

TOWN OF WALLINGFORD, CONNECTICUT

SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

Budget Public Hearing

April 29, 2009

The following minutes are a record of the Special Meeting of the Wallingford Town Council held in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall on Wednesday, April 29, 2009. The Meeting was Called to Order at 6:09 P.M. Responding present to the Roll Call given by Town Council Secretary Sandra Weekes were Councilors Mike Brodinsky, Nick Economopoulos, Jerry Farrell, Jr., John LeTourneau, Robert F. Parisi, Rosemary Rascati, Michael Spiteri and Vincent F. Testa, Jr. Councilor Vincenzo M. DiNatale arrived at 7:25 P.M. during the recess. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr., arrived at 6:15 P.M.

The meeting began with a Moment of Silence, the Pledge of Allegiance and the Roll Call.

PUBLIC HEARING

BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2009-2010

Chairman Brodinsky explained how the Public Hearing would be conducted and preceded with the Roll Call of the departments to determine which departments residents wished to speak with during the hearing.

Departments that were excused included:

Board of Assessment Appeals, Board of Ethics, Board of Selectmen, Building Department, Cafeteria (Board of Education), Civil Preparedness, Conservation Commission, Dog Pound, Economic Development Commission, Electric Division, Employee Insurance and Other Benefits, Engineering Department, Finance Department, Fire Department, Fire Marshal, Government Access Television, Health Department, Inland Wetlands Commission, Insurance, Property and Casualty, Law Department, Library, Mayor's Budget, , Planning and Zoning, Police Department, Probate Court, Program Planner, Public Utilities Commission, Parks and Recreation Department, Registrars of Voters, Sewer Division, Town Council, Town Clerk, Electric Water and Sewer Divisions, Veterans Service Center, Water Division, Youth and Social Services Bureau, Zoning Board of Appeals

Departments asked to remain and take part in the hearing included:

Board of Education, Capital Appropriations Reserve; Capital and Non-Recurring Account; Contingency; Debt Service, Pension Funds, Personnel Pension and Risk Management, Public Works Department, Social Services Contribution: VNA

Based on interest in each category Chairman Brodinsky announced the order in which each would be called: Visiting Nurses, Board of Education, general comments, and then the list will go as it was read.

VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION OF WALLINGFORD

John F. Marriott, 33 Grieb Road, resident of Wallingford since 1960, President, Board of Directors, Visiting Nurses Association of Wallingford, He said that the board instructed the VNA Executive Director to develop a budget this year that showed no increase over the prior year budget. He said that

before his budget meeting with the Mayor, he learned of a counteroffer from another entity for services that Visiting Nurses Association of Wallingford has provided to Wallingford since 1919. Following the budget meeting with Mayor and receipt of a copy of the counteroffer, the VNA reviewed and analyzed what was being proposed. He said that in a second review, the Mayor felt that social work, social services, was not a mandate. He said that he is deeply concerned since their number of cases has increased. He said that the VNA is seeing the impact of the economic downturn in the number of families that it sees.

He spoke about the Town's Charter with regard to the Health Department, which states that the department is charged with providing and concern about public health and does not define public health as physical versus mental. He said that in the State of Connecticut, there are two departments that address each of these, public health and mental health and addiction. He said that they realized that there would be some kind of budgetary reduction but are now faced with the Mayor's cut of \$100,000. He said that this was significant but that they are getting an outpouring of support. He said that for-the-record that either the Council and/or the Mayor should have received communications from the following:

Janice Debartolotto, Area Director of the Meriden-Wallingford Office of Children and Families for the State of Connecticut;

Margaret O'Day, MSW, School Social Worker, Pond Hill School;

Denise Strom, MSW, School Social Worker, Stevens School;

Allison Lange, MSW, School Social Worker, Sheehan and Moran;

Pam Krombel, MSW, School Social Worker, Sheehan;

Kathy Queen, Director, Wallingford Community Daycare Center;

Phyllis Murray, Director of Ulbrich Boys and Girls Club;

Dr. Louis Alonzo, Wallingford pediatrician;

Dr. Steven Frank, Wallingford pediatrician;

Pat O'Connor, APRN, Wallingford Family Practice;

Steven May, resident; Ruth Gaffey, resident;

Rev. Margaret Jay, First Congregational Church;

Joanne Marashak, RN, Assistant Supervisor, HomeCare Services, VNA;

Rev. Gary Simeon, Most Holy Trinity Church;

Jackie Barbato, previous Group Service CareGiver;

Donna Diaz, Coordinator of Parkinson's Center, St. Raphael's Hospital.

The following people spoke in favor of restoring the funds that were cut from the budget:

Bill Shovil, Ridgecrest Rd., past chair of the *Elderly Tax Deferral Fact Finding Committee*, made comments regarding his concern for seniors and what the VNA does for the seniors of our town.

Betty Holyroyd, RN, 18 Miller Street, read a letter from Lillian Wasielewski of 2 Southside Terrace that recorded the services available to seniors by the VNA. Ms. Holyroyd made comments regarding the time when she was an RN for the VNA in Wallingford and compared it to the increased need of the care by the VNA today.

Maria Ruiz spoke of her experience with the VNA in learning about various aspects of childcare and the availability of Literacy Volunteers at the VNA along with other testimony.

Irene O'Brien, former community social worker at the VNA, read an email from Marion Gracy, Guidance Counselor at Moran Middle School.

Regina Lukas, member of the Caregivers Group at the VNA, told of the great help she has received from this group during her husband's illness. She also spoke of the care her mother received years ago from the VNA.

Marina Mingas spoke for VNA support and their assistance with the Hispanic community in acclimating to the Wallingford community.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

In attendance:

Superintendent of Schools, Dale Wilson

Business Manager, Linda Winters

Chairman, Board of Education, Mike Votto

Rich Harkawik, 18 Anderson Road, President, Wallingford Education Association, expressed his concerns regarding the Board of Education budget and suggested restoring the cuts that were made by using the CRRA funds. He spoke about the effects of cuts as having longstanding impacts on Wallingford's educational system. He illustrated his point by discussing classroom size, school supplies, the increase in ability difference, maintaining technological advances, etc.

Robert Hogan, Grieb Road, read a prepared statement that addressed teacher salaries, benefits, wage freezes and staff reduction results.

Jim Gianotti, made comments regarding seniors and wanted to know if there are 400 less students attending school than in the past. Mr. Votto responded, "There are." Mr. Gianotti asked how many assistant principals there are. Mr. Wilson responded that there are two at the high schools and one at the middle schools and none at the elementary schools and that all of them are needed. He continued with the questioning in regard to salaries and cost.

Annie McDonald, 175 North Branford Road, parent of Wallingford student, para-educator, President of Para-Education Union in Wallingford, talked about the changes in the school system and the need to provide what our students deserve.

Elizabeth Concession, 20 Promontory Drive, Yalesville PTAC, read a prepared statement that expressed support for the Mayor's budget in its current form.

John Marriott, 33 Grieb Road, retired Moran principal, expressed concerns regarding school custodial services.

Beth Raccio, 10 Franks Road, Chairwoman, system wide PTAC, active parent Board of Education budget process participant, conveyed her concerns with respect to the \$2.9 million educational budget cut. She appealed to the Town Council and the Mayor the need to invest in our system and to use new money to restore cuts.

Mary Sambori, 69 Wentworth Drive, spoke about the value of our educational system changing as times have changed and compared the changes in education from her mother to her grandchildren.

Barbara Kapi, 6 Demi Road, spoke about the reduction of revenue in the Town Clerk's Office.

Paul Ciardullo, 2 Bayberry Drive, said that the Mayor's cuts were not deep enough in relation to current economic conditions. He said that key issues in the budget have been met with tepid responses from the Council. He asked what is the justification for any spending increase and reminded everyone of his request months ago what he asked the Council to take a stand for a tax freeze, noting that taxes have increased 70% over the last 10 years.

Ted Krol, Yalesville, asked to balance the budget and that he is not in favor of raises.

The last speaker, Pam Forte, 10 Hintz Drive, Moran PTAC, Wallingford parent and university nursing instructor, asked for no further cuts to the Board of Education budget stating that students need to be prepared for college and need to have strong abilities in math, science and also in the ability to write in order to make them strong, successful members of society.

MOTION

Mr. Farrell made a motion, seconded by Mr. LeTourneau, for a recess. All Councilors present (9) voted Aye. Recess commenced at 7:20 P.M.

The chairman reconvened the hearing at 7:30 P.M. and called for General Comments

GENERAL COMMENTS:

Mark Rolan, President, Local 1183, read a prepared statement. (*Appendix I*)

Dianne Saunders, Northford Road, spoke about budget cuts and voiced her support for the VNA, a local agency for local people.

Paul Ciardullo, 2 Bayberry Drive, spoke to the contingency fund, the bond fund and the waste water treatment study and asked the purpose of the study. He asked why is there any tax increase.

Ted Krol, 53 Hanover Street, Yalesville, asked for a balanced budget.

Jim Seichter, 163 Grieb Road, supports the Mayor's budget and thinks that it is responsible. He said that the town is a stable employer.

Steve Knight, 289 Ivy Street, said that he does not think it a good idea to reassign the CRRA money to the Board of Education, especially since it is earmarked for a new firehouse. He said that if those funds are reassigned now, then it will cause a tax increase in the future. He said that he does not understand why the union would rather forgo a job rather than take a wage freeze for one year.

PUBLIC WORKS

In attendance:

Director of Public Works, Henry McCully

Bob Gross, 114 Long Hill Road, asked questions on the subject of Public Works vehicles with respect to truck repair and replacement. He asked questions concerning contingency money with regard to Public Works transfer history for salt and sand.

Wes Lube, Montowese Trail, was interested in the town's tree program.

CAP & NON-RECURRING

Bob Gross, 114 Long Hill Road, discussed possible use of the CRRA money. Mayor Dickinson said that the projects it will fund are the new aerial truck and the firehouse, which may exceed the CRRA funds.

Dianne Saunders, Northford Road, supports maintaining the character of Whirlwind Hill Road in the upcoming phases of widening and paving the road and hopes that Public Works and the Engineering Department will work together to that end. For safety reasons and speed, she expressed concern with the widening of the road and that it will promote speeding. And lastly, she is concerned about Whirlwind Hill Road runoff into the reservoir.

PERSONNEL & PENSIONS

In attendance:

Director of Personnel, Terence Sullivan

Assistant Director of Personnel, James Hutt

Risk Manager, Kurt Treiber

bidding for a third party administrator for health insurance. Mr. Sullivan said that the town has not and that the town needs to comply with union contracts. He said the common language needs to be drawn up that both the town and the unions can agree upon. He said that then there would give an ability to bid. Mr. Gross suggested that that language be worked on. Mr. Sullivan discussed group size and its effect on plans.

PENSION

In attendance:

Comptroller, James Bowes

Bob Gross, 114 Long Hill Road, asked about the status of the town's Pension Plan- contributions, dividends, interest income and advisor fees. He asked if the advisor has gone out to bid. Mr. Bowes commented that an RFP would be more appropriate.

Paul Ciardullo, 2 Bayberry Drive, asked about fund performance. Mr. Bowes told him the it waa down 22% in 2008/

OTHER

Bob Gross, 114 Long Hill Road, made comments with regard to the Contingency Fund.

MOTION

Mr. Farrell made a motion for adjourn. Mr. Parisi seconded. All Councilors present (9) voted Aye. The motion passed, and the meeting adjourned at 8:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Sandra Weekes
Tow Council Secretary

Meeting digitally recorded by Sandra Weekes
AF-042909

Chairman Mike Brodinsky
Date

Town Clerk Barbara Kapi
Date

Statement by Mark Rolan
Town Employee and President of AFSCME Local 1183
April 29, 2008

Good evening Mayor Dickinson and members of the Town Council.

My name is Mark Rolan, 590 Ward St. Ext.. I speak to you tonight as President of AFSCME Local 1183, which represents 129 public service workers. Our members include Administrative Clerical, Public Safety, Public Works, and Sewer Division employees. I work at the Department of Public Works as a Maintainer 2.

Our members are the people you see behind the counters and desktops at Town Hall. We are the people you go to for answers concerning your property and personal business matters.

We are the people who maintain your roads, ball fields and town parks. We maintain your traffic signage and we are the people who answer 911 when you call and we dispatch the necessary first responders. We operate and maintain your sewer plant. We plow your roads in the winter and we repair those roads in the spring.

Our contract with the town expired June 30 2008. We have been working without a contract for nearly a year, essentially working with wage freeze conditions, at no impact to the Town of Wallingford.

Nevertheless, our commitment to the town remains as strong as ever. We have saved the town hundreds of thousands of dollars by working efficiently and getting the job done. We are proud to serve the people of Wallingford. Yet we are aware of the economic climate and we want to work with the town by becoming part of the solution and yet achieve a just and fair contract for our members.

Approximately 3 weeks ago, during mediation meetings we negotiated concessions that included furlough days as an alternative to a wage freeze. After 2 days of mediation we thought we had finally come to an agreement on wages that would have saved the town approximately \$129,000, yet at the last minute this concessionary offer was rejected by the town, ending 2 days of talks, thus leading us into arbitration and bringing us closer to the threat of layoffs, a threat that our members take very seriously.

Our bargaining unit has already seen positions cut. We feel that any further cuts would seriously affect the services the taxpayers have come to expect.

Is it really necessary to adversely affect the quality of life in the Town of Wallingford when one of the largest unions have already begun talking of concessionary measures that would save the taxpayers \$129,000?

Is it worth neglecting town hall services, little league ball fields and maintenance of the town infrastructure by forcing layoffs on us when we have tried to faithfully negotiate a contract?

Our union believes it would be irresponsible to balance the town budget by cutting vital services without regard for the impact on residents and businesses. In this time of economic challenge people need to be able to rely on their public services so that they may focus on the more challenging issues that families must now contend with.

I would like to express appreciation to the Town Council for their gesture of bipartisanship when passing a motion of accepting furlough days as a possible alternative to a wage freeze.

I ask of the taxpayer who comes to the Town Council demanding a zero % budget increase to consider that those services cut may be the ones you take most for granted.

I ask of the Town Council that you continue to try to be a positive player in this budgetary process so that we all may come to a resolution that will benefit all people involved and so that we may continue to serve the people of Wallingford.

Finally I ask Mayor Dickinson to seriously consider the effect of layoffs on both the taxpayers of Wallingford and also the families of those people who serve the Town of Wallingford.

Thank you very much for this time.