

COVENTRY TOWN COUNCIL  
PUBLIC HEARING - SCHOOL DEPARTMENT BUDGET  
April 16, 2009 – 7:00 p.m.

Present: Frank Hyde, Ray Spear, Glen Shibley, Laura Flanagan  
Absent: Kenneth Cloutier  
Interim Town Manager Paul Sprague

Vice-President Spear opened public hearing. He outlined budget, stated that the town has lost over \$2 million in revenue and is facing a \$5 million dollar shortfall.

Coventry School Committee Chairwoman Katherine Patnaude presented Town Council with list of budget reductions consisting of potential program eliminations for fiscal year 2009-2010 if the school were to be level funded and cut further. She stated that the Coventry Teacher's Alliance is willing to talk to the School Committee, but the problem exists that it is uncertain whether any concessions will be made. The proposed eliminations are assumed if an agreement can't be reached with the CTA. We do not have the ability to break the contract.

Councilwoman Flanagan further explained that we are losing about \$2.5 million in revenue below the 2008-09 budget and a full tax increase under S3050 will just make our shortfall.

Joel Johnson, 164 Gough Avenue, commented that it is commendable that the School Committee came up with a list of cuts, but there has been no evidence of any sacrifices by the school administration.

Jason Marsden, Audubon Lane; Marsha Liss, Circlewood Drive; Linda Cohen, 25 Fieldstone Drive; and Diane Jordan, 66 Town Farm Road had several comments and suggestions pertaining to consolidating services, questioning whether the town has any plans to bring in revenue and that such deep cuts will ruin the schools, the result being that the children will suffer.

Elice Gibbons, Pine Haven Road, noted that at last night's municipal hearing, Representative Guthrie offered that he would work with the town to assist in finding stimulus funds.

Manager Sprague – The Governor has six individuals from EDC working on stimulus money. They are sorting out requests and have yet to receive guidance from the federal government.

Charles Vacca, 134 Fairway Dr. indicated that it's time to do business differently; Mary Vandervelde, 7 White Oak Court, stated that an extra \$2 million out of the budget would be devastating; and Gary Beaudoin of 45 Fairview Ave. asked why we are \$2 million short.

Councilwoman Flanagan explained \$500,000 is lost revenue from auto excise tax, \$113,000 in state aid; \$847,000 from general revenue sharing; \$598,000 town revenue down in areas such as recording fees, building permits, functions of the town.

Kelly Erinakes, Coventry Teacher's Alliance President –Although CTA is willing to talk, they already gave back three years ago in the previous contract negotiations.

Chris Derocher, Acacia Court feels that the town should pursue action against the state for cutting us off.

Mark Bouley, Blackrock Road – ROTC is supported by the Air Force, does a lot of community service, members have high morals and values. It is a self-supporting program that gives back to the town and should not be cut.

Michele Cohen, Driftwood Drive worries that her position may be cut this year.

Lisa Tomasso, School Committee member, 40 York Drive – We forecast the worst case scenario and have seen this problem before. The town had a surplus in 2006-2007 and it ended up in the town reserves. Surplus money should be given to the schools.

Joe Brown, 52 Colvintown Road – Have to find a way to cut. This teacher's contract is not about the kids. Everybody needs to bear the brunt.

Ernie Nardolillo of Coventry Drive suggested seeking sponsors for the school, such as Amgen sponsoring an athletic field.

Joyce Martinelli, West Greenwich, has taught in Coventry. West Greenwich does not have garbage pickup and has a volunteer fire department.

Joe Szymkowicz, Fieldstone Drive - Before the election Ms. Flanagan stated that she would be against level funding, and she should stick with that. I want all my children to get the education that I got in the Coventry schools.

Richard Kalunian, 607 Blackrock Road – Commented that Coventry has wealthy seniors getting tax breaks.

Tony Ferrucci, Finance Director, School Department – We work with no parameters. The school department can't achieve long term goals. Looking for advocacy this evening. Fund schools appropriately for the last year of the contract. It is already set in motion. We'll do the best we can between now and May 18.

Mr. Hyde and Mr. Shibley are not in support of closing any schools. People cannot afford a tax increase. May need to open the teacher's contract and cut 5%.

Mrs. Flanagan – This has been years in the making. We are looking at every department and need to pull together as a community.

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

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Town Clerk