

Town of Cromwell, CT
Board of Finance
Public Hearing
Tuesday, April 11, 2017
Cromwell Town Hall (Room 224/225) @ 7:00 PM

Minutes

Present: Chairman John Henahan, Amanda Drew, Joseph Corlis, Allan Spotts, Bob Milardo and Alternate Dan Kelly

Not Present: Vice Chairman Julius Neto, Alternate Jon Dzurka

Also Present: Mayor Enzo Faienza, Town Manager Anthony Salvatore, Finance Director Marianne Sylvester, Chief Denise Lamontagne, Superintendent Dr. Paula Talty, members of the Board of Education, Town Council Liaison Ed Wengers, Town Staff and members of the public.

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

A motion was made by Town Manager Anthony Salvatore to not to have the Legal Notice dated March 24, 2017 read and seconded by someone on the floor. Motion passed by the majority of those in attendance agreed not to have legal notice read.

Chairman John Henahan announced that Dr. Talty will discuss the 2017-18 Board of Education budget then will open the floor up to questions. Town Manager Anthony Salvatore will present the 2017-18 General Government Budget with questions from the floor following Dr. Talty presentation.

Dr. Talty began her presentation that the members of the Board of Education and the leadership team were present. Dr. Talty went over areas of focus for 2017/18. She discussed the numerous factors that influenced the budget nothing short of what is going on at the State. The Board of Ed continues to have mandates that are not funded (Technology mandates, increasing costs in special education and magna school tuition, as well as the salary and energy increases). There are three budget priorities that will be presented. The first providing an enhanced learning experience for every child. Dr. Talty detailed the technology that will be used at each level of education. She also explained how they would be refining the special education programs and various programs being offered on the high school lever (robotics and other technological programs). She further explained other programs that will be offered to student on all levels. The second priority is to offer rigorous curriculum for all of the students. This entails line our curriculum with state standards, continue to expand our AP classes for advanced placement offerings etc. The upcoming challenge for the next generation of sciences is a concern. This will entail some professional training. The third budget priority is to maintain a safe school environment. This entails supporting additional resource officers, additional technology for security and to implement a visitor tracking system.

The proposed budget is at 2.31% increase. The dollar increase is \$663,405. Copies of the power point are available for those that want a copy. It details the breakdown of the budget.

It was also noted that the possible State cuts are a concern. Contingencies are in place if these cuts do happen. Personnel is one area that will be affected.

Alice Kelly inquired that the budget includes state funding and if cut, would it affect the budget presented tonight. Dr. Talty said that it would and they have contingencies in place to accommodate.

Mike Camolari made mention that Dr. Talty is retiring as of June 30, 2017. He also commended a job well done and thanked her for her services. He also wished her the best on her retirement.

Dr. Talty also noted that Cromwell demographically in a DRG D which is a demographic reference group. The average proposed increase is 3.03%. Right now Cromwell would be under that average.

Town Manager Anthony Salvatore thanked the mayor, town council and all those involved 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 2017-18 General Government budget. The budget is set at \$16,246,101 (a 1.59% increase or \$253,654 over 2016/17 budget). However, after the town council finalize the budget the Town and the Board of Ed was successful and negotiated with Connecticare only a 2% increase for medical benefits resulting in a \$40,000 savings and as a result of \$15,000 coming from the police pension which resulted in a \$25,000 reduction (a 1.43% increase in the budget). He highlighted on the General Government Budget pointing out some of the increases and decreases. He pointed out that approximately 72% of the budget is comprised of wages and benefits. Mr. Salvatore detailed the various positions added and shared in various departments. He further detailed the expenses and savings of each department. A copy of the power point presentation is available for those that would like a copy.

Town Manager also mentioned the State Aid. He stated that the budget was based on what they know now but have placed contingencies in case there are changes (cuts). The budget does reflect an over \$700,000 decrease in education costs sharing grant and it also includes a direct payment to the board of ed for new special education grant of approximately \$1.7 million replacing the excess cost grant of almost \$800,000. It also includes a 1.4 million contribution from the board of ed to the state for teacher's retirement system. State Aid continues to be uncertain but hope to have clarity by the end of April. The 1.4 million was not used in creating the budget at this time. Mr. Salvatore further detailed on the Capital expenditures and redevelopment plan for the town. He also mentioned that the town is legally obligated to pay back the six outstanding bonds they have going back to 2008 to present.

A pie plate of the General Budget which represents 16+ million for General Fund, 29+ for Board of Ed and 3-4+ million for Bonded Debt. The budget was created with every effort to maintain programs and services to the community with the intention of keeping the tax impact to a minimum.

Alice Kelly asked about the about the teacher's retirement and if the town is now responsible to fund it, what is the plan to manage it? Mr. Salvatore response was that his recommendation after reviewing with the Finance Director to appropriate and request a supplemental tax bill to cover the change.

Chairman Henahan noted that the Finance Board continually questions and asks about the changes from the State and the cuts they may impose on the town. The Finance Board is aware but they are going by what is real for now but will make changes as it is needed in the best interest of the town. He also mentioned the town and board of ed continues to combine efforts (costs) when and where they can.

Chairman Henahan asks for a motion to close the Public Hearing. Alice Kelly motioned to have the Public Hear closed and a second by someone on the floor. ***All in Favor – Motion Passed.*** Meeting adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Hardacker
Recording Clerk