

TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBER
EAST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

MARCH 5, 2014

PUBLIC HEARING/BUDGET

PRESENT Chair Richard F. Kehoe, Vice Chair William P. Horan, Jr., Majority Leader
Barbara-Ann Rossi, Minority Leader Esther B. Clarke, Councillors Marc I.
Weinberg, Linda A. Russo, Ram Aberasturia, Patricia Harmon and Anita D.
Morrison

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kehoe called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. He announced the exit locations in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes §29-381 after which the Council joined him in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Chair gave a brief overview of the Mayor's recommended 2014-2015 budget totaling approximately \$173M which represents a 2.6% increase in taxes. The mill rate would be 45 mills with the average homeowner seeing a \$115 increase in taxes annually. The major drivers for the increase in expenditures on the town's side are (1) employee pension and healthcare costs which require a \$1.4M increase over the current fiscal year; (2) a contingency fund for various ongoing union contract negotiations; (3) an accrual fund of approximately \$375,000 to cover the costs of a 53rd payroll; (4) a \$368,000 increase in MDC sewer fees; and (5) a \$200,000 set aside for revaluation. The Chair noted that the Mayor's recommended budget does not add any additional personnel. Except for the Police and Fire Departments, Town employment has decreased by 77 positions since 1990.

That portion of the Mayor's recommended budget which is allocated to the Board of Education is \$85,700,000. The state will provide the Board of Education with \$6.5M in direct aid through the Alliance District program. However, the state restricts funding earmarked for the Board of Education to new programs – not existing expenditures.

The following citizens came forth to speak against any cuts to the budget that would affect the Board of Education's proposed budget:

Paul Apostalon, President of the East Hartford Education Association; Korinne Fruster, East Hartford Music Department; Sue Simmons, East Hartford resident; Audrey Breen, 52 O'Connell Drive; Rachel Conboy, 35 Northfield Drive; Susan Skowronek, 84 Syracuse Drive; Karen Burke, 1657 Main Street; Nasreen Onari, 64 Warren Drive; Kailei and Nicole Cumento, 35 Sunset Ridge Drive; Kelci Davis, 64 Sunset Ridge Drive; Micki Boccaccio, 164 Woodmont Drive; Michelle Paradis, 41 Ferncrest Drive; Samantha Gonzalez, 78 Smith Drive; Robert Ventj, 132 Lydall Road; Zena Wright, 3 Henderson Drive; Bryan Hall, 7 Heritage Lane; Shelly Nearing, 377 School Street; Vikki Hampton, 31 Knollwood Road; Kim Tipton, 147 Kingston Drive; Timothy Estremera, 70 Grande Road; Jonathan Taylor, 305 Maple Street; Dorese Roberts, 1454 Silver Lane.

Karen Howe, 100 Ridgewood Road, urged the Town Council and the Board of Education to work cooperatively toward the common goal of doing what's right for the town and its residents.

Honora Futtner, 1629 Main Street South Windsor and 910 Silver Lane, requested a police presence at this year's Farmers' Market held at the Town Green.

Mike Vengruskas, 517 Hills Street, asked the Council to keep the budget in check by cutting as much as possible to decrease the mill rate. Mr. Vengruskas listed several areas in town government that could reduce expenses, i.e., eliminating several supervisor positions, not increasing funding for the Board of Education.

Susan Kniep, 50 Olde Roberts Street, (1) commended all the speakers who came forward this evening; (2) stated that East Hartford has the 4th highest mill rate in Connecticut; (3) believes that the imbalance of state funding when comparing magnet schools with public schools shows when the town is setting its budget; (3) suggested that all union contracts should be re-opened to negotiate a wage freeze; (4) acknowledged the Mayor's call for transparency by posting all wages, salaries and pensions on the town's website; and (5) against the Police Department's DROP program.

Donald Sugalski, 1736 Main Street, (1) suggested the Board of Education Administrators and Supervisors freeze their salaries; (2) increased MDC costs for the town's water and sewer usage is a big financial burden for the town; and (3) is against giving the Board of Education the money requested due to the financial impact it will have on the taxpayers.

Jeff Currey, Chair of the East Hartford Board of Education, stated that the Council has proven in years past that they are supporters of the Board of Education and is confident that the monies the Council allocates to the Board for the 2014-2015 fiscal year will, hopefully, allow all programs to go forward.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION By Esther Clarke
 seconded Bill Horan
 to **adjourn** (9:40 p.m.).
 Motion carried 9/0.

Attest _____
Angela Attenello
Town Council Clerk