



MINUTES of the Public Hearing of the Board of Estimate and Taxation held on Tuesday, March 16, 2010 in the Cone Meeting Room, Greenwich, CT.

Chairman Stephen Walko called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m., after which the members pledged allegiance to the flag. A moment of silence was observed for the death of Democratic Town Committee Chairman David Roberson.

Board members in attendance:

Stephen G. Walko, Chairman
Jim Campbell, Vice Chairman
Joseph L. Pellegrino, Clerk
Nancy E. Barton
William R. Finger
Randall Huffman
William G. Kelly
Michael S. Mason
Arthur D. Norton
Jeffrey S. Ramer
Laurence B. Simon
Leslie L. Tarkington

Selectmen: Peter Tesei, First Selectman; Drew Marzullo; David Theis, Selectmen

Staff: Peter Mynarski, Comptroller; Roland Gieger, Budget Director; John Crary, Town Administrator; Dustin Anderson, Assistant to the First Selectman; Sidney Freund, Superintendent of Schools; Joseph Siciliano, Director; Tom Greco, Manager, Business Services Operations, Parks & Recreation

Mr. Walko began the meeting with a brief statement. He stated that the recent storm was the worst storm in decades and that many citizens still remain without water or power. Therefore, at the upcoming Thursday BET meeting, we will discuss and vote on the creation of an account to pay for and maximize the potential for reimbursement concerning those expenses related to the storm. Mr. Walko then thanked all Town employees and independent contractors who are working to restore electricity and working roadways.

Mr. Walko next addressed the format of the Public Hearing and provided an overview of the budget process. He thanked the Budget Committee under the leadership of Michael Mason, and members Bill Finger, Larry Simon, and Leslie Tarkington, for their excellent work putting together the proposed FY 2010-2011 Budget.

Mr. Walko explained that the budget is increasing by over four percent year-to-year with a projected mill rate increase of 3.38%, due to rising fixed charges, especially in the area of healthcare. He emphasized that permanent savings from last year's retirement incentive program need to be realized in order to reduce the operating budget on a long term basis. And

that maintaining the reduction in personnel in the Table of Organization is central to realizing a permanent savings.

Mr Walko then highlighted the actions taken by the Budget Committee. The Committee arrived at the recommended budget by balancing those interests that seek a mill rate increase of zero and those that call for a rate greater than four percent. The capital budget was dominated by the Central Fire Station and the High School Auditorium projects, both of which have zoning approvals and timing issues to address. Calls to change our modified Pay-As-You-Go (PAYGO) financing model were presented, to address building infrastructure, as well as storm water management. It is anticipated that at least one major storm water management project will be proposed in the FY 2012 budget, at which time the BET will have to decide on a funding policy for such projects. Bringing our infrastructure up to an acceptable level and maintaining it at that level remains a critical element of this budget.

Mr. Walko stated that as we look forward to the FY 2011-2012 budget, we do so in light of anticipated shortfalls. The Board already anticipates a greater shortfall in FY 2011-2012 due to the anticipated contribution to the pension fund. The action to reduce spending in FY 2010-2011 will help bring fund balance up to a more appropriate level. We must work cooperatively with the employees through good faith negotiations, wherein all unions appreciate the sacrifices made by their fellow employees.

Mr. Walko thanked the First Selectman, Department Heads, the Town Administrator, and appointing authorities including the Board of Education. Mr. Walko also thanked Peter Mynarski, Roland Gieger, Elaine Brown, and Maria Bocchino for their contributions.

PUBLIC HEARING

General

Peter Tesei, First Selectman – Requested reconsideration of the reduction to code 104 - Emergency Management Operations, and stated regarding the weekend storm, that there is a sole individual who is coordinating all of the efforts of the Town and the external entities, and is working to communicate the most up to date information to the citizens. In his opinion, this reduction means less service will be provided to the citizens of the Town. He also supports keeping EMO as an independent entity. Mr. Tesei also requested reconsideration of the reduction to code 105 – Office of the First Selectman, explaining that the proposal was for a 1.3% increase over the present year and that this reduction would be 2% below the present year. Due to this reduction, the Selectman's Office will be unable to provide resources and services to Town Committees for special projects.

Vince DiMarco, PGA, Greenwich Safe Cycling – Stated that going forward it is crucial that the Board should not only understand what a request is all about, but should also demand to know the goals and policies the expenditures will fulfill, and be certain that those goals and policies meet the wishes of the taxpayers, as well as the long-term economic and environmental health of the Town. He spoke about storm water management concerning the Byram River watershed, erosion control, the need for transportation enhancements, as well as bicycle and pedestrian accommodations improvements.

Dr. Carl G. R. Carlson – Shared comments on overall budget. In favor of further reductions in staff and Capital projects.

Operating

Mr. Pellegrino announced the items for the FY 2010-2011 Operating Budget.

General Government 101 - 196

Drew Marzullo, Selectman – Spoke in favor of reinstating \$20,000 to the Emergency Operations Coordinator position.

Robert J. Richardson – Shared comments on emergency operations concerning natural and terrorism disasters. In favor of reinstating \$20,000 to the Emergency Operations Coordinator position.

Fire Department 201 - 208

Joan Caldwell, Chairman RTM District 10 – Shared comments on fire protection in the back country. Ms. Caldwell supports the volunteer fire company in the back country, and the need for cohesiveness within the department. She supports equipment replacement at the Round Hill Fire Station and reinstating funds to the Emergency Operations Coordinator.

External Entities - 440

Susan Larkin, Chairman, Greenwich Historical Society – Shared comments on the Historical Society activities and requested reinstating funding per the First Selectmen's Recommended Budget.

Social Services 501 - 511

Tim Bassford – Shared statistics on the Social Services Department and his personal experience. In favor of reinstating reductions made to the original proposed Social Services budget.

Board of Education 600 - 675

Dr. Carl G. R. Carlson – Spoke in favor of further reductions in the Board of Education budget, including reductions of instructional staff.

Sue Rogers, President, PTA Council – In favor of the Board of Education budget and the MISA project.

Capital

Mr. Pellegrino announced the items for the FY 2010-2011 Capital Budget.

David Hopper – In favor of Hearthstone Drive sidewalks. The absence of sidewalks creates a danger for 71 children who walk to Riverside School, 62 who walk to Eastern Middle School and those who wait at the High School bus stop. A number of studies have recommended the addition of sidewalks.

Jennifer Boone - In favor of Hearthstone Drive sidewalks. The street that leads right to Riverside School. In the most recent study, which was done by the First Selectman's Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee, the sidewalk report shows that more people wrote to request sidewalks on Hearthstone Drive than any other in the entire town.

Lisa Ormm - In favor of Hearthstone Drive sidewalks. There is congestion and danger at the intersection of Hearthstone and Hendrie due to lack of a sidewalk and the lack proper sight lines due to the mailbox hut. It is the most responsible thing to do for the community, before near misses turn into a tragedy.

Warren Baroon – Opposed to Hearthstone Drive sidewalks. There has not been one pedestrian accident on Hearthstone since 1954. Has been told by Town Engineer, Joe Loyd; Traffic Coordinator, Melissa Evans; and Kevin Conroy, of Fuss and O'Neil; that sidewalks are unnecessary on Hearthstone, after personal visits were made to the street. Shared information from a newsletter sent by Amy Siebert. In the First Selectman's Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee's study, Hearthstone was not one of the thirteen streets named that most need sidewalks in the Town.

Nick Barile – Opposed to Hearthstone Drive sidewalks. Shared findings from a personal survey of 20 residents of Hearthstone Drive, 15 of which are opposed to sidewalks. The DPW recommended traffic calming measures, white shoulder lines and some residents would prefer this to sidewalks, which would need maintenance.

Erynn Arnold - In favor of Hearthstone Drive sidewalks. The letter from Amy Siebert was regarding traffic calming and speed humps, and the DPW found speed humps unnecessary. DPW included a sidewalk on Hearthstone this year, because they believe that it is necessary. Three separate surveys recommended a sidewalk on Hearthstone.

Lawrence E. Larson – Requested additional funding for replacement of a fire truck for the Round Hill Fire Station. One of their trucks will be out of service after 20 years.

Rick Strain, Chief, Round Hill Fire Department – Request for additional funding for replacement of a fire truck. Fire trucks need to be replaced every 20 years to meet NFPA requirements and regulations. Originally in 2008, the town Chief was asked to make this request in the FY 2010-2011 budget. \$300,000 is needed to support purchase of a new truck, which costs approximately \$600,000. Without this, the Town's insurance rating will drop, which will make insurance rates go up.

Camille Broderick, Co-President, Greenwich High School PTA – In favor of the MISA project.

Barry Montgomery – Shared photographs and is opposed to a park at the Cos Cob power plant site. He sited three concerns: the playground is within 250 feet of a power line and 1,500 feet of

a cell tower; the traffic layout is poorly designed, children being dropped off will have to cross traffic to the ball field; and the planned fourteen foot high, almost vertical, seawall will be built out of quarried stone and laid on humus bed, which will settle and the wall will fall down. He supported a less intensive design; removing the ball field, which will also eliminate the need for lighting; and changing the seawall from vertical stone to an engineering of 1-in-3, which could be naturally landscaped. Is in favor of using the funds for the MISA project instead.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, upon a motion by Mr Ramer, seconded by Mr. Huffman, the Board adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Maria Bocchino, Recording Secretary



Joseph L. Pellegrino, Clerk of the Board



Stephen G. Walko, Chairman