

TOWN COUNCIL
SCHOOL AND MUNICIPAL BUDGET HEARINGS
Coventry Town Hall Council Chambers
1670 Flat River Road, Coventry, RI
April 19, 2007 – 6:00 p.m.

Present: Anthony Colaluca, Justin Pomfret, Bruce Thompson
Town Manager Richard Kerbel

Absent: Frank Hyde, Kenneth Cloutier

Pledge of Allegiance led by President Pomfret.
Moment of silence for tragedy at Virginia Tech.
President Pomfret reviewed emergency evacuation plan.

- School Budget

Presentation by Superintendent Ken DiPietro. Mr. DiPietro summarized as follows:

- School budget that has been developed is complaint with Senate Bill 3050 with a 5.25% cap
- Believes that we can balance the budget, a couple of challenges have been met, but by looking at the possibility of the transfer of Flat River School for town purposes, could be some cost savings. By looking at some potential increased revenues, believe that we can also retain Oak Haven as a K-5 elementary school Also maintain that with a couple of modifications that add no increase of any requested funds, believe that we can, for FY 08, meet all the obligations that the town and community are looking for.

Sandra Coolen
Enzo Drive

Ms. Coolen - Requested that the Town Council give consideration to the schools in every aspect of the budget as presented by the School Committee

Lori Pare
6 Bestwick Trail

Ms. Pare – Would like to see the \$500,000 school surplus put into the school budget.

Manager Kerbel explained there is no surplus. There is an undesignated fund balance, but not a tax surplus. There is a recommendation in this year's budget to appropriate some of those funds. The school district is capped by Senate Bill 3050 as to what they can request from the town, and they have requested the 5.25 % maximum increase, and the budget that is recommended includes that 5.25% increase.

Mary Vandervelde
7 White Oak Court

Ms. Vandervelde – Would hope that the town does approve the school budget without any cuts. Has been very difficult to maintain services. Have lost programs that have not come back. The high school roof is a disaster and other schools need repairs. Request any additional funds/surplus to be put towards schools and capital budget.

President Pomfret - We didn't put in for too much capital in this budget as it is the Town Council's goal to put out a bond before the people to repair the school roofs.

Manager Kerbel – Potential bonding is on the agenda for Monday night's meeting, will be looking for discussion and more direction.

Jennifer Ramsey
President, Oak Haven PTA

Ms. Ramsey, along with children from Oak Haven, presented a sign to the Town Council stating "Look What's Cool, Save Our School".

President Pomfret announced that the Town Council may further discuss budgets in detail on April 23 and/or May 7. The meeting for adoption of budget will be on May 21 with the Financial Town Meeting on June 12.

MUNICIPAL

Presentation of municipal budget by Town Manager Kerbel.

Gave overview of revenue sources chart, with 62% coming from property taxes, 3.6% from federal aid, almost 30% is state aid (bulk goes to schools), 3.1% is departmental revenue and various fees and investment earnings remaining. This chart shows differences from last year to this year. There is 5.25% increase in property taxes, that is the cap.

In departmental revenue there is an \$800,000 increase in that line, which includes \$500,000 of the lease buy back from the Centre of New England for the Hopkins Hill Condos, \$100,000 increase in fees to use the transfer station and a \$50,000 dollar fee for Johnson Pond boat fees, which is not going to happen, but is only in the proposed budget.

Property taxes estimated at 4.3% increase (\$16.37 estimated residential and \$19.71 estimated commercial rate). One hundred thousand dollars would represent approximately .03 cents in the taxes.

In the past, the cap used to be 5.5% on the tax rate, now the cap is 5.25% on the levy. These charts show the difference for future years, from 5.25 all the way down to eventually 4%. This is something that is of concern in future.

Expenditures on the municipal side, on every dollar 72% personnel, 12% contractual and 7% fixed charges and 2% capital outlay. Pension plans are underfunded and health insurance will increase.

Nancy Sprengelmeyer

Ms. Sprengelmeyer – How much money was cut from police requests and Human Services, and how will the cuts impact the services

Mr. Kerbel – Police and Human Services have increases. Police by 5.6% percent or \$475,000.00, and Human Services by 6.6% or \$48,000.00. It thinks it's fair to say that we did make some adjustments in what the police chief and Director of Human Services asked for. Don't recall what we changed in Human Services, off the top of my head, I do recall changing car request in police department as well as an employee. In terms of individuals, the chief had requested a half time person funding for half year for IT person due to retirement. The IT Dept. is posed to have additional employees, half of whose time will be dedicated to police functions.

Tony Ferrucci
91 Isle of Capri Road

Mr. Ferrucci thanked Town Council for taking a second look at fees on Johnson's Pond and trying to find other ways to fund that \$50,000.00

Ron Gizarelli
50 Harrington Road

Mr. Gizarelli – Believe that this is a responsible budget. One concern is use of the transfer station. Feel we need to make an effort to check on who is using it. Other towns charge for this service, feel that there should be more scrutiny in that it is only Coventry residents who use the transfer station. Also suggested ad hoc committees to help town with suggestions for municipal and school budget spending plans and in finding problem areas.

Lori Pare
6 Bestwick Trail

Ms. Pare – Asked for clarification on boat fees, shouldn't have to pay for boat fees when you live on the water and pay the extra taxes.

Manager Kerbel explained that this was proposed but feels that it will not happen.

Mr. Pomfret thanked the public for attending tonight's hearings. Thanked the School Department and Manager Kerbel for their efforts.. This is the proposed budget, doesn't necessarily mean it will stand like this. Things may change, but as it stands right now, this is how it is.

Nancy Sprengelmeyer – In the schools there is a \$1million increase in salaries, \$500,000 in health care insurance and \$500,000 increase in pension contribution, and since the request is 1.9 million, I don't see room for anything to be cut.

President Pomfret – Offered that the public could e mail or call the Council if there are concerns or thoughts.

Motion made by Anthony Colaluca seconded by Bruce Thompson to adjourn meeting. All voted Aye. So voted.

Town Clerk