

RTM Budget Meeting
May 4, 2015

and education and said that he is privileged to live here. He said that he is disappointed that Penfield Pavilion is still not open and that the FEMA reimbursement is unknown.

First Selectman Tetreau disagreed with the remarks regarding FEMA reimbursement explaining that the rate had not changed and noted that the reductions in pension, OPEB costs and other savings were attributable to initiatives and work done over the last several years.

Joe Palmer, District 4 thanked the members of the town bodies and department heads for their diligence. He stated that the tax rate increase in this budget is a welcome reprieve. He asked department heads to continue to “think outside of the box” in order to keep up the level of services we enjoy while keeping Fairfield an affordable place to live. He also noted that healthcare costs continue to be expensive and asked that the CBAs with the employees be recalibrated.

Heather Dean, District 4 stated that she will support this budget. Fairfield means value and quality of life. She noted that the BOF and the BOS worked together with a great deal of “give and take” to keep the budget increase under 2%. She further noted that the BOE has restored World Languages in this budget and that both DPW and the Library were able to restore items.

Ed Bateson, District 3 asked for clarification of the budget increase as it presently stands. CFO Bob Mayer said it currently stands at 1.64% including the Board of Assessment Appeals actions, pending tax collection rate and BOF approval.

Hal Schwartz, District 7 agreed with Rep. Palmer that it is good to look forward but that we must also look back. He noted that this budget was six years in the making by the planning done, reductions made and savings found.

Moderator Iacono cited the budget presentation by the Finance Department regarding its new personnel request. She asked if the Finance Department would be able to function if the new position was part-time or temporary, rather than a full-time employee with full benefits. CFO Bob Mayer said he is willing to work with the RTM. If the RTM gives him the salary line he is willing to reduce the position to a part-time position without benefits.

MOTION: Gaylord Meyer District 1 moved to reduce Department 3010 Finance Senior Accountant/Analyst from full-time to part-time with no benefits: for a total reduction of \$27,985, duly seconded.

VOTE: The motion was passed by a unanimous voice vote.

John Donovan, District 1 questioned the Microsoft licensing issue. CFO Mayer explained that the Town had for a period of years used Microsoft software without making provision to pay the licensing fees for use of such software when it copied files or upgraded equipment. This caused the Town to have a liability because it had used the products. The Town opened a dialogue with Microsoft and the reseller. While it originally owed \$1.6 million for use of the software, the Town has been able to reduce the amount to \$1.357 million, payable over the next 3 years. One installment has already been paid, which is reflected in the budget. Mr. Donovan thanked CFO Mayer and asked how this can be prevented in the future. Mr. Mayer replied that in the future such fees will be reflected in the IT budget.

Bill Gerber, District 4 noted that a number of people in the audience were teachers and asked to allow them to speak.

Moderator Iacono thanked Mr. Gerber but noted that they are discussing the Town budget and there were no cuts made to the BOE budget. There being no further discussion of the town side, the discussion moved to the BOE budget.

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John Donovan, District 1 noted that there has been a lot of discussion regarding the teachers' contract. As more data is given to the RTM regarding contracts it should be transmitted in a format such as Excel so that the members of this Body, who all are part-time volunteers, can more easily examine such data.

Kathy Braun, District 8 echoed Rep. Donovan's request for the BOE to send data to the RTM in a format such as Excel. She noted that while the BOE budget increased 3% the Conservation Department provides a vital service to the town and continues to be short staffed.

Bill Gerber, District 4 appreciated Rep. Braun's comments but noted that it had been explained that the BOE's budget increase was due to medical inflation. He stated that there is a strong link between home values in Fairfield and the excellence of our schools.

Mr. Bateson agreed with Messrs. Tymniak and Palmer that next year's budget will not benefit from several factors which helped contain the increase in this budget to 1.64% and that the town will have to negotiate open contracts with an eye to taking care not to overburden the taxpayers.

Allen Marks, District 6 stated that he supported the budget which had an overall increase of 1.64% and still allowed things such as World Languages to be put back in.

Mr. Donovan, District 1 read from the 2010 Connecticut Commission on Enhancing Agency Outcome which compared the salaries of private sector and public sector administrators. Mr. Donovan stated that this report which was put out by the governor shows that 34% of public administrator's salaries are comprised of pension plans. Only 5% of private sector salaries are dependent upon pension plans. Mr. Donovan stated that this is a reality we have to face.

VOTE: The motion to approve the budget as amended in the amount of \$291,219,733 was approved with 43 in favor and 5 opposed.

IN FAVOR: Donovan, Herley, Lipp, Sundman, Ambrose, Burshtein, Jones, Steele, Varian, Bateson, Cargill, Ference, Mackenzie, Dean, Gerber, Palmer, Waldron, Garskof, O'Brien, Smey, Way, Gottlieb, Marks, Siebert, Wolk, Zezima, Hochberg, Hoffkins, Newman, Pires, Schwartz, Durrell, Li, McCarthy, Iacono, McArdle, Pontrelli, Tymniak, Cafferelli, Farnen, Neuberger, Perugini, Ryan

OPPOSED: Meyer, McCullough, Braun, Melaragno, Jacob

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business and upon motion being made, duly seconded and carried unanimously, the meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth P. Browne, CMC, MCTC
Town Clerk

Recorded by: Frances M. Daly