

**TOWN OF CROMWELL
BOARD OF FINANCE
PUBLIC HEARING AND SPECIAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2008
WOODSIDE INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL 7:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

PRESENT: Chairman Michael Gengler, Loraine Caruso, Edwin Maley Jr.
(arrived at 8:14pm), Joe Corlis, John Flanders, Donna DiMauro,
Alternate Jack Henehan

ABSENT: Alternate Jamie Kiefer

ALSO PRESENT: Finance Director Marianne Sylvester, First Selectman Jeremy Shingleton, and members of the Board of Education and Education System.

1. PUBLIC HEARING

Chairman Michael Gengler opened the public hearing at 7:05pm.
Chairman Gengler remarked that the legal notice had been published in the Hartford Courant.

Chairman Gengler asked the members of the public to consider the position of a moderator for public meetings for the Town of Cromwell and explained the training options available and that there is a small stipend for their services.

Chairman Gengler recognized First Selectman, Jeremy Shingleton.

First Selectman Jeremy Shingleton provided hard copies of his presentation to the public of his power point presentation. The presentation reviewed economic trends. For example, jobs, energy costs, household expenses and utilities. Mr. Shingleton described the Town's debt service and its projections. Mr. Shingleton reviewed the overall operational policy of how to do more with less and gave the town's budget overview. Mr. Shingleton provided a summary of the justification of the addition of the public works staff person. Mr. Shingleton examined the sources of revenue available to the town, showing that 84% is provided by tax revenue. Mr. Shingleton discussed ways of trying to streamline operations and reduce expenses to improve the quality of the town and at the same time enhance the image.

Chairman Gengler reviewed the Town of Cromwell budget including the bonded debt. Chairman Gengler reviewed the Board of Education Budget. Chairman Gengler opened the floor to questions regarding the General Town Budget.

Stan Stachura of 47 Geer Street commented on this years budget overruns of \$70,000. Mr. Stachura expressed concern that if the proposed budget is so lean where will the monies come from if the same occurs next year? Mr. Stachura also remarked about the general budget and CNR & Christian Hill Rd costs.

Chairman Gengler responded that transfers are only allowed in the 4th quarter and can only increase by 1% and if it is more than that it has to go back to the taxpayers.

Caroljoyce Cannito of 3 Blackhaw Dr asked whether there would be any repair of the general roads of Cromwell.

First Selectman Shingleton explained about a road study that had been done and that the current plan is to address the worst roads as approved by the bond proposal and as the time and resources become available they will address additional roads as they can.

Dick Coughlin of 19 Glenwood Terrace asked for clarification of the budget handout and whether it included adjustments and asked where the budget projection of this fiscal year is.

Chairman Gengler explained that this would be looked at. Finance Director Sylvester said they would be within budget.

Christie Drzewiecki of 11 Fern Street asked about the elimination of the zoning enforcement position and would this hurt development in town.

First Selectman Shingleton explained that this is an inspection position and that the position she is referring to is handled by the Economic Development Coordinator.

Karen Spotts of 62 Blackhaw Drive asked about line 14 and why the Board of Selectman get a stipend, especially when other Boards do not. Could this be cut during lean times?

Chairman Gengler explained that this is in the charter and has not increased in 30 years.

Karen Jordan of 10 Vincy Drive asked about the playground for ECS School.

First Selectman Shingleton stated that funding is in place for the playground base. Mr. Shingleton stated that \$65,000 of \$250,000 was to be used to begin to create a place for kids to play, along with fundraising.

Christie Drzewiecki of 11 Fern Street asked if this could be worked on together. Ms Drzewiecki explained that there is a playground committee.

Dick Coughlin of 19 Glenwood Terrace asked for clarification about the part-time position in youth services that works within the schools.

First Selectman Shingleton explained that this position has been looked at but it is important as it is for troubled youth and is a valuable service.

Peter Keithan of 24 Iron Gate Lane began to ask about the maintenance at the schools. Chairman Gengler asked him to wait until discussion of the Board of Education began.

Mary Banks of 3 North Ridge Drive asked about changing the charter and having the Fire District included in the budget so they could be looked at as well.

Chairman Gengler explained that it is not a charter issue but it would be a legislative change since they are considered a different municipality.

Chairman Gengler called a recess at 8:00pm

Chairman Gengler called the hearing back to order at 8:10pm.

Chairman Gengler recognized Dr. Bisceglia, Superintendent of Schools.

Dr. Bisceglia explained that Cromwell is a district reference group "D". Dr. Bisceglia described what a reference group was. Dr. Bisceglia discussed the goals of the District for 2006-2009 and showed where Cromwell ranked in comparison to other towns. Dr. Bisceglia introduced members of the educational process who began working on the budget proposal back in October. Dr. Bisceglia reviewed the mandates required of the education system and that many of them are not funded, for example, in –school suspension. Dr. Bisceglia discussed the salary and compensation rates of teachers and staff and explained that Cromwell is in the mid-range. Dr. Bisceglia remarked on the shortage of teachers in certain subject areas and the competitiveness to attract qualified teachers. Dr. Bisceglia discussed ways to continue improvements like staff development. Dr. Bisceglia reviewed changes for 2008-2009. For example, full-day kindergarten, remedial reading program, D-5 social studies curriculum, and safe environment. Dr. Bisceglia reviewed the additions of certified and non-certified staff. Dr. Bisceglia discussed how the team came up with a continual decrease in the budget from the original request and yet were able to fund programs. Dr. Bisceglia gave the example of item 739 which had a large increase because it is for technology upgrades for the high school. Dr. Bisceglia reviewed the projected enrollment figures. Dr. Bisceglia reviewed the energy cost savings that has been done and measures that have been found to save money. Dr. Bisceglia remarked on the great job that Rick Mandeville has done to find cost reduction measures. Dr. Bisceglia reviewed the goals and objectives to continue improvement for all students.

Chairman Gengler read into record a letter and petition submitted by Julie Schmidt of 54 Field Road with 59 signatures. The letter expressed support of the Board of Education budget and expressed concern with the dates of the hearing. The letter and the signatures have been submitted with these minutes.

Fran Monnes of 7 Old Colony Lane and a retired schoolteacher and coach, stated Cromwell has one of the top school systems, police and fire departments and thinks Cromwell will become one of the best towns in the Country. Mr.

Monnes representing the seniors stated they voted no more than 4% increase in the Board of Education budget next year. Mr. Monnes gave a list of the senior's reasons for their decision. Mr. Monnes asked what would the difference in taxes be with only this increase on the budget?

Chairman Gengler explained this would be difficult since this year's figures are not complete yet. Mr. Shingleton said he would put together a worksheet for next meeting.

Peter Keithan of 24 Iron Gate Lane commented that the maintenance problem at the schools is not good and that if they have the bonding than maintenance shouldn't be as high.

Dr. Bisceglia answered that Mr. Mandeville does a great job getting things done for your money.

Terri Camilleri of 14 Centerwood Drive spoke in favor of a ½ day kindergarten and would like the option to be maintained. Ms Camilleri described her reasons and research to support this view. Ms. Camilleri would like to see the Board of Education do more studies before more money is committed to the full day program.

Chairman Gengler explained that the bottom line of the Board of Education budget is up to the Board of Finance but the individual resources is up to the Board of Education. Dr. Bisceglia explained that the demand has been high in Cromwell for a full-day kindergarten program but he will take a look at a study.

Carol Dewey of 2 Laurel Drive also supports a ½ kindergarten and is concerned with parents forced to place children in a program. Ms Dewey would like to see funding that would benefit more students such as the playgrounds.

Dr. Bisceglia discussed that a long-range strategic planning committee was formed and would like a Board of Finance member to join.

Patricia Rizzo of 16 Congress Drive presented the Board of Finance and members of the Board of Education and education support team with a letter expressing her support of the Board of Education budget along with attachments. Ms Rizzo reviewed the letter, which stressed that a lack of funding would hurt education. Ms. Rizzo also expressed her frustration with determining the timing of meetings.

Chairman Gengler explained the Town Charter process regarding the budget process and the dates given by the Board of Education for scheduling. Chairman Gengler asked that the Town of Cromwell website be used as a resource for meeting dates and agendas. Dr. Bisceglia apologized for the confusion as well.

James Enowitch of 21 Glenwood Terrace spoke in support of the budget. Mr. Enowitch stated he went to the Board of Selectman meeting and was frustrated

with a discussion on school issues. Mr. Enowitch praised Mr. Mandeville. Mr. Enowitch felt you couldn't ask for a specific percentage when utilities and other expenses increase dramatically.

First Selectman Shingleton commented that what he recalled from the Board of Selectman meeting is that nothing is being done at the school and that they need to discuss what is to be done. Dr. Bisceglia addressed the Phase III issues and its continued needs.

Karen Jordan of 10 Vincy Drive supports the ½ day kindergarten program and would like it offered. Ms Jordan also addressed the heat issues at ECS.

Dr. Bisceglia stated that ECS has 1950s technology and is not designed for today.

Kate Jonkman of 13 Fairview Heights supports the budget and a full-day kindergarten.

Alison Edman of 14 Scott Lane does not necessarily believe a full day kindergarten is right and feels there should be a ½ choice. Ms Edman would like it looked at to see the difference and doesn't see it necessary at this time.

Teri Civitello of 52 Timber Hill Rd supports the petition and supports the budget. Ms Civitello expressed views that were important to her within the school and does not wish to see a risk in services to the schools. Ms Civitello asked that the Board of Finance not cut the Board of Education budget but to let the taxpayers to decide.

Christie Drzewiecki of 11 Fern Street expressed support for the 7% increase and described her concern with the mandates and costs to support them. Ms Drzewiecki asked that the school be looked at during the school hours and what it takes to make it happen then.

David Murphy of 3 Freestone Avenue asked is more necessarily better for your child and when does a child have an opportunity to be a child.

Jeana Tine of 8 Black Birch Drive supports the budget and asks to look at more than the maintenance and the programs that are involved.

Denise McNeill of 26 High Ridge Road supports the Board of Education budget and asked if Mr. Shingleton supported the budget based on his illustration in his presentation.

First Selectman Shingleton explained that he showed that for illustrative purposes.

Mr. Bondi, CPA does not want to see education slashed and supports the budget.

Al Waters of 86 South Street provided the Board of Finance with an annual finance report and reviewed the head count of employment of the Board of Education and its increases, particularly after the new building.

Dr. Bisceglia explained that the new building and mandates may be the causes of the increase but he would have to look into it.

Mark Zadadzski of 14 Scott Lane supports the ½ day kindergarten and said his daughter is thriving. Mr. Zadadzski was embarrassed by the condition of ECS and the lack of a playground.

Marie McCabe of North Ridge Dr supports the budget particularly the need for technology advances at the high school. Ms McCabe provided an example with her daughters.

Marie Colandrea of 5 Warner Court spoke about her thoughts of the full day kindergarten from another point of view.

Helen Sullivan of 6 Rosewood Lane asked about the potential of bus savings if ½ day kindergarten was eliminated.

Rich Waters of 84 South Street stated he reviewed the capital expenses and asked that the monies be put aside for the kids. Mr. Waters asked about a 1.9mil surplus on May 1 of last year in their budget.

Dr. Bisceglia explained that a 1.9mil surplus has never been there and invited Mr. Waters to come to his office so they could review it.

Dick Coughlin of 19 Glenwood Terrace does not support the increase. Mr. Coughlin does not have an opinion yet on the kindergarten issue but feels the ½ day should remain until it is researched more. Mr. Coughlin asked why the PTO is putting supplies in the classroom yet the Board of Education can put in technology. Mr. Coughlin questioned the head count and asked the Board of Finance to take a look at it.

First Selectman Shingleton had a chance to run the numbers for a median household and with a 4.5% increase in the Board of Education budget it would be at (4.6%) \$4,333 and with a 7% increase in the Board of Education budget it would be at (6.15%) \$4,394. This would be a difference of \$61.

Shirley Banic, the Chairman of the Board of Education thanked everyone for coming to support the Board of Education and explained the challenges to keep the budget down.

Alison Edman of 14 Scott Lane responded to Ms Banic concerns.

Peter Keithan of 24 Iron Gate Lane remarked that the kindergarten concerns should be addressed within the Board of Education and not at this public hearing regarding the budget.

Rich Waters of 84 South Street commented on the capital section of the budget sheet and had a concern about the ceiling fan costs.

Dr. Bisceglia clarified that the ceiling fans were not in the current budget and discussed how the Board of Education saves monies.

Rich Waters of 84 South Street stated he was against the budget and asked for it to be cut.

Christie Drzewiecki of 11 Fern Street thanked Mr. Shingleton for coming up with a number and commented that the difference is like a night out to dinner.

Chairman Gengler adjourned the public hearing at 10:08pm.

There were no further deliberations.

- A. Discussion and decisions on 2008-2009 Board of Selectman's proposed budget including Debt Service-None
- B. Discussion on any 2008-2009 budget matter-None
- C. Adjournment-None

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer L. Donohue
Finance Clerk