

**TOWN OF CROMWELL
BOARD OF FINANCE
PUBLIC HEARING
THE BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 05/06**

**TUESDAY, APRIL 4, 2006
7:00 P.M.
WOODSIDE SCHOOL**

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Michael Gengler called the Public Hearing to Order at 7:10 p.m. The presence of the following Board Members were noted: Chairman Michael Gengler, Julius Neto, Douglas Payne, Jack Henehan, Ed Maley, and Greg Bedell. Also present: First Selectman Paul Beaulieu, H.B. Dumeer Principle of Cromwell Middle School Mark Cohan, Superintendent of Schools Rick Mandeville, Director of Business and Operation Services, Kathy McPhierison, Administrative Assistant, Kathleen Spence, Director of Special Services, Paula Talty, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Shirley Banic, Chairman of the Board of Education, & other supporting members of the faculty and staff, Sue Schein, Recreation Department, Fred Curtin, Zoning Enforcement Officer, Theresa Strong, Senior Center, Ann France, Youth Services, Al Kaplan, Social Services Director, Darlene DiProto, Town Clerk, Sharon Ramsey, Tax Collector, Kim Spurlin, Assistant Tax Collector, Shawna O'Neil, Assessor, Mary Amenta, Voter Registrar, Michelle Hodge, Voter Registrar, Wes Bell, Health Department, Eileen Branciforte, Library, Jeff Mills, Middletown Press Reporter. .

B. NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING:

The notice of the public hearing was read aloud.

C. OPENING STATEMENTS:

Chairman Michael Gengler discussed the car tax proposed by Governor Rell to eliminate property tax on certain passenger cars (SB #50) and the seriousness of this issue. He stated that usually the Board of Finance does not get involved but this is a serious issue of the elimination of the car tax. The concern is how the town gets reimbursed. This is a combination to eliminate the rebate on your income tax and taking in some casino money, which creates a higher dependence on the state. We could be looking at a ½ million dollar loss.

The Chair introduced First Selectman Paul Beaulieu to go over the Budget Process. Tonight, we are here to represent Phase II of this process, the first phase of the General Government Budget is viewed by the Board of Selectman, the Board of Education is required to present their budget to the Board of Finance at their March meeting. The Budget tonight is actually, step 2 of the process after it is reviewed by the Board of Selectman. When the Board of Finance gets done with the Budgets, the Board of Selectman suggested that this go to Referendum for vote. The townspeople expressed a very strong preference in this matter. This may occur the first or second Tuesday in May.

First Selectman Paul Beaulieu discussed the General Government Budget

General Government: 12,368,157 (recommended by BOS)
(7.24% increase higher than the previous year after adjustments, which is an increase of about \$835,000)

Debt Service: 3,136,214 (7.4% lower increase)

We have a decline in the debt service because about three years ago we started paying on the \$50 million towards the new schools.

Energy costs have risen. This effects the operation of the facilities. Fuel cost is significantly higher and is up fifty cents a gallon from the previous year.

Employee salaries will show a 3.25% increase towards the cost of living.

The Police Department and Public Works Departments are in negotiations for increases.

Also, what will show is a significant increase in the cost is health insurance.

First Selectman Paul Beaulieu discussed the anticipation of a State Grant of 17,000 to expand part time hours and transportation to the seniors.

Also included in the General Government Budget under the Highway Department you will see an additional cost included in the budget of \$77,000 for 1 mile of road repaving also granted by the Board of Selectmen.

The amount of revenue we received from the State of Connecticut for our budget is dependent upon our Grand List Budget of Real and Personal Property. We saw a 2% increase in Grand List growth this year and are looking at possibly at 2.7 million increase based on what we have.

D. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Colleen Monnes of Monnes Road- spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget and asked with the increase in healthcare cost if it was looked into finding carriers who may be significantly cheaper.

Laura Falt 20 Oxford Lane – spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget.

Theresa Civitello 52 Timber Hill Road – spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget and asked if we are doing things more cost effectively.

Rob Langenauer 31 Hicksville Road – spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget. He has concerns with the tax increasing so high that the residents in town can not afford to live in this town. He is a lifelong resident in town and his parents lived in this town, however, they had to sell their home and move due to taxes being too high. He also spoke about the importance of sports and the impact that it has on the students, without sports it is hard to have balance, some students who may not do so well in school find the ambition through sports and are highly encouraged to succeed.

Anthony Varricchio 6 Kowal Drive – spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget. He feels that line item #8 Charter revision should be dropped, we need to be serious about the infrastructure funds for our roads, we have to operate like a business, he feels Chief Salvatore does a great job with the Police Department, and we need to realize that we have to provide services and if we add more personnel to be sure it is needed.

Bob Jahn 3 Woodside Road – spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget and concurs with the First Selectman regarding line item #8 Charter Revision. We have not updated since 1993, just from legislation passed at the Capitol we need to agree with the updates. He also asked if First Selectman Paul Beauliau was confusing replacing with adding officers at the Police Department. He feels that we should keep at 24 and have an officer training for replacement purposes so we do not keep adding officers.

Al Waters 86 South Street- He feels the consensus of this room is keeping the Police Department at 24, he was glad to hear that and feels that we have to treat this budget like a home and tighten belts.

Shirley Banic, Chairman of the Cromwell Board of Education of 46 Geer Street- Spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget. She said that we are one of the rare schools, we have ranked fourth in the education statistics, we are doing ok and would not want to go backwards.

Mr. Cohen, Assistant Principal – thanks the Board of Finance for letting us come here tonight, he thanks all the faculty, staff, parents and citizens. Also thanks his Administrative Assistant Kathy McPhieron. He spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget and stated that the town ranked 4 on the ERG (Education Reference Groups). He also let everyone know that in the year 2000 81% of students that graduated from Cromwell High School went on to 2-4 year colleges and in the year 2004 95% of students that graduated from Cromwell High School went on to 2-4 year colleges. This has increased over the years. He discussed and made a recommendation that a 12.12 budget increase is large and that we are not having any pleasure by this. However, this is clearly the toughest budget year to be confronted. He went through the four phases. He also discussed the multiyear copier contracts, multiyear utility contracts, energy conservation and telephones and spoke about the accounts deficits.

Rick Mandeville, Director of Special Services – spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget and discussed the importance of custodial staffing during the hours of 6:30 a.m. -10:30 p.m.

Chris Licht 1 North Road – spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget.

Micheal Levesque 2A Wightman Place –spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget. He asked that we work smarter not harder to find simple ways to save money. He also has 3 children in the school system and realizes the impact the school is going to have on everyone. He stated that the decision should be made by everyone and settled at a ballot box.

Liz Verhagen 83 Coles Road- spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget. She stated that programs are crucial for the budget increase to be maintained and that you have the power to make the future brighter and the children are our future.

Vanessa Powell 1 Fennwood Drive – spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget and scholastic sports. She is 13 years and attends the Cromwell Middle School. She is a student athlete of various athletics and lifetime resident. She has been told by her parents and others that there is only so much money for funding the various programs. She requested along with her fellow students to please find some way to keep the sports in the budget and asks that everyone work together on this issue. To some students it is a great way to receive college scholarships. She is here to say that it has been her experience with scholastic sports that they are worth every dollar. It is hard to put into words the growth against other schools and how proud my teammates and I feel to represent our Town of Cromwell. Please state before us and my fellow students that it is the right thing to do. Thank you very much for your time.

Jayla DelCiampo 8 Marsal Lane- spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget and scholastic sports.

Pam Grandy 4 Russell Road- spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget. She works in a school system and stated that this school system has a high reputation. She mentioned that this hurts the children of Cromwell. The computer tech gets cut all the time, CMS did loose their sports, buses were cut, we have a beautiful school with a library with no books, and we need support staff. She hopes for no reduction.

Kathy Hodlin 4 Vincy Drive- spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget. She has 2 teens that graduated and 1 teen that is a Jr. at the High School. The programs get cut they are not nurtured or enhanced. It is important to have programs for the kids it is an outlet for a lot of students. As President of a Sports Booster Club and fundraiser she mentioned that 2 scholarships were given away for Project Graduation and Student Council.

Mike Civitello 52 Timber Hill Road – spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget.

Jenn Tine 8 Black Birch – spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget. She also spoke in support of the need for sports.

Marjorie Lemon 33 Hicksville Road - spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget.

Dave Director 8 Warner Court- spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget.

Melinda Frazier 25 Irongate Lane – spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget. She feels that the town should decide.

Dan McKiernan 19 Geer Street- spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget. He has a daughter at ECS that hinged on a lottery for full day kindergarten and stated that this is a serious issue.

Christa Drzewiecki 11 Fern Street – spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget and extra curricular activities.

Michelle Roper 12 West Street Heights- spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget and extra curricular activities.

Tim Feehan 4 Anthony Avenue- spoke in support of the Board of Education Budget. He stated that new residents moving to town ask about what the schools are like not what the mill rate is.

E. ADJOURNMENT:

A **motion** was made by Ed Maley, **seconded** by Julius Neto and it was *unanimously* approved to adjourn at 9:21 p.m. *Motion Passed.*

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Milardo
Clerk