

Town of Cromwell, CT
Board of Finance
Public Hearing
Wednesday, April 3, 2019
Town Hall Room 224/225 @ 7:00 PM

Minutes

Present: Chairman John Henahan, Vice-Chairman Julius Neto, Amanda Drew, Steve Wygonowski, Ed Maley Jr., Alternate Dan Kelly and Alternate Jon Dzurka

Not Present: Bob Milardo and Alternate Allan Spotts

Also Present: Town Manager Anthony Salvatore, Finance Director Marianne Sylvester, Chief Denise Lamontagne, Captain Kevin VanderSloot, Interim Superintendent Dr. Thomas Y. McDowell, Board of Ed Business Manager Anne Burke, Board of Ed Facilities Director Tom Litwinczyk and Board of Ed staff and some board members.

Chairman John Henahan called the Public Hearing to order at 7:00 p.m.

Vice-Chairman Julius Neto read the Legal Notice dated March 22, 2019. (copy attached).

Chairman John Henahan announced that Dr. McDowell will present the 2019-20 Board of Education budget then will open the floor up to questions. Town Manager Anthony Salvatore will then present the 2019-20 General Government Budget with questions from the floor following the Town Manager's presentation.

Dr. McDowell opened his presentation stating that he, his staff and members of the Board of Ed are happy to be present and to offer the 2019-20 Board of Education Budget. Dr. McDowell also addressed the concerns of the Finance Board. The requested data will be provided and distribution of the budget will be distributed to the public once the numbers are final. Business Manager Ann Burke is also available to answer any questions the Finance Board may have. Mr. Henahan noted that he has the additional information requested by the Finance Board and will distribute to the members. Mr. Maley questioned Dr. McDowell as to why he does not have numbers to present to the citizens of Cromwell. Dr. McDowell noted that depending on the outcome of his presentation and what the Finance Board decides to authorize for their final number is when the final numbers will be available to the citizen's review. He knows what is asking for but not sure what will be approved.

Dr. McDowell began his presentation by stating what their budget drivers were. He then covered what the budget goals are followed by what the indicators of success are. He mentioned that they continue to improve test scores, wants to preserve small class sizes and maintain a 0% dropout rate to name a few.

The Operating Budget for 2018-19 was \$29,724,214 and proposed for 2019-20 is \$30,850,762 for an increase of \$1,126,548 or a 3.79% increase. Dr. McDowell mentioned areas of the budget that have reductions (one less special education teacher, retiring personnel will be replaced with personnel at a lower pay rate and will be eliminating a behavioral specialist due to program changes.

The original proposed budget was at 4.11% increase and was able to get it down to a 3.79% increase. Also included in the proposal was the executive summary by accounts showing how the 3.79% increase is compromised. Dr. McDowell also shows a breakdown using a pie chart showing the breakdown of the budget. Also provide is a chart showing student enrollment from 2014 to present.

Dr. McDowell concluded with understanding the Cromwell community and what they expect. They also recognize the desire of the Cromwell community to maintain a high quality school district and promote academic excellence.

Discussion regarding the following took place:

- Behavioral Specialist and inquired what was changing with the program.
- Discussion regarding the replacement of the retired personnel with new personnel and the rates of pay they would be getting.
- A citizen (Marie) commented on the many students not going to college due to the increase in tuition and wanted to know what was being done for those to prepare them for their future. Dr. McDowell stated that the staff tries to find out what the student is interested in and what they would like to do after school. They will work the student to assist in reaching their goals.
- Vice-Chairman Neto asked about the data for the certified and non-certified personnel. Also asked about the per diem Assistant Superintendent Paul Galaducci.
- School Board Chairman Michael Camilleri mentioned that the Board of Education Budget is being presented in this manner for this fiscal period only due to issue and personnel changes that transpired since December 2018.
- Business Manager Ann Burke verified that the dollars are accounted for. The salary is being presented as a certified position for the Human Resource person but may be changed to a non-certified position.

Town Manager Anthony Salvatore thanked Dept Heads for all their work in preparing this budget especially Finance Director Marianne Sylvester and her staff. He also stated that the budget was created keeping in mind the needs and services that the residents expect.

Town Manager Anthony Salvatore presented the 2019-20 General Government budget. The budget is set at \$16,958,517 a 2.6% or \$433,210 increase over 2018/19 budget). He noted that the employee wages and benefits comprise of 74% of the budget (which is shown in a pie chart within his presentation).

Mr. Salvatore highlighted on such areas as:

- Public Safety – Increase staffing in the Police Department so they can adequately respond to calls.

- Senior Center/Transportation - Increase staffing by a part-time Outreach Worker/Program Coordinator and increase staffing by one full-time driver to provide transportation for increase in demand.
- Library – Increase staff with a full-time Library Technician Assistant reducing part-time staff to better serve the community.
- Recreation Department – Continue implementing new programs for special need individuals and integrate “Movies in the Park” with the Summer Concert series.
- Employee Benefits – Increase primarily due to Health Insurance and Pensions (changing health insurance provider, employee contribution increasing to 19.95% for the Employee Retirement System). NOTE: The State dictates what happens here.
- Public Works – Moving forward with improvements and relocation of Public Works facilities. Engineering is overseeing various road projects and various park improvement projects. The Highway Department continues the road improvement program. Park Maintenance on the Little League field upgrades.

Mr. Salvatore shows a chart as to the impact on the budget by department (showing change from prior year and compared to this year).

He mentions Revenue and where it is coming from. The Governor’s proposal for State Aid indicates that Cromwell is slated to receive a \$131,370 increase but may be offset by an \$86,526 payment towards the Teacher’s Retirement System. The Local Capital Improvement Program grant was reduced by \$13,783. Mr. Salvatore stated that decisions on the budget were mindful of regionalization efforts that the State wants to implement and concerned with the uncertainty of the State Aid. He mentioned that the Grand List increase is minimal (only a .5% increase)

Capital Improvement Program was discussed. The Charter requires that the Town Council adopt a 5-year CIP every year. It also requires CIP to review the Operating Budget. The proposed funding through the General Fund fund balance for \$489,000 in capital equipment and projects (a list of improvement programs listed in the presentation).

Debt Service for 2018-19 was \$3,687,300 and is proposed at \$3,704,100 for 2019-20. Annual payments on existing bond obligation, listed the five outstanding bond issues and continue to pay-down on the existing debt.

Town Manager Salvatore concluded by saying that the budget was created with every effort to maintain programs and services to the community with the intention of keeping the tax impact at a minimum.

Discussion regarding the Teachers Retirement took place. Mr. Maley noted that part of the original government proposal is no longer valid and zero dollars from the Towns will be required.

Several senior citizens spoke on behalf of the Senior Center budget. Asked the Finance Board to approve the funds needed for the additional driver. Also asked that other considerations to increase the budget to add staff to better serve the increasing needs of the seniors using the Senior Center. Letters from some that spoke were given as

documentation of their requests. Those that came forward in behalf of the Senior Center were Marie, Bonnie Sprague, Anthony Amenta, Al Waters, Judy Benvenuto and Ann Russo.

Chairman Henehan asks for a motion to close the Public Hearing. A motion made by Mr. Maley and seconded by Mr. Netos to have the Public Hearing closed. ***All in Favor – Motion Passed.*** Public Hearing adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Hardacker
Recording Clerk