meeting of the Board of Estimate and Taxation held on Monday, March 29, 2021 as a Zoom webinar in Greenwich, CT.

Chairman Michael S. Mason called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M., after which the members pledged allegiance to the flag.

Board members in attendance:

Michael S. Mason, Chairman
Karen Fassuliotis, Vice Chairman
William Drake, Clerk
Andreas Duus III
Laura Erickson
Debra Hess
Miriam Kreuzer
Elizabeth K. Krumeich
Leslie Moriarty
Jeffrey S. Ramer
Leslie L. Tarkington
David Weisbrod

Staff: Jenny Larkin, Information Technology (IT Department); Alexandra Moch, Environmental Analyst, Conservation Dept; Joseph McHugh, Chief, Fire Dept; Peter Mynarski, Comptroller

Selectmen: Jill K. Oberlander, Select-person; Lauren Rabin, Selectwoman

BOE/GPS: Peter Bernstein, Chairman, Board of Education (BOE); Karen Hirsch, Secretary, BOE; Sean O'Keefe, Chief Operating Officer, GPS

RTM: Kim Blank, (D-7); Dan Ozizmir, (D-5)

Public: Ken Borsuk, Reporter, *Greenwich Time*; Richard Kaufman, Reporter, Greenwich Sentinel; Horst Tebbe, GCTV

The Chairman, Michael Mason, welcomed Board members, Town staff and the public to the 2021 Public Hearing on the Town's FY2021-2022 Budget. He thanked the public for their interest in the meeting and noted that 80 online Comment Forms have been received and circulated to the Board. The Comment Forms will be part the record of the meeting Minutes and Forms will be accepted until mid-night tonight. The meeting is being held under the Governor's directive that permits electronic meetings. The meeting is being recorded live and an audio copy will be posted on the Town's website. The Public Hearing is an opportunity for the Board to learn residents' expectations and views to assist in balancing needs and priorities during its Budget

Workshop, Tuesday, March 30, and at the Board's Decision Day meeting. If not finished at that time, a second Decision Day meeting is scheduled for April 6, 2021 starting at 9:00 A.M.

The Town's Budget process commenced with the Board of Estimate & Taxation's (BET) adoption of its Budget Guidelines for FY2022 in fall 2020. The Chair thanked Department heads, Town Boards and Commissions for their contributions and noted that the Board would vote on the FY2022 Budget and then submit it to the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) for its vote at the RTM's May meeting.

Mr. Drake invited members of the audience who wished to speak to raise their hand to be called on in turn, to introduce themselves, add the name of the organization, group, or location of their residence. Remarks will be limited to three minutes to allow time for everyone to speak. Each speaker may speak once, and if time permits after everyone had spoken, will be allowed to speak a second time.

Public Hearing

Carolyn Peterson – Co-President Old Greenwich Elementary School PTA and member Eastern Middle School PTA and a member of the Old Greenwich Association – spoke in support of improvements to the Julian Curtiss School ADA, HVAC, and Security.

Dan Ozizmir – RTM (D-5) Vice Chair BOC, Chair Labor Contracts Committee – commended the BET, BOE and Office of the First Selectman for their FY2021 flat budget and spoke in opposition to the Town and BOE budgets that exceed BET Guidelines.

Kim Blank – RTM (D-7), Chair, Education Committee - spoke in opposition to the reduction of \$175 thousand from the design work for the Glenville Intersection as a necessary improvement.

Mary Ellen Markowitz - spoke in support of a professionally staffed NW Fire Station.

David Windreich – spoke in opposition to the Dept of Public Works variable message board signage. He spoke in opposition to the \$1.75 million investment in the Glenville Road/ Brookside Drive Intersection.

Susan & Joseph Gatto – Greenwich residents – spoke in opposition to the \$1.75 million improvements to the Brookside Road/Glenville Road intersection improvements saying the importance was exaggerated, excessively costly, and would create environmental problems.

Cheryl Moss – RTM (D-8), Chair - spoke in support of a professionally staffed NW Fire Station.

Joanna Swomley – RTM (D-10) – spoke in support of a professionally staffed NW Fire House for adequate protection and safety because of travel time to fire location.

Sandy Litvak – former Selectman – spoke in support of prioritizing a NW Fire Station which the Town needs for adequate protection and safety of residents.

Jill Ernst – Co-President Julian Curtiss PTA - spoke in support of the design and upgrade for the Julian Curtiss School as a magnet school sorely in need of updating which serves a diverse population.

Rachel Khanna – RTM (D-10) - spoke in support of NW Fire Station for adequate coverage and to avoid litigation.

Jennifer & Sam Taylor – residents of Greenwich – spoke in support of improvements to the Julian Curtiss School.

David Langhorne – spoke in support of a NW Fire Station to avoid a tragedy and in opposition to projects with excessive budgets diverting money from improvements to Central Middle School and unplayable school athletic fields while prioritizing the Hamill Skating Rink, Roger Sherman Baldwin Park, and a Bike Path.

Bob Chaney – Julian Curtiss PTA - spoke in support of renovations to Julian Curtiss School because it has remained at 90% capacity or over capacity for 30 years. Currently it is the only GPS that has received no significant renovation.

Angie Hartofilis – Int'l School at Dundee & Eastern Middle School Parent – spoke in support of BOE Budget as presented and in support of school playing field rehabilitation, Julian Curtiss renovation and an East/West Bike Path.

Cate Elliott-Bocassi – Glenville School Parent – spoke in support of BOE Budget and Julian Curtiss School renovation.

Liane Tel – spoke in support of the East/West Bike Path to increase safety and for investment of \$100 thousand in natural grass fields.

Vincent Dimarco – spoke in support of the Sea Level Conservation Study, the Sustainability Study, an East/West Bike Path Study as a Town amenity that will be supported by Public/Private pledges.

Aleksandra Moch – Town Conservation Department employee – spoke in support of Bike lanes, saving green space from development and in opposition to pollution caused by congestion and road/soil runoff.

Ernest Schirmer – spoke in opposition to an internal rather than professional public relations role with deserves a long-term perspective that includes social media and phone apps. He spoke guardedly in support of increasing pedestrian and bicycle traffic expressing concern about lawsuits against the Town from poorly marked road and pedestrian crossings.

Mimi Duff – spoke in support of the NW Fire House, North Mianus School repairs despite very limited contribution from insurance and renovation to update ADA accessibility, security, HVAC, and further design work for Julian Curtiss School which has been value-engineered from the original estimate of \$42 million down to \$27 million.

Randy Giacchino – spoke in favor of quality public education and infrastructure improvement to Julian Curtiss School.

Julie DesChamps – RTM (D-6) and member of the Sustainability Committee – spoke in support of better public communication about the Field Master Plan and Implementation and an East/West Bike Path.

Suzanne Sherwyn – Glenville resident – spoke in opposition to a traffic circle at the Glenville Road/Brookside Drive intersection and the newly installed fence that interferes with a clear sightline for cars turning onto Glenville Road.

Brad Markowitz - Cos Cob resident – spoke in opposition to the lack of public input on park playable fields. Spending money on future consulting contracts should be preceded by public notice and input.

Phil Dodson – RTM (D-8) Public Works & Town Services – spoke in opposition to the cost overrun of Greenwich Avenue Streetscape and lack of public notification on bump-out construction.

Louisa Stone – RTM (D-10) – spoke in support of the NW Fire Station.

Lorelei O’Hagan – spoke in opposition to the Town underfunding its public spaces and austerity funding of BOE Budget, Bike Path and Julian Curtiss renovation project.

Diana Singer – RTM (D-10) Town Services – spoke in opposition to the lack of attention on public safety and postponement of fire safety. Mrs. Singer spoke in support of funding the \$5.8 million for the NW Fire Station to accommodate career firefighters as early as possible.

Richard Neuman – RTM (D-11) Chair, Town Services and Volunteer Fireman – spoke in support of a second Assistant Fire Chief and maintaining a Volunteer Coordinator.

Mary Tobin – Old Greenwich School Parent – spoke in support of E/W Bike Path as an amenity that will attract visitors and future residents. Mrs. Tobin spoke in support of natural grass playing fields as healthier, more economical, and more attractive.

Isabelle Harper – spoke in support of an E/W Bike Path and sustainable, safe transportation. Mrs. Harper commented that many students from the GHS’s Environmental Action Club sponsored by the Dept of Human Services signed a petition in favor of the bike path as an exercise opportunity,

Monica Wolle – GHS Student, member of the Environmental Action Club – spoke in support of Bike Path as a safe place to enjoy exercise rather than be fearful of the narrow road-shoulders and ruts to escape car traffic.

Lucy von Brachel – RTM (D-4) speaking on her own behalf – spoke in opposition to repeatedly deferring projects to preserve the lowest Mill Rate in the state rather than achieving the goal of growth and progress. Ms. Von Brachel spoke in favor of funding improvements to Julian Curtiss School, and noted lack of commitment to life and property safety by deferring the issue of the NW Fire Station. Ms. Von Brachel spoke in support of the Bike Path as a positive investment in lower cost transportation, youth safe exercise and reduced air pollution.

Pascale Sejean – Julian Curtiss School Parent – spoke in support of Julian Curtiss School investing in its renovation as a magnet school with an inclusive community and a diverse population.

Brian Peldunas – President, PTA Council – spoke in support of the BOE operating and Capital Budget as submitted; in support of GPS spending to maintain and improve academic performance; in support of BOE budget team to close out capital projects and for Julian Curtiss School renovations including the addition of a science room and pre-pre-K and pre-K classrooms to bring equality to the facilities. He spoke in support of Western Middle School field remediation and a unified vision that benefits the schools, students, teachers, and staff.

Michelle Tierney – Julian Curtiss and Western Middle Magnet School Parent and Co-President of Julian Curtiss PTA – spoke in support of improvements and maintenance to the community of 15 GPS that continue to attract new residents to Greenwich.

Tom Casazzone – Parent of four children in GPS – spoke in support of \$1.7 million for Julian Curtiss School renovation and expansion and \$150,000 for Field Study design and implementation.

David Walko – Volunteer District Fire Chief and President of the Volunteer Fire Chiefs Association – spoke in support of the addition of a second Assistant Chief to move the Department Administration forward and to maintain the Volunteer Recruitment and Coordinator position.

Ed Dadakis – RTM (D-1) – spoke in support of conditioning funding for the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center with a 50/50 Public/Private Partnership based on the Glenville Civic Center model. Mr. Dadakis spoke in opposition to funding the Julian Curtiss project, especially the recommendation of a new science room, without a full understanding of the declining enrollment will impact the community. He asked that the Julian Curtiss project be returned to the BOE for re-thinking.

Rosemary Hyson – spoke in support of funding the full BOE Capital Plan including the \$1.7 million for Julian Curtiss HVAC, Security and ADA needs; and full support for the BOE Operating Budget. She commented that pandemic level services inadequately funded heroic efforts of teachers to overcome material deficiencies.

Alan Small – Board Member Northwest Association – spoke in support of fully funding a NW Fire Station at the Round Hill Fire Station with accommodations for additional professional career firefighters given the number of 6,000 square foot homes identified in the GIS study of the NW district which are subject to flashover if not doused with water within 8-minutes. He noted the urgency of the NW Fire Station situation.

James Waters – GPS Parent – spoke in support of the BOE Operating & Capital Budgets, in support of the \$1.7 million for the Julian Curtiss School renovation and expansion and encouraged the immediate response to damage repairs at North Mianus School.

Lucia Jansen – RTM (D-7) Chair BOC – spoke in support of the BET Guidelines and disappointment at both the Town and the BOE exceeding them. Describing the current environment of COVID, the completion of the ReVal, labor and benefit costs and no information about the results of Public/Private Partnership to offset Capital costs, as FY2022's Budget issues. Ms. Jansen spoke in support of speedy repairs to the North Mianus School water damage problems and the improvements recommended in the P&R Field Masterplan Study.

Karen Giannuzzi – RTM (D-11), GPS Parent and mother of a soccer player – spoke in support of the Parks & Recreation request for \$150,000 for the design and implementation of the Field Master Plan.

Christine O'Brian – spoke in opposition to the \$150,000 for the design and implementation of the Field Master Plan and any improvements to fields or adding to parks.

Molly Saleeby – RTM (D-8) Vice Chair – spoke in opposition to the failing and outdated school infrastructure. Ms. Saleeby spoke in favor of the Central Middle School engineering study and the Julian Curtiss expansion and renovation project, especially to include a science room as an equity issue. She expressed disappointment that there seems to have been no progress on forming Public/Private Partnership contributions to the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center and other capital projects.

Rosemary Paccione – President, Pheasant Run Condominium Association – spoke in favor of repairs to the sidewalks in the Weaver Street neighborhood which have been neglected for 20 years. She has spoken to DPW and the First Selectman about the situation and spoke at the January Public Hearing but feels the sidewalks are being treated as a low-priority issue until an accident happens.

Elizabeth Dempsey – spoke in support of the Field Master Plan design and implementation because the fields currently are maintained properly. She also supports the Bike Path study and recommends it as a quality-of-life issue.

Annabelle Berizzi – Julian Curtiss School Parent – spoke in support of the design and renovations for Julian Curtiss School with the \$1.7 million budget.

Clare Kilgallen, Esq.- member PTA Council – spoke in support of the BOE Operating and Capital Budget for adequate funding of schools, Special Education and proactive maintenance.

Scott Kalb – RTM (D-7) – spoke in support of the NW Fire Station at Round Hill with the addition of career firefighters, design and renovation plans for ADA access, Security and HVAC to the Julian Curtiss School, the full BOE budget request and reform of the Town's Capital budgeting process and funding practices.

Katherine LoBalbo – RTM (D-2) Chair, Parks & Recreation – spoke in support of the Town playing fields but not the \$350,000 and \$150,000 dedicated to the Field Master Plan Study which she recommends be returned to the Department for more knowledgeable focus on needs. She spoke in opposition to the full allocation of the \$8 million request for Western Middle School but prefers to allocate it over a period of years, and in opposition to enlarging parking lots at Town parks.

Myra Klockenbrink – spoke in support of funding the Bike Path study for safe cycling for youth and local commuting to school and libraries as well as grass field maintenance.

Mareta Hamre – RTM (D-10) – spoke in support of the NW Fire Station at Round Hill with career firefighters, the East/West Bike Path study, Julian Curtiss School improvements and the full amount of the BOE Operating and Capital Budget.

James Walsh – spoke in support of fully funding design and feasibility studies for Capital improvements and fully funding the BOE Operating and Capital Budgets. He spoke in opposition

to the Field Master Plan that reduced Town green space and requested that no unrestricted money be given to the Parks & Recreation Department. Mr. Walsh asks for further consulting with the general public as well as park active users to prioritize implementation the Master Plan.

Matt Driskill –Julian Curtiss School Parent and active PTA member - spoke in support of the full BOE budget and renovation of Julian Curtiss School. He commented that the community spirit in Greenwich is strong and asks that for that same spirit be reflected in funding and maintaining the schools.

Valerie Stauffer - former RTM and District 7 Chair, participant in many civic organizations – spoke in support of BET Budget Guidelines, keeping the Budget under control and awareness that Mill Rate increases might trigger relocation outside Greenwich.

Renee Seblatnigg – spoke in support of the Conservation Commission Bike Path study for health, safety, and environmental reasons. She commented that this project would be supported 50/50 by the Town and Public/Private Partnership.

Chairman Remarks

Mr. Mason thanked the speakers and attendees who participated in the Public Hearing, the Information Technology staff supporting the virtual meeting, and WGCH and GCTV for live broadcast of the meeting. He noted that comments could be sent through the Town website form until 11:59 P.M. so that BET members could gather topics for BET Decision Day voting at its virtual meeting taking place on April 1 beginning at 11:30 A.M.

Adjournment

Upon a motion by Ms. Moriarty, seconded by Ms. Kreuzer, the Board voted 12-0-0 to adjourn at 9:34 P.M.

The next Regular Meeting of the BET is scheduled on Monday, April 19, 2021.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Sidor, Recording Secretary

William Drake, Clerk of the Board

Michael S. Mason, Chair