

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
April 15, 2009
Public Hearing – Municipal Budget

Present: Frank Hyde, Raymond Spear, Glen Shibley, Laura Flanagan

Interim Town Manager Paul Sprague

Absent: Kenneth Cloutier

Vice-President Spear opened public hearing. He advised that if Town Council was to permit the maximum allowed levy increase of 4.75%, it would increase the tax rate by .88 cents per thousand (6%) and still require a \$2 million reduction in requested budget expenses.

The Town Council would like to see no tax increase in the ensuing year. We are one of the highest taxed towns now. To do that it would mean level funding both the town and school and reduce municipal expenses from FY 08-09 budget by 2.5 million because of lost revenue. The Council is here tonight to provide you the opportunity to share your concerns about increased taxes, the budget or level funding.

Councilwoman Flanagan stated that the Council has received questions about our revenue projections. We are lacking approximately \$ 2.5 million. This is due to the phase out of the auto excise tax, reduction in local town revenue in building permits, recording fees, the Planning Department, Centre of New England buy back, loss of interest, and loss of state general revenue sharing. We have been told by our legislators to expect the worst.

Karen Ferretti, 17 Brentwood Drive, wanted to know if there would be a savings if residents were responsible for bringing their own refuse to the dump and Ken Nicaastro of 106 Jefferson Drive suggested saving money on health benefits and insurance waivers.

Joe Brown, Colvintown Road, asked what the possibility is of lay-offs, also the possibility of property tax increases.

Mr. Hyde stated that he is not a proponent of layoffs.

Elizabeth Falconio, Flat River Road remarked that raising taxes will put people out of their homes and Louise Dinsmore, Knotty Oak Shores doesn't want to see people lose jobs.

Dennis Skorski, 70 Abbots Crossing Road – It is impossible not to increase taxes; that is the only reasonable answer. It would cost somewhere around \$12.00 per month per average homeowner if you go to 4.75%.

John Ryan, Wisteria Drive – Town employees are dedicated and work hard. DPW works very hard. It would be a travesty to cut police and our parks and recreation department provides great services.

Mrs. Flanagan – This is an economic recession. We cannot continue to do business as we have in the past. The only way we can do this is to cut.

Representative Scott Guthrie, 21 Maplewood Drive – Stimulus money is there for job stability, urge the Council to look at this and get in touch with a representative from EDC.

Ron Ghizzarelli – Town's full time staff is short now. DPW has been trying to get two people on a garbage truck for years. Layoffs are not practical. Will cause a speedup with the union and that will cause extra duties for employees along with more injuries resulting in litigation. Is there extra in the reserve fund?

Mrs. Flanagan – No.

Joel Johnson, 164 Gough Avenue – You need to look at where to cut. You have people in school administration making more than the town manager.

Mr. Ghizzarelli – Only 8% to 10% of the school budget goes to the students.

Anthony Nardolillo, Union President – Laying people off is the wrong move. I would be willing to sit and talk about anything. Maybe eliminate jobs through attrition.

Mr. Ghizzarelli – There are incentives in health care that you could consider.

Debra Costa, Holmes Road – Middletown charges \$50.00 a year to each resident for trash pickup. Why are engineering and building maintenance costs up?

Councilwoman Flanagan explained that the former Town Council felt it was cost effective to eliminate the engineering department. This council is looking for ways to trim that down.

Ms. Costa asked about stimulus money and Manager Sprague responded that a letter requesting stimulus money was sent and Mr. Sprague has since spoken with a representative from EDC who will be getting back to him with further information. They are still sorting out issues for various cities and towns. Manager Sprague also explained that building maintenance has increased because the town has taken on the responsibility of the Town Hall annex across the street from the Town Hall.

In closing Mr. Spear stated that the Town Council will do the best they can and although he would like to see no tax increase, it may be out of the realm of possibility.

Motion made by Laura Flanagan seconded by Glen Shibley to adjourn meeting. All voted Aye.

Town Clerk