

TOWN OF GREENWICH
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION BUDGET COMMITTEE
MINUTES
Town Hall Meeting Room
Monday, January 26, 2009

Committee:

Present: Michael S. Mason, Chairman; Laurence B. Simon, Robert S. Stone

Absent: Edward T. Krumeich, Jr.

Board: Steve Walko, Leslie Tarkington, Nancy Barton, Jim Campbell, Bill Finger, Art Norton, Jeff Ramer, Bill Kelly

Selectman: Peter Tesei, First Selectman; Peter Crumbine

Staff: Peter Mynarski, Comptroller
Peter Siecienski, Fire Chief; Robert Kick, Asst. Fire Chief
Betty Sternberg, Superintendent; Kathy Greider, Deputy Superintendent;
Susan Wallerstein, Asst. Superintendent; John Curtin; Assistant
Superintendent, Board of Education
John Crary, Town Administrator

Other: Nancy Weissler, Chairman; Leslie Moriarty, Vice-Chairman, Board of
Education

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 P.M.

PROPOSED BUDGET FY2009-2010

Mr. Tesei presented the Town's proposed FY 2009-2010 Budget to the Committee. Mr. Tesei addressed the Budget Committee and handed out his 35 page presentation.

Ms. Weissler and Dr. Sternberg presented the Board of Education's proposed FY2009-2010 budget to the Committee. They presented a power point presentation which was also provided to the committee.

PUBLIC HEARING

Coline Jenkins, Chairman, RTM District 6 –

1. Very frustrated by a lack of data and unable to make a proper assessment of the Social Services budget due to a lack of client service data.
2. What is the staffing model, what is the departmental head count, how does that head count compare with other communities.
3. What are the costs of service, what does it cost the Town of Greenwich to deliver these services and what does it cost other municipalities to deliver these same services?

Alexis Volgaris, RTM District 6 Delegate to the RTM Committee on Health and Human Services and a licensed clinical Social Worker

1. Not in favor of the Dept. of Social Services proposed budget.
2. Redundancy of services with other community service agencies in town such as the United Way.
3. Has yet to see a comparison study done, as requested by the RTM committee. The Greenwich Dept. of Social Services Budget is three times greater than the average of other six towns in comparable Town study.
4. Which clients are benefitting from these services?

Chris Von Keyserling

1. General CIP and the budget in General. The BOE needs to protect the core teaching programs. It must be fair across the board.
2. A 4% mill rate increase is being reasonable in these times, and still within the 2 to 4 percent guidelines that have been published for ten years as being something that people can expect.
3. Wage freezes are better than layoffs. We need cooperation with the Labor Unions to save expense, we can cut 70 jobs or we can have wage freeze.
4. Services have to be looked at. Cut service to Island Beach for two years. That's approximately one million dollars or so in expenses that we could save.
5. The BOE does have to trim some more, through mid-level management expenses.

Candace Garthwaite

1. Supports drainage projects in the Park Avenue, Old Greenwich neighborhood.
2. The Town has a history of not funding drainage projects.
3. Please move ahead with the Capital Budget Master Plan to improve drainage capacity. The capital budget should be more detailed to show specific drainage projects.

Erf Porter, RTM

1. Address the problem of drainage and implement defined projects. It is important to maintain our infrastructure.
2. Additional recreational/athletic fields are needed for active recreation.
3. Does not support replacement of the roof at the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center because he feels we need an entire new building.

Harry Fisher

1. Supports Mr. Tessei's objective to maintain a tax increase of not more than 3.5%.
2. We need action now, wages need to be pared back, overtime needs to be reduced or eliminated, programs need to be cut, eliminated or independently funded, we need accurate and all inclusive accounting for costs.
3. When making cuts, make sure we do not incur additional costs for the residents.
4. Schools should plan for increase in enrollment; go back to teaching the basics of educating our children equally and across the district.
5. Move building construction and maintenance to the DPW.
6. Pension problems will continue into the next budget cycles.

Joan Caldwell, Moderator, RTM District 10

1. Supports Mr. Tesei and BOE budgets. 3.5% is a reasonable increase.
2. However, no departments should be off limits when making cuts.
3. There should be some reductions in services.
4. Does not support replacement of the roof at the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center. WE would be better off closing the building.
5. A freeze should be imposed in steps, not on hiring. The GWI should be dramatically lower.
6. The Town's health insurance program be re-visited.

Karen Sadik-Khan

1. Does not support replacing the roof at the Eastern Greenwich Civic Center.
2. The building is in terrible condition and should be closed.
3. Civic Center has an operating loss of \$200,000 per year.
4. Need to relocate programs and then close the building.
5. Greenwich Civic Center Public/Private partnership is moving ahead.

Julie Faryniarz, President PTAC

1. Supports BOE budget but has concerns about the potential for increased enrollment.
2. School building construction is required by State law and Town Charter to have a building committee, so therefore the unfortunate circumstances that have happened with Hamilton Avenue School are not the responsibility of the BOE Facilities Dept.
3. The BOE budget leaves very little room and the PTAC wants to make sure the current budget cuts in ALP, Special Education, Guidance, Social Work, and in other staffing areas are considered temporary and not permanent.
4. Supports the need for additional training of teachers.

Lisa Beth Savitz, President; Cindy Barrett, North Street School PTA

1. Support BOE budget
2. Further cuts will be a loss of staff and increase in class size.

Anna Saras

1. Supports BOE budget but wants more resources aimed at those students who are in the middle.
2. Further cost savings must be analyzed and part of those savings should be reallocated in restoring coaching, ALP, and additional high school counselors.
3. One area of potential savings is student residency verification.

John Michelotti, Secretary, North West Greenwich Association

1. Limit any tax increase. Keep in mind the existing economic circumstances in our community.

Michele Mattera Regan, Co-Chair, PTAC Special Ed. Services Committee

1. Supports BOE budget. The current budget is very lean.

Keith Felcyn, President, Round Hill Association

1. Supports Peter Tesei. Need to keep a lid on costs in order to curtail the mill rate.

Christina Downey, Co-President, Riverside School PTA

2. Supports BOE budget
3. Public Schools in Town are one of our greatest assets.

Laurie Heiss Grealy, Co-President, GHS PTA

1. Supports BOE budget but worries about enrollment increase.
2. Asking for a better solution.

Christina Russell, PTAC ALP Committee –

1. Supports BOE budget, any additional cuts would be unacceptable.
2. The ALP is a model program which should not be curtailed.

Edmund Mehring

1. Not in favor of Police Dept. budget. We should reduce the number of police officers, reduce overtime and reduce the cost of the department.
2. Police salaries should be looked at and we should eliminate traffic officers on Greenwich Avenue.
3. Supports BOE budget.

At the request of Mr. Tesei, Mr. Mason explained that the police salaries that are published in the newspaper are inclusive of overtime and do not represent base salaries.

Mark Pruner, RTM Finance Committee –

1. Addressed the overall size of the budget.
2. Bond only what is absolutely needed. Moving general maintenance items into bonding is not an appropriate thing for our Town to do.
3. Look at other areas where we can cut the budget.
4. The BOE superintendent search process has not resulted in a superintendent that we have been able to keep long term. Consider drastically reducing the scope of the search; we have plenty of qualified people here in Town. Why can't we just hire somebody from here in Greenwich, as opposed to once again doing a national search for somebody that's only going to be here for a year or two?
5. The student enrollment projection needs to be looked at closely. We should expect a shift from private to public school
6. Keep the mill rate closer to 3% and then let it move up to 3.5%.

Ted Walworth, President, North East Greenwich Association

1. Supports Peter Tesei and recommends that the Town keep to its moderate 3% range in budget increase.
2. Suggests that the labor unions stay within that level as well and is looking for a flat wage increase.

Leslie Dubryn, Co-President, Cos Cob School PTA

1. Supports BOE Budget.
2. Class sizes were not increased.
3. Worried about the increase in enrollment.

Tom Conelias, RTM Education Committee

1. Supports BOE Budget
2. Fear that further cuts will affect the students that are most in need. Poor schools cannot supplement the educational process to the extent that richer schools are able to.

In conclusion Mr. Mason gave a brief overview of the upcoming Budget process and urged people to go to the meetings. Mr. Tesei stated that the Town has put a link on its website for input regarding the Budget.

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 8:58 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Bocchino, Recording Secretary

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Michael S. Mason, Chairman