

May 1, 2019

The Board of Finance Public Hearing was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman, David Shippee. Other members' present-Neil Cook, Peter Rabbitt, Robert Salisbury, and Neil Delmonico. Staff present-Joyce Gustavson.

David Shippee thanked everyone for coming tonight and stated that if the proposed budgets were passed as they are submitted tonight, it would mean a zero (0) mil increase.

D. Shippee also stated that this hearing is to discuss budgets only. Any other town or school issue should be brought to the proper board or administration. This is not a meeting for those purposes. Everyone who wishes to speak will be able to. However, there will be a time limit of three (3) minutes and each speaker will be allowed to speak twice.

D. Shippee stated that the Board of Education will present their proposed Fiscal Year 2019-2020 budget first and after the presentation we will have a question and answer period.

Item 1: Itemized Estimates for Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Board of Education Budget:

Gail Lanza, Superintendent, presented the Power Point presentation for the 2019-2020 proposed Board of Education Budget.

Items Covered: The proposed budget is \$8,214,874, an increase of \$39,430, which is a 0.48% increase over last year's budget. Anticipated State revenue is \$3,255,497. Other Grant Revenue Sources include School Readiness Grant, Title I, Title II, IDEA, and Title VI. G. Lanza also explained the data and details of the proposed budget, as well as transportation costs, proposed expenditures, budget assumptions, enrollment, preliminary high school acceptances and staffing levels.

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

Frank Bood, 230 Harris Road stated that every year, residents come before the Board of Finance (BOF) and are told to vote for the school budget because everything goes toward the kids. At the last Board of Education meeting, someone walked in and dropped off a couple reams of paper because the school was running low on supplies; yet we see massive increases in individual salaries, one in particular was \$8,800.

F. Bood asked to be shown, in the numbers, where this is going towards the kids, with these exorbitant raises. F. Bood also asked the BOF if they were aware of the special meeting that was held.

D. Shippee stated that this does not pertain to tonight's meeting.

F. Bood stated it is irrelevant to this meeting, but it is relevant because if you do not have the information given to you, how can you make decisions about our money.

D. Shippee stated that the BOF only has control over the bottom line of the school board budget; it has no say over line items in the BOE's budget. Discussion followed.

G. Lanza stated the school budget contains \$18,000 in the line item for the lease of the copier, copies and supplies.

F. Bood asked why the library is empty and in disarray. In the last three (3) years the Superintendent's raise has been in increments of \$10,000 each, but you can't say the money is going towards the kids when it is not, if people are bringing in supplies. Where is all the money going? Year after year, the salaries are increasing, the students are not benefiting from the Superintendent's salary increase.

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

Patricia Ball, 15 Sawmill Hill Road asked what happens if the school doesn't spend all the money in a line item.

G. Lanza stated that any leftover money in the budget goes back to the Town's General Fund.

D. Shippee stated that up to one (1) percent of the budget can be put into a fund that can be used to supplement the following year's budget.

P. Ball asked why there is an increase in the stipends for the proposed budget when only \$4,000 has been spent to date.

G. Lanza stated that stipends are paid at the end of the year.

P. Ball asked about evaluation services, stating that a little less has been budgeted for the upcoming budget and is that also paid in June.

G. Lanza stated they never know if someone is going to ask for an evaluation, so money needs to be available. This is earmarked for student evaluations.

P. Ball asked for clarity regarding other professional and technical services.

G. Lanza stated that it is software.

D. Chrzan stated that the school has switched to a payroll service and some is used for payroll expenses and some is spent on services that are provided to the BOE.

Dale Boisselle, 37 Railroad Avenue asked what the cost and criteria is for out-placed students as it has increased so much over the last ten (10) years and do we pay transportation for those students.

G. Lanza stated that outpatient services are determined by PPTs and the cost varies depending on the student's needs. The school transports the students.

D. Boisselle asked if transportation includes the other high schools that are outside of the designated high schools.

G. Lanza stated that the school transports to the Stem Magnet; there is a drop off point for Norwich Tech that is shared with Plainfield.

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

Nancy Chenette, 986 Plainfield Pike asked what the cost is for the different high schools and is Woodstock Academy a choice.

G. Lanza stated that Woodstock Academy is not a choice. The tuition cost for each high school was broken down by regular education, special education and RSP (Resource Specialist Program).

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

P. Ball asked if staffing levels were going to be cut and is this determined by the budget presented tonight or is this decided afterwards.

G. Lanza stated the goal is to try and keep all staffing levels.

D. Shippee stated that if there are no more questions or comments we will have the Board of Selectmen present their proposed 2019-2020 budget.

Item 2: Itemized Estimates for Fiscal Year 2019-2020 Board of Selectmen Budget:

R. Gray, First Selectman, presented the PowerPoint presentation for the proposed 2019-2020 Board of Selectmen Budget.

He stated that anticipated revenues have increased by 4.90% due to an increase in prior taxes/interest and liens. Anticipated expenses have increased by 1.46% due to funding of the Teacher's Retirement and increases in Highway Road work. The largest expense is notes and loans for the Sterling Community School and Plainfield High School which is twenty-nine (29) percent of the budget. Other items covered include: The components of the grand list with real estate being the largest at 67.9% followed by motor vehicles at 11.0%. R. Gray also discussed school related expenses included in the proposed budget, bids, Library and Recreation budgets, and capital improvement projects.

R. Gray asked if there were any questions or comments.

F. Bood stated that the proposed cost of the generator was \$150,000 and the job was done for \$80,000. Regarding the roads, the Town went out to bid this year and received good pricing. F. Bood would like the Board of Finance and the Board of Selectmen to look at putting more money into road repair. With the new solar program coming in and once the savings begin, it would be nice to see those funds diverted to road resurfacing as well, so the Town can catch up and maintain.

F. Bood asked R. Gray if he is aware that three (3) culverts on the corner of Harris and Valley View and two (2) others in that area need repair. Lastly, are there any additional funds added to the budget for the summer Recreation Program so the kids could stay longer.

J. Gooslin stated her Board took that into consideration and it was felt that it would not be beneficial to the program because of the cost to the families for the children to attend an extra week. Discussion was held on whether or not the Town would be willing to help offset some of the cost, the taxpayers picking up some of the burden, and the weekly cost to run the program.

D. Shippee stated that many things are going on within the State right now; everything is up in the air. One thing the State is discussing is eliminating the car tax.

F. Bood asked for clarity as to how it will affect individuals.

D. Shippee stated the Town would lose twenty-six (26) million dollars from the grand list. The State's response to eliminating the car tax is to offset it and instead of paying taxes on seventy (70) percent, assessed value of your property, you will pay taxes on one hundred (100) percent. Every person who owns property would pick up the money for the lost car revenue.

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 2019-2020 Local Capital Improvement Plan and Budget: R.

Gray explained that every year the State gives the Town approximately \$40,000. To date we have \$48,919 to be used on a capital improvement project. The money is to be used for non-reoccurring capital projects; such as, a new building or paving.

R. Gray asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

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 2019-2020 Budget: There were none.

The Town Meeting for the proposed budgets is scheduled for Wednesday, May 15, 2019 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 Wednesday, May 22nd from noon to 8:00 p.m. in the gym.

The public hearing closed at 7:50 p.m.

May 1, 2019

Call to Order: The special meeting of the Sterling Board of Finance was called to order at 7:58 p.m. Roll was called: David Shippee-present; Bruce Lindberg-absent; Neil Cook-present; Neil Delmonico-present; Robert Salisbury-present; and Peter Rabbitt-present. Staff present-Russell Gray, Lincoln Cooper, John Firlik, and Joyce Gustavson.

II. Consider & Act on Public Hearing Comments on the Proposed 2019-2020 Board of Education

Budget: N. Cook made a motion, seconded by R. Salisbury to keep the proposed Board of Education Budget as it was presented this evening in the amount of \$8,214,874 and not make any changes to it. All voted in favor of the motion.

III. Consider & Act on Public Hearing Comments on the Proposed 2019-2020 Board of Selectmen's

Budget: P. Rabbitt made a motion, seconded by N. Cook to keep the proposed Board of Education Budget as it was presented this evening in the amount of \$2,842,969 and not make any changes to it. All voted in favor of the motion.

IV. Consider & Act on Public Hearing Comments on the Proposed 2019-2020 Local Capital Improvement Plan and Budget:

R. Salisbury made a motion, seconded by N. Cook to keep the proposed Local Capital Improvement Plan and Budget as it was presented this evening in the amount of \$48,919 and not make any changes to it. All voted in favor of the motion.

V. Consider & Act on Public Hearing Comments Regarding Any Item of Expenditure to be Considered for Inclusion in the Proposed 2019-2020 Budget:

No other items were requested.

VI. Adjournment: N. Delmonico made a motion, seconded by P. Rabbitt to adjourn at 8:00 p.m. All voted in favor of the motion.

Attest: _____
Joyce A. Gustavsn, Board of Finance Clerk