

May 14, 2014

The Board of Finance Public Hearing was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman, David Shippee. Other members present-Robert Lassar, Bruce Lindberg, Neil Cook, and Dale Clark. Members absent-Neil Delmonico.

Staff present-Joyce Gustavson.

If the proposed budgets were passed as they are submitted tonight it would mean an increase of .50 mills. This would bring the mill rate from 31.50 to 32.00 due to budget increases and loss of state revenues.

D. Shippee explained that prior to tonight's public hearing; the school reduced their proposed budget from \$8,138,914 to \$7,867,047 resulting in a decrease totaling \$271,867 and tonight's presentation is the same budget as last year.

Item 1: Itemized Estimates for Fiscal Year 2014-2015 Board of Education Budget:

Joe Musumeci, Principal of Sterling Community School introduced staff, and then gave a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed 2014-2015 Board of Education Budget.

Items covered: An Overview and Introduction to Budget Planning, Students and Staff, Budget Data and Details, and Comparative Data.

Gail Lanza, Director of Special Services, discussed the Core Educational Programs and the changing expectations for Connecticut Schools. Sterling Community School uses a three (3) tier SRBI (Scientific Research-Based Intervention) Instructional Approach in teaching the students. Key components of SRBI are: Universal Screening, Progress Monitoring and Data-Based Decision Making.

J. Musumeci explained the Projections for the students and staff. This is an enrollment comparison for all the grades.

MaryAnne Keleghen, Business Manager, explained the Proposed Revenue and Anticipated Revenue Sources, and the Proposed Expenditures.

The presentation concluded with J. Musumeci explaining the Comparison of DRG's (District Reference Groups) expenditures per pupil.

D. Shippee asked if anyone had any questions or comments on the proposed budget.

Richelle Chappell, 317 Pine Hill Road asked if the school had requested additional money from the Board of Finance in the amount of \$199,000 and if they would be asking for additional money again this year.

M. Keleghen explained that the school asked for that appropriation from the General Fund Balance to update the computers. She further stated that it is not the plan to ask for an additional appropriation this year.

Michael Anthony, 41 Pond Street asked what the total budget is and does this include the \$11,000 for the high school students and what is spent per pupil.

It was stated that the total school budget is \$7,867,047 and that includes the cost for the high school students. The cost per high school student includes tuition and transportation cost.

M. Anthony asked again what the cost is per high school student.

M. Keleghen stated that if he leaves his telephone number, she will compute it and get back to him.

Jim Schrader, 378 Pine Hill Road asked why three (3) Kindergarten teachers are needed for nineteen (19) students.

J. Musumeci stated that 29 students will be entering Kindergarten in September 2014.

J. Schrader stated that Kindergarten class sizes consisting of nine (9) and ten (10) students per class is small.

D. Shippee explained that the school budget cannot be cut any lower than what it is.

Steve Williams, 215 Pine Hill Road, questioned if the Technology teacher was cut from the budget after the school received the \$199,000 for updating the computers.

G. Lanza stated that a technology teacher was added.

A question was asked regarding the School Security Grant in the amount of \$80,000. Renee Keech-Theroux explained that the \$80,000 was used to make improvements to the security system at the school and the \$199,000 was used to replace computer equipment that was outdated.

S. Williams asked if it is mandatory that all students bring a computer to school.

R. Keech-Theroux explained the school had asked, but it is not mandatory.

S. Williams also asked how many special education students are at the school.

G. Lanza stated that 90 in District, 58 in State Commercial Schools.

Madelyn Vanacore, 110 Old Cranston Road, stated that having 15 children in a classroom is a luxury. She also stated that she is seeing a decrease in students, but an increase in salary and how many special education teachers are full-time.

G. Lanza stated that the school has five (5) full-time special education teachers.

M. Vanacore asked the salary of the IT person and what the breakdown is of the Special Education Students and that she would like to see the results from the latest State test scores.

G. Lanza stated that the student scores are up to level and comparable with other local schools. Marks have increased.

M. Vanacore asked if salaries are going up and how many years are left to the contract.

M. Keleghen stated that salaries will increase 1.5 percent and they have two more years remaining on the current contract.

D. Shippee asked if there were any other questions or comments.

Jessica Connetti, 61 Old Cranston Road, stated that if we keep cutting the budget, we are not helping our students and how can we retain the teachers and keep them happy. She also asked how enrollment will increase if we keep cutting back.

Richard Young, 796 Plainfield Pike, asked how much was saved in teacher retirements.

It was stated that one (1) teacher retired.

R. Keech-Theroux stated that the school is having a hard time retaining teachers.

Paul Tetreault, 138 Pine Hill Road, stated that if you are passionate about your child's education, you have two (2) choices – home education or private school.

Ron Marchesseault, 459 Newport Road asked how many students are going to the high school.

M. Keleghen stated 137 to Plainfield High, 49 to Ellis Tech, 20 to Killingly VoAg, 5 to QVC, 2 to Marianapolis and 2 to Charles Barrows STEM School. We do not pay tuition for the students attending Ellis Tech. Parents pay for Marianapolis and the Town pays less to send a student to Charles Barrow STEM School than to Plainfield High.

Derrick Anforth, 95 Gibson Hill Road, questioned different line item account descriptions from the Board of Education proposed budget; such as, Department 1200 -Special Education, Department 1000 – Regular Education, and Department 2310 – Board of Education.

M. Keleghen stated that Dept. 1000 includes the copy machines, which are leased, and even though there have been reductions in staff, salary increases remain in place. The increase in Dept. 2310 is due to unemployment, resulting from the cut backs. She also stated that the Principal's Office has added more pieces of software; such as, a parent communication piece.

Melissa Collier-Meek, 63 Spring Lake Road stated that she is worried about cutting the Special Education Teacher because it will cost more to rehire a teacher.

D. Shippee asked if there were any other questions or comments. There were none.

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Item 2: Itemized Estimates for Fiscal Year 2013-2014 Board of Selectmen Budget:

First Selectman R. Gray gave a PowerPoint presentation on the 2014-2015 proposed Board of Selectmen Budget.

Items covered: Anticipated revenues are expected to increase 13.6%. Anticipated expenses have increased by \$12,066, with a new line this year for water and sewer subsidies because not enough residents use the system to cover the cost of operation. He also reported that the Industrial Park

Sales totaled \$106,130 for Lots 3, Lot 11 and Phase II Land. R. Gray stated that the budget for the Library and Recreation Program remain about the same. He also explained the following items on the Selectmen's Budget that are school related expenses: School Notes/Loans total \$923,769; shared mechanic – 15 school vehicles to 2 town vehicles and a yearly bus purchase for \$84,000 and this year \$22,000 for the purchase of a van. He explained that the combined budget for the school and the town reflects 74% for the school, 16% for the Town to run programs; such as, Animal Control, Education Costs, Library, Recreation, Senior Center, Snow Plowing, Town Hall, and the Transfer Station, and 10% school related expenses. Other items covered were: LoCIP – (Local Capital Improvement Plan) and local capital improvement projects.

R. Gray asked if anyone had any questions or comments on the proposed budget.

Richelle Chappell, 317 Pine Hill Road asked what the salary is for the library and why 6 librarians are needed for 22 hours a week of operation.

Rachel Vincent explained that 2 people work during the day and other staff members rotate at night.

R. Chappell stated that she didn't think it was right that staff received raises last year and again this year and why is the Administrative Assistant's salary going from \$38,977 to \$40,147 and she doesn't feel that assistants are needed in any department with a Town population of a little over 3,000 residents. She also asked why the Town is paying for phones and heating at the Robert P. Jordan Center and why is the building of the "new" Weideles being held up by the Town.

R. Gray stated it is not the Town holding up Weideles.

Jim Schrader, 378 Pine Hill Road questioned why the front office needs 2 people and why an Administrative Specialist when that position was an Administrative Clerk position. He also stated that 2 people are not needed in the Revenue Office.

R. Gray stated that the duties of the Admin. Clerk has changed.

J. Schrader asked what staff is paying for health insurance, what they receive for vacation, holidays, personal days, sick days and why the heat at the Town Garage is so high.

R. Gray said that staff receives vacation time based on how long they have worked, along with four (4) personal days and holiday pay.

Jessica Connetti, 61 Old Cranston Road, asked what the State Dog Report is and what is the Recreation Department doing.

Judy Gooslin stated that the Recreation Department offers many programs at no charge to the residents.

Madelyn Vanacore, 110 Old Cranston Road, stated that she will run the Town for half of what the First Selectman is getting. She then asked if salt for the road went out to bid and how many people take care of the roads.

R. Gray stated that for a storm, we have four (4) contractual people plow and one (1) Town worker. Same number of trucks and the salt did not go out to bid.

D. Shippee stated that anything over \$25,000 needs to go out to bid and that the State increased that amount from \$7,500 to \$25,000.

M. Vanacore stated the Town Hall is over staffed and what does the Tax Office do and that the Library should use more volunteers.

Rick Deojay, 660 Sterling Road, stated that everything over a certain amount needs to go out to bid and favoritism needs to stop.

Derek Anforth, 95 Gibson Hill Road stated that he would like to see the Resident Trooper's position back in the budget.

D. Shippee stated if we put the Resident Trooper back in the budget, the Town is looking at a 6/10th increase to the mill rate. The cost would be approximately \$120,000.

R. Choquette, Asst. Revenue Collector and resident expressed the following concerns: Wages paid under Professional Expenses; expenses for the RPJ Community Center, if the church is paying half of those expenses; telephone expenses increasing from \$500 to \$1,000 for the Town Garage; heating expense for the Town Hall; and Town Hall wages, as to why some staff are

getting a 3% increase, to the clerical assistant getting 9.4% increase, which is 10% over compensation from the Employee Handbook and why a position name change. She also questioned why the other two selectmen are getting a 3% increase and why two separate line items for janitorial staff. She asked the question as to where she can get answers when the Selectmen do not respond to issues.

Steve Williams, 215 Pine Hill Road asked why all residents should pay for sewer and water.

R. Gray stated that the sewer and water expense is beyond what people can pay. We have raised the rates, but it is still not enough and Re-energy may be gone and that is not going to help the situation.

Jacklyn Angelone, 879 Gibson Hill Road wanted to thank the Board of Finance for the \$199,000 for tech support and she asked about the salary for the Recreation and Library Department.

R. Gray stated that we have a different format this year and it shows the salary clearer. She also stated that she supports both programs and wishes the Library was open more hours. She then expressed concern that we need some sort of law enforcement in Town.

Bonnie Parenteau, 525 Sterling Hill Road asked about the community programs. She also expressed support for the Resident Trooper to be re-instated.

R. Gray stated that some programs, such as, NEDDH is paid based on per capita.

Rosalind Choquette, Margaret Henry Road stated that a few years ago when the Revenue Office was threatened, it took the Resident Trooper over three (3) hours to respond and when they did, they did nothing.

D. Shippee asked if there were any other questions or comments. There were none.

M. Vanacore asked about LoCIP and the usage of solar panels.

R. Gray responded that we are in the process of putting together an Energy Commission.

D. Shippee stated that the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen are considering hiring a business manager for the Town and to have Towns people, School Board members, and the Selectmen look into the feasibility. This person would be in charge of contracts and budgets.

D. Shippee asked if there were any other questions or comments. There were none.

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Item 3: Estimate of the Fiscal Year 2014-2015 Local Capital Improvement Plan and Budget: D. Shippee explained that R. Gray spoke about the Local Capital Improvement Plan stating that the State gives us money each year to spend on capital improvement projects and what is not used, is carried over from year to year. This is free money.

Item 4: All persons will be heard regarding any item of expenditure they may wish for the Board of Finance to consider for inclusion in the 2014-2014 Budget: Many residents expressed concern to re-instate the Resident Trooper's position back in the budget or some other form of law enforcement.

D. Shippee reported that the Town Meeting for the proposed budgets is scheduled for Wednesday, May 28, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. at the Sterling Town Hall/Municipal Building Gym and the Board of Selectmen will adjourn the Town Meeting to a vote by referendum scheduled for Thursday, June 5th from noon to 8:00 p.m. in the gym.

The Public Hearing closed at 9:30 p.m.

May 14, 2014

Call to Order: The special meeting of the Sterling Board of Finance was called to order at 9:35 p.m. Roll was called. David Shippee-present, Robert Lissan-present, Bruce Lindberg-present, Neil Cook-present, Dale Clark-present, Neil Delmonico-absent. Staff present-Russell Gray, Lincoln Cooper, John Firlik, and Joyce Gustavson.

Consider & Act on Public Hearing Comments on Proposed 2014-2014 Board of Education Budget: D. Clark made a motion, seconded by N. Cook, to leave the proposed budget in the amount of \$7,867,047 and not make any changes to it. All voted in favor of the motion.

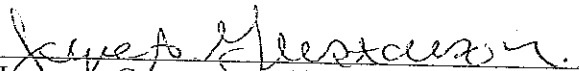
Consider and Act on Public Hearing Comments on Proposed 2014-2015 Board of Selectmen Budget: D. Clark made a motion, seconded by N. Cook to cut the Board of Selectmen's Proposed Budget \$109,644 making the total \$2,702,580. All voted in favor of the motion.

D. Shippee stated that with the reduction to the Board of Selectmen's Budget, the proposed mill rate for 2014-2015 would not change from last year and remain at 31.50 mills.

Consider and Act on Public Hearing Comments on the Proposed 2014-2015 Local Capital Improvement Plan and Budget: D. Clark made a motion, seconded by B. Lindberg, to not make any changes to the Local Capital Improvement Plan and Budget as submitted earlier this evening. There was no discussion. All voted in favor of the motion.

Consider and Act on Public Hearing Comments Regarding Any Item of Expenditure to be Considered for Inclusion in the Proposed 2014-2015 Budget: Discussion was held on whether or not to re-instate the Resident Trooper's position back in the budget. D. Clark made a motion, seconded by N. Cook to have an exit poll taken at the referendum. All voted in favor of the motion.

Adjournment: N. Cook made a motion, seconded by D. Clark to adjourn at 10:05 p.m. All voted in favor of the motion.

Attest: 
Joyce A. Gustavson, Board of Finance Clerk