

SPECIAL MEETING
May 14, 2011

The Wethersfield Town Council held a special meeting on Saturday, May 14, 2011 at 8:00 a.m. in the Town Council Chambers, Town Hall, 505 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT.

Present: Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Montinieri, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Console, and Chairperson Hemmann

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant Town Manager and Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk

At 8:15 a.m. Mayor Hemmann called the meeting to order. She stated the Budget and Finance sub-committee as well as the Town Council had been working on the budget for quite some time. They waited until they had more of a feel from the Governors proposal to set the Town budget.

Mayor Hemmann asked if any of the Councilors had a motion. She noted that they can start with the motions that they have and then make adjustments.

Councilor Hurley motioned **“TO DECREASE THE PORPOSED APPROPRIATION TO THE RETIREE RESERVE (Self Insurance Health Reserve fund) by \$64,000”** seconded by Councilor McAlister.

All Councilors present including the Chairperson, voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Mayor Hemmann asked if any of the Councilors had other motions.

Councilor Roberts asked if these motions were based on the last document that was reviewed.

Chairman Hemmann responded that there is a new document that has not been printed.

Deputy Mayor John Console moved **“TO AMEND THE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET TO INCREASE BY \$390,422, A .8% INCREASE TO \$49,222,295”** seconded by Councilor Drake.

Councilor Drake asked Deputy Mayor Console to explain the number. Deputy Mayor Console had a slide to show as he spoke.

After a presentation by Deputy Mayor Console to the Council stated he has gone through the Board of Education budgets for the last 10 years extensively. He realizes the Town Council authority can only assign a dollar amount of the budget to the Board of Education. It is the Board of Education which disperses its allocation and use. The entire Council has tried to come up with a fair budget for the Board as well as for the people of Wethersfield. Deputy Mayor Console proposed that the Board of Education side of the budget was really up 3%.

Councilor Kotkin explained that the Budget Committee started with the Board of Education's increase of \$2.9 million and then reduced the budget by \$468,000 because that is a separate source of revenue that the Board of Education will receive. When reviewing the budget, it was understood that although there was a basis for the instructional supervisors, this was not the year to do it, and so \$358,000 was deducted. Additional deductions: \$106,000 was deducted for all day kindergarten, \$107,000 for the Dean of Students and Discipline, \$70,000 with the decrease in natural gas prices, \$136,000 in health insurance, \$25,000 deducted for electricity costs, \$308,000 for salaries, \$150,000 because the Board has run on a surplus. \$128,000 was added for money the Board would not be receiving from the magnet schools. The Budget Committee then reviewed the Board's potential cuts: \$20,000 for the Central Office wage freezes, \$12,000 in instructional program improvement, \$10,000 in staff development, \$21,000 for middle school team leaders, \$53,000 for hall monitors, \$10,000 nurse clerk, \$57,000 for maintenance position, \$72,000 for an elementary text specialist, \$57,000 for an elimination of an elementary teacher, \$71,000 for another elimination of an elementary teacher; \$54,000 each for an elimination of two Wethersfield High School teachers. Councilor Kotkin commented that he didn't feel an additional \$500,000 in cuts was something that could be done and could not support that.

Councilor Drake felt a 3.12% increase was reasonable for the school budget.

Deputy Mayor Console commented it is not a trust issue, but is based on his review of historical data.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted by roll call. With Councilor Drake, Deputy Mayor Console and Mayor Hemmann voting AYE and Councilors Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Montinieri and Roberts voting NO. The motion failed 3-6-0.

Councilor Manousos moved **“THAT THE TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR SCHOOL PURPOSES BE SET AT \$49,631,873 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2011,”** seconded by Councilor Hurley.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if Councilor Manousos could indicate how this number was reached.

Councilor Manousos reported that what was left off on Wednesday, they reduced it an additional \$200,000 and noted that he felt confident that the Superintendent and staff can accomplish the goal of preserving teachers' jobs and programs.

Councilor Drake asked if Councilor Manousos could do it in the form that Deputy Mayor Console had done, to reflect percentage increases.

Councilor Manousos responded that the increase from last year on the Board of Education's side would be 1.64%, on the Town side 2.41% and a total town-wide would be 1.95%.

Deputy Mayor Console noted that this would come to a 3.9% increase, taking into account the federal job grant and the transfer of the health costs, for the highest increase in the state.

Councilor Kotkin asked Deputy Mayor Console how he knew this would be the highest increase in the State.

Deputy Mayor Console responded that he got this information from what he read in the papers.

Councilor Kotkin asked if he had the information from all the towns and cities in the State.

Deputy Mayor Console responded that he did not have the documentation with him but would be happy to supply it to Councilor Kotkin.

Councilor Roberts asked Councilor Manousos where the additional cuts were taken from.

Councilor Manousos responded that it was a compromise and he was confident that the Board of Education and the staff can get it done and accomplish their goal.

Councilor Montinieri noted that he does not want to see teacher cuts. He also noted that the present proposal would most definitely ensure teacher cuts and he could not support it. He asked Councilor Manousos how he got to his number without line item clarification from the Superintendent or the Board that gives him confidence that there would not be teacher cuts.

Councilor Manousos responded that it wasn't a reduction from 1.2%, but from 1%. He explained that assumptions were taken for anticipated surpluses.

Councilor Montinieri noted that he would feel more comfortable if the Board or the Superintendent could confirm that there would be no teacher cuts with this proposal. He noted also that he could not support this without any numbers in front of him that tells that there would not be significant teacher cuts.

Councilor Manousos reiterated that he had full confidence with the Superintendent and his staff to meet his goals.

Councilor Montinieri stated that he was disappointed to see only one board member at the meeting today and felt the Board had failed the Council by not participating. He noted also that he felt this was the administrator's budget and not the Board's budget. He hoped he would be wrong by saying that if this \$800,000 passes, it would mean no teacher cuts.

Councilor Manousos responded that he feels Councilor Montinieri will be saying that, and he noted that the Board of Education has said that if the increase came below 5%, it would mean teacher positions would be lost.

Councilor Montinieri commented that this \$300,000 to \$400,000 was more than the last conversation that was had with the Board of Education.

Councilor Drake commented that Councilor Montinieri had no basis to say what teachers were going to be laid off. He noted that he was closer to Deputy Mayor Console on where the budget should be.

Councilor Roberts acknowledged that she was unable to support this budget also. The additional \$200,000 is a random number that was picked.

Chairperson Hemmann commented that she felt this to be a compromise. She noted that she was willing to support this motion with the school for 1.64% increase in spending because she felt it was time to be responsive to the citizens who have engaged in discussions this year.

Councilor Kotkin asked Councilor Manousos to verify that there isn't any item that has been identified that contributes to the reduction.

Councilor Manousos responded that there were additional reductions that the school was willing to make.

Jeff Bridges commented that the Board of Education Superintendent has not seen the recommendations made by the Superintendent.

Councilor Drake noted that the \$800,000 was a compromise among all of them.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted by roll call. Councilors Drake, Hurley, Manousos, McAlister and Chairperson Hemmann voted AYE. Councilors Kotkin, Montinieri and Roberts and Deputy Mayor Console voted NAY. Motion passed 5-4-0.

Councilor Manousos moved **“THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL ADOPT THE TOWN BUDGET AS SUBMITTED BY THE TOWN MANAGER ON APRIL 1, 2011 AND AS AMENDED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL, IN THE SUM OF \$84,312,361 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2011”** seconded by Councilor McAlister.

Deputy Mayor Console commented that he is going to vote no on this motion because of the Board of Education's budget.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted by roll call. Councilors Kotkin, Montinieri, Roberts and Deputy Mayor Console voted NAY. The motion passed 5-4-0.

Councilor Manousos moved **“THAT THE TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR LIBRARY PURPOSES BE SET AT \$1,665,153 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2011”** seconded by Councilor McAlister.

Councilor Kotkin commended the Library Board with their work together with the Library staff to bring in a sound budget with no increase.

Councilor Manousos agreed with Councilor Kotkin.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted by roll call. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Councilor Manousos moved **“THAT THE TOTAL AMOUNT TO BE RAISED BY TAXES FOR THE TOWN, LIBRARY, AND SCHOOL PURPOSES COMBINED BE SET AT \$71,301,203 FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2011”** seconded by Councilor McAlister.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted by roll call. Councilor Drake, Hurley, Manousos, McAlister and Chairperson Hemmann voted AYE. Councilors Kotkin, Montinieri, Roberts and Deputy Mayor Console voted NAY. The motion passed 5-4-0.

Councilor Manousos moved **“THAT THE TAX RATE ON ALL REAL AND PERSONAL TAXABLE PROPERTY BE SET AT 31.42 MILLS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2011”** seconded by Councilor McAlister.

All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted by roll call. Councilor Drake, Hurley, Manousos, McAlister and Chairperson Hemmann voted AYE. Councilors Kotkin, Montinieri, Roberts and Deputy Mayor Console voted NAY. The motion passed 5-4-0

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:05 a.m., Councilor Hurley moved **"TO ADJOURN THE MEETING"** seconded by Councilor Kotkin. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano
Town Clerk
Approved as corrected, 9-0-0
06-06-2011