

TOWN COUNCIL
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TOWN HALL
Trumbull

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**FINANCE COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
APRIL 7, 2016**

CALL TO ORDER: The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm. All present joined in a moment of silence and the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENT: Chairman Mark LeClair, Chairman Vice-Chairman, Tony Scinto, Matt Caron, Mary Beth Thornton, Lisa Valenti (arrived at 7:14 p.m.), Dawn Cantafio, Alternate and Ann Marie Evangelista, Alternate

ABSENT: Lori Rosasco Schwartz.

ALSO

PRESENT: Town Council members, Thomas Whitmoyer, Jason Marsh, Mark Block, and Donna Seidell.

The Chair stated each speaker would have two minutes, if there is time at the end of the public hearing there will be a minute rejoinder. The sole item on the agenda is 2016-2017 FY operating budget. The Chair explained per the Town Charter the council is only permitted to increase a line item up to First Selectman's budget. The council cannot increase to the departmental request. All comments are welcome and extended his gratitude to all those that attended this hearing.

Lainie McHugh of 132 Fresh Meadow Drive congratulated Councilman Marsh for guiding an Odyssey of the Mind team to a state title and trip to the word competition for the third straight year. Ms. McHugh spoke against the disparaging comments made at a recent budget hearing about PTA volunteers. There were many unanswered questions from the BOE budget hearing, there is a BOE spending freeze and questioned what would not be done that was budgeted for.

Veronica Lenzen of 52 Woodhaven Drive is the PTSA Treasurer stated education should be a priority, the elementary schools need more technology integration specialists, additional health programming is needed at the high school to address the opiate addiction issue and

would like to see it at the elementary and middle schools as well. If the schools are not given the financial support resident families will leave and our property values will decline.

Jen Kehley of 20 Hill Circle stated she had 3 children in the school system and serves as the PTSA President. The list of priorities are as follows: curriculum development, funding technology, 3 additional technology integration specialists, extra AP classes, capital plan for building improvements, gradual reduction and phase out of pay-to play, and the increase foreign language program. Would like to see the district move on from the pay check to pay check mentality and would like to see the district move on from status quo. Ms. Kehley spoke in favor of productive conversation between all the boards.

Vicki Tesoro 133 Beechwood Avenue spoke on behalf TPAUD and spoke in favor of .45 health teacher at THS and would like to see this position as a 1.0 position. Many THS graduates have died from overdoses recently. The students are under a lot of stress. Ms. Tesoro spoke in favor of restoring the \$161,262 to the police budget for the Lieutenants and SRO's and asked the Sewer Enterprise account 522202-Svcs/Professional be reviewed and adjusted since we now have an agreement with Bridgeport and would not need these funds. Ms. Tesoro stated she is a lifetime PTA member and stood behind Jen Kehley.

Jen Mottolese of 33 Valley View Road stated she is annoyed with the game being played with the budget. The budget process is long and confusing even for those who pay attention. The union negotiation is confusing, how can we speak about the budget when they do not know what is going on. The tactics she has seen are strong arm tactics and are playing with the lives of our Town employees. These are our employees who have a day-to-day impact on our children, families and seniors. These are our teachers and police officers and spoke to the concerns of not doing enough to move forward and asked for the support of the superintendent and to fund the budget as best as it can be.

Melanie Flavin of 23 Louis Street has attended the Senior Center Commission meeting and asked questions regarding the plans for the senior/community center. She noted that many people are questioning why the town is going ahead with this project based on the data and noted the citizens who are paying attention to this do not feel the voices are being heard. The surveys have been botched and is not ok with that. This is not a kids v. senior issue this is a Trumbull issue.

Irene McGeachy of 62 Raven Road stated she is relocating to Massachusetts in three months after having lived here for 7 years. At first she was upset to leave but is now excited to do so based on what her new town invests in the education system. Her children will have many other opportunities in the new school district that they do not have here. She is glad her company will purchase her home because she would not be able to sell her home for what the amount she purchased it for.

Susan Lafrance of 45 Woolsley Avenue spoke against the budget and the fact that the BOE budget was sent back with less money due to the health insurance negotiation. Ultimately the Town Council will need to figure that out. The SAT scores are lagging and the children have tested at 48% proficient in Math and 64% in English. Year-to-year the officials look at the

education budget as a lot of money and questioned where the waste is. Ms. Lafrance questioned what will happen if the BOE budget is shorted by \$1 million.

Tony DAquila of 29 Valley View Road spoke against the limit to speaking for 2 minutes at this meeting, this is the first time in his 32 years of attending meetings that a limit had been placed. The leaf pick up program would not be reduced and/or cut without public input, this has been studied for over 20 years and the town is still incapable of doing so. Fairfield has a more efficient program and costs them only \$80,000, since Trumbull is smaller than Fairfield it would cost us even less, approximately \$46,000. Fairfield has been using their system for 40 years. They bag their own leaves. This would be low hanging fruit as savings for this administration and could save the town \$1 million.

Lainie McHugh stated no one has asked about how the Health Department is over budget by \$40,000. Ms. Capuano had indicated the staffing models used were not realistic. The Parks & Recreation Department reduced a position and is being replaced with 4 others to do the same job. The cost of the programs is going to the residents, but the town was able to offer retirement packages. Ms. McHugh spoke in favor of SRO's and spoke against the reduction to the police budget noting it is a disservice to Chief Lombardo. The leaf program was the subject of the Internal Auditor's report.

Jen Kehley of 20 Hill Circle spoke to the amount of fund raising that is done by the PTA's and other booster clubs in town and that doesn't include the pap-to-play fees. We already ask the parents for a lot.

Susan Lafrance of 43 Woolsley Avenue stated times have changed. Our schools have yet to catch up with technology, the curriculum needs to be updated. The teachers support the school and one of their biggest perks are their benefits. The administration did not go about the insurance change correctly. The students will pay the price. 48 % of the students are proficient in Math which leaves us with 52% who are not. There are writing assistants helping the students with college applications but this is at the end of their schooling and spoke in favor of this assistance in their freshman year. Add more sports so the children become more involved, the district is standing still. If a million dollars is cut from the budget what will happen? No one on the BOE is concerned about the students and hopes someone here is.

Kathy Doornbosh of 43 Linely Road stated she and her husband put two children through the school system, she was a very involved parent and donated hundreds of hours of her time much of it outside of the PTA, because it is the right thing to do for the children. What she is hearing at this meeting is, out of respect for the superintendent he should be given what he asked for in the budget. We are talking about is less than 1% of what was requested and what was offered by the first selectman. She read an article in the Trumbull Times that the budget is being slashed and is trying to figure out where this intensity is coming from. Every year they have seen the education budget increased by state mandate. It is against the law to reduce the education budget. There is a difference between a decrease in budget and reduction of the increase. There are people struggling in this Town and are barely making it and it is good to reconsider the vituperative language that is sometimes used when discussing

budgets. We just lost General Electric, they are leaving this state to go to another high tax state. The state's economics is dire, the state budget will be \$2 billion short in years out This will have reverberations in every town in our state. When looking at budgets she wished everyone would consider what is best for the state, our town and our children. Just because people have concern for the budget and are asking for slight decreases of the superintendent's request does not mean that they don't want the best for their children.

The Chair asked if there was anyone else who wanted to speak or come back to speak a second time. Hearing none. The Chair closed the public hearing and thanked everyone for attending this public hearing.

There being no further business to discuss the Finance Committee adjourned by unanimous consent at 7:48 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Margaret D. Mastroni, Town Council Clerk