



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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BOARD OF FINANCE

JOHN P. RACHEK
Chairman

PEGGY BUSSE
DOUGLAS B. HARDING
DAVID J. OLENDER
BARRY C. PINTO
MICHAEL D. VARNEY

PUBLIC HEARING FY 2018-19 BUDGET April 10, 2018 Ellington High School

Minutes

Board of Finance Present: J. Rachek-Chairman, P. Busse, D. Harding, Olender, B. Pinto,

Board of Finance Absent: M. Varney

Others Present: N. DiCorleto-Finance Officer, L. Spielman-First Selectman, Dr. Nicol-Supt. Of Schools, Members of the Board of Selectman and Board of Education, Town Department Heads and School Officials, Concerned Citizens.

The First Selectmen welcomed everyone to the hearing and updated them on events coming up. The Earth Day celebration on Saturday, April 21 from 10-2 and the farm run obstacle course at Brookside Park with over 400 people signed up on April 22.

Board of Finance Chairman John Rachek opened the hearing at 8:00 PM. He introduced the Board of Finance members. He stated that last year the Town started with a budget that had many unknowns from the State budget and how it would affect Ellington. In May of 2017, the Town anticipated receiving \$10,743,899 in grants and aid from the State. What was actually received was \$9,293,818 leaving a gap in funding of \$1,450,081. No supplemental tax was required because the Town was able to withstand that shortage due to the prior year's balance carry over and some funds set aside. However that leaves fewer funds to carry over to this year's budget. The Finance Officer is anticipating carrying over \$2,153,000 and will keep \$400,000 for unanticipated events, so that leaves \$1,700,000 to apply to this budget. This budget put forth for 2018-19 anticipates that the State will follow the Governor's budget.

The budget process starts in December with the Capital Improvements Budget. The total requests that the Board of Selectmen approved of \$1,491,542 is less than last year's Capital Improvements budget. It is down .5% from 2017-18.

Missing from this year's capital improvement budget is the Center Fire Truck and the Library roof replacement. These items will go to town meeting for a vote.

Operating budgets were presented in March. The Board of Education presented a budget to the Board of Finance with an increase of \$1,429,392 or 3.88%. Their total budget is \$38,301,361. This increase is mainly due to salaries and benefits and transportation. Maintenance of Existing programs is increasing by \$1,206,674 so this would be the increase if no other new programs were added. The balance of the increase is long term investment items including four new positions.

The General Government budget is \$18,944,547 for a .66% increase of \$125,119 over last year. Last year's contingency was set at \$400,000 due to last year's Governor's budget funding unknowns. This new budget currently has no contingency in it. The largest increases are for a new position of Emergency Services Administrator for \$94,950, contractual services for wages and benefits and the Police Department's need for new radios and Tasers.

Revenues increased somewhat due to the increase of 2.29% in the Grand List. The increase is \$30,986,157 and includes new houses and developments, Windermere Village build out, new apartment complexes, Oakridge Dairy and the Ivy's at Ellington Assisted Living Facility.

This budget as it stands now requires a mill a rate of 33.4 mills which is a 1.7 mill increase or 5.36% increase. Deliberations take place this week and next, and Mr. Rachek stated that he is not happy with this budget increase. He is asking the members of the Board of Finance to go over this budget with a fine comb and asked department heads to let the Finance Office know if there are any adjustments they can make to their budgets.

He opened the floor for questions.

Robert Ludwig, 66 Crystal Lake Rd, asked if the Public Safety administrator position was necessary and where the funding would come from. Mr. Rachek stated that the Town has grown such that the need for coordination is necessary to provide safety and to coordinate the needs of the town with the needs of the various public safety departments without bankrupting the town. He felt that the coordination between the departments will save more funds than the position requires.

Gary Feldman, 108 Ellington Ave, stated that he has been chief of the Center Fire Dept for 4 years and clarified that the new truck in this budget is a replacement for two pieces of existing apparatus. He feels that the new Public Safety position is an insult to his department and stated that they have a 20 year plan for replacement of apparatus. The reason there are two fire departments in town is due to the distance between the two areas of town.

Wilfred Duchesneau, 200 West Rd, asked for clarification of the three public safety departments. He was told that it was Ellington Volunteer Fire Dept., Crystal Lake Fire Dept. and Ellington Volunteer Ambulance Corps. He asked what the responsibilities of this new position would be. First Selectman, Lori Spielman stated that they were still working out the details and that it also has to go through the Town Charter. A study was done in 2003 as well as again last year. In the 2003 study a lot of things didn't get done and they felt it was the Town that didn't do anything. In 2006 the EVAC charged \$458,743 for an 8 month period and collected \$177,017.

The collection of even some of this debt will fund this position. She stated that this is not a reflection on the Ambulance Corps, she wants to help them with their administrative items. The administration of this is a lot of work. Additionally, this individual would work with other departments in the State and in securing grants.

Joseph Wehr, 155 Windermere Ave, asked if the Board of Finance had a target they were working towards. Mr. Rachek stated that a budget with no increase is not possible. They will look for the smallest increase possible.

Matthew Mullin, 14 Maplewood Dr, stated that every year there is a tax increase. He asked that the Board of Finance avoid unnecessary items in the budget and consider a possible part time position for the Emergency Services Administrator. Mr. Rachek stated that there is not much to cut and that most increases are contracted. The Town needs to maintain its infrastructure and offer a good educational system.

Ms. Thanvanthri, 43 Steeple View Drive, stated that she attended the Plan of Conversation and Development meeting, and it seems that a lot of people feel there are enough people in Ellington. She stated that the way to increase the tax base is for people to move into town and more development. She stated that perhaps more rental properties which are more profitable. She asked about the hand held pulse oximeters. Mr Rachek stated that this item will be funded through the Ambulance Corps charging fund, it is for 9 of them.

Joseph Burns, 228 Windsorville Rd, asked the Board of Finance to do their job and take into consideration senior citizens on fixed income.

Tracy Rich, 142 Ellington Ave asked about the Fire Marshal vehicle. Lori Spielman stated that the Fire Marshal currently receives a car allowance to use his own vehicle. He is retiring this year, and the new Fire Marshal will need a vehicle. There are now three vehicles and will continue to be three vehicles. Tracy asked if the Fire Marshal generates revenue. Al Lawrence stated that there is a proposal for an ordinance that would generate \$50,000 a year. The State Legislature is considering a % of each building permit as revenue for the Fire Marshal. Apartment inspections as mandated by State law are in the excess of 2,850 per year in Ellington and they can't accomplish this with the staff in place but they do the best they can.

Mrs. Rich asked if the First Selectman had met with the three public safety departments with respect to the new position. Lori Spielman stated that she met with the chiefs and it is going to Charter Revision.

Robert Smith, 3 Westland Rd, asked for clarification regarding the shortfall and asked if there was ever a negative balance from the previous year to this budget. Mr. Rachek stated that there was not a negative balance and that the town as able to cover the short fall.

Hearing no more questions or comments, Mr. Rachek thanked all for attending and closed the hearing at 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted:


Lori Smith, Recording Secretary