

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED BUDGET MONDAY, APRIL 26, 2004

A Public Hearing on the 2004-2005 Town Budget was held on Monday, April 26, 2004 at 7:00 p.m. in the Wethersfield High School Auditorium with Chairperson Russell A. Morin presiding.

Present: Councilors Adil, Cascio, Czernicki, Forrest, Fortunato, Montinieri, Deputy Mayor Karangekis and Chairperson Morin.

Absent: Councilor Hemmann.

Present from the Board of Education: Claire A. Carney, Matt DeAngelo, Michael F. McKenna, Janet G. Pilczak, Gerri Roberts, Raul Rodriguez, Martin Walsh and Chairperson Stacey M. Hodges.

Absent: Penny Stanziale.

Also present: Bonnie L. Therrien, Town Manager; Patrick Proctor, Superintendent of Schools; Lisa Hancock, Finance Director; and Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk.

OPENING REMARKS

Chairperson Morin called the public hearing to order and all stood for the pledge of allegiance. He stated that those signed up to speak this evening will be called in order and will each be given ten minutes to speak. After those signed up have had the opportunity to speak, the Chairperson will then recognize those who did not sign up previous to the hearing. After all have had the opportunity to speak once, a second opportunity will be granted to those who have already spoken. The time limit for the second comment opportunity will be limited to no more than twenty minutes. Chairperson Morin asked the Chairperson of the Board of Education, Staci Hodges, to begin with her presentation of the Board of Education budget.

PRESENTATION OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET

Chairperson Hodges said that it has been an exciting year for the schools. She introduced Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Patrick Proctor, and Board of Education members Claire Carney, Matt DeAngelo, Martin Walsh, Mike McKenna, Gerri Roberts, Janet Pilczak and Raul Rodriguez. Chairperson Hodges then turned the Board of Education presentation over to Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Patrick Proctor. Dr. Proctor stated that Wethersfield's greatest asset is its people and their dedication and commitment. Dr. Proctor said that all budget plans need to begin with a vision for the future. The Wethersfield Board of Education has created and adopted a vision for the Wethersfield Public Schools that focuses on three areas of central importance. These include opportunities and outcomes for students, overall quality of the school system, and the school system's relationship with the Wethersfield community. Dr. Proctor said that the Wethersfield Board of Education, on March 11, 2004, approved the 2004-05 operating budget in the amount of \$37,210,834, which represents an increase of \$2,971,509 or 8.7% over the 2003-04 operating budget. The 8.7% increase is the result of five major contributing elements: fixed and contractual cost increases, corrective adjustments to the budget, transition costs of the Webb, Marsh Street, and Stillman projects, new staff positions, and new technology and textbook acquisitions. The average increase in Board approved budgets across the State is approximately 6.85%. Dr. Proctor gave a Power Point presentation of the proposed 2004-2005 Board of Education Operating Budget which included the following:

- Vision of the Wethersfield Board of Education
- Budget Priorities for 2004-2005
- Current and Projected Enrollment Districtwide
- Wethersfield's Per Pupil Expenditures: Present and Past
- State's Cap on the Education Cost Sharing Grant & Impact on Wethersfield
- Budget Overview

- Distribution of Proposed Budget Expenditures by Percent
- Contributions to Increase: Budget Components
- New Staff Positions
- Requests for New Staff Not Funded
- Technology Initiatives
- Textbooks/Materials
- Board of Education Reductions to the Superintendents Budget (3/11/04)
- Present/Future Needs



[At this point Dr. Proctor gave a slide presentation, offered here for [download in Adobe PDF* format](#) (45 KB).]

PRESENTATION OF THE TOWN BUDGET

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien introduced the Town's new Finance Director, Lisa Hancock. She said that this is the most difficult budget she has faced in her twenty years in local government. She said there have been a number of negative economic factors coming into play. The Town Manager gave an overview of the two Town budgets she has proposed to the Council. One budget shows what a 3.5% impact (Budget #1) would have on the budget and also what is needed to move the community forward (Budget #2). Both budgets assume a Board of Education budget of 8.7% which, by Charter, she cannot change.



[Ms. Therrien went on to give a slide presentation, [available here in Adobe PDF* format](#) (269 KB).]

Town Manager Bonnie Therrien thanked all of the Town Staff and Department Heads who aided her in the development of the budget.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Matthew Zawadski, 88 Dix Road, Chairman of the Fund Raising Committee for the Wethersfield Skate Park; and Paul Mangiafico, 203 Pine Lane, Chairman of the Rules and Regulations Committee, spoke on behalf of those in favor of a Town Skate Park and gave a synopsis of the Skate Park fund raising activities that have already taken place and are planned for the future. Mr. Zawadski said that to-date they have raised \$12,693.02. They requested that the Council include \$112,306.98 in the Recreation & Parks budget to build the Wethersfield Skate Park. They said that the youth of Wethersfield has been asking for a Skate Park for twenty-five years and it is time to provide them with one.

Christine Orde, 316 Church Street, spoke in favor of funding for the Wethersfield Skate Park. She said that there will be initial installation costs, but further maintenance is minimal. She has served on the fund-raising committee and is very impressed by the initiative and determination of the youth in their fund-raising endeavors.

Joe Hammer, 65 Broad Street, a Hanmer School parent, spoke in favor of the proposed Board of Education budget as Wethersfield needs to provide a first rate education for its children. He said that the budget is lean and has no room for further cuts.

John Miller, 375 Pine Lane, said that Wethersfield cannot continue to delay needed projects without destroying the status of the Town. Mr. Miller said that the consultants hired in the 1990's to guide the Town in increasing the Grand List did not work. Mr. Miller said that the EDIC and tourism alone cannot solve Wethersfield's problems. He believes that Wethersfield's primary resource to generate income involves the Meadows. The present solution has to be to opt for a significant increase in taxes so that we can compare favorably with surrounding towns.

Linda Avery, 39 Ox Yoke Drive, spoke in support of the current proposed Board of Education budget. She said that she does not believe that the Cottone Field renovation should be included in the budget, but should be put out to referendum.

Paul Courchaine, 481 Main Street, spoke of the importance of increased spending on the Wethersfield Library budget, as the Library plays an important function to residents of all ages in Town.

Betty Rosania, 88 Desmond Drive, stated that the Town needs to start spending money in order to make money. She said that she is ashamed of Wethersfield's current conditions of roads, vacant buildings, and PTO's having to fund school supplies. Ms. Rosania feels that Wethersfield needs more and not less staff to maintain the Town. She believes that Wethersfield needs to issue bond referendums for land acquisition and economic development. She urged the Council to raise taxes as per the recommendation of the Town Manager and to increase user fees so that programs are self-sustaining. Ms. Rosania stated that the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. does not speak for thousands of Wethersfield residents in the opinions they give at Council meetings.

Carol Adil, 53 Desmond Drive, stated that Wethersfield has a number of services built into the tax dollars that other Towns do not. She read from a letter in the newspaper written by Jim Clynch that supports raising taxes to continue the excellent services offered in Wethersfield. These tax dollars provide for a good quality of life in Wethersfield.

Carol Kober-Narciss, 34 Griswold Road, spoke on behalf of a number of parents at the Highcrest School, where one of her children attends, in support of the Board of Education proposed budget. Ms. Kober-Narciss urged the Council to fund, in the capital budget, the replacement roof at Highcrest School which has been an issue for some time. She would also like to see funds in the budget for a Wethersfield Skate Park.

Elizabeth Bray, 114 Two Stone Drive, spoke in opposition to the cuts to the Wethersfield Library budget. She said that libraries help to improve the quality of life in a community.

Christine Bradley, 480 Wells Road, spoke in support of the Wethersfield Library. She said that the budget for the Library is less than 2% of the total Town budget, yet it serves so many patrons, both residents and nonresidents. She does not support cutting the Library hours.

Holger Lundin, 137 Dale Road, spoke in representation of the Senior Net Computer Studies Learning Lab at the Pitkin Community Center. He said that the group is concerned about the cuts to the Library's books, materials, and hours of service. The group treasures the working relationship they have with the Library's computer resources. The Library is a valuable resource to the community and he urged the Council to maintain the Library's current level of spending.

Patricia Carroll, 34 Chesterfield Road, spoke in support of the proposed Board of Education budget, as it legitimately makes up for past under-budgeting and reflects the basics necessary to keep the Wethersfield school system competitive. Ms. Carroll questions the renovation to Cottone Field and whether it is a good financial venture at all. She is not in support of lighting the field.

Robin Bourassa, 248 Dale Road, has two school-aged children and believes that the character of a Town rests on the quality of education it provides. She supports the proposed Board of Education budget, as it is fair and palatable. Ms. Bourassa has concerns over the proposed cutbacks to the Library.

Liz Brown, 15 Harding Street, supports the proposed Board of Education budget and urged the Council not to cut the Library budget. She stated that she will be taking a more active role in Town so that Wethersfield will not need to "rise from the ashes."

Maureen Hayes, 29 Hartford Avenue, spoke in support of the Wethersfield Library and urged the Council not to cut funds to the Library. She said that a strong public library indicates that a community has its priorities firmly directed to enhancing the quality of life of all of its citizens.

James Clynch, 903 Ridge Road, stated that the Manager's proposed Budget #1 would be a prescription for disaster. He said that the Town cannot shun its responsibility to educate its youth, look out for its senior citizens, protect its community from crime and fire, and to maintain its roads. He said there are programs in place for those citizens who cannot afford an increase in taxes.

Tracy McDougall, 45 Nott Street, stated that she is frugal and opted to move to Wethersfield over West Hartford because her family was able to get a larger house and bigger yard for a lower tax amount; however she feels that the Town has to provide a competitive level of services. She is concerned over the proposed cuts to the Library's budget as a library reflects a Town's commitment to learning and reading. Wethersfield's Library helps make the Town a community and gives people a sense of belonging. Ms. McDougall said that she would be willing to pay a monthly trash fee and bring her own leaves to the Town dump in order to cut costs in the budget.

Jennifer Wolf, 345 Wolcott Hill Road, spoke in support of the proposed Board of Education budget. She said that the school system needs the resources required to bring it up to date.

Christine Pattee, 23 Bristol Street, said that all residents need to pay their fair share and she spoke in favor of the Town Manager's proposed budget #2. She said that a competitive school system will provide for elevated property values.

Greg Bedula, 126 Meadowgate, spoke in opposition to any cuts to the Library budget and commented that much work has gone into the Library to make it one of which the Town can be very proud. Mr. Bedula spoke in favor of the Town Manager's proposed budget #2 as raising taxes, although not pleasant, is a better alternative than watching the Town decline.

Pauline Ucich, 646 Nott Street, thanked both the Town Council and the Board of Education for the time they donate for the betterment of Wethersfield. She spoke in opposition to any cuts to the Library budget. She said that people feel a sense of freedom and relaxation in the Library.

Perry Cornwall, 61 Boulter Road, stated that positive attitude, balance, courage and discipline are attributes necessary for the Council to use when making decisions. The decisions made will almost always be approved by some and disapproved by others. Mr. Cornwall spoke in favor of the relocation of the Nature Center near Mill Woods Park and does not support the cuts in proposed budget #1 as they would curtail programs at the Nature Center.

Marguerite Alpert, 7 Morrison Avenue, spoke in support of the proposed Board of Education budget and in opposition to any cuts to the Library budget. She said that the Board of Education budget is a modest proposal even at its 8.7% increase. She said she is willing to accept an increase in taxes in order to accomplish the needs of the budget. Ms. Alpert said that she is disappointed with the Library's already reduced hours and is concerned over the fact that the hours may be cut even further.

Karla Neville, 40 Brussels Avenue, stated that she is dismayed by the lack of development in Town. In the past, Wethersfield had a wonderful, cutting-edge reputation which is now deteriorating. She said that Wethersfield needs to upgrade its sports fields, especially Cottone Field, provide a Skate Park for its young, and update its educational resources. Ms. Neville said that life is full of choices and those with fixed incomes could pay less taxes by downsizing.

Mary Ellen Gregorio, 4 Somerset Street, a teacher at Charles Wright School, sees Wethersfield as the gateway to Hartford. She spoke in support of the proposed Board of Education budget. She also spoke of her opposition to the cuts to the Library budget. The Library offers free and open access to services and strives to provide excellent customer service. The Library enriches your life, enlightens citizenship, and promotes communication. She would like to see resources added back to the Library budget as having a fully functioning library is not a privilege, it is a right. Ms. Gregorio is tired of waiting and feels that the cuts have to be stopped now and that taxes need to be raised equitably.

across the board.

Judy Keane, 126 Broad Street, urged the Council to maintain the current Library budget, or to expand it. She said that a love of reading must be cultivated and the computer systems must be upgraded often.

Charles Ford, 249 Ridge Road, spoke in favor of a Skate Park in Town as it is something that the Wethersfield community should have. Mr. Ford read from a plan written by the kids in support of the Skate Park stating that the intent of the Park is to provide a safe place for the youth of Wethersfield to have fun and practice their sport. Funding for the Park, \$125,000, is anticipated to come from businesses, civic organizations, residents, grants, donations, and fund-raising activities. He urged the Council to help the kids obtain their goal. Mr. Ford also commented on the general direction of the budget. He said that he spoke with someone recently who had heard that Wethersfield is going down hill. Mr. Ford is concerned that this is the current perception of Wethersfield and he urged the Council to keep the Town from sliding down this slippery slope.

Matthew Daskal, 24 Griswold Road, spoke in support of the ROPES program which had a great affect on his life and provided him with many leadership skills. Mr. Daskal also spoke in opposition to the cuts to the Library budget. He does not like that the hours are already cut on Fridays.

Lawrence Daskal, 24 Griswold Road, spoke in support of the proposed Board of Education budget and also spoke of his concerns over the cuts to Library funding and to the ROPES program.

George A Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, commented that democracy in not in bad shape as so many people tonight have been able to express diverse opinions. He stated that the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. has five hundred paying members in the community and they have spent a lot of time meeting and talking with residents of Wethersfield. Mr. Ruhe said that many people in Wethersfield are struggling to make ends meet and many have even said that they may have to leave Wethersfield. Mr. Ruhe said that the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. agrees with many of the points made tonight by the Town Manager. Mr. Ruhe said that the Town needs to tighten their belt and give up wants and desires for necessities only as he is concerned that the tax burden is being pushed on to its residential owners.

Jane Sjoman, 769 Maple Street, spoke in opposition to cuts to the Wethersfield Library She stated that volunteers at the Wethersfield Library free up time for the staff to serve the public. She said that, in the past two years, the Library has experienced double digit increases in circulation with no increase in staff. She said that senior citizens visit the library to relax and enjoy different types of media that they may not be able to afford at home.

Billye Logan, 318 Hartford Avenue, reminded the Council that they will not be able to please everyone. She said that it is necessary for her taxes to be raised. She stated that both Town Manager Bonnie Therrien and Town Planner Peter Gillespie will, in time, broaden the tax base by improving the business on the Silas Deane Highway and the Berlin Turnpike. Ms. Logan said that Wethersfield has to have good schools, library services, police department and a volunteer fire department.

Rocco Orsini, 95 Broad Street, spoke on behalf of the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. He reminded the public that, while the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. enjoys a good debate, they attack the issues and not people or groups. Mr. Orsini said that if the proposed tax hike goes through, he, personally, will have to consider moving to downsize and save on taxes. He said that his property taxes have doubled in ten years and if current trends continue in Town, his taxes will double again in five years. Mr. Orsini said that everyone must understand the economic reality that money does not grow on trees and that all Towns are hurting. Mr. Orsini said that the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. finds the spending increase of \$4.9 million and tax increase of 18.9% to be excessive. He said that this \$4.9 million does not include any expenditures relating to the renovation of Cottone Field. Mr. Orsini said that the piling-on budget mentality must be stopped. He reminded the Council not to abandon the 3.5% financial roadmap. Mr. Orsini said that the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. believes that the Town has been more than generous with its school budgets.

Moira Chance, 21 Willard Street, a junior at Wethersfield High School, stated that the ROPES program provided her with better social skills and a better understanding of herself. Ms. Chance spoke in opposition to any cuts to the

Library budget. Ms. Chance also stated that she initiated a petition in support of a full-time choral director at Wethersfield High School. She said that the choirs have grown by leaps and bounds and the staffing has remained the same.

Kerry Zaleski, 23 Black Birch, spoke in support of the proposed Board of Education budget. Ms. Zaleski is a teacher at Wethersfield High School and has experienced first hand the affects of the under-funding of education. Ms. Zaleski also spoke in opposition to any cuts in the Library budget.

David Kelly, 145 Parsonage Street, Rocky Hill, chairman of the Village Cemetery's FACES group, said that the maintenance of the stones, especially the table tablets, in the Cemetery is very costly, but very necessary as non-maintained stones cause a safety hazard and the loss of these stones would be a great loss to Wethersfield. He said that numerous tourists and school groups visit the cemetery and its park-like grounds.

Aurelio Interlandi, 249 Willow Street, commented on the school system, recreation and the library. He said that he has seen many houses for sale in Wethersfield. He questions what his taxes are paying for. He knows he is paying plenty for education, but he has lost services such as the free disposal of grass clippings. He urged the Council to reinstate the free grass clipping disposal service.

Lisa Nicoletti, 15 Rosedale Street, spoke in support of the proposed Board of Education budget and the proposed Town budget #2. She requested that the Library hours be restored. Ms. Nicoletti fears that if key services continue to be cut in Town, businesses will not be attracted to Wethersfield and the Town will not be able to grow its Grant List. She said that the Town needs to raise its income to support its burgeoning costs.

Douglas Buck, 411 Hartford Avenue, encouraged the Council to hold the line on the budget. Mr. Buck offered suggestions to cut administrative costs within Town. He questioned why Board of Education administrators are paid higher salaries than the teachers. He suggested that trimming these administrative salaries would not hurt education at all. Mr. Buck also suggested that Wethersfield professionals, including himself, offer to volunteer one or two days per year to teach a class of a special topic in Wethersfield. He said that this will help to defray costs along with giving students a better understanding of their community.

Edward Kardas, 850 Cloverdale Circle, stated that the Town has to determine the amount they are willing to pay for the level of services they are currently provided. Mr. Kardas said that neither proposed budget #1 nor #2 address cost reductions through salary freezing for one year and increasing insurance co-payments. He said that the schools need to be restructured in a manner to eliminate administrative bureaucracy. Mr. Kardas also suggested using retirees in the classrooms. He said that the members of the Council and the Board of Education need to remove themselves from their political equations and take nonpartisan actions in all aspects of the government/public school process.

John Pratt, 32 Surrey Drive, spoke in support of the Children's Department of the Wethersfield Library. He said that his family supports the entire library. Mr. Pratt spoke in opposition to any cuts to the Library budget.

Laura Saunders, 84 Hillcrest Avenue, spoke in support of full funding for all services that promote the development of Wethersfield's youth. This includes full funding for both the education and library budgets.

Holly Landers, 205 Broad Street, spoke in support of the proposed Board of Education budget as children are the future of Wethersfield. She supports sports in Town, but feels that funding for education is a higher priority than the renovation of Cottone Field. She also spoke in opposition to any cuts to the Library budget and suggested that the Council explore privatization before making any further cuts.

Jeff Kotkin, 28 Farms Village Road, stated that the Council needs to make sure that the Town's infrastructure is kept up and improved. Mr. Kotkin spoke on the upgrading of Mill Woods, which he believes to be the crown jewel of Wethersfield. He said that the Wethersfield Little League is willing to put up \$5,000 for a study of the soil at Mill Woods and they pledge to do what they can to raise money for a new ball field. He requested that the Town match this contribution.

Kelly Weinberg, 480 Brimfield Road, stated that the Town is in a sad state of affairs. She said that she agrees with

other residents that the artificial turf and lighting at Cottone Field are not priorities, and the Town hasn't the time or money to fund this project at this time. Ms. Weinberg said that she agrees with the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. that pay freezes and contributory efforts toward benefits are necessary in Town, just as is done in the private sector. She agrees that quality teachers are essential to Wethersfield, but she believes that these salaries must also be frozen for a period of time along with Town salaries. Ms. Weinberg suggested that the following items could be omitted from the Board of Education budget without creating a detriment: the purchase of new hardware and software, non-mandatory training and conferences, portable phone systems, and overtime. She said that the Town needs to make sacrifices and put priorities in order until better days. Ms. Weinberg spoke in opposition to any cuts in the Library budget.

Harry Lichtenbaum, 16 Townhouse Lane, suggested that the Town Council look very carefully at the Library budget as Wethersfield is made up of many senior citizens and school-aged children who use and need the Library. He believes that the Library should be open seven days per week and that the Library budget should not only be maintained, but increased.

Gail Griffin, 52 Desmond Drive, said that she supports the Town Manager's budget and the proposed Board of Education budget. She urged the Council to be strong and go with what they know is right. She agreed with the idea of volunteer substitutes in the schools.

Lou Sanzaro, 41 Robeth Lane, said that during the election a pledge was made by candidates that they are fully supportive of a progressive plan to revitalize Wethersfield and make the changes necessary. He said that the citizens of Wethersfield need to trust the Board of Education and Council to make decisions that will keep Wethersfield vibrant. Mr. Sanzaro said that passing a minimum budget will continue to put off and even worsen issues that are already at a critical point. He said that Wethersfield needs to adopt a budget that will address these issues that have been put off for many years.

Anne Riccio, 7 Hayrake Drive, spoke on behalf of the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) of the Silas Deane Middle School. She said that the PAC supports the proposed Board of Education budget as it will regain the school system's reputation of excellence. Ms. Riccio said that she is willing to pay increased taxes in order to achieve the Town's goals.

Dan O'Connor, 34 Dorchester Road, said that he does not agree with the allowance of signs at the public hearing. Mr. O'Connor implored the Council to do what is right and do what is in their hearts. He said that the Council cannot be beaten into submission by the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. to follow a roadmap. Mr. O'Connor urged the Council to listen to the silent majority rather than the vocal minority.

Peter Brzezicki, 239 Griswold Road, stated that he is appalled by the lack of textbooks in the Wethersfield schools and that many textbooks are outdated. Mr. Brzezicki said that he is willing to pay his share of taxes for as long as he can in order to insure that Wethersfield is a great Town in which to raise and educate his kids.

Ramond Kryzak, 12 Talcott Place, suggested a five-year phase in of the tax increase. He said that affording an increase in taxes will be felt hard by retirees on fixed incomes. Mr. Kryzak said that if the true issue is to support Town Manager's proposed budget #1 or #2, he would have to choose #2. Mr. Kryzak asked if Dr. Proctor is setting the Town up for another 8% increase next year. He said there will be a lot of people will leave Wethersfield. He urged the Council to consider further consolidation within the Town.

Rita Dikegoros, 16 Bay Roc Road, said that residents who do not have children currently in the Wethersfield school system do not realize how much separate fund-raising is done to fund school supplies, etc. She said that many issues are being deferred throughout Town and this is affecting residents' quality of life. We need to do what is necessary to attract families and businesses to Wethersfield. She said that

Wethersfield will not thrive under the 3.5% roadmap limitations. Ms. Dikegoros would like to see the library open seven days per week.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, spoke on many issues currently facing Wethersfield on both the Town and Board of Education side. Mr. Young supports the Town's request of a \$1 million bond to purchase open space. Mr. Young

said that a more aggressive approach should be taken toward tax delinquencies and that they should be posted on the web. He would also like to see more consolidation between the Town and the Board of Education.

Maurice Cornelio, 126 Hang Dog Lane, said that basic school supplies are being taken over by high salaries. He said that the lies from the past do not prove that the Town will do better in the future. He does not want to see administrators getting more money to break their promises again. Mr. Cornelio said that high taxes are deterring residents and businesses from coming to Wethersfield. He said that the problem with Wethersfield is sitting up on the Council because they cannot take a look at the past and decide what to do with the future. Mr. Cornelio said that all of the budget's money is going to salaries and the Council is not negotiating for the people, but for their own pleasures instead.

Susan Bookman, 51 Gooseberry Hill, spoke in favor of the proposed Board of Education budget. She believes that the Town would not be in this unhealthy financial situation if they hadn't been held to the 3.5% roadmap in past years. She also supports the Town Manager's budget #2 and does not want to see cuts in the Library budget, ROPES program, or Dial-A-Ride program. She said that the Council needs to move forward and not look backward.

Judy Niedzielski, 149 Straddle Hill, spoke of her concern over the leaking roof at Highcrest School. She supports the hiring of two new teachers at the Silas Deane Middle School.

Patti Silva, 24 Hillcrest Avenue, said that she fully supports the proposed Board of Education budget and commended the Town Manager for providing two options for budgets showing clearly the affects of the under-funding of critical services in Wethersfield.

Chairperson Morin thanked those from Channel 14 who were still present to broadcast the meeting. He then opened the floor to anyone who has already spoken to speak for a second time.

Rocco Orsini, 95 Broad Street, spoke on behalf of the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. He said that the Town had a 3.5% tax roadmap, but failed to ever hit the mark. He said that he spoke with the Town Manager about his concern that her budget proposal #1 takes all of the cuts while taking nothing from the proposed Board of Education budget. He said that the whole Town should share in the cuts. Mr. Orsini pointed out that the proposed Board of Education budget actually cuts supplies and materials by 50%; therefore he urged parents not to think that this budget will cure the lack of supplies and materials in the schools. The Association believes that the Board of Education will be back for even more funding in 2005-2006 and that the funding requested this year is not just to make up for past shortfalls. Mr. Orsini said that the Wethersfield Taxpayers Association, Inc. agrees with the points made in the Town Manager's budget message. Mr. Orsini said that an Association member suggested that those who want to pay higher taxes go ahead and pay extra to the Town without having everyone's taxes go up. Mr. Orsini urged the Council to do what is best for the Town.

Robert Young, 20 Coppermill Road, stated that it doesn't make sense to hire more teachers when the student body will decrease. Mr. Young recalled the March 29, 2004 Council meeting where it was stated that \$50 may be a lot of money for some families for swimming lessons, and this showed a lot of compassion. Yet, there doesn't seem to be much compassion over a 24% tax increase.

George A. Ruhe, 956 Cloverdale Circle, stated that the signs at the Budget Hearing are there as a right of the citizens. He does not believe that they are demeaning and he would like to have seen the Mayor remind the speaker who criticized the signs that it is indeed a constitutional right of the public to have the signs there.

Maurice Cornelio, 126 Hang Dog Lane, commended those in Town who do their job and don't even get paid for it. He said that those who get paid to do a job and aren't doing it have brought something to the table that stinks.

ADJOURNMENT

At 12:45 a.m., Councilor Czernicki moved "**TO ADJOURN THE PUBLIC HEARING TO THE BUDGET WORKSHOP SESSION ON APRIL 27, 2004 AT 5:30 P.M. IN THE TOWN HALL MEETING ROOM OF THE TOWN HALL**" seconded by Councilor Adil. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE.

The motion passed 8-0-0.

Dolores Sassano
Town Clerk

*These linked files are in Adobe's Portable Document Format. To view them you will need Adobe Reader installed on your computer. It is available for free download at:

