

BOARD OF FINANCE PUBLIC HEARING

May 5, 2009

The public hearing was called to order at 7:35 at the East Windsor Intermediate School.

Board of Finance members:

Marie DeSousa, Chairman  
Jack Manette  
Robert Little  
Joanne Kubick  
Jason Bowsza  
Al Floyd  
Cathy Pippin, Alternate  
Adam Mehan, Alternate  
Treasurer, Cathy Cabral

Board of Selectmen members;

Denise Menard, First Selectman  
Gil Hayes, Deputy First Selectman  
Dale Nelson, Selectman  
Mark Simmons, Selectman  
Unable to attend: Edward Farrell, Selectman

Marie DeSousa thanked everyone for coming to the budget discussion for 2009/2010. She introduced the Board of Finance members to the public. Ms. DeSousa explained the procedure for the public hearing. She also asked anyone who picks up documentation tonight, that they be sure to date it – so it can be ascertained in the future it is the current documentation. The Board of Finance will meet May 12, 2009 (formerly scheduled for May 6) to consider recommendation received this evening. Also May 19, 2009 will be the annual town budget meeting (It was noted that originally incorrectly reported as May 18, 2009)

Ms. DeSousa indicated the goal was to spend less and get more for every dollar – and all worked together to get this achieved. Ms. DeSousa detailed that the economic crisis provided for a unique situation in arriving at a budget this year. Reduction of services should not be the diving factor; cuts in salary may be something that should be considered. The economic stress of budget erosion will take years to recover if the historical cuts are continued. The Boards works work diligently and vigilantly to do the best for East Windsor.

Tim Howes, representing the Board of Education side of the budget, briefly introduced the Board of Education members that were present in the audience. The Board of Selectmen was in charge of the town government side and the Board of Selectmen members were also introduced. Ms. DeSousa introduced the new treasurer and thanked her for her assistance in this budget process.

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It was reminded that all should afford respect and courtesy for everyone's opinion to be expressed. If there are generalization questions at the end they will be addressed.

Denise Menard spoke and reiterated what Ms. DeSousa stated that a hard working group of volunteers worked together to come up with this budget in the terrible economic year. The rough economy is not only for East Windsor, Connecticut but for the United States in general. It has to be understood that this is by far the fairest that this board could find to address the needs of the community and not severely impact services. It will cause some pain across the board – not only pain now with further cuts, but it will be much more significant as historically there has been conservative budgets in the recent. As for town government side there has been lots of searching for costs savings, especially with town services, i.e. trash and/or insurance. Ms. Menard has worked with Ms. DeSousa and hope to continue this budget process in a fair and positive way.

Tim Howes spoke next and stated the clichés of tonight are savings. Community day, which celebrates East Windsor, is an investment in all the town not each department separately – all the departments that run the system. He reiterated there have been many discussions about the budget, including potential loss of staff, but this is the economic environment. The town has tightened the belt and worked together, using shared services. Tonight will incorporate the towns views on what the staff has come up with. The goal of the school administration is to have the students leave the school and be productive citizens so they can compete for jobs, not only in Connecticut, but across the country and the globe. The global conditions also impact how the children coming out of schools compete. All present are looking forward to tonight's comments and continue to look forward.

Ms. Menard also mentioned that the staff members, many of whom are at the hearing, work very hard for the Town of East Windsor and they are present to stand behind this budget. Ms. Menard also indicated it has been rewarding in that the town entities are working solid together and East Windsor is served best by that. There are things that are done smarter and wiser and many ideas are borrowed from other communities.

Ms. DeSousa indicated that there was criticism last year in getting information in the public. Historically after budget presentations there is a line by line cut on town government side and last year the Board of Finance took a lot of criticism for doing that. So this year they took the initiative and gave back to the Town side and the Board of Education side and had those entities, rather than the Board, make the cuts where they could. The hand outs provided were explained in general. In an effort to make this process easier for the residents present, a power point presentation of this budget was displayed. A copy of that power point presentation is Attached to these minutes (2009-05-05 Public hearing attachment A)

Ms. DeSousa spoke briefly regarding the state revenue situation. At the start budget of the budget process the Board used 12% budget revenue loss figures. Recently it was questioned if that was too high of a reduction. Through investigation and discussion with

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appropriate State entities, it was determined that the State projections may be altered to a 6% revenue loss. The revenues do drive what happens to the budget.

Karla A. Bagdikian, 19 Tromley Road

Feels as a parent and taxpayer the Town needs to reevaluate what is being cut and what is important. Teachers and staff who care about the students and go that extra mile are being cut. It is not in their job description to go to plays and sporting events – but it is done and means a lot to the students. The number one priority should be for the students and what they should or should not have. Some parents are taking children to private school where there are bigger class rooms. She will not allow her children to do this as larger classrooms are not the way she wants her children to go. She asked if teachers were asked for wage freeze, maybe they will surprise the town with their response, instead of cutting jobs.

Linda Radson, 36 Barber Hill Road

She is present as Connor Radson's representative, who is in first grade. She has spoken to the legislature, senators Lebeau and Grazianai and was told they cannot ask for additional funds for revenue and that they had to contact Governor Rell. She has not seen it printed in the news media that residents should contact Governor Rell for additional funds. She thinks the town taxes for bussing and inner city school children shipped here –because of that seeing large expense for Board of Education budget. She thinks the town does not display how severely taxed East Windsor is, compared to Glastonbury and South Windsor, who have the infrastructure to accept those burdens. Also her child is looking at being in class 25+ - which will be difficulty. She grew up in 70's in class of 30 kids which was bedlam. She does not look forward to her child in a class structure like that. Need to consider that the children will not be able to compete globally. She works for aerospace company and manages budgets and can appreciate the process – but she is concerned with long term burden for schools and children. Has it ever been mentioned contacting towns of Ellington, Windsor Locks and Somers for tri-town procurement – if you can get 3, 4, 5, towns together to buy supplies, fuel that might work, in fact, how about bussing, have we ever considered sharing. This is a time to form partnerships and look at the town alone. As a result of increased classes there are going to be repercussions – as parent contacted by magnet schools in Hartford and she will consider sending her son to magnet school and that will be an additional burden for e.w. which has no choice to pay – which is \$10,000 tuition. Have to think of parents that will consider those options. Again, there is private school – but that is a significant burden. Some may consider moving, which will be increased turnover. When there is increased turnover of housing, reduced housing values and then there is lower housing values and you cannot get an equity loan. So there will be repercussions along the line – maybe we pay an additional \$50 a month due to a budget, but when pay home equity loan, not get that much money. If you have not read headlines aerospace industry has significant layoffs and her husband works for Gerber who has layoffs . She acknowledges that she is bringing up painful topic, and is not comfortable with it and is addressing it to teachers union, asking if teachers will give a token sum show something, give something ½% or 1%. As a parent, please consider that – not asking no raise – offer a token to keep the jobs

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and keep the teachers. This recession is forecasted as short – in more glorious times you can increase the wages again.

William Loss, Melrose Road

He would like to talk about the economy. Last year at this time it was said we were in recession yet Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen raised expenditures over 5% - a lot of business in Town got over 5% increase. This year when you met with businesses a week or so, did you tell them you were going to raise taxes by 4% again? The businesses cannot afford the increases. Businesses are discussing no bonus, layoffs, less one day in work – large percentage cuts in pay and no more pension contributions. This is the economy yet there are “AIG teachers” who are “greedy like AIG executives” – cut the budget by \$450,000 and get them to do concessions – no need to lay off, but force them to cut salaries. Cannot afford increase in taxes every year, business cannot afford it. There was a business in town that had to close because he could not afford taxes – there are business that sued town because of increases. Business is the heart of function in town – not going to get business by raising taxes. Greedy teachers need to be put back in their place. They are not taking any cuts. What about guy who took 30% pay cut; cannot afford this – cannot afford a 4% increase. Board of Finance did great job with general budget, but the teachers should be chastised.

Dick Pippin, Wolam road

One comment to the Board 3.9% does not = 0. He would like to see same as last year substantially – do not need a tax increase, cannot afford it. He understands prominent educators getting 6% increase and stated that a local county had one position for teacher and 300 qualified applicants. He cannot see paying more taxes – general government is bleeding and he thanked the unions that made concessions and worked with the town. He cannot understand why need more teachers to teach less kids. There were 30 to 32 kids in classes when he went to school and he survived. You cannot take 100% of cuts out of 40% of budget, which is the general budget and capital improvement.

Samantha Coucher, 34 Sullivan Farm and Marrissa \_\_\_\_\_ 71 Depot Street

The seventh grade students read a statement together. They are students who are in school sports and activities and detailed that school sports and enrichment programs should not be cut. Understand economic times but think there are enough advantages to sports and enrichment programs which should not be cut. They detailed specific programs for the Board which will provide assistance to them in their future; also in addition to the programs it has been suggested teachers will be cut and that is deterrent to the students. They asked that the board remember this that losing money can always be regained but think of kids in town who will lose something priceless - a firm education.

Bill Schultz, Lindsay Lane

Understand economic situation and people have lost jobs but the needs of the town have not gone down – while no one wants a 4% increase, it is for the town to move forward. He probably said these exact words last year – cannot go status quo and go forward. He detailed the incredible cuts to the capital improvement program and he detailed the substantial cuts to park and recreation – which are needed for the children and the

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community at large. He is Board of Education member – they cut \$1.44 million to get to 0% increase, as requested – meetings were painful and cuts painful. Now asked to cut another \$219K. He has been involved with Board of Ed for about two years – there are a lot of good things going on in schools. Lately the idea is to lay off more teachers who are “not doing their jobs”. He requests that those people who say that go to the schools and ask what the various programs are – that did not go on thirty years ago – the job is far more complicated that it was 30 years ago. Certainly cannot go lower than current figures, there is nothing excess to get rid of and hope the town can pass 3.99%

Kathy Bilodeau, 343 Scantic Road.

She is a Board of Education member. She asked that the Board of Finance reconsider and accept the 0% spending increase as presented. A 0% tax increase will mean additional cuts and the town services, she does not believe, can afford additional cuts. Many came in with 0% increase in spending. She is concerned for students. She understands the economic distress but all need to understand the distress further cuts will be. She understands the thought of 0% increase, but need to maintain the integrity of town and school system. Although state has not set budget yet and no one has a crystal ball and it will come later- it has been indicated that they do not plan on reducing education funding. With that thought in mind, knowing that the revenue may not decrease, ask that Board to consider that when determining what the education budget should be in town – and should consider not reducing the BOE budget. As BOE member, first concern students and education – any more cuts will be detrimental to the students education and will effect strides made in recent years. It would be a shame – the town needs the teachers and needs to continue the progress. Also would like to state that she agrees to see the teachers and maybe other town departments to consider a pay freeze. Probably not many people in the room that think a pay increase – to her knowledge that the teacher have not been able to make a vote on the salary freeze, as of today. That choice has not been given to the teachers yet. As much as it is thought the teachers are greedy – she would like it known that the teachers have been given that opportunity to voice that opinion and strongly requests the union board put that opportunity out to the teachers themselves.

Jeff Carolus 56 Broad Brook road

Support larger classrooms; support keeping athletics. He had a daughter all the way thru school system and has been supportive of East Windsor schools and she entered Daniel Webster college with 12 credits coming out of high school and that is about one semester. He feels that the education did a great job. When talk about taking out athletics and other programs children are involved with, think forgetting the whole education of the children. Forget how much that impacts. He has been a coach for almost 20 years now – there are a lot of kids without athletics that will go the opposite way. Friends in other towns have experienced 20 to 40% tax increases in towns – not had that in East Windsor. He does not think the town is doing a bad job, but does not think should be looking at cutting programs. Recommendation, to go with bigger classes – parents have be responsible for actions of kids – up to parents to make sure kids fit in classroom – that is life. In college you are in classrooms of 400 to 500 in college, you get left behind, you get left behind.

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That is life – it is reality. If could have that teachers have more ability to be disciplinary action without it all coming on them like a ton of bricks – it would work.

Cathy Simonelli, 71 Depot Street

She thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak and for the hard work coming up with budget that town can live. She knows there have been difficult decisions and tough areas cut. Would love to see the numbers go back up and understands the reality that will not happen. What she is here to say is to implore the board not to make additional cuts and maybe put some money back to education and police and fire that would be a bonus – but please don't cut anymore.

Carol Dixon, 10 Simone Drive

Her son, Bradley, is a six grader and has been in East Windsor schools from the start and she cannot say enough about East Windsor and the staff. Ms. Simonelli and Ms. Coucher stole her thunder – in stating need to serve all students of East Windsor. By state law understand special services required, but also think enrichment services are important that are used a lot. Athletics are huge – team work, respect, coachability. Her son has learned from athletics to be coachable is a huge life skill – probably more than quadratic equations she teaches. Certainly do not want any more cuts and would like some things returned. Especially at middle school – high school has options to take extra courses – middle school does not have that and needs those enrichment programs.

Cecilia Harman, Melrose road

Thank board for hard work, as parent applaud work of educators and administrators – loves living here – different from South Windsor and Enfield. Implore no more cut from education budget. Class sizes big issue – she is an educator and state employee and her union voting tomorrow on concessions. Teachers in East Windsor do a great deal with what they have. Classes are not same as they were 20 or 30 years ago – teachers accountable on all sides testing at state and national level. She thinks its a mistake to cut now and have to try recoup in future years. Consider restoring some money and not cut any more and give respect to teachers and administrators in town, as others deserve respect also.

Jon Costa 194 maple street (student)

This student came before the Board. He does not want anything cut from budget and does not want teachers eliminated. Want to keep all sports – need to keep extra classes, such as Annex, to challenge students and help them be successful. Everyone needs to work together.

Jerilyn K. Corso, 23 Lindsay Lane

She is here with a plea – blessed to live in wonderful neighborhood and has everything to do with people. Neighborhood is filled with caring individuals and families – young people and the young at heart. There are many neighborhoods like this in East Windsor and sadly recently in her neighborhood for sale signs up are up due to fear that town backwards and not forward. School admin working hard to be successful and town working to be protected and successful. If community says no to budget, the town

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suffers, property value down and town fails. The thought of working for greater good and not individual interest is forgotten in this process. There are parts she does not agree with, such as taking more from Board of Education when did what were asked to do – why ones who have no vote and no voice lose more – need to work together to work for future, towns future and economic future.

Gina \_\_\_\_\_. 15 Emily Road

Thanked for opportunity to speak and all members of town who volunteer. Understand constraints and has concerns as parent and resident. Would like to see it increased, but also a realist. The budgets in the past have been underfunded to point treading water for years. She hears if budget cut further there will be serious decline. Once stop making progress you start to decline. Her children are in school, sports and volunteer in town. Oldest son in college is thriving doing to the excellent teachers – deeply concerned about youngest in middle school and that he will get same opportunities that his sibling did. Hope that residents will pass this budget. Will always support education whether has children in school or not. Quality town measured in large part by quality or lack there of education – business or households will relocate or say here based on that.

Bea Corrado, 1 Lindsay Lane

Her reason for speaking is to go thru process as last year, after one referendum had public hearing and board took into consideration all that was stated and the thanked board. Would love to see budget go up but understand that will not be realistic, please do not ask for more cuts – especially when the Board of Education did what was asked. When pie chart 59% of budget for town is for Board of Education – different communities that number is 65% to 70% so obviously the admin is doing something right, as it is only 59% - working hard with low numbers when looking across State of Connecticut. Thank the board for all of their time.

Nicole DeSousa, 10 Rice road

Students did a good job with what said, she is graduating East Windsor this year and attending Sacred Hart in the Fall. She did those middle school activities and recalls the pay to play for sports is an option and pay to play for annex may also be an opportunity to keep the program.

The public hearing was concluded at 8:35 p.m.. Ms. DeSousa thanked everyone for coming out and giving the input that is necessary to move forward. Also reminded everyone to date paperwork handed out this evening as information can change and the Board wants to make sure the public is working with the current data. It will also be on the website. Thanked the board of finance for all their efforts to date and those to come and to all town agencies involved as well.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia D. Croxford  
Recording Secretary