

Trumbull Town Council  
Finance Committee 2011-2012 Public Hearing  
March 26, 2011

The Public Hearing of the Trumbull Town Council Finance Committee was opened at 1:06 p.m. by Vice-Chairman Tony Scinto. All present joined in a moment of silence and the pledge of allegiance.

Members present: Chairwoman Debra Lamberti (arrived at 1:15 p.m.), Vice Chairman Tony Scinto, Jane Deyoe, Ann Marie Evangelista, John Rotondo and John DelVecchio, Jr.

There were 31 members of the public present to speak.

Brian O'Connor of 18 Yorktown Circle stated that he was surprised that he would have to speak to a 5% BoE budget increase; instead they should be speaking about a decrease. Trumbull seems to be out of touch with other communities.

Cindy Altman of 21 River Bend Road stated that she is computer lab para-professional employed at Daniels Farm School one of the positions slotted for being elimination if a budget of less than a 4% increase is approved. The position's job description and requirement have expanded through the years, i.e. software installation, troubleshooting, scheduling the computer lab times and working as a liaison between the technology department and the classroom as opposed to how when she was first employed and the main responsibility was putting a floppy disc in the computer and taking it out for the students.

Mark LeClair of 43 Linley Road stated that in 1994 Trumbull was a town with low taxes and a very good education system; taxes for average home in Trumbull in 1994 was \$1,774, 86% of the state's average and the town had \$32 million in total debt. Those numbers started to rise in 1999 the average home's tax was \$1,900, 123% of the state's average and the total debt had risen to \$47 million; in 2007 the average home's taxes had risen to \$3,000 and increase of 75% in 13 years and at 137% of the state's average, the town had \$81 million in total debt an increase of 133% since 1994. Trumbull is no longer a town with low taxes.

Marjorie Rindos of 227 North Street spoke to the current economic climate; Trumbull should have a referendum where all taxpayers are allowed to approve the budget. A referendum in Monroe cost the town \$3,000. At the last election Trumbull residents gave the elected officials a mandate to cut taxes.

Lucille Borowry of 31 Towerview Drive stated that seniors make up 1/3 of the town's population, speaking as a senior she says no to the BoE request; and yes to the first selectman's recommended budget. Seniors have had no cost of living increase for two years now; the budget needs to consider everyone and to lower taxes for all.

Lynn Springer of 33 Johnson Road stated that the BoF's vote on the total budget failed after several attempts with a deadlock of 3-3, 50% for and 50% against. Both sides are important, if both sides can not have it all they need to compromise. Don't underestimate the next best choice, both sides can give a little, sometimes the next best choice is the best.

Kristy Waizenegger of 82 Lorma Avenue and Town Council Representative of District 4 spoke to better managing the BoE operating budget noting that nobody wants to see program or teacher cuts; there are options that could be put in place to reduce the BoE operational costs; incremental reductions do add up. Examples of such: reducing the amount of paper used throughout the school system, by printing and/or copying on both sides of the sheet, there are clerical models in which could be followed and formally initiate a plan to reduce operational costs in lieu of continually raising taxes.

Howard Dale of 38 Driftwood Lane spoke to the education budget in 1994 and how it continually rose in costs in 2005 and again in 2007 and the proposed increase of this year. It is hard to say what is considered a good salary for educators stating that there is no direct correlation between salaries and student success. The town is hurting there are homes in foreclosure. The BoE has received 94% of its requested increases since 1994.

Cindy Katske of 129 Meadowview Drive stated that the Town Council has a unique opportunity; they now have the same powers as the BoF. A 2.375% increase is actually nothing after the funding cliff is removed and the utilities are accounted for. It is a reduction. Reductions were made to the budget. Larger class sizes and the loss of support staff will impact the students.

Karen Egri of 1 Morningside Drive stated that she is the Vice-Chairwoman of the Republican Town Committee; and has attended all of the BoF meetings and has reviewed the budget. Education is one component of the budget; the budget is a thoughtful, comprehensive budget, which represents fiscal responsibility. Ms. Egri thanked the First Selectman and all of the department heads who had done their job from the beginning of the budget process. The Town Council Finance Committee has been meeting all last week reviewing the departments thoroughly line by line.

Judy Fitzgibbons of 5 Sarenee Circle stated that she was in favor of an increase to the BoE line item; the benefits outweigh the losses. The children's education is important and is willing to pay the extra tax money. The town's elementary schools are ranked in the top 15% and are willing to pay for a superior education system.

Lanie Mcugh of 132 Freshmeadow Drive stated that many of the education employees have chosen to live and work in town; there are 7,000 students in the education system and respectfully requested to restore some funding to the education system.

Joanne Zimmerman of 4672 Madison Avenue requested that the committee listen to the teachers; Jane Ryan is a top elementary school; doing a great job; providing an excellent education.

Aurora Montini of 2790 Reservoir Avenue noted that the BoE salaries, and the upcoming high school renovation debt. Explaining that there are many taxpayers who do not even agree with a 2.375% increase. Politicians have a habit kicking the problem down the line to the next person; the voters voted for fiscal responsibility. Hold firm sacrifice is not fatal. She voted for individuals who fiscally responsible,

Cindy Penkoff of 101 Columbine Drive stated that this is her fourth year speaking at the public hearing and is currently serving on the BoF and is a mother whose child has gone through the pre-school, elementary school and is now at the middle school; her child is also a special needs child; she is definitely pro-education; but is anti-waste. Trumbull has an excellent education system; but is speaking to better management of the funds. A ½ million dollars has been returned every year for five (5) years and now we are hearing of old books and outdated pc's. The money had been sitting in a fund, was returned and the taxpayers had paid taxes on those funds. Requesting that the Town Council support the 2.375% cap on the education budget; this will hold the BoE accountable.

Dorothy Lewandowski of 24 Poplar spoke in favor of the First Selectman's budget, fiscal management and good management. The budget is laudable and would have been looked on favorably in other towns, noting that the BoE is conditioned to cry wolf and then having the needs met.

Elizabeth Polzello of 74 Roosevelt Drive asked that the BoE budget be restored back to the 5% level speaking against the instruction chairperson reductions. The expert teachers and principles are in the trenches and asked to put politics aside to support teachers children and schools.

Art Mikucki of 85 Canterbury Lane stated that reductions will not create issues, something is wrong when the BoE can not work with an increase; tax and spend is not the answer for today; we're hurting.

Pam Discko of 4956 Madison Avenue requested that the focus should not be on the education supporters; many of you were elected for your fiscal responsibilities. There are unfunded state pensions; Governor Malloy has announced major tax increases; citizens will be impacted. At this time the state debt is equal to \$45,899 per person. Inflation is here.

Fran Pechtol of 10 Trailwood Lane is a second grade Booth Hill elementary school teacher. An increase of 2.37% will increase class sizes. Education is the foundation. Ms. Pechtol read a page from the children's book Mrs. Spitzer's Garden explaining how different flowers and plants have different types and amount of needs in order to flourish and bloom. The teachers can manage with less; but the question is, "Will the students get what they need?" There were 37 pink slips given out to teachers this year.

Mr. Tom Tesoro of 133 Beachwood Avenue a Board of Finance member stated that he is embarrassed to have a 3-3 tie on the budget; there is a division in Trumbull. Putting political consideration aside they should have found common ground. Mr. Tesoro requested that the Town Council consider the following items; Pension Funding; to look at the nurse at Stern Village explaining that more time is necessary for a transition and to consider the 2 half year police officer positions. The leaf program needs to be looked at with a plan for the seniors.

Paul Sullivan of 49 Bonita Avenue grew up in the Bronx and has experienced first hand the results of an over crowded and underfunded education system. People will take on another job if necessary. Look at the kids here; there were 44 kids in a class in the Bronx when he was growing up.

Tony D'Aquilla of 29 Valleyview spoke to play for pay sports; \$84,000 spent for math specialists and the TAG program. The leaf program needs to be looked at; its cost is \$900,000.

Mitzi Goldberg of 71 Johnson Street stated education is important; the First Selectman's budget will not hurt the education system it is a quality education system, there were many constructive ideas at this public hearing and hopes that the committee is listening. People have to live on a budget and can not take on any more loans other communities are living within their means.

Penny (*Inaudible*) of 125 Merrimac Drive stated that her husband is currently laid off and is speaking from a point of view where her family budget has been impacted, there will be cuts, but education has changed in the last 14 years; there are more demands on the teachers requesting a compromise between the two budgets.

Matthew Hepfer of 194 Putting Green Road has been an educator in Wilton for 15 years speaking in favor of education. The \$2 million in cuts will come from people; the education system is exemplary and respectfully requested a compromise that would not result in the firing of people; the school system is exemplary let's not make it average.

Roy Fuchs of 221 Fitch's Pass has been a BoF member previously in another community stated that he would not take a position on the budget, but was disappointed with the level of homework done by the committee at Wednesday's department heads' meeting. The technology budget includes a 15 year old network and noted that there is not one Wi-Fi building in town.

Greg Hatsus of 15 Barry Place is a principle of a Derby middle school explained that the list of potential BoE cuts sports through TAG are what motivated him to come to speak at this public hearing. There is a federal mandate to include special education but there is a curve from low to high. There is a very real issue with bullying in the schools and the gifted students are at risk without a program such as TAG. TAG gives them confidence.

Education is a different than it was 25 years ago; there is many differentials to educating all of the children.

Donna Mack of 148 Teller Road moved here from a state that the make-a-wish children's wishes were to go to school. Her child started in the school system in 6<sup>th</sup> grade and is now an honor student at the high school and was even able to participate in freshman sports. She had taught in a state that did not have the resources to support such programs. She is a Trumbull teacher and a teacher who will be let go.

First Selectman Timothy M. Herbst of 97 Fairview Avenue spoke to compromises by the education system and the effects of the current economy; the town council now assumes the authority of the Board of Finance. The BoE health care is a driver of the costs associated with the BoE budget; the rates had started at a 14% increase, have gone down to 11% and now are at 8%. The BoE health coverage is through Anthem, so is the Town's, the town's anticipated increase for this year is 0%. The BoE is not in the business of negotiating health insurance rates, recommending the removal of the health insurance line item from the BoE budget; the superintendant has expressed support of this proposal. The health insurance represents 1% of the 5.3% increase requested. This is where the energy needs to be focused on management this will provide savings for the BoE and the overall town budget.

Cindy Katske of 129 Meadowview Drive stated much has been said about running on fiscal responsibility at this public hearing this administration also ran on a pro education platform.

Cindy Penkoff of 101 Columbine Road stated she is strong education supporter and wanted to clarify a point made with regard to the leaf program and its cost, the program if eliminated would not yield a \$900,000 savings, the real savings would be approximately \$40,000 based upon the fact the workers and the equipment are at work everyday and therefore if the leaf program were not in place the workers and equipment would be used elsewhere on a different project in town. The elimination of the town nurse from Stern Village had been a recommendation made by the department head explaining her presence at Stern Village has become a liability based upon there dependency on the nurse in lieu of seeking help from physician.

Fran Pechtoll of 10 Trailwood Lane spoke in favor of educating the children with the most up to date skill set.

The Chair closed the public hearing at 2:34 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Margaret D. Mastroni, Town Council Clerk