

**PUBLIC HEARING ON THE 2009-2010 PROPOSED BUDGET
MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2009**

A Public Hearing on the 2009-2010 Proposed Budget was held on Monday, April 20, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the Silas Deane Middle School Auditorium with Chairperson Andrew S. Adil presiding.

Present: Councilors Console, Forrest, Hemmann, Kotkin, Roberts, Walsh, Deputy Mayor Montinieri, and Chairperson Adil

Absent: Councilor Cascio

Present from the Board of Education: Marie Massaro, Penny Stanziale, Tristan Stanziale, Vice Chairperson Julie Montinieri, and Chairperson Stacey Hodges

Also present: Bonnie L. Therrien, Town Manager; Michael Kohlhagen, Superintendent of Schools; and Amy Bello, Assistant Town Clerk, and staff from both the Board of Education and Town Hall

OPENING REMARKS

Chairperson Adil called the meeting to order and welcomed the Town Council, Board of Education members, Town staff, Board of Education staff and the public.

PRESENTATION BY THE SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Michael Kohlhagen, Superintendent of Schools, presented the Board of Education's budget presentation. (see Power Point attachment #1)

PRESENTATION BY THE TOWN MANAGER

Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager, presented the Town's budget. (see Power Point attachment #2)

Amy Bello, Assistant Town Clerk, took attendance.

Chairperson Adil explained the procedures for the evening. He said speakers will be called in order and allowed to speak for ten minutes on items pertaining to the budget. After all members of the public wishing to speak have spoken one time, he will call members to speak a second time. At the end of the meeting, the Assistant Town Clerk will read the letters and e-mails received into the record.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Miller, 45 Highland Street, said that this is another year without growth to the grand list. He said that the funding should be kept in the Board of Education budget. If anything it looks a little lean. He said that some Town cuts bother him. The Town should not remove the Emergency Management Director position. The Nature Center needs more time to be

independently funded. It is an asset to the Town. He said that he is concerned with increasing user fees when related to youth programs. He said that he doesn't understand how the Town can proceed with the purchase of the Wilkus property. It will remain open space even if the Town doesn't purchase the land. He asked who is representing the taxpayers. The Land Trust relies on the seller for a donation. Spending the bond money will be a big expense for years to come. Please vote no on May 12th.

Ann Brickley, 143 Highcrest Road, said that she is a civil engineer and lifelong resident. She supports the Board of Education budget. The Town's number one priority is education. The Board of Education should cut down on transportation costs and administrative costs. She supports keeping the Wilkus property open space, but not at a cost of \$3,500,000. The Green Plan, a guide for land preservation, states that the State average for purchasing open space is \$6,000 per acre. The Town is paying \$42,000 per acre. The property already has restrictions on much of it. She suggested the Land Trust purchase the property and act as steward until an appropriate owner can be found. She said that as a last option, she would support purchasing the land at a fair price.

Councilor Roberts asked for a point of order stating that the purpose of the tonight's meeting was to address the budget, not the purchase of the Wilkus property.

Ann Brickley said that she also supports the Board of Education budget and the funding of the Nature Center.

Pat Yagmin, 27 Jay Street, President of the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center, said that only a few Towns in the State can say that they have a Nature Center that is not in debt. The Board is following Eleanor's dream of having a freestanding Nature Center. She asked the Town Council to support the budget as presented by the Town Manager, but also continue to support the Nature Center. It has excellent programs and should be considered a core service to the Town.

Garrett Hughes, 41 Sunrise Terrace, Treasurer of the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center, said that in the spring of 2003, the Town and the Friends of the Nature Center made a commitment to a freestanding Nature Center and in June 2005 it was opened without any debt to the Town. 68 percent of the funding was raised through fundraising efforts. The Town needs to continue its commitment to the Friends of the Eleanor Wolf Buck Nature Center.

Keri Milne, 52 Livingston, a member of the Board of Directors of the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center, said that the Nature Center offers many different activities. She volunteers as a Nature Leader and Teacher. The Nature Center offers programs for Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, preschool programs, and birthday parties as well as its camps. She read several comments from people who have used the Nature Center.

Tom Linden, 39 Parkview Drive, a member of the Board of Directors of the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center, said that there is a spirit of volunteerism in Wethersfield. 120 people volunteered at the Nature Center last year, both students and adults. 20,000 people visited the

Nature Center last year. It is a vital part of the community. He looks forward to working with the Town Council in an effort to make the Nature Center self-sustaining.

Bill Haines, 516 Highland Street, Vice President of the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center, said that he worked with the Nature Center for more than 20 years. The Town is fortunate to have a Nature Center Director who can educate the public. The Friends of the Nature Center are working hard to keep Eleanor's dream alive. The motto is "No Child Left Inside." He asked that the Town Council please adopt the budget and they will continue to work with the generosity of others to keep it going.

Robin Bourassa, 248 Dale Road, speaking on behalf of several Emerson Williams School parents, said that the education system in Wethersfield is a great treasure. There are so many talented teachers and it would be a huge loss to the children and the system to lay them off. She said that a classroom is so different now than it was when she was a student. Teachers have so many mandates to follow. She is amazed at what teachers get done. She said that the proposed 2.85 percent increase represents a fair and thoughtful Board of Education budget.

Paula IZard, 89 Cider Brook Drive, spoke in support of the Library. She said that she is impressed with the renovations, especially the children's level. The Library is an important asset to the Town. She hopes that residents will vote yes on May 12th for the Wilkus property.

Christine Bradley, 480 Wells Road, spoke in support of the Library and the Town Manager's budget. She said that the Town Manager gave a very clear presentation. She said that the Library budget only represents 2 percent of the Town budget and represents about 30 employees, many of whom are part time. The Library is getting more use. The usage has increased 30 percent due to the recession and the renovations. It was up 20 percent the year before. The Library serves 100 percent of the population. She said please protect the Library budget.

Richard Fippinger, 28 Wells Farm Drive, Emergency Management Director, said that someone needs to coordinate the emergency services in the time of an emergency. He said that Wethersfield has fine first responders but they will need coordination. He read a letter from Thomas Gavaghan, Region 3 Coordinator, State of Connecticut, Department of Emergency and Homeland Security. The letter stated the need for retaining the position and said that the position is funded at a rate of 50 percent by a State grant. In Mr. Fippinger, the Town has an experienced and knowledgeable Emergency Management Director who would perform in an outstanding manner in an emergency. The letter stated Mr. Gavaghan's strong support of the continuation of Mr. Fippinger in the position of Emergency Management Director.

Sara Winton Coffey, 17 Oldham Road, a teacher at Wethersfield High School, asked the Town Council to please support the Board of Education's budget.

Maggie and Paul Pace, 26 Victory Lane, said that they agree with the comments made earlier in the evening by Robin Bourassa. Please support the Board of Education budget. They are concerned with class size.

Marguerite Alpert, 7 Morrison Avenue, said that she fully supports the Board of Education budget. It is so important to maintain class size. She said last year her daughter was in a room with 27 children, a teacher, and four paraprofessionals. The class ran fairly well but was overcrowded. The proposed budget increase is minimal and very necessary. She also supports the wonderful Library and its staff. She asked how the Town could set up the Nature Center in its beautiful building and then pull all its funding from it. She said that the Town needs to find the funding for it. She said that her daughter enjoyed participating in the ROPE program. It has many benefits that are important for the development of the children. She hates to see the loss of these Youth Services programs.

Patti Silva, 24 Hillcrest Avenue, said that she supports the Board of Education increase of 2.85 percent. She said that the Town can't afford to do less. She asked parents to stand to show their support of the Board of Education budget. She also asked people to stand in support of the Library and the ROPE program.

Casey Pettengill, 167 Jordan Lane, said that he supports the ROPE program. It helps a lot of children overcome their fears and become more confident.

Steven Bielenda, 141 Fox Hill Road, said that he can empathize with the budget process. He had to lay off people across the river, as he is the Human Resources Director for East Hartford. He supports the Board of Education budget and the need to maintain strong schools in order to maintain our home values.

Anne Peck, 29 Wheeler Road, said that she is a lifelong resident of Wethersfield, the parent of two students at the high school, and a paraprofessional for the past nine years. She spoke in support of the Board of Education's budget.

Joseph Koneski, 140 Eastern Boulevard, thanked the Town Manager for preparing a zero increase budget. On the Board of Education budget, 83 percent is for salaries and benefits. That only leaves 17 percent for the children. The Superintendent just hired a Human Resource Director for \$117,000. In the commercial sector, a position like that would be about \$80,000. The Superintendent continues to add non-teaching staff. To get parents to support his budget, the Superintendent makes political and self-serving telephone calls using the school telephone system. He should let the teachers teach. The Town Council needs to put its foot down. There are a lot of senior citizens and residents who have lost their jobs. It is way beyond time to cut the Board of Education budget.

Kathi Stickley, 147 Collier Road, said that she applauds the teachers and administrators at Highcrest School. She fully supports the Board of Education budget and thinks it is judicious and focused and allows for the maintenance of class size at the elementary level, team teaching at the middle school level, and AP classes at the high school. The Board of Education provides excellent, well rounded programs for the youth.

Carolyn Vallieres, 4 Wilcox Street, said that she supports the Library and would hate to see children not know how to use the Library. The Library staff works to help the children.

Lynn Sweet Dobrow, 69 Stillwold Drive, spoke in support of the Board of Education budget. The Board of Education helps to bring people to Town. The Town also needs to support the Nature Center. She said that she is concerned with the elimination of the positions in the Youth Services Department. These programs are core services that are needed to help the youth grow into healthy adults. Youth Services is a far reaching department. The ROPE program is a 21 hour program for all 6th graders. It teaches them to make good decisions. Parenting a teenager is critical but learning from other adults is also so important. She said during this time of fiscal crisis, it would be a travesty to lose this program when families are stressed and many need these programs even more.

Ben Dobrow, 69 Stillwold Drive, a senior at Wethersfield High School, said that the Youth Services Department is so important to the Town. The Town should fully support the Nature Center and the Library, too. This is support that students can't find at home or school. It teaches communication and trust. He said that it is foolish to cut the communication between students and adults. It also provides community service opportunities to older students.

Kathy Kanya, 27 Meadow View Drive, presented a list of 17 residents that support the Board of Education's 2009-2010 budget. They were: Diane Dow, Alexis Courneen, Lyndee Gray, Rita Dikegorio, Kelly and Steve Condon, Tammy Luiz, Melissa Roberts, Lynn Odell, Sarah Galatie, Cathy Mandile, Dawn Cormier, Cory Stabach, Lisa Pulielli, Larry Boyes, and Andrea Zurula. She spoke in support of the Board of Education's 2.85 budget increase. She said that Highcrest added a teacher last year to the 3rd grade to ease overcrowding. She hopes that class size will not be an issue next year. The quality of the schools is a cornerstone of the community.

Jen Wolf, 345 Wolcott Hill Road, said that she supports the Board of Education and the ROPE program. She would like the Town Council to take a look at the Library budget and do something a bit better. She said that the Town needs to look at Nature Center funding. The community has done a lot fundraising for the Nature Center.

Carrie O'Neil, 95 Randy Lane, a teacher at Highcrest School, said that many of the teachers in Town also live in Town and are graduates of Wethersfield schools. She, along with her fellow teachers present at the meeting, supports the Board of Education budget. She hopes the Town Council will think of the direct impact on the students if the budget is not passed. She said that any decrease in the budget will dilute any achievements that students have made on the CMT's. She said that there is a direct correlation between teacher/student ratios.

Mary Fulton, 254 Highcrest Road, said that she was so happy to see the great turnout tonight. She has never seen such support for a budget. She, too, supports the Board of Education budget. The schools play an important role in their community. It speaks to itself how many teachers live and work in Town. So many people use the Library. The Town needs to maintain the Library services because there are no Librarians in the elementary schools. She complimented the Town for looking at regionalization of services.

Andrea Ginter, 19 Midwell Road, spoke in support of the Board of Education budget. Maintaining class size is critical. The bright students are not being properly challenged.

People look at school programs and Wethersfield needs to stay on par with surrounding Towns. Learning can't be put off. Parents are not looking for luxuries. The PTO's are providing essentials that the school system should be providing. It is important to keep the teachers.

Jeff Lojko, 190 Windmill Hill, spoke in support of the Board of Education budget. The children are our return on investment. Residents shoulder 85 percent of the taxes. The Town needs to look at other revenue sources. The Nature Center needs to be funded, so take money away from Physical Services Department instead. He said that if there is a choice between the children and open space, the Town should support the children.

George Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, said that these are trying difficult times with income going down and unemployment going up. Wethersfield is a good Town but not without its problems. He said that preparing the budget is a difficult chore. The Town Manager made wise decisions that he can support. The Town is not being represented by the people here tonight. He believes in keeping the spending to zero and see where the chips fall. Money doesn't come from the applause that was heard tonight. All of the items have merit. The Town Council has to make all arms of government with high paid staff cut their salaries. The Superintendent of School taking a pay freeze is a drop in the bucket. He said that the Superintendent always concentrates on an issue that will upset the parents and divide the community. The Superintendent should look hard and fast at where the money is and establish priorities. Items must be kept in balance and the Town needs to spread the pain.

Barbara Ruhe, 79 Main Street, said that she and her children were educated in Town. She is an advocate for children for her living. The Youth Services Department is an invaluable resource in the State and is worth preserving. She said that the elimination of the Youth Services staff comes to about \$200,000. If all of the Board of Education staff took a pay cut of \$5.31 a week, it would cover the expense of the Department. Youth Services benefits the schools and works with the Board of Education and Police. She said that education is also important but spending big money doesn't mean a good education. The Board of Education is top heavy in its administration. She asked if there have been any union concessions. She asked what the staff could give up. The schools need to be more creative.

Tina Perez, 4 Fairmont Street, a senior at Wethersfield High School, said that because she took part in the Busy Buddies Class at Wethersfield High School, she was accepted into Salve Regina's early education program. This is a college course that the school offers. The budget is going to change the program, so that the high school students will have to be bussed to pre-school programs to learn instead of learning in the pre-school that is at the High School. Parents of preschoolers have already said that they are willing to pay for this program at the high school.

Shannon Tuneski, 140 Ox Yoke Drive, a senior at Wethersfield High School, said that she was able to transfer her Busy Buddies/Early Childhood Program credits to Manchester Community College. She said that the program gave her great experience working with young children.

Lindsay Temple, 317 Brimfield Road, a senior at Wethersfield High School, said that she took the Early Education class for three years and will be attending St. Joseph's College in the fall. She has used her learning from the class while teaching swimming lessons in Town. It is wrong to limit the preschoolers and not give the high school students the chance to have this program.

Al Kottke, 545 Elm Street, said that it sounds like Mr. Fippinger needs a raise for the work he does. Mr. Koneski made some good points that should be looked into. He said that he is very disappointed by the revaluation. The mill rate has increased a lot in the past few years. He also said that someone should look at the road conditions on Middletown Avenue by Broad Street.

John Porriello, 49 Dudley Road, thanked all the volunteers. He said that they have great challenges ahead of them. He said that class size is important to him as, he has students at Emerson Williams. He supports the Library, School, Nature Center, and ROPE program, but the Town needs to find long term solutions for funding. He hopes the Town Council will look outside the box. He suggested vouchers for private schools or eliminating the defined contribution plan for new hires. The Superintendent of Schools says that the budget is 85 percent staff. It's a people business. Mr. Porriello said that it should be an education business. A mind shift should take place.

Gail Stewart, 411 Main Street, said that she is the parent of three students. She supports the Board of Education budget and said that it is unacceptable to cut staff or programs. She said that the State and Federal government imposes mandates that never existed before. The education system is not the same as use to be. She said that the Silas Deane Middle School is a state of the art school and her son is excelling. The High School needs more AP classes and foreign language classes.

Casey Lilley, 100 Boulter Road, Vice Chairperson of the Youth Advisory Board, spoke against the cuts to the Youth Services budget. The programs and staff are needed. Cutting ROPE will have a huge impact on the 6th graders. The Youth Employment Program will also be cut. He said that the Town is ignoring the needs of the youth in favor of leaf pick up. He said that he is not in favor of the Board of Education budget with all its consultants and high paid Human Resources position.

Jeffrey McPhee, 174 Church Street, an employee of the Board of Education, said that the economics was the driving force in the custodian union negotiations this past winter. There will be an unfilled position in the group of 42 custodians. His two children were educated in Town and received a top notch education. The Board of Education must be adequately funded to give students the opportunities they need. This is a barebones budget, but will provide quality education.

Matt Wilson. 44 Goodwin Park Road, said that he is shocked to see the ROPE program being cut. He said that it is a core service. Tourism and leaf collection should go first. He said that the Library and Nature Center need to be funded, too.

Bill Smyers, 76 Ox Yoke Drive, said that the Town shouldn't be purchasing the Wilkus property. He suggested people go to the website: www.wethersfield.proboard.com.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, said that Wethersfield sent the State \$113,065,000 in taxes and licensing and permits. Of the \$17,000,000,000 collected by the State, the Town got back less than \$13,000,000. He is concerned with taxes on the Town and State level. The Town needs to reduce spending. He said the Town needs to only look at necessary capital items. He asked why the Town is putting lights and sidewalks in by Greenfield Park. The Board of Education needs to reduce some line items and the head count. The Board of Education needs to come in with a negative budget.

Steven Clarke, 83 Main Street, said that he came to the meeting tonight to support his son and is impressed with the youth that have spoken. He said that he works for UTC and has received a salary merit freeze and will have furlough days that with net a 3 percent reduction in salaries. He suggested the Town does something similar.

Martha Meyer, 333 Griswold Road, said that she supports the Library. She said that the Library was instrumental in her job search and asked that the Town maintain it.

Susan Nosorgian, 334 Fox Hill Road, spoke in support of the Board of Education budget. She said that she is the parent of three students. She said that this is a fiscally responsible budget that preserves class size and core curriculum. She said that she doesn't want to see a loss of teachers.

Kathleen Dunn, 94 Butternut Circle, said that she supports the budget, too. She said that the Board of Education may be able to eliminate late buses at the Middle School and High School in an effort to save money. They are often underused. There are also many special education buses that only carry one student at a time. It would be less expensive to have one bus pick up a few children and pay a paraprofessional to ride the bus. Her children have taken part in the Busy Buddies program at the High School. To bus the high school students to other preschools would dismantle the model of the program.

Mary Dobruck, 689 Folly Brook Boulevard, spoke in support of the Board of Education budget. She also encouraged the Town Council to continue the ROPES program and Youth Services program and the Busy Buddies program and reinstate the funding for the Nature Center. She said that the public should request that the teachers and Town staff go to their unions and vote to cut their raises for one year. This type of concession is happening all over. She said that many teachers live in Town and we are all in this together. The Town ought to forgo the purchase of all vehicles for one year and put off major purchases. She encouraged the Town to continue with its cost savings measures and work in a spirit to make thing better, not divide the Town.

Jerod Clark, 83 Main Street, said that a group has started an on-line petition of people who want to eliminate cuts to the Youth Services budget. So far there are 160 signatures.

Gus Colantonio, 16 Morrison Avenue, said that he supports education and enjoys using the Library. The Library is the best place in Town and it took too long to renovate. The ROPE program was great for his children and it should be continued. The Town should be doing more with less, not less with more. He said that he has been laid off, his taxes are going up, and his children are in college.

Rita DeGregoris, 16 Bay Roc Road, said that she is proud of the students that spoke tonight. It speaks of the education system in Town. She said that the Town is lucky to have a program like Busy Buddies. The Town budget also impacts the children, like Parks and Recreation and the Library. One of her pet peeves is the evening hours of the Library. She supports the Board of Education budget. She said that the Town should keep the school budget where it is and support the Library and Youth Services, too.

Dave Gregorio, 4 Sommerset Street, said that he is the parent of graduates of the Wethersfield schools. He supports the budget as written. The Superintendent's budget has already been cut by the Board of Education. The teachers do a great job with less.

George Ruhe complemented the Town Manager on the direction of the Town budget. He said that the group at the meeting tonight did not represent all the people in Town. The community should know that there are others in Town that you may not know that you don't want to put out on the streets because they can't pay their taxes. There are a large number of senior citizens that are concerned about this budget.

Robert Young said that there are a lot of people out there that don't come to the Town Council meetings that will be hurt by the tax increases. He asked that the Town Council consider all of those people, too. He said that Wethersfield students are performing the same today as they did years ago on standardized tests, yet education costs much more. He said that he can't see spending money this way. The Town Council must bring expenses down by reducing government and the Board of Education budget.

The following are summaries of letters and e-mail that were received prior to the Public Hearing:

Michelle and Brandon Zwick, Nancy Jones, Bob Jones, Gail Stewart, Kevin Stewart, Sharon and Tom O'Brien, David and Donna Berry, Diana Reeve, Tony and Cathy Mandile, Tom Landers, Rene Joanis-Burke, Dale Greenwood, Marguerite and Mark Alpert, Jill and Donald Swoverland, Paula Barone, Lance Tatro, Brenda DiLoreto, Marlene DeConti, Diane Dow, Tracy Melendey, Wendy Everett, Donnalynn and Michael Petrella, Paul Braren, Andrea Ginter, Joseph DeMonte, Laura DeMonte, Daisy Trehan, Francis Kaminski, Nella Szilagyi, Charlene Aronne, Charles and Beth Varca, Brian Turner, Ellen Brookes, Mary Duffy, Patricia Carroll, Laura Martin, Donna Cathcart, John and Elizabeth Hallinan, Robin Bourassa, Yolanda Preysner, Ellen Brookes, Dennis Tulimieri, Greg Ginter, Amalia Delgado, Charlene Aronne, Manuel and Sylvia Meneses, Charlie and Debby Epp, Beth Ann Donovan, Margo Melillo, Helen Desrochers, Kyleen Cascio, and 3 unsigned wrote in support of the Superintendent and Board of Education's budget proposal of a 2.85 percent increase from last year. Maintaining current class size is crucial to the education of our students, and further

cuts to the budget will jeopardize the quality of education in our Town. Our teachers and programs are what make the Wethersfield school system stand out from the rest.

Richard Lasher, Camilla Rossi, Louise Gordona, Paul Pace, Linda Yorton, Juanita Hart, Elizabeth Arnold, Deb Derocher, Jay Amoruso, Robert Pulford, Cynthia and Gregory Calegari, Andrea Autorino, William Haines, Marilyn and Perry Cornwall, Sharon O'Brien, Barbara Molchan, Julie Dessin, Martha and Robert Smart, William Holmes, Heather Sullivan, Richard Brenske, Jane and Dick Foxall, Henry Link, SueAnne Santiago, Steven Lecky, Terry Brazel, Grace Adams, Elizabeth Horgan, Nicole Ferrari, Dave and Nancy Edwards, Mike and Kim Joyce, Robert and Bonnie Barrow, Dr and Mrs Carol Braren, The Gardners, Linda Ciarcia, Michelle and Brandon Jurich, James Hughes, Pastor Wendy Vencuss, Stephanie Anderson, Theresa Almond, Hans Walser, Carol Kober-Narciss, Colbath Family, Paul and Antoinette Mozzarella, Mary and Greg Yanaras, Gina Guerrera, Claire and Philip Cashman, Millard Mason, MaryAnn and Leo Kirchner, Elizabeth Pinney, James and Barbara Ryan, Susan Smith, Nicholas Giosa, Esther Longey, Bill and Mary Lynch, Michael and Shelagh Schuberth, Lois Clarke, Erika McKee, The Connors, Paula Brinton, Robbins and Margaret Barstow, Herb Horthrop, Maureen and Walter Ivers Mary and Frank Sena, Lindsey and Glenn Appel, Carole Hughes, Jamie Bartone, K Musson Hulk, Garrett Hughes, Paul LeTendre, Char and Dick Peplau, Stacey and Scott Tinker, Cindy Brown, Kelly Weinberg, Lisa Stefano, Virginia Wraight, Anita Faulise, John Linden, Eileen Washburn and John Magel, John Gerardi, Eleanor Kruger, Winifred Lawlers, Tracy and Steven Bielenda, Lisa Peters, Jim and Kristine Bankowski, Jeffrey Haines, Lisa Escabi, Mr and Mrs Patrick Fallon, Members of the Griswoldville Chapel, 3 signatures that could not be identified wrote in support of the Eleanor Buck Wolf Nature Center and its mission to bring education and the hands-on experience of nature to the citizens of Wethersfield. We agree that a formal plan of self-sufficiency is in the best interest of the Center. We applaud the Friends' commitment to the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year. We further support the cooperative planning that the Friends' plan to initiate with the Parks and Recreation Department, Town Manager and Town Council to come up with an operating plan for the years ahead that will ensure the Center's continued operation in a manner fair and equitable to all parties involved.

Martha DiTomasso, Mary and Dan Daversa, and a concerned citizen wrote against cutting the ROPE program and the elimination of 2 positions in Youth Services.

Melissa Hart, mother of four, wrote in support of the proposed school budget. As the parent of a child with special needs, she need to be sure that he will be provided for. She asked that the Town Council keep our children's needs in mind when making a decision.

Joan Maulucci wrote in support of the school budget. She said that she chose to live in Town because of the education system. Teachers make schools, not buildings. Crowded classes only cause problems.

Kimberly Forbes and Burgess Speed wrote in support of the school budget. Please maintain current class size and continue the level of education.

Kathy Hulk wrote in support of the school budget and asked that the 52 teachers' contracts be renewed.

Jennifer O'Connor wrote in support of the school budget saying that it is imperative that we provide our schools with the resources they need so that we can realistically maintain the high expectations of both teachers and students.

An anonymous writer wrote that he was whacked with taxes since he bought his house 10 years ago and feels that the Town Council does not think of the small folks who don't have children and don't use the Town services.

Klem and Lora Klementon wrote in favor of the school budget and said that they understand their taxes will go up. The loss of teachers and an increase in class size are an unacceptable option. The children in Wethersfield deserve better than the zero increase budget.

James Felice wrote in opposition to the budget. He said that he is targeted for an excessive tax increase and has no children in the school system.

Joy Hansen wrote against the cuts to the Youth Services Department and Assistant Library Director position.

Gennaro Mascolo wrote that he is concerned about the unfair impact that the projected tax implications would have on the owners of small houses. Please appropriately balance the tax increase burden for homeowners and do not cut the education budget.

Irene and Carl Braren wrote in support of the school budget and said that enrichment programs should not be eliminated.

Antoinette Hetherman suggested that the Town and Board of Education pay bills on line to save on paper and stamps.

Tracey McDougall wrote in support of the school budget. She asked that the Town Council pay attention to class size and adequately fund the library.

An anonymous writer wrote that the purchase of the Wilkus property will be too little too late. The Town is already too built up and taxes are going up too much.

An anonymous writer wrote that within the past 6 months every citizen has gone through a lot of financial hardships. The proposed budget has no staff cuts and asked to cut jobs would prolong the hardships of those living in Connecticut.

Jean Turcotte wrote that the Town should cancel the 375th anniversary and save \$10,000 and try to save the Nature Center and Library and support the school budget.

A concerned citizen wrote stating that many of the proposed school cuts are temporary and superficial and enough is not being done on the part of the Board to reduce its spending.

An anonymous writer wrote against the school budget saying that it is unconscionable for the Board to be requesting a 2.85 percent increase when the Town is decreasing its expenditures by 2.5 percent. Education is important but it is the biggest expense to the Town. The proposed budget should be a zero percent increase.

ADJOURNMENT

At 10:46 p.m., Deputy Mayor Montinieri moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Forrest. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 8-0-0.

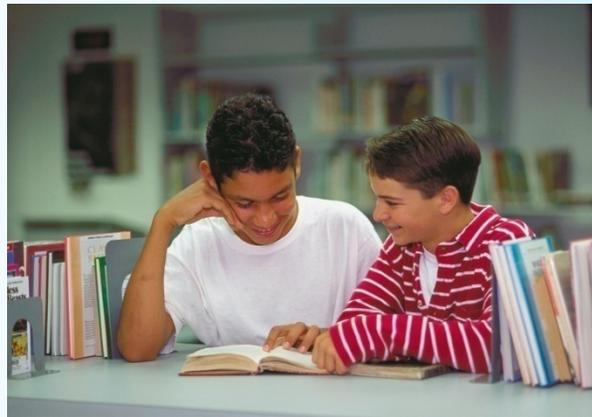
Amy M. Bello
Assistant Town Clerk

Wethersfield Public Schools

2009-2010

Recommended Education Budget
Approved by the Board of Education

Town Council Meeting
March 16, 2009



Michael Kohlhagen, Superintendent of Schools
Rigor and Success for Every Student

Vision of the Wethersfield Board of Education

The Wethersfield Board of Education has created and adopted a vision for the Wethersfield Public Schools that focuses on three areas of central importance.

- As a result of the ***opportunities and outcomes*** they will have experienced in our school system, students will value their years in the Wethersfield Public Schools and face their future with optimism and confidence;
- The ***overall quality of our school system*** will be recognized for its excellence in the region and the state; and
- The ***school system's relationship with the Wethersfield community*** will be as an active partner with town government and civic organizations in strengthening the quality of life in our community.

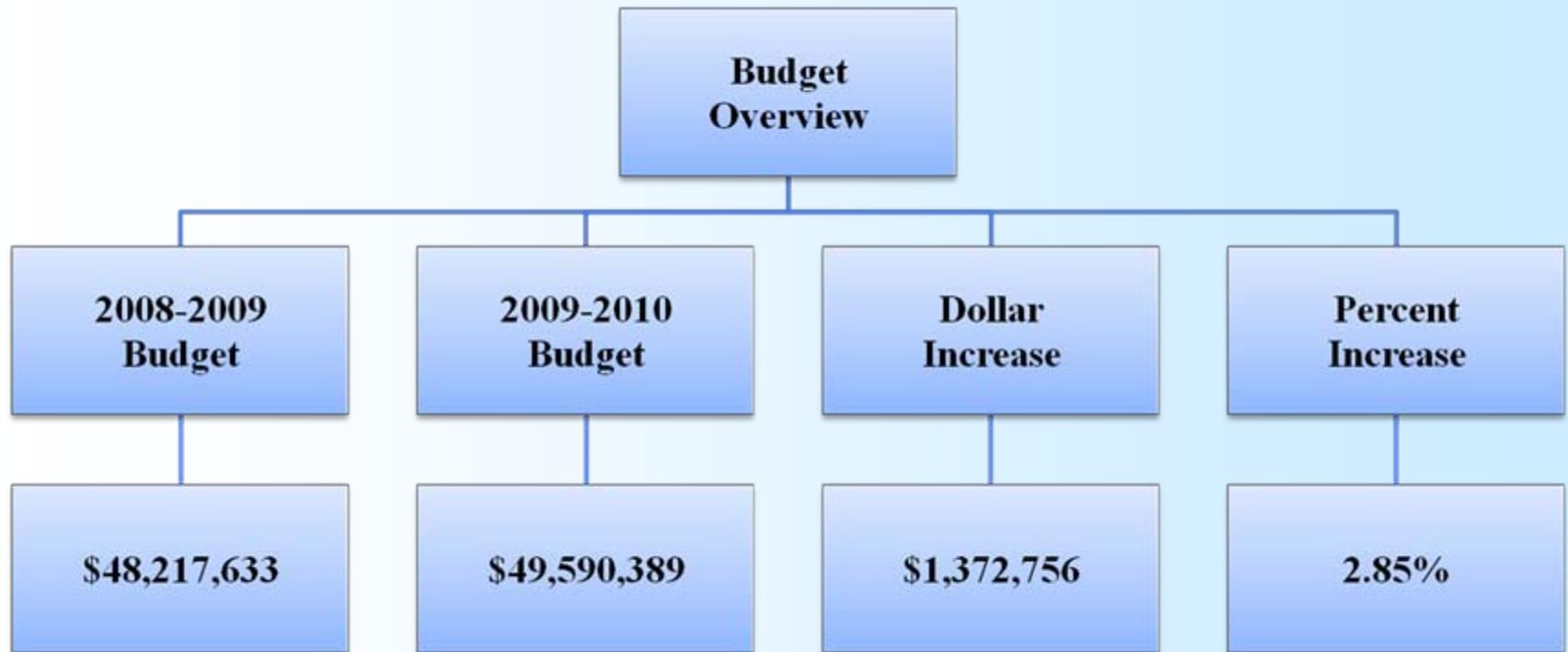
SMART* GOALS

The Wethersfield Public School District will:

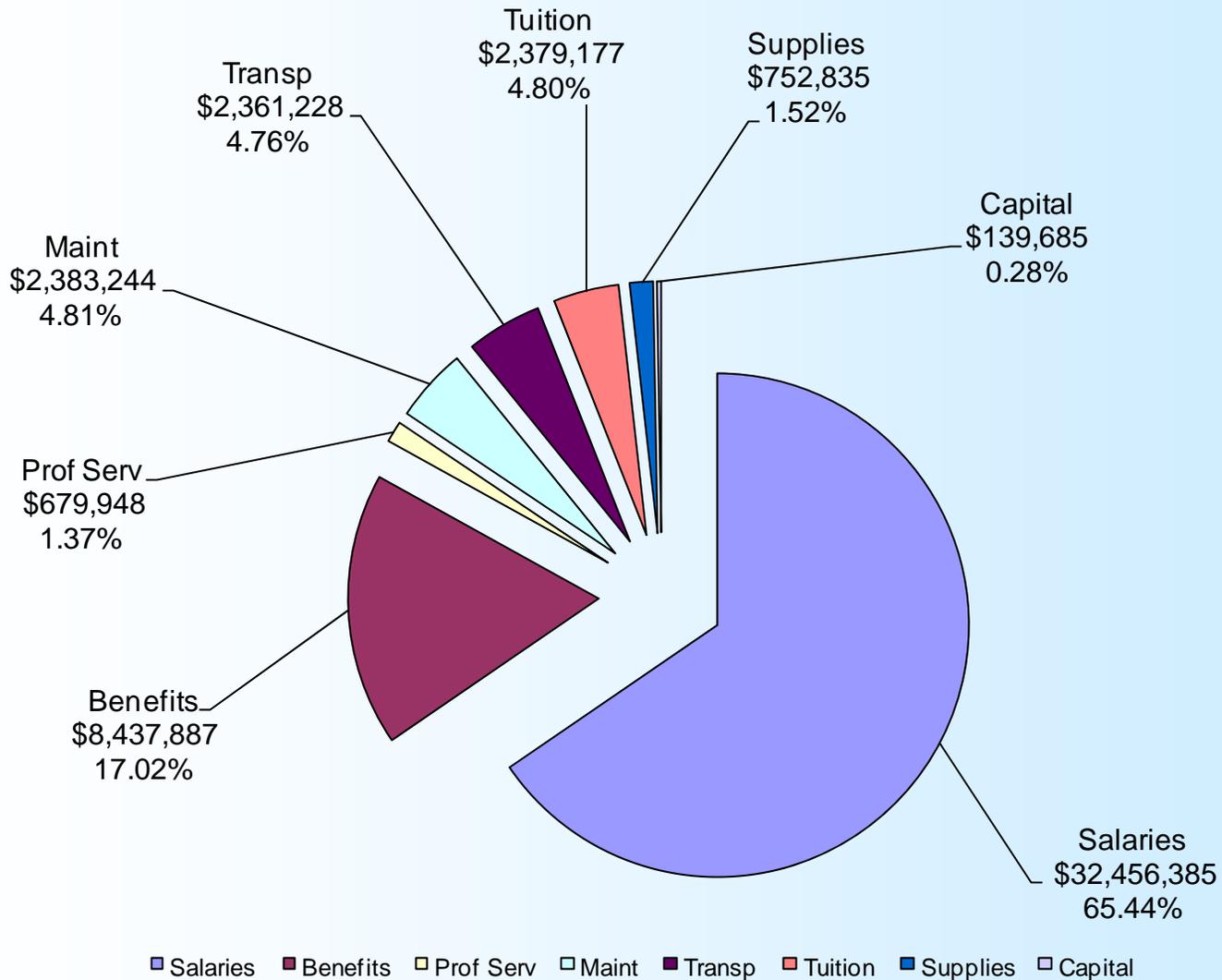
- 1. Improve Student Achievement**
- 2. Strengthen Student Support Services**
- 3. Improve Communications Systems**
- 4. Assess and Strengthen Capital Improvement and Financial Management**
- 5. Improve Use of Instructional Technology to Impact Student Achievement**

*(Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timely)

Budget Overview



Distribution of Recommended Budget Expenditures by Percent



2009-2010
Recommended Education Budget
Development Summary

2008-09 Adopted Budget	\$48,217,633
2009-10 Rollover Budget	\$51,174,325
	6.13% increase
	or \$2,956,692 increase

2009-2010
Recommended Education Budget
Development Summary

2009-10 Recommended Budget represents reductions of 2.25% or \$1,086,961

2009-10 Recommended Budget	\$50,087,364 3.88% increase or \$1,869,731
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2009-10 Recommended Budget as of 3/5/2009	\$49,862,813 3.41% increase or \$1,645,180
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2009-10 Recommended Budget as of 3/5/2009	\$49,602,162 2.87% increase or \$1,384,529
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2009-10 Budget Line Reductions by Object Code

61110 Supervision	- .82%	(\$19,202)
62004 Life/LTD/Medicare B Insurance	- 6.21%	(\$18,457)
63120 Instruct Program Improvement	- 7.06%	(\$ 1,878)
63130 Pupil Services	- 3.74%	(\$ 5,250)
63193 Technical Services	-12.96%	(\$46,717)
63194 Data Processing	-10.42%	(\$12,481)
64100 Electricity	- 1.22%	(\$10,580)
64300 Repairs & Maint-Buildings	- 1.80%	(\$ 2,750)
64310 Repairs & Maint-Equipment	- 1.23%	(\$2,340)
64420 Rental Lease-Equipment	-23.85%	(\$69,938)
64600 Maintenance Supplies	- 1.72%	(\$ 2,520)
64610 Cleaning Supplies	- 1.24%	(\$ 1,840)
64700 Heat Energy	- 6.82%	(\$41,500)
65800 Staff Travel & Conferences	-19.37%	(\$12,655)
65110 Non-Reimb Pupil Transportation	-20.77%	(\$ 7,893)
65220 Transportation Supplies	- 1.68%	(\$ 1,800)

(Continued)

2009-10 Budget Line Reductions by Object Code

66400 Communication Services	- 6.42%	(\$15,983)
66600 Advertising	- 23.79%	(\$15,249)
66610 Printing & Binding	- 23.78%	(\$6,401)
67110 Instructional Services	- 14.36%	(\$60,790)
67200 Textbooks	- 39.34%	(\$126,752)
67900 Other A-V Media	- 18.78%	(\$1,640)
67904 Office Supplies	- 11.71%	(\$4,837)
68200 Building Improvements	- 29.47%	(\$25,900)
68300 New Equipment-Instructional	- 83.36%	(\$108,233)
68310 New Equipment-Non-Instructional	- 50.00%	(\$5,000)
68320 Replacement Equip-Instructional	- 19.46%	(\$2,073)
68330 Replacement Equip-Non-Instructional	- 29.20%	<u>(\$17,525)</u>
	Total	(\$648,184)

Cost Savings & Actions Taken to Reduce Budget to 3.88%

2009-10 Budget Adjustments from 3.88% to 3.41% Budget

<u>Object</u>	<u>Account</u>	<u>Adjustment +/-</u>	<u>Reason</u>
61110	Supervision	(34,309)	Personnel Adjustments-Contract
61112	Certified	113,308	Personnel Adjustments-Grants
61120	Non-Certified Permanent	(174,140)	Personnel Adjustments-Contract/Grants
62002	Retirement	74,779	Final Actuarial Projection
62003	Health Insurance	(439,982)	Final Insurance Renewal
62005	Worker's Compensation	(8,906)	Final Insurance Renewal
64310	Repairs & Maint-Equip	8,000	Athletic Bus Repairs
65100	Reim Pupil Transportation	(37,700)	Magnet School Trans Reimb
66700	Pupil Tuition	271,400	Hartford Magnet Schools
67200	Textbooks	5,000	World Language Textbooks
67902	Conf & Meeting Supplies	(2,000)	Meeting Supplies
	Total	(224,551)	

2009-10 Adjustments to Reduce Budget to 2.87%

<u>Object</u>	<u>Account</u>	<u>Adjustment +/-</u>	<u>Comment</u>
61110	Supervision	(100,000)	One Administrator
61112	Certified	(3,090)	One Department Leader Stipend
61120	Non-Certified Permanent	(47,000)	One Custodial Vacancy
61120	Technology Support	(50,000)	Reorganization
61130	Non-Certified Temporary	(20,000)	Energy Management
65100	Reim Pupil Transportation	(40,561)	Reduction of one bus
	Total	(260,651)	

2009-2010
Recommended Education Budget
Development Summary

2009-10 Recommended Budget as of 3/10/2009 Superintendent's Salary Freeze	\$49,597,131 2.86% increase or \$1,379,498
2009-10 Recommended Budget as of 3/10/2009 Cabinet Salary Freeze	\$49,590,389 2.85% increase or \$1,372,756

Budget Scenario

<u>2008-09 Adopted Budget</u>	<u>2009-10 Proposed Budget</u>	<u>Dollar Increase</u>	<u>Percent Increase</u>
\$48,217,633	\$49,590,389	\$1,372,756	2.85%
\$48,217,633	\$48,217,633	<u>\$0</u>	0.00%
		\$1,372,756	

Decreasing the budget from a 2.85% to a 0% increase is equal to the average salary of 25 full-time teachers.

Staff reductions would need to be made across all bargaining units.

Wethersfield Public Schools Employee Residents

# Employee Categories	26
Total # Wethersfield Resident	425
Total # of Employees	725

Budget Comparisons by District

	2008-09 Adopted <u>Budget</u>	2009-10 Proposed <u>Budget</u>	2009-10 Budget Dollar <u>Increase</u>	2009-10 Budget Percent <u>Increase</u>
Berlin	\$35,817,521	\$37,013,325	\$1,195,804	3.34%
Cromwell	\$24,927,222	\$25,675,038	\$747,816	3.00%
Newington	\$55,872,142	\$58,080,219	\$2,208,077	3.95%
Rocky Hill	\$27,192,227	\$28,541,391	\$1,349,164	4.96%
Wethersfield	\$48,217,633	\$49,590,389	\$1,372,756	2.85%

Education Budget Request

- Maintains Recommended Class Size
- Maintains Current Programming
- Maintains Core Services
- Reductions in all other Areas focusing on Non-Personnel Cuts
- Future Reductions could include:
Transportation, Insurance, Fuel, other
Benefits

Striving for Continuous Improvement

In the midst of this crisis, we must stay mindful of the larger goal of closing the achievement gap and striving to provide the most appropriate education to all of Wethersfield's children.

Wethersfield Public Schools

Commitment to:

- Providing a quality education at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer.
- Ensuring “rigor and success for every student” through effective budgeting and resource management.

Budget Timeline

- Town Public Hearing
April 20, 2009
- Town Council Budget Adoption
Not Later Than May 15, 2009

Town of Wethersfield Proposed Budget

2009/2010



Mill Rate

- Decrease = - 3.6 Mills
- Mill Rate = From 34.71 to 31.11



Appropriations

	<u>FY2008/2009</u>	<u>FY2009/2010</u>	Increase/Decrease	<u>Percent</u>
Town	34,712,281	33,857,261	(855,020)	-2.46%
Board of Education	<u>48,217,633</u>	<u>49,590,389</u>	<u>1,372,756</u>	<u>2.85%</u>
Total	82,929,914	83,447,650	517,736	0.62%
MILL RATE	34.71	31.11	-3.6 mills	
Average Home				
Assessed at (70%)	\$152,860	\$180,140	\$298.65/year	



Revaluation

Increase In Real Estate Value from 10/1/2003 To 10/1/2008

Residential Properties	17%
Commercial Properties	22%
Industrial properties	25%

Corresponding Increase in Real Estate Taxes Based on Proposed Mill Rate of 31.11

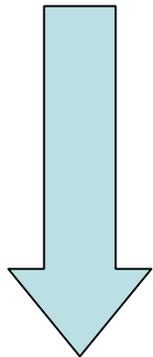
Starter Home	18.4% or an average increase of \$772/year
Mid Range Home	0.17% or an average increase of \$12.50/year
Larger Homes	-16.38% or an average decrease of \$4,000/year
Condos	20.79% or an average increase of \$405/year
Commercial	21.69% or an average increase of \$1,280/year



Revenues

Total Lost Revenues = \$1,471,784

	<u>FY 2008/2009</u>	<u>FY 2009/2010</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Other Taxes & Interest	\$ 1,155,000	\$ 955,000	(\$200,000)	(17.32)
State & Federal Aid	9,359,294	8,899,337	(\$459,957)	(4.91)
Non-Tax Revenue	2,629,592	2,398,765	(\$230,827)	(8.78)
Fund Balance	<u>1,281,000</u>	<u>700,000</u>	<u>(\$581,000)</u>	<u>(45.36)</u>
Total	\$14,424,886	\$12,953,102	(\$1,471,784)	(10.20)



Investment Income (-12.6%)
 Intergovernmental Revenues (-5.2%)
 State Education Funding (-4.9%)



Revenues

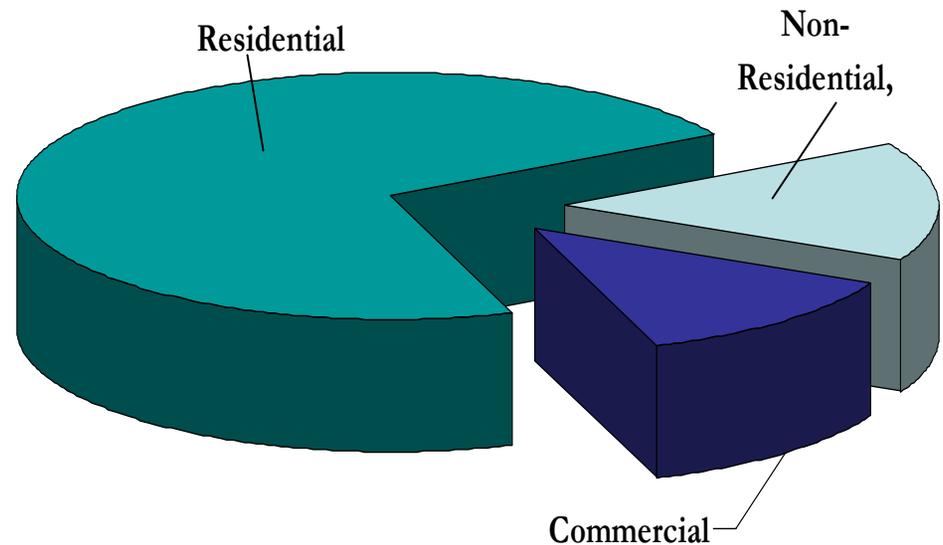
- Fund Balance = Use of \$700,000 = 7.38%. Goal = 8%
- Local Option Taxes: Alternative source to property tax
 - Hotel Tax
 - Sales Tax



Where does the money come from?

- **Revenue Sources**

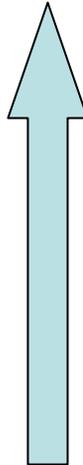
- Property Taxes 84.5%
 - Residential = 85%
 - Commercial = 15%
- Non-Residential 15.5%
 - Permits & Licenses
 - Fines & Penalties
 - Investment Income
 - State, Federal & Other Grants
 - Charges of Services
 - Other Miscellaneous Income
 - Use of Fund Balance



Expenditures

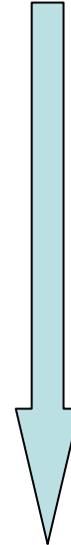
Increases

Electricity	3%
Health Insurance	7.5%
Refuse Disposal	2%
Liability Insurances	9.6%
Workers' Comp.	5%



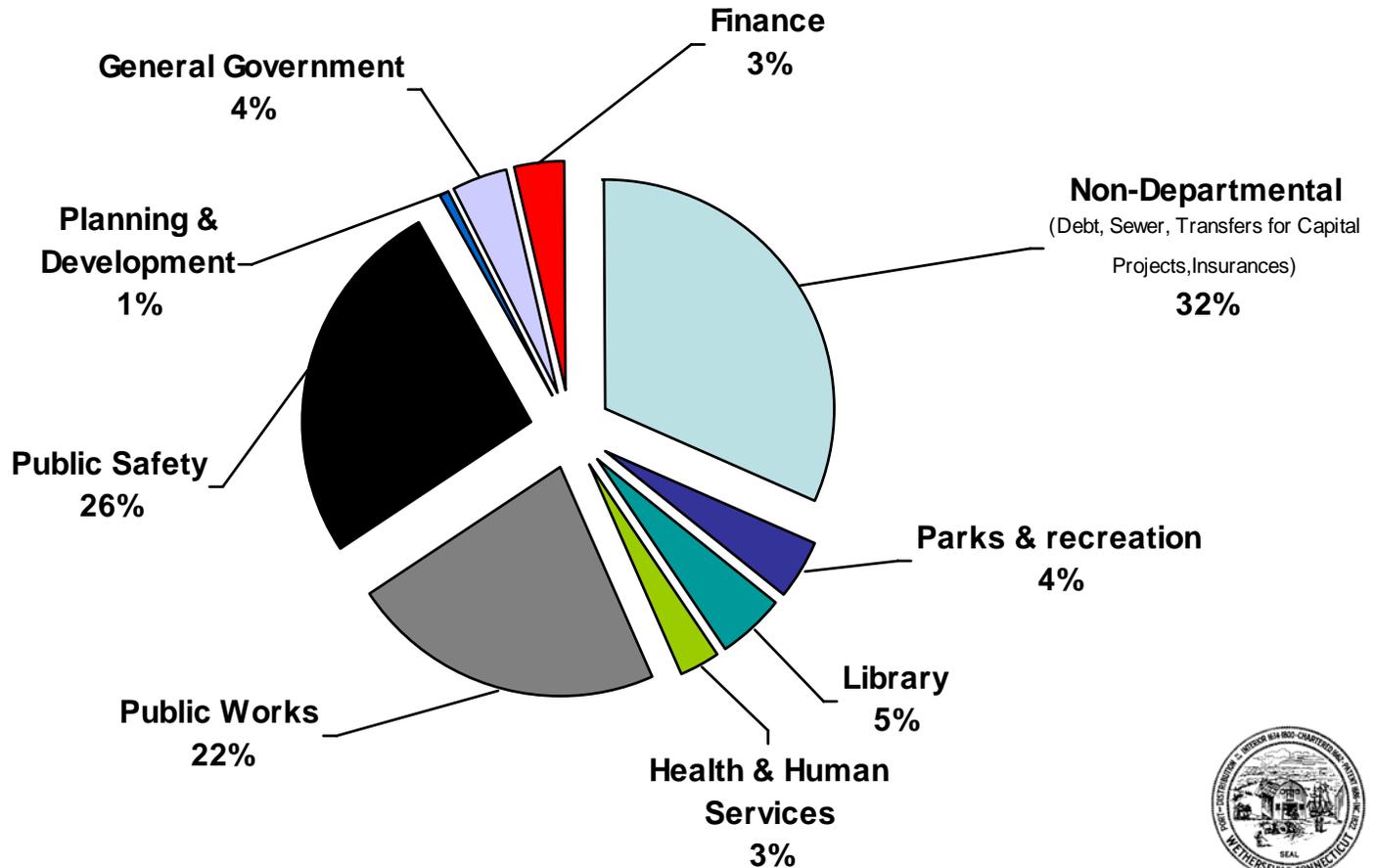
Decreases

Diesel Fuel	46.5%
Gasoline Fuel	39.6%
MDC Charges	4.1%
Pension (Town)	3.4%
Dial A Ride	0%
Heating Oil	48.1%



Town Expenditures by Department

(Excludes Education)



Major Expenditure Cuts

A 2.46% decrease in Town Budget equates to \$855,020 in reductions which include:

- Contributions to Outside Agencies eliminated
- 375th Anniversary Celebration Funding reduced
- Emergency Mgmt. Director Salary eliminated
- Technology equipment requests cut by half
- Economic Development & Tourism reduced by 66.2%
- Some part time positions reduced by 5 hours each
- Elimination of two full time and one part time positions in Social & Youth Services and the ROPE and Adventure Programs for our youth
- Physical Services vacancy will not be filled
- Fire Dept. equipment account and Awards dinner accounts reduced, and new vehicles and software program requests not funded
- Nature Center no longer in the General Fund Budget; Town to contribute \$5000 for utilities only.
- Number of vehicles in fleet reduced
- Number of street lights reduced
- Salaries for seasonal leaf employees eliminated
- Assistant Library Director position eliminated and Library materials budget reduced.
- Eliminated Physical Services' request for a payloader
- Significant reductions in Capital Budget



Where Your Tax Dollars Go

- If you pay \$5,000 per year in real estate taxes.....
 - 59.4% goes to Education = \$2971.50
 - 2.5% goes to Capital Improvements = \$125.50
 - 4.9% goes to Debt Service = \$242.00
 - 1.9% goes to the Library = \$96.50
 - 31.3% goes to Town Expenditures = \$1564.50



Including some of these major categories:

- | | | |
|---|--------|--------------|
| – Public Safety (Police, Fire, Ambulance) | 31.54% | or \$ 493.50 |
| – Public Works | 19.85% | or \$ 310.58 |
| – Planning & Econ Dev | 0.88% | or \$ 13.69 |
| – Parks & Recreation | 5.13% | or \$ 80.34 |
| – Health & Human Services | 3.22% | or \$ 50.45 |
| – Metropolitan District Comm. | 9.14% | or \$ 143.00 |
| – Refuse & Recycling | 6.92% | or \$ 108.22 |



Capital Budget

The first year of the five-year program, fiscal year 2009-2010, total expenditures are proposed at \$9,003,564. This amount is comprised of \$0 local bond funds, \$7,968,564 of State funds, and \$1,035,000 of General Fund appropriations.

- **\$25,000** Preserve America/Wayfaring Signs
- **\$660,000** Silas Deane Streetscape *
- **\$1,400,000** Wethersfield Avenue Streetscape *
- **\$75,000** Plan of Conservation & Development Update
- **\$250,000** Bell Pond Repair *
- **\$25,000** Underground Water Study of Wethersfield High School and the James well Road area
- **\$30,000** Repair various Town parking lots
- **\$25,000** New parking lot at Millwoods
- **\$500,000** General Fund Share of Paving
- **\$147,577** State Town Aid Funds for Paving
- **\$188,247** LoCIP Funds (est.) for Goff Road Reconstruction
- **\$30,000** Baseball fields
- **\$90,740** Asbestos Abatement at Community Center *
- **\$200,000** Replace Ductwork at Community Center *
- **\$25,000** Repair Chimney at Community Center
- **\$140,000** West Entrance Drop Off at Community Center *
- **\$57,000** New Sidewalks from the Community Center to Willard Pool with Lights *
- **\$50,000** Roof Routine Maintenance on Town buildings
- **\$35,000** Roof Consultant PM – Renewal
- **\$5,000** Closed Circuit Television at Physical Services
- **\$30,000** Paint Exterior of Standish House
- **\$25,000** Multi Building Window Replacement Escrow Account
- **\$30,000** Replace Skylight in Media Room at Wright School
- **\$225,000** School/Town District-wide fiber Town Ring Loop *
- **\$100,000** Digital Controls at Wright School *
- **\$25,000** Office of Civil Rights Compliance at Wethersfield High School
- **\$135,000** Webb School Cooling System *
- **\$100,000** Phase II Boiler Replacement at Emerson Williams School
- **\$175,000** Replace Doors & Windows at Highcrest School *
- **\$100,000** School District Wide Retrofit Server Farm *
- **\$350,000** School District Wide Phone System *
- **\$300,000** Reconfigure Traffic Pattern at SDMS *

Within the State Grants category are projects we submitted to Governor Rell for consideration under the Federal Stimulus Package. Nothing has been awarded as of this date.

Capital Nonrecurring Expenditure Fund

- **Four Police Vehicles**
- **Pager Replacements for Fire Department**
- **2 Medium, 6 Wheel Dump Trucks**
- **1 Pick Up Truck, Heavy Duty**
- **Leaf Machine**
- **MUNIS ASP Financial System (Town & BOE)**
- **Energy Committee Funding**
- **Lease Payments for new Fire Truck, Dump Trucks, & Cottone Field**
- **Radio Tower Reserve**



Recommendations & Solutions

1. **No additional programs unless covered 100% by user fees**
2. **Cost of Doing Business**
3. **Operating Expenses not funded by one time revenues**
4. **Take care of the truly needy through sliding fees**
5. **Shortened work week**
6. **Regional Efforts**
7. **Follow financial policies**
8. **Prioritize Core Services**
9. **Consider long term effect line item deductions will have on services**
10. **Impact Statements, Communicate with the Public**



Challenge

- ❖ A mill is worth \$2,311,009
- ❖ So therefore, for every \$231,101 you add or delete, the mill rate will go up or down 1/10 of a mill
- ❖ If you wish to add something back into the budget, let us know where to cut back in another area, so we have a balanced budget.



Public Input

It is important to us to hear from the public on how they wish to have their tax dollars spent. I encourage people to call me at 721-2801 or contact me with letters or emails at bonnie.therrien@wethersfieldct.com. This year the budget is on the Town's website and you are able to submit your comments and suggestions online. Just go to the Town's website at www.wethersfieldct.com and click the link for the 2009/2010 Budget. Remember the Town Council must adopt next year's budget no later than May 15, 2009.

