



# BOARD OF FINANCE

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

## PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 29, 2011  
7:30 p.m.

Bethel High School Auditorium, Bethel, CT

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TOWN OF BETHEL  
TOWN CLERK

PRESENT: William Slifkin, Chairman, James Roden, John Dietter, William Kingston, Gary Regan and Timothy Draper. Also in attendance was Comptroller Robert Kozlowski, Lawrence Craybas, Board of Education Chairman and Theresa Yonsky, Board of Education Director of Fiscal Services.

William Slifkin opened the Public Hearing at 7:30 p.m. He noted that the figures included in the handout were incorrect on the town side and provided the correct bottom line number for the town side. He explained that they had received a lot of feedback and the majority of those they spoke with felt that taxpayers should not be forced to contribute their individual taxes to certain charities and they (the Board of Finance) voted to reduce this account.

First Selectman Knickerbocker advised that the mill rate calculation is very preliminary; revenue sources are not final and the mill rate associated with the proposed budget will most certainly be reduced.

Jill Shaw, Dittmar Road, among other comments, spoke against the Board of Finance reducing the Meals on Wheels program; noting that this is a volunteer organization that provides hot/cold meals 5 days per week, for some, it is their only human contact.

David Glahn, Elizabeth Street, among other comments, offered that the 30 people the Board of Finance spoke with does not represent the majority of Bethel residents and wishes to see the Meals on Wheels funding reinstated. He also commented that Bethel High School graduation should be held in Bethel, not Danbury. And he is not in favor of the Pre K program; children should be with their parents, not at a babysitting program.

Kathleen Oles, Senior Center Director, among other comments, offered that the Board of Finance members should have asked the 100 + people a day who attend the Senior Center whether they thought the Meals on Wheels program should be funded.

Kevin Cleary, Pound Sweet Hill, among other comments, expressed the concern over the funding of pension obligations and funding of the paramedic program, which he thought was supposed to decrease over time.

Patricia Orsino, Codfish Hill Road, among other comments, expressed concern over the lack of funding to the non government agencies subsidies.

Lisa Bergh, Greenwood Avenue, among other comments, expressed concern over the lack of funding to the non-government subsidies and offered that the Assessor's office needs more office help, the part-position should be increased.

Martha Bishop, Maple Avenue, among other comments, expressed concern over the reductions to the Library account over the past several years. The Library Board of Directors has the authority over the bottom line of the account and instead of turning money back to the town, they chose to buy books.

James Roden, Board of Finance member, among other comments, advised that the Board of Finance reduced the COLA increases to the part-time salaries, also, that the true cost of the Library budget is not shown in their budget, it is really over \$1,000,000 with utilities, benefits, etc. and they did not cut the book account.

Alice Hutchinson, Rockwell Road, among other comments, offered that the needs do not go away just because the Board of Finance chose not to fund the non government agencies, especially the Meals on Wheels. Clarified that tonight is the Public Hearing and it is the opportunity for the public to speak and hopes that the Board of Finance will consider the comments made this evening.

William Slifkin and James Roden, Board of Finance members, among other comments, offered that the Board of Finance will take comments/resident requests under consideration.

William Kingston, Board of Finance member, among other comments, advised that if people care about these organizations, they can choose to support them by writing a check and that doesn't force a neighbor to support your cause through their taxes.

Jane Bickford, Vera Drive, Chairman of the Library Board of Directors, among other comments, clarified that the Board of Finance reduced their account further by \$3,500 (amount not turned back) and pointed out that after listening to the recording of that meeting, noted that the reduction of \$3,500 was in fact, punishment for not turning funds back to the town.

Karen Rowe, Grassy Plain Street, among other comments, that she agreed 100% that funds should be restored to the non government agency accounts. Comptroller Robert Kozlowski clarified that the cost is approximately \$2.50 per person, per year to fund these accounts.

Winn Brickmeyer, Fox Den Road, among other comments, expressed concern that the hand-out contained incorrect numbers, she volunteers for Meals on Wheels and it is not a charity and should be fully funded.

Eileen Goodrich, Aunt Pattys Lane West, among other comments, offered that the Library be funded at the requested level, the Library offers a variety of programs and services and the non-government subsidies should be funded, those here tonight are in support.

Martha Bishop, Maple Avenue, clarified that the Library budget was cut by more than just the COLA that Board of Finance member James Roden said.

William Hillman, Walnut Hill Road, among other comments, noted that (some) residents will also be faced with the sewer assessment, he felt that this budget, unless reduced, will be “dead on arrival”, even if there were a zero increase in funding, there would still be an increase based on the reduced revenues.

Don Goodrich, Aunt Patty’s Lane, among other comments, offered that funding to the non government agencies and Board of Education should be reinstated.

Jenny Tesar/Linda Curtis, Friends of the Library, among other comments, noted the many services the Library provides and presented over 150 signatures from residents requesting that the funds be restored to the Library budget.

AJ Bernard, Highview Terrace, among other comments, offered that the part-time position in the Assessor’s office should be increased to full-time. This will allow them to bring in additional revenues.

Shani Burke Specht, Nashville Road, among other comments, offered that the Library has been cut every year, for the last 4 years and they should at least have the same funding as the current year. And, wondered who prepared the hand-out for tonight’s meeting.

Wendy Smith, Recording Secretary, apologized for the error in the handout, having inadvertently left off a column which had the Board of Finance recommendations for FY 2011-2012. The error was in the hand-out not the Legal Notice that appeared in the newspaper.

Billy Michael, Fleetwood Avenue, among other comments, spoke to a number of topics, among those, were to reduce the Treasurer salary, spoke against the Hart and SweetHart bus funding as the buses are always empty, Library costs are not just the costs shown in the budget but also include benefits, debt service, utilities, etc. He commended the Board of Finance for their stance on not funding the non government accounts.

Jen Larson, Grassy Plain Street, among other comments, offered that Meals on Wheels is not a charity and should be funded.

Selena Ballard, among other comments, expressed concern that the Board of Finance chose to not fund Meals on Wheels, especially at a cost of \$2.50 per person.

Nancy Ryan, Walnut Hill, among other comments, offered that there are many great resources available through the Library and that Meals on Wheels should be funded, account should be funded at the Board of Selectmen recommended levels.

Robert Legnard, Evergreen Drive, among other comments, offered that the funding of the non government accounts should be funded as part of meeting the needs of the residents of the town rather than looking at it as a charitable donation and asked for a show of hands as to who in attendance supported reinstating the funds, he noted the show of hands tonight was clearly more than the 30 people Mr. Slifkin referred to as the reason they cut the account.

Tim Beeble, Grassy Plain Street, among other comments, offered that on the Charter Revision Commission, they discussed eliminating the Treasurer position but felt it was important to have a position to oversee the Comptroller and did not support increasing the part-time position in the Assessor's office.

David Glahn, Elizabeth Street, among other comments, requested that the First Selectman inform the audience at the Town Meeting that the Town Attorney can overrule a moderator decision.

Bill Michael, Fleetwood Avenue, among other comments, offered that he is against implementing the new full day kindergarten program, expressed concern that without the Federal Educational Jobs Funding, the Board of Education increase would be higher.

Theresa Yonsky, Director of Fiscal Services – Board of Education clarified the use of the Federal Educational Jobs Funding, which can only be used for salaries, that the Board of Education has opted to use this funding for FY 2011-

2012 and made it clear that this reduction of \$476,994 is for FY 2011-2012 only and that for the next budget year, that savings goes away.

Larry Craybas, Board of Education Chairman, among other comments, offered that the Board of Education does not present two budget years at once and that all are aware that the Federal Educational Jobs Funding reduces the cost for one year only.

Bill Michael, among other things, commented that the \$100,000 Board of Education employee giveback is not really a give back, but rather a deferral; employees will still receive their pay, just at a later date.

Bill Hillman, Walnut Hill Road, suggested that Bethel join with the remaining municipalities to file suit against the State of Connecticut to insure that the State provides the statutorily promised reimbursement.

Selena Ballard, among other comments, commended the Board of Education for the full day kindergarten, as a kindergarten teacher in another town, she has 5 hours to teach where currently, Bethel only has 2 ½ hours of kindergarten.

Paul Szatkowski, Selectman, among other comments, offered that this coming Thursday, area legislatures are meeting in Bethel and this is an opportunity to speak to them about funding that affects Bethel.

Dionne Craig, Whipporwill Road, among other comments, offered that full day kindergarten is not babysitting and based upon the learning criteria that the state requires, she wants what is best for her children.

Larry Craybas, Board of Education Chairman, among other comments, clarified that the full-time kindergarten is neither babysitting nor daycare; the standards set allows more time to teach, this can not be accomplished in the present 2 ½ hours.

The Public Hearing was closed at 9:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Wendy Smith, Recording Secretary