



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR STEPHEN WOODS

MINUTES

**NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING – TOWN COUNCIL'S TENTATIVE BUDGET
2015 - 2016
Council Chambers/Auditorium – Town Hall
Immediately following Public Hearing at 7 p.m.**

April 2, 2015

The public hearing was called to order by Mayor Woods at 8:33 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

Councilor Borjeson
Councilor Castelle
Councilor DelBuono
Councilor Klett
Councilor McDonald
Councilor Marocchini
Councilor Nagel
Mayor Woods

Staff Attendees:

John Salomone, Town Manager
Ann Harter, Finance Director
Lisa Rydecki, Deputy Finance Director
Jamie Trevethan, Asst. to the Town Manager – Administration
Linda Irish-Simpson, Clerk of the Council

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ON AGENDA (In Person/Via Telephone: 860-665-8736)

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Street: She understood the concerns of the Board of Education, parents and teachers but it was her understanding the notices sent to teachers were contractual and did not think that 78 teachers were really going to be laid off. She asked about how many were actually going to be laid off if the amount was not increased and how much money did Newington spend for students to go to magnet schools as opposed to attending school in Newington. The Board of Education and Town Council had to do what was right not just the schools but for all the residents of Newington. Every department wanted more, and as a senior citizen she could not give anymore.

V. CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

A. Adjustments to Town Council's Tentative Budget, if needed

Councilor Nagel read each proposed change to the budget, which is attached.

Councilor Nagel indicated the Republicans had been searching for various options with both high and low price tags and were presenting the items they felt were realistic and thought everyone on the Council might support.

Items 1 – 8, 12, 14 & 15 passed unanimously by the Council.

Items 9 – 11 & 13 failed on a roll call vote:

Yes: Councilors DelBuono, Klett and Nagel

No: Councilors Borjeson, Castelle, Marocchini, McDonald, Mayor Woods

#9. Mayor Woods indicated money had been taken from the account last year and felt it needed a more substantial balance to meet any future need.

#10. A balance of \$33,952 would be left in the account and Mayor Woods and Councilor Marocchini indicated their lack of support for this measure since there were quite a few repairs that needed to be done especially some wall repairs (Maple Hill). Councilor McDonald said there were quite a few sidewalks in Town that needed to be repaired and was concerned they might be shortchanging the amount of money needed. Councilor Castelle said there was a particular line item that increased 17% over last year and the reason why was because last year the fund balance was used to lower the increase. If too many transfers were made, it would defer tax increases next year.

#11. Councilor Nagel stated this amount could be deferred a year and thought it was worthwhile to consider the reduction. Mayor Woods thought they should not move forward until a new Parks and Rec director was hired. The IT Department had not had the time to purchase and install the program which was why the money was still in the budget. Councilor DelBuono indicated she agreed they should wait for a new superintendent who might want to purchase a different software or system. The cost could be more or less and felt they should not put that money into the tax rate this year. Mr. Salomone indicated the money had been in the budget for approximately three years and said that once a new superintendent was in place the item could be purchased and installed quickly since it was a high priority item. Councilor Klett felt the new superintendent would have other higher priorities besides this software when they were initially hired.

#13. Mayor Woods stated money had been pulled from the account before and the balance he felt should be higher since the replacement of signals was expensive and could deplete the account quickly. Some of the signals were getting old and could need the money sooner rather than later.

#14/15: Councilor Nagel indicated the funds would be shifted for the paving of school parking lots. Councilor Borjeson stated the CIP Committee had taken \$650k from Garfield and if it changed at a later date, the money could be bonded. The recommendation was to take \$500k and move it to the Town Hall repair fund, \$100k to a fund for the Library renovations and \$50k for the amount being voted on. Councilor DelBuono indicated that because of the harsh winter, the parking lots were in serious need of repair. Councilor McDonald supported the proposal and the adding of it to the Board of Education budget.

Councilor Klett thanked the Council for one of the best budget processes she had been involved in and wanted to give a lot of credit to Mayor Woods for the way it was handled.

Councilor Nagel indicated the new proposed mill rate would be \$35.80% or a 3% increase. The total amount of changes equaled \$64,200.

Mayor Woods commented on the following: 1) Teachers layoffs – he indicated that it was up to the Board of Education and not the Council. The Board of Education would have to deliberate next Wednesday and again on April 22 to make any final adjustments. He encouraged the public to reach out to the Board of Ed or the Superintendent for further information on spending. 2) Fund balance – There would be approximately \$15 million in the fund which was about 14% of the operating budget. It grew at about 2-3% each year. They use approximately \$2 million each year from the fund but projections indicate it will not grow at the same rate in the future. The money would keep the Town in business for only five weeks 3) Budget process – It was not easy and the Council would like to give every department everything they requested but could not afford to do that. The growth of the Town was flat and would stay that way until they could find ways to grow the grand list. There was approximately \$75k of growth in the grand list this year. The 3% growth may be unsustainable to the residents since the demographics show the median income was \$74,000, which was the lowest in the surrounding area. 4) CREC schools – he understood why people choose that option since the daycare or nursery school parents in town pay for, was free at the magnets. The Town did not have the income to compete with the magnets.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ON AGENDA

Mary Houle, 253 Dix Avenue: She was concerned with how to increase the tax base and felt that the STEM program could compete with the magnet schools ensuring that people would want to live and stay in Town. The Council needed to fund the Board of Education to a level to meet Dr. Collins vision.

Jennifer Freese, 109 Goodale Drive: As the program leader and teacher at the bio-medical sciences academy she was teaching 7th graders science that was beyond anything that was taught at the magnet schools. It was a huge draw to keep students in Town and felt strongly the Board of Education budget should be supported.

Christopher Kerr, Manchester: He taught software technologies using computers and programming. When he first came to teach, he was embarrassed at the technology level of the students but felt it was vital to teach the subject to enable them to get jobs in the future.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: She was a product of Newington schools and was 100% in favor of the teachers. However, thought should be given to making cuts other than teachers in any area of fluff that was in the budget. The school system was wonderful and it was up to the Board of Education to come up with the answers to the problem.

VII. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Mayor Woods stated that no teacher had been given a pink slip but were notified of the possibility of layoffs, which was a contractual obligation on the part of the Board of Education. A pink slip would entitle a person to collect unemployment and that was not the case yet.

Councilor Borjeson congratulated Dr. Collins on the STEM academies. He went to a meeting of business leaders that Dr. Collins coordinated to try to hook up children in the STEM programs with a local resource. He read an article that Middletown had no tax increase which was an increase of 3.5% over the current budget. The town had made progress with new development, which included a new warehouse and new high end apartment building. This supported the need for future development in Newington to increase the tax base.

Councilor DelBuono stated the Council was looking at all options with regard to the budget. She valued education and it was very difficult to listen about potential layoffs. She wanted to remind everyone that the budget had not been cut but the BOE had not been given the full amount requested. The Town Manager

increased the amount to 2.63%, added the amount of \$588k, and the Councilors were in support of Dr. Collins STEM initiative.

Councilor Nagel stated that he was a former teacher, and he shared the teachers' sentiments. The budget was not finalized and changes could still be made. He thanked the public for attending the meeting as well as the Town Manager and his staff for their help in the budget process. Fifteen changes had been presented at the meeting and only four had been rejected. He appreciated the bi-partisanship of the Council during the process.

Councilor McDonald agreed with the other speakers and was committed to do the best for the children of Newington. The process was not easy but the Council had to consider the entire community's needs. She indicated the school budget had increased approximately 3.5% overall and it was important to understand that all other departments took a 3% cut. The Board of Education was the only department that got an increase. She stated Mr. Arbur's comments regarding middle ground should give all pause since the grand list was not growing and couldn't sustain a 3% increase every year. Over 500 families were receiving Social Services support in Town, and the Council had to consider their circumstances as well as the children.

Councilor Marocchini stated that as a parent he initially encouraged greater increases to the Board of Ed in technology but when he looked at the bigger picture, he realized the grand list had not grown enough to do that.

Councilor Castelle enjoyed listening to the STEM academy teachers and wanted them to know the Council did support the STEM program. He reminded everyone there was \$1.8 million in the budget for the high school STEM academy, which was not reflected in the Board of Education's operating budget.

Mayor Woods stated the Council would finalize the budget and mill rate at the next meeting on April 21 at 7 p.m. On April 20 at 6 p.m. in Room L101 there would be another public meeting to given input in the Chief of Police hiring process. He encouraged people to attend.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Marocchini moved to adjourn at 10 p.m. and was seconded by Councilor DelBuono. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Irish-Simpson
Clerk of the Council

Cc: T. Lane, Town Clerk
Att.

ADJUSTMENTS TO 2015-16 TOWN COUNCIL TENTATIVE BUDGET

**NOTE: Figures in parenthesis decrease "Amount to be raised by Taxes";
figures without parenthesis increase "Amount to be raised by Taxes".**

Proposed Mill Rate FY 2015-16: 35.83
 Amt. to be raised by taxes: 89,777,237
 Net Adjusted Collectible Grand List: 2,505,920,404
 Value of mill: 2,505,920

Item #	Account #	Description	Change In Tax Burden	COUNCIL VOTE		For Reference Only			
				Yes	No	Amount to Be Raised By Taxes	Revised Rate	Mill Change	Percent Change
						89,777,237	35.83	1.06	3.0%
1	10110 8310	Decrease Town Council Other Materials	(\$1,500)	8		89,775,737	35.83	1.06	3.0%
2	10961 8220	Decrease Manager Contingency	(\$1,500)	8		89,774,237	35.82	1.05	3.0%
3	11100 8502	Adjust CIP project Fire Co 3 & 5 Replacement Windows	(\$30,000)	8		89,744,237	35.81	1.04	3.0%
3	10235 8408	Increase Fire Station Building Improvements for Fire Co 3 & 5 Replacement Windows	\$10,000	8		89,754,237	35.82	1.05	3.0%
4	10212 8101	Decrease Police Full Time	(\$12,000)	8		89,742,237	35.81	1.04	3.0%
5	14000 8601	Increase Board of Education for SRO Officer	\$12,000	8		89,754,237	35.82	1.05	3.0%
6	10151 7001	Increase Transfer from Capital Non-Recurring Fund for partial balance of Public Building Resurfacing	(\$10,000)	8		89,744,237	35.81	1.04	3.0%
7	10151 7001	Increase Transfer from Capital Non-Recurring Fund for partial balance of Park & Grounds Equipment Reserve	(\$10,000)	8		89,734,237	35.81	1.04	3.0%
8	10151 7001	Increase Transfer from Capital Non-Recurring Fund for partial balance of Information Technology Reserve	(\$11,200)	8		89,723,037	35.80	1.03	3.0%
9	10151 7001	Increase Transfer from Capital Non-Recurring Fund for partial balance of Drainage Improvments -\$57,655		3	5	89,723,037	35.80	1.03	3.0%
10	10151 7001	Increase Transfer from Capital Non-Recurring Fund for partial balance of Sidewalks & Stonewall Repair -\$10,000		3	5	89,723,037	35.80	1.03	3.0%
11	10151 7001	Increase Transfer from Capital Non-Recurring Fund for balance of Recreation Software -\$75,000		3	5	89,723,037	35.80	1.03	3.0%
12	10151 7001	Increase Transfer from Capital Non-Recurring Fund for partial balance of General Property Improvements	(\$10,000)	8		89,713,037	35.80	1.03	3.0%
13	10151 7001	Increase Transfer from Capital Non-Recurring Fund for partial balance of Traffic Signalization Reserve -\$25,000		3	5	89,713,037	35.80	1.03	3.0%
14	10151 7001	Increase Transfer from Capital Non-Recurring Fund for partial balance of Garfield St Realign/TH Site Improv.	(\$50,000)	8		89,663,037	35.78	1.01	2.9%
15	11100 8501	Add Resurfacing of School Parking Lots	\$50,000	8		89,713,037	35.80	1.03	3.0%
16						89,713,037	35.80	1.03	3.0%
17						89,713,037	35.80	1.03	3.0%
TOTAL			(\$64,200)						