



STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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BOARD OF FINANCE

JOHN P. RACHEK
Chairman

DOUGLAS B. HARDING
MARK A. JOYSE
DAVID J. OLENDER
BARRY C. PINTO
MICHAEL D. VARNEY

PUBLIC HEARING FY 2017-18 BUDGET April 11, 2017 Ellington High School

Minutes

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

Board of Finance Absent: M. Varney

Others Present: N. DiCorleto-Finance Officer, L. Spielman-First Selectman, Dr. Nicol-Supt. 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 John Rachek introduced the members of the Board of Finance. He stated that this year due to the Governor's budget proposal, the Town is looking at two budgets. One is the budget as submitted by Department Heads today and the other is the budget with the changes as proposed by the Governor.

He explained the budget items. The Capital Improvements net cost to the Town after State funding, etc. is \$1,155,711 which is a 3.14% increase over last fiscal year. The General Government budget increase is \$610,267 or 3.41%. The debt for this budget includes the lease/purchase of the Fire Dept. Breathing Apparatus, Fire Dept. Pumpers, and DPW Dump Truck. The larger increases in operating budgets consist of the Police Budget being increased to 100% of the cost paid by the Town as proposed by the Governor, a secretary in the First Selectman's office, salary for a person currently employed under a grant for Human Services and a secretary for the Senior Center front desk. The Board of Education budget as submitted totals \$37,071,969 or 2.69% over last fiscal year. The increases to this budget consist of salaries and benefits, technology, outside tuition and instruction. Under the proposed budget from the Governor, the Education Cost Sharing will be reduced by \$2,560,347 and a Special Education Grant added in the amount of \$2,431,707. The portion of the Teachers' pension fund that Ellington would have bear is \$1,898,286 which would result in a Board of Education Budget

of \$39,482,368. If this comes to fruition, the education budget would require a 2 mill increase. Ellington's Grand List increased 1.95% up by \$26,000,000.

The worst case scenario would be if all items in the Governor's proposed budget go through. If that should occur, it would require a 3.3 mill rate increase or 10.83% budget increase. The total budget would be \$59,398,740. If none of the Governor's proposed items get approved by the legislature, this budget currently would require a 1.2 mill increase or 3.94% increase over last year. The Board of Finance will deliberate Thursday.

He then opened it up for questions and comments:

Mr. Correia, 65 Cider Mill Rd, expressed his concern regarding the increase of \$1,000,000 for education and \$500,000+ for General Government and felt that the Town was not using its resources in the best and most efficient way. He did not feel that BOE needed additional staff and felt that there was \$500,000 that could be easily cut out of the budget. He felt that the Town could not afford the increase and stated several projects that he felt were not good use of its resources.

Mr. Palshaw, 120 Pinney St, asked for clarification on the Route 83 Sidewalk funding. It was his understanding that the Town had to pay for the project up front and the State would reimburse. He was concerned that if the town spends the upfront costs and then the construction costs are not approved at referendum, would the Town be responsible for the costs already expended. Public Works Director, Tim Webb stated that this year's budget includes the design, next years the acquisition and final design phase is being budgeted for and the following year is the construction phase. The construction cost is \$2,000,000, and it was his understanding that the Town would be reimbursed for the first two phases of costs if the project was not approved.

Mr. Mullin, 14 Maplewood Drive, stated that he is a concerned taxpayer and with the uncertainty of the State looming, now is not to time for the budgets to be increased. He was not in favor of additional personnel and felt the current employees should work more efficiently. He felt that growing government was not the solution and that is why the State is in such bad shape. He asked that the Board of Finance please make budget cuts for the unnecessary items.

Ms. Busse, 37 Abbott Rd, asked if the Governor's budget also impacted the general government budget. Mr. Rachek stated that the State Police cost is the only change to the Town Budget. She asked when the Town would feel a police department of its own would be more cost effective. Mr. Rachek stated that it would cost the Town \$3,000,000 for a police force as opposed to the \$1,500,000 cost for the 100% funding of state troopers. There is to be a study of the emergency services department done to see what is specifically needed. He is proposing that Police also be part of the study. Their case load has increased by 3,000 incidents. Sgt. Santa stated that when the Town is funding the troopers 100%, the troopers are dedicated to the Town 100% of their time and not split between the troop.

Mr. Gionet, 15 Pine Cone Rd stated that investing in youth should be a priority. He felt that the theater program was just as important as all the other activities and programs.

Mr. Burns, 228 Windsorville Rd stated that he felt that if the parents want their child to go to a magnet school they should pay for it. He does not agree with what the State is doing by mandating that the Town pay for students to go to schools out of the district.

Ms. Alexander, 23 Muddy Brook Rd stated that she has a special needs child that may have to be outplaced. She would rather not send her child out of the district. She asked if the special education grant would result in any increase in services. Dr. Nicol stated that the increase in cost of special education would be staffing.

Ms. Mendelson, 34 Newell Hill Rd stated that she moved to Ellington for the school system and that this is the best education for her children.

Olivia Palmer, 41 Windmill Rd, stated that she is in favor of the new theater arts position and that she is part of the Theater Arts Program. She read off statistics where students in theater are better students and adults.

Ms. Thanvanthri, 43 Steeple View Drive stated that she is a teacher at a community college. She asked if the Board knew how much the State was going to ask the Town to shoulder yet and Mr. Rachek stated that he did not know. He feels that enough pressure was being put on the Governor that possibly the teachers' pension portion may not go forward. She stated that she does not want to see the school system compromised with the cuts to pay for the Governor's contribution.

Ms. Busse, 37 Abbott Rd asked what is driving the debt cost higher. Mr. Rachek stated that the debt includes the Crystal Lake School addition and Nutmeg Drive Firehouse bonding, also for the lease purchase of the items in this year's budget. There are other projects that come off the debt continuously. Mr. Joyse stated that other items come on to replace those coming off.

Ms. Hinkley, 120 Middle Rd stated her support for the education system and the theater program. She felt that it was important to have seasoned teachers.

Mr. Larson, 12 Steeple View Dr. stated that this is not an easy task for the Board of Finance and asked that they look at future years when doing this year's budget.

Mr. Williams, 7 Francis Ave stated that the theater arts program is good and helps promoted the creativity of the student. He felt it was money well spent.

Mr. Rachek stated that the Board of Finance can only set a budget figure for the Board of Education and that they decide how to spend the funds.

Mrs. Gionete, 15 Pine Cone Rd, stated her approval of the theater arts program going forward.

M. Helme-Brother, 52 Sadds Mill Rd. asked what the Board will do to figure out what the budget request will be if the Governor's budget is not complete before the referendum in May. Mr. Rachek stated that he feels if that the budget is based on the additional items that the Governor has requested, the budget will not be accepted. The Board of Finance will discuss it at their deliberation meetings.

The Town Meeting is scheduled for May 9 and the Budget Referendum for May 16.

Ms. Busse, 37 Abbott Rd stated that the carpet at the library needs replacing badly.

Mr. Rachek thanked all for attending and closed the hearing at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lori Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lori Smith, Recording Secretary