



# TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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## BOARD OF FINANCE

ROBERT J. CLEMENTS  
Chairman

### PUBLIC HEARING FY 2016-17

DOUGLAS B. HARDING  
MARK A. JOYSE  
BARRY C. PINTO  
JOHN P. RACHEK  
MICHAEL D. VARNEY

**April 12, 2016  
Ellington High School**

### Minutes

**Board of Finance Present:** R. Clements-Chairman, D. Harding, M. Joyse, B. Pinto, J. Rachek

**Board of Finance absent:** M. Varney

**Others Present:** N. DiCorleto-Finance Officer, L. Spielman-First Selectman, S. Nicol-Supr. Of Schools, D. Keune-Chair BOE, Members of the Board of Selectman and Board of Education, Town Department Heads and School Officials, Concerned Citizens.

Chairman Robert Clements opened the hearing at 8:05 PM. He introduced the Board of Finance members as well as three new town officials; First Selectman Lori Spielman, Scott Nicol-Supt of Schools, and Sgt. Brian Santa.

He stated that in the next few weeks, the Board of Finance will analyze and prioritize the budget requests put forth by the various departments and agencies. He stated that last year was a tough budget year in that the budgets came in with a 2.8 mill increase that the Board of Finance pared down to 1.8 mill increase. This year the budgets brought forth for next year require .1 mill increase. There has been some news from the Governor's office that reductions in State aid will be made. The reason that the mill rate increase is minimal is due to the grand list increase of 1.28 mills and the revaluation having little impact on the assessments. One mill is about \$1.2 million in value. The budget requests will be trimmed back but Ellington in a better starting point this year. Some of the savings have been the architect fees from the Crystal Lake School Project and that it is finishing up costing less than anticipated. The debt service retirement is replaced each year by new debt so that it doesn't change and affect the tax base. By holding a reserve fund, the Board of Finance has kept Ellington with a good credit rating of Aa3 which gives us good interest rates on the bonding. The bond for Crystal Lake School, Windermere School, Pinney St Fields and the Farm Rights Acquisition Program totaled \$10,630,000 and earned Ellington a premium of \$259,000 and interest of 3.14%. The Town's Finance Officer saved the town \$242,619 by structuring the bond in a certain way. The Town's tax collection rate was estimated at 98.2%, but the actual collection rate is 98.7% which creates unanticipated revenue and minimizes the tax increase.

However, today the Town received word from Connecticut Conference of Municipalities that the Governor's budget anticipates cutting back the Education Cost Sharing for Ellington by \$404,272. The Board of Finance was hoping to cut this budget back to create a tax decrease, but it looks like that may not be the case now.

Mr. Clements opened the floor for questions:

William Correia, 65 Cider Mill Rd, stated that he feels people are still struggling and that the Senior Citizens in town have to absorb an increase when their income does not increase. He asked that they take into consideration the senior citizens.

Tom Palshaw, 120 Pinney St, asked when the library would receive their budget book for review. He was told it would soon. The Finance Officer is working on it.

Mr. Kreiger, 16 Glenwood Drive, asked about the salary adjustment figure, line item 1065. Mr. Clements stated that this estimate takes into account the worse possible increase because the unions are all renegotiating this year. The raises are undetermined at this time.

Ashley Lanz, 105 Burbank Rd, read a prepared statement in favor of full day kindergarten and encouraged the Board of Finance to fund the Education budget as presented. Mr. Clements stated that this board cannot tell the Board of Education what to fund, they are only cut the bottom line, it is up to the Board of Education to use the funds as they see fit.

Christopher Todd, 15 Bridge St, spoke in favor of full day kindergarten and supports the education budget as it stands. He also agreed that these are hard times but feels that the kindergarten should be implemented.

Matthew Mullin, 14 Maplewood Dr., stated that the economy is not good and he has spoken to bankers that agree with him. The tax increase takes disposable income from the pockets of the citizens so it affects everyone including businesses. He asked that the Board of Finance try to keep the tax increase down. Mr. Clements agreed that the Board of Finance will try to offset the education cost sharing reduction with reductions.

Mr. Clements pointed out that the Athletic Director is doing a good job and the result is an enormous participation in recreation programs. He stated that it looks like the town has a lot of fields, but the fields get so much use that the needed rest for the grass does not happen. The Public Works Dept. maintains the fields and that is a huge job. The roads get repaired based on the 5 year overlay schedule. Ellington is a great community.

Rhonda Villanova, 34 Buff Cap Rd, stated that their financial condition is such that if the choice is made to keep her house or fund full day kindergarten, she would choose her home.

Christina Emery, 4 Hemlock Trail, stated that she is a member of the Crystal Lake PTO and supports full day kindergarten. She stated that Ellington does a lot for its citizens for a lot less than other towns. She agreed that the town facilities, parks, fields as well as school gymnasiums are used at all times.

Mr. Clements stated that the Board of Education budget is fiscally responsible with a 3.8% increase especially when you take into consideration that the contracted salaries is almost 3% of the increase. Education is a personnel driven item.

There was some back and forth between Mr. Clements and Mr. Burns about voting on the budget at a town meeting versus holding a referendum. Mr. Burns thanked First Selectman Spielman for voting to send the budget to referendum and thanked her and the Board of Education for doing their budget presentation at the Senior Center.

Cynthia Costanzo, 16 Punkin Dr., stated that her children received a fabulous education in Ellington and that all citizens share in the community and share the resources. It not about what I get for my money, it is the overall picture of the community.

Mr. Clements stated that the volunteers in this community are very important. The value of volunteers such as the Fire Depts. and Ambulance Corps save the town money.

Joshua Oliva, 32 Brooks Crossing Ext., stated his support for the full day K and that he moved to Ellington for the school system.

Edward Swindelles, 5 Brooks Crossing, advocated for the school budget.

Mark Spurling, 17 Gail Dr., stated his support for the Board of Education budget, he felt it was both fiscally and socially responsible.

Weining Wu, 4 Teaberry Ridge, stated that he is a tax payer and a parent and is in favor of full day kindergarten but would like to see it not increase his taxes. He asked what percentage is used for the salary increase budget. Mr. Clements stated that it is confidential and he cannot share this number until contracts are negotiated. There is a fund balance of \$2.6 million going forward into next year, which answered his question about any one-time cost savings for this year.

Melissa Todd, 15 Bridge St, asked that the Finance Board accept the education budget as presented.

Hearing no further questions, Chairman Robert Clements closed the hearing at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted:



Lori Smith, Recording Secretary