



# BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Clifford J. Hurgin Municipal Center, 1 School Street  
Bethel, Connecticut 06801 Telephone: (203) 794-8501

**RECEIVED**

AUG 20 2007

TOWN OF BETHEL  
TOWN CLERK

*Robert Burke, First Selectman*  
*Paul Szatkowski, Selectman*  
*Patrick T. Wild, Selectman*

## MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING

Tuesday, August 14, 2007  
7:00 p.m.

CJH Municipal Center – Meeting Room “A”

**PRESENT:** First Selectman Burke, Selectman Szatkowski and Selectman Wild. Also attending was William Hagan, Town Attorney.

First Selectman Burke opened the Public Hearing at 7:00 p.m. after explaining that the purpose of the Public Hearing was to receive public comments on the draft proposals as submitted by the Charter Revision Commission.

### Speakers:

William Michael, Fleetwood Avenue  
David Olson, Wagon Road  
Robert Crnic, Old Hawleyville Road  
Spruille Braden, Jr., Nature View Trail  
Stuart Carlsen, Winthrop Road  
Jeffrey Kenausis, Prospect Street  
Paul Improta, Highview Terrace  
Kevin Cleary, Pound Sweet Hill  
William Kingston, Dittmar Drive  
J. Philip Gallagher, Sunset Hill Road  
Nora O’Neill, Taylor Avenue  
Jan Neuner, Old Hawleyville Road  
Robert Legnard, Evergreen Drive  
Joan Bradley, Ridgedale Road  
A.J. Bernard, Highview Terrace  
Thomas O’Leary, Terry Drive  
Sharon Petersen,

Patrick T. Wild, Taylor Avenue  
Matthew Knickerbocker, Colonial Drive  
Alice Hutchinson, Rockwell Road  
Christopher Trodahl, Oak Ridge Road  
Kitty Grant, Quaker Ridge Road  
Martin Lawlor, Shelly Road  
Kathryn Gadarowski, Williams Road  
David Glahn, Elizabeth Street  
William Guyla, Putnam Park Road  
Frances O’Neill, Taylor Avenue  
Thomas Cheslock, Huntington Court  
Carol Cheslock, Huntington Court  
John O’Neill, Taylor Avenue  
Clifford Tager, Hudson Street  
Nick Ellis, Fawn Road  
Dana Eaton, Plumtrees Road  
William Slifkin, Katrina Circle

Jennifer Hansen, Main Street

Charles Steck, Putnam Park Road

**Correspondence from:**

Alex Smith, Codfish Hill Road  
John Sarver, Linda Lane

Jill Smith, Codfish Hill Road

First Selectman Burke closed the Public Hearing at 9:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wendy Smith".

Wendy Smith, Recording Secretary

First Selectman Bob Burke  
Bethel Municipal Center  
1 School Street  
Bethel, Connecticut 06801

August 2, 2007

Dear Mr. Burke,

Please read this letter as part of public comment during the Charter Revision Public Hearing scheduled for August 14, 2007 and include it as part of the minutes. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend the meeting.

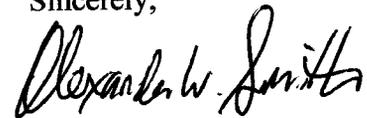
Members of the Board of Selectmen,

Thank you for continuing the process of charter revision. I have followed the process closely from the very first meeting last summer. I am very concerned with the present charter revision package being considered. It changes what shouldn't be changed while ignoring what should be. The revision proposes splitting the budget, which the Board of Finance stated would complicate not simplify the budget process. The revision does not address the antiquated power the annual town budget meeting has to reduce the budget, which threatens the democratic process by which we fund the town.

The annual town budget meeting typically draws no more than 2% of the voters in our town, yet that gathering has the power to take millions of dollars out of the budget. It doesn't make any sense to keep this power to reduce. Why would we allow 180 people, not elected by anyone, to make decisions for the 10,000 voters in town? We certainly wouldn't let 180 people add millions of dollars to the budget. Therefore, we should not allow such a small group to reduce the budget. This meeting has become an undemocratic body prone to manipulation by special interest. It is this same special interest that is so defiant about modernizing the system. Once this power is removed, the budget process would follow the mantra "let the people (all the people) decide."

Gentlemen, please reconsider the charter revision proposal. Eliminate the power to reduce in Article C6-3 part (2).

Sincerely,



Alexander W. Smith  
135 Codfish Hill Rd  
Bethel, CT 06801  
(203) 778-1381

First Selectman Bob Burke  
Bethel Municipal Center  
1 School Street  
Bethel, Connecticut 06801

August 2, 2007

Dear Mr. Burke,

Please read this letter as part of public comment during the Charter Revision Public Hearing scheduled for August 14, 2007 and include it as part of the minutes. Unfortunately, I am unable to attend the meeting.

Members of the Board of Selectmen,

Thank you for holding this public hearing. This latest proposal includes some things that concern me. It is a mistake to split the budget. This year the town side-increase was 11%. If the budget were split, we may not have approved much-needed items to improve Bethel. Splitting the budget makes things worse not better. It will pit community members against each other. Due to the fact that our town is already divided, if we split the budget, I envision multiple referendums each and every year. We have enough of that already. Let's work **together** to build our community.

Another troubling change is the decision of the charter revision commission to keep the power to reduce at the annual town budget meeting. The only power I want the annual town budget meeting to have is the power to listen to the voice of the people. Any other power this meeting has is dangerous. If we leave the power to reduce in, the budget **forced** to go to referendum by the lack of any other option, may not represent at all, the budget presented to the people by our elected officials. This should just be an advisory meeting. Please get rid of the power to reduce at the annual town budget meeting.

Thank You,



Jill K. Smith  
135 Codfish Hill Rd  
Bethel, CT 06801  
(203) 778-1381

**John C. Sarver**  
19 Linda Lane  
Bethel, CT 06801  
Telephone (203) 792-7781

**Bethel Board of Selectman**  
Bethel, Ct. 06801

**August 14, 2007**

**Dear Sirs:**

**I submitted the enclosed letter on July 10, 2006. In the year that has past since I first wrote this letter I have become even more convinced that splitting the town budget is essential if we are to achieve fiscally responsible government in this town.**

  
**John C. Sarver**

**John C. Sarver**  
19 Linda Lane  
Bethel, CT 06801  
Telephone (203) 792-7781

Bethel Charter Revision Commission  
Bethel, Ct. 06801

July 10, 2006

Dear Sirs:

I am a registered voter and a 32 year resident of Bethel. I would like to provide my input to your consideration of the possibility of offering an amendment to the Town Charter which would create separate Municipal and Board of Education budgets in future budget votes at your July 11<sup>th</sup> meeting.

I support a town vote on amending the town charter so that there would be separate votes on the Municipal and Board of Education portions of the budget. I believe if this amendment was voted on and approved it would result in greater clarity and guidance to the board of finance as they seek town approval for the annual town budget.

I believe that the 2006 budget vote provides support for this position. The attached page provides some statistics from the 3<sup>rd</sup> vote on the 2006 budget which occurred on June 6, 2006. In this attachment I have shown the percentage of total voters that indicated "Too High" to the budget advisory question. Even though the budget passed, the majority of total voters in each district (and for the town in total) felt the approved budget was too high. This pattern was consistent through all three votes on the budget.

During this year's budget process the Board of Finance had to make hard choices as to where to make cuts in the proposed budget. While results from the Budget Advisory Question suggested the need for cuts I am troubled by the fact that the current budget advisory question provides no clear direction as to where the voting residents felt the reductions should be made. In fact, I believe that the "Too High" response to the approved budget indicates that the majority of voting residents had issues with the mix of cuts that were reflected in the approved budget. In my opinion separating the Municipal and Board of Education budgets in future budget votes would provide much clearer direction to the board of finance as they seek to produce an operating budget that is acceptable to the voters of the town which is the ultimate goal of the budget process.

While I am sure that critics of this proposed amendment will raise a variety of potential concerns about separating the budgets I would submit that the current advisory question on a single town budget is not accomplishing it's intended objective of providing the board of finance with the guidance they need to make the budgeting process work effectively. I believe this year's approval of a budget which the majority of voters felt was "Too High" points to real short comings inherent in the current process.

The recurring difficulties in reaching an approved town budget make this an appropriate time to put this idea to the voters.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my input to your consideration of this important issue.

  
John C. Sarver

## Bethel Budget Vote Results - 3 Vote June 6, 2006

District	----- Budget Approval -----			Advisory Question "Too High" Votes	"Too High" as % of Total Voters
	"Yes" Votes	"No" Votes	Total Votes		
1	227	207	434	233	53.7%
2	800	634	1434	767	53.5%
3	867	638	1505	764	50.8%
4	393	473	866	538	62.1%
Absentee	46	28	74	36	48.6%
5	137	115	252	133	52.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2470</b>	<b>2095</b>	<b>4565</b>	<b>2471</b>	<b>54.1%</b>

### Observations:

- > Third Budget passed by vote of 2470 to 2095
- > Despite budget passage, a majority of those who voted in all Districts indicated that the budget was "Too High" on the budget advisory question
- > Of the total of 4565 voters that voted on the third budget 54.1% indicated "Too High" to the budget advisory question (2471 "Too High" as a percent of 4565 who voted)
- > In reaching an approved budget the Board of Finance reacted to budget advisory guidance indicating that the proposed budget was "Too High"
- > The resulting "approved" budget level was achieved by cuts in both the municipal and the Board of Education budgets. I would submit that the overwhelming "Too High" advisory guidance to the approved budget supports a conclusion that: #1. the approved budget was still deemed "Too High" by the majority of voters and #2 this advisory result suggests that the mix of cuts (municipal and BOE) was not deemed appropriate by the majority of voters

