



MINUTES of the Public Hearing for the Fiscal 2021 Budget of the Board of Estimate and Taxation held on Tuesday, April 21, 2020 as a Zoom webinar in Greenwich, CT.

Chairman Michael S. Mason called the meeting to order at 7:03 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: Craig Jones; Information Technology (IT) Department (Dept.); Jenny Larkin, IT Dept.; Peter Mynarski, Comptroller

Public: Ken Borsuk, Reporter, *Greenwich Time*

The Chairman, Michael Mason, welcomed Board members, Town staff and the public to the 2020 Public Hearing on the Town's FY2020-2021 Budget. He thanked the public for their interest in the meeting; more than 250 online Comment Forms have been received and circulated to the Board. The Comment Forms will be with the permanent record of the minutes. The meeting is being broadcast LIVE and a video copy and transcript will be posted on the Town's website. The Public Hearing is an opportunity for the Board to learn residents' expectations and priorities. The Town's Budget process commenced with the Board of Estimate & Taxation's (BET) adoption of its Budget Guidelines for FY2020-2021 in October 2019. The Chair thanked Department heads, Town Boards and Commissions for their contributions and noted that the Board would vote on the FY2020-2021 Budget and then submit it to the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) for its vote at the RTM's budget meeting.

Mr. Drake invited members of the audience who wished to speak 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

Susan Rudolph – Greenwich resident – expressed appreciation to the Board for the work involved in creating the Budget and for an opportunity for public comment despite the restrictions on public meetings during the Coronavirus health crisis. Ms. Randolph spoke in support of more sports fields but in opposition to artificial turf installation at Central Middle School. She described the cost as being fiscally irresponsible.

Diane Martinez Rasekh – Greenwich parent of GPS student – spoke in opposition to the current quality of education and materials for special needs children. Ms. Rasekh requested that the BET fund an audit of Greenwich Special Education delivery.

John Blankley – Greenwich resident and former BET member - spoke in support of Police traffic control on Greenwich Avenue as representative of the Greenwich image. He proposed that the RTM be allowed to decide the issue of keeping the item in the FY2020-2021 Budget.

Dan Ozizmir – RTM District 5, Vice Chairman of BOC, member of LCC Committee spoke in support of a more conservative budget that recognizes the post-COVID 19 economic reality. Expressed concern about future Town revenue losses and unrealistic expectations of Fairfield County's contribution to the State through new taxes.

Gregory Piccininno – spoke in opposition to the expenditure for the Cos Cob and Greenwich High School (GHS) artificial turf athletic fields because of the expense and negative health impact on children. He asked the BET to delete the artificial turf funding from the FY2020-2021 Budget.

Nerlyn Pierson – GPS PTA Council Food Service Committee – spoke in support of the installation of dishwashers in Town schools. The speaker was opposed to the environmental hazard and waste disposal of current paper trays.

Jennifer Kutai – Parent GPS 5th Grade Student - spoke in support of increased funding, higher standards for Special Education delivery and earlier intervention to identify special needs children. Ms. Kutai spoke in opposition to the costly legal fights in pursuit of better-quality special education and parental fear of retribution if not acquiescing to the education standard being provided.

Warren Silver – RTM Member District 6 – spoke in opposition to artificial turf installation at Central Middle School. He cited children's health and economic reasons for favoring grass athletic fields.

Carolyn Peterson – Co-President of Old Greenwich Elementary School PTA – spoke in support of prioritizing the renovation of Old Greenwich Elementary School building as it is not ADA accessible and building security is inadequate.

W. Brooks Harris – RTM District 10, Finance Committee - spoke in support of conservative budgeting that will offset probable reduction in income; reduction of Mill Rate; use of Fund Balance; and, reduction of Capital Projects. He expressed concern about a sustainable solution for The Nathaniel Witherell. Mr. Harris spoke in opposition to omitting maintenance capital.

Cricket Dymont – President, Greenwich PTA Council - spoke in support of BOE budget and GPS teachers. She spoke in support of the BOE Capital and Maintenance Budget of public schools, saying it was responsible and a necessary investment.

Charlene Barnes – resident of Old Greenwich – spoke in opposition to the Sound Beach Avenue Bridge and new road. Ms. Barnes expressed concern that there had not been sufficient Public Hearing for residents to examine the revised plans, costs and timetable.

William Stowell – Special Education Teacher, Old Greenwich School – spoke in support of prioritizing the renovation of the Old Greenwich Elementary School because it is not ADA accessible, and although the building has historical integrity, it needs updating of lighting and security.

Jaimie Voehl – GPS Parent, signatory of a 200-signature Petition – spoke in support of prioritizing Old Greenwich Elementary School renovation due to its security issues. Ms. Voehl would like cameras installed and Monitors scrutinizing visitors entering the school.

Candace Garthwaite – RTM District 6 and Eastern Greenwich Preservation Association - spoke in opposition to the lack of information about the Sound Beach Avenue Bridge as a Capital Project.

Tina Courpas – RTM District 11 - spoke in support of eliminating all Capital spending in the FY2020-2021 Budget to achieve a negative Mill Rate. Ms. Courpas was opposed to increasing the residents' tax burden post-COVID- 19 health emergency.

Caroline Lerum – Parent of a GPS student and representing 100 parent petition signatories - spoke in support of increasing the Special Education budget and recommended an audit of Special Education delivery because administrators were denying services and parents feared retribution for speaking out. The Special Education teaching is understaffed and lacks training to provide adequate education.

William Morrison – one of 400 signatories requesting the deletion of the Sound Beach Avenue Bridge Project – spoke in opposition to the project without additional public information about the grading of the road and aesthetics of the Bridge.

Rita Baker – Old Greenwich resident – spoke in opposition to the replacement of the Sound Beach Avenue Bridge based on the aesthetics and road grading. Since the Bridge was previously denied Municipal Improvement status by the Planning & Zoning, more public information is needed.

Joan Strung – RTM District 10 – spoke in support of reducing the Town Budget by cutting spending on Capital Projects, by reducing Town staffing, and finding prudent operational savings. Ms. Strung proposed a negative Mill Rate change for the upcoming fiscal year.

Val Rahmani – Old Greenwich resident – spoke in opposition to the Sound Beach Avenue Bridge. He requested that \$3.5 million be deleted from the FY2020-2021 Budget, recommend that the project be subject to Municipal Improvement status so that there could be more public review.

Beth MacGillivray – spoke in opposition to widening the road and adding parking in Glenville. She spoke in opposition to spending \$5.5 million on this Capital Project.

Julie DesChamps – Member Council of PTA Councils – spoke in support of a central dishwasher system for GPS based on the savings in installation, operating cost and amount of time needed

to execute the complete project. Ms. DesChamps spoke in support of the BET Conditioning the cost because the BOE had not approved the installation of multiple dishwashers.

Thomas Conelias – Vice Chairman, Chickahominy Neighborhood Association – spoke in opposition to the traffic that would result from the Tipping Fees and in opposition to the inequity of individual's low permit fees unless they are required to pay by weight.

Wynn McDaniel – RTM D-7 Chair – spoke in support of comparing the Town's budget prior to the COVID- 19 crisis with the proposed budget for FY2020-2021. Ms. McDaniel spoke in opposition to Capital Improvement Projects until the impact on revenues and expenses is understood.

Bob Strassel – spoke in support of artificial turf for the Central Middle School athletic field because it is a solution for additional paying time. He noted that the plan was endorsed by the BOE.

Ashley Cole – Hillside Avenue resident – spoke in support of the BOE budget, Cardinal Stadium improvements, and, a second egress from the GHS property. The speaker encouraged the BET to continue investing in the Town.

Arline Lomazzo – RTM District 6, Public Works Committee – spoke in support of the Sound Beach Avenue Bridge Project and in opposition to delaying the project for additional public review.

Paul Olmsted – RTM District 5 – spoke in support of revising the FY2020-2021 Budget so that it reflects the reality of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on current Town revenue, expenses and expectations for the coming fiscal year. He encouraged the BET to arrive at a negative Mill Rate change.

Alison Larow – member of 200 parent group of petitioners - spoke in support of higher level of safety and security in GPS.

Lucia Jansen – RTM District 7, Chair BOC, Member Labor Contract Committee – spoke in support of revising the FY2020-2021 Budget to reflect the reality of the impact of the COVID- 19 crisis.

Kimberly Fiorello - RTM District 7, Health & Human Service Committee – spoke in opposition to spending without considering the new economic reality. She suggests fiscal restraint and re-evaluation of all Capital Project scheduled to begin in FY2020-2021.

Laura Gladstone – RTM District 2 - spoke in opposition to new Capital Projects. Recommended pay cuts for Town employees, furloughing non-essential staff, and if parks and beaches continue to be closed, those employees should be laid off.

Elizabeth Dempsey – Hillside Road resident – spoke in support of better traffic control on Hillside Road and a second egress from GHS campus.

Charlene Barnes – speaking a second time – spoke in support of coherent presentation in a respectful manner for a new public hearing on Sound Beach Road and Binney Park Bridge.

Arline Lomazzo – speaking a second time - spoke in opposition to a new public hearing about Sound Beach Avenue and Binney Park Bridge because three hearings have already taken place, the cost is 100% paid by the State of CT and there are no changes in the aesthetics of the Bridge.

Michael Mora – GPS Western Middle School teacher – spoke in support of one artificial turf field at Central Middle School to increase playing time opportunities. It is the responsible solution.

There being no further speakers, the Public Hearing was closed. More than 250 online Comment Forms have been received and circulated to the Board. The Comment Forms will be with the permanent record of the meeting Minutes.

Please use this link to review Parts 1 & 2 of the BET Public Hearing Comment Forms:
<https://www.greenwichct.gov/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/04212020-3992?html=true>

The comments submitted by non-speakers were on the following topics: Special Education quality; educational facilities access and security; timeliness of Capital Project implementation; conservative budgeting; and, Soundview Avenue and Binney Park Bridge replacement.

Chairman Remarks

Mr. Mason thanked the speakers and attendees participating in the Public Hearing, the Information Technology staff supporting the virtual meeting, and WGCH for its LIVE broadcast of the meeting. An invitation was issued to attend the BET Decision Day virtual meeting taking place on April 27.

Adjournment

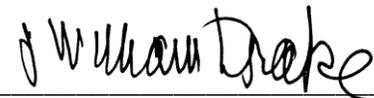
Upon a motion by Ms. Krumeich, seconded by Mr. Ramer, the Board voted 12-0-0 to adjourn at 8:52 P.M.

The next Regular Meeting of the BET is scheduled on Monday, May 18, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,



Catherine Sidor, Recording Secretary



William Drake, Clerk of the Board



Michael Mason,
Chairman