

**BOARD OF FINANCE  
TOWN OFFICE BUILDING  
40 OLD FARMS ROAD  
WILLINGTON, CT 06279**

**BUDGET HEARING MINUTES**

Wednesday, April 4, 2018

*\*Minutes are not official until approved at the next regular meeting*

**Members Present:**

Jim Bulick, Chairman  
Mike Makuch, Vice-Chair  
Barry Wallett  
Peter Tanaka  
Laurie Semprebon  
Bill Rankin – Alternate  
Fred Schoen – Alternate

Absent- Randy Belair

Chairman Bulick opened the Public Hearing at 7:00 P.M. Presenting the Board of Finance proposed 2018-2019 General Government and Board of Education budget. Copies of the budget were available for the public to review.

Chairman Bulick stated that he had received correspondence about the fire hydrant costs from former Selectman Kowalyshyn. The explanation is that it is a flat maintenance fee regardless of using the water or not. (it is like a utility bill). Ms. Kowalyshyn then explained that the former Board of Selectmen had suggested holding a meeting with CT Water to see if an agreement could be worked out, or at least so the board could get a better understanding of what it is and how it works.

The Board of Finance members were informed that the Board of Education members were on their way to the meeting (but were running late, due to another meeting). In the meantime, other residents had come into attendance.

Chairman Bulick opened the floor to the public to ask questions or make comments.

Judy Threatt of Birch Meadow Lane stated that she has concerns about the MBR. She submitted an article from the CT Mirror regarding other towns that are facing penalties. For example; the Town of Killingly might get hit with a \$7.9 million penalty this year. Southington is facing a \$3.2 million penalty Watertown, \$2 million; Canterbury faces a \$502,000 penalty, Montville could see a \$355,000 penalty and Groton could face a \$3.1 million fine. Most of these are due to MBR. She said she has grave concern about the cost benefit analysis; the benefit being \$70,000 from the Board of Education budget and a potential cost of a \$7.9 million penalty – it does not equal. She then added if you are just going to set aside \$10,000 for an attorney to fight this, it is grossly inadequate – especially if an attorney charges us \$400 per hour and you won't see any results. She then said she is a taxpayer and a voter – she wouldn't want to see her tax dollars being spent on a \$7.9 million penalty or an attorney. Lastly, Ms. Threatt said she is a taxpayer and a voter- and she wants her tax dollars spent on a teacher, so put the money back.

Michelle Doucette Cunningham (Board of Education Chairman) and BOE members arrived at 7:10 P.M.

Ms. Cunningham explained that there may be an opportunity for the MBR issue to be resolved without having to go to legislation. There is a chance the issue could be resolved and in our favor. We should receive a final decision at the end of the month. Although it is not official, she is quite optimistic as the findings look better than they did last week.

Joe Colangelo (Chairman of the Recreation Commission) stated that he had a last minute submission for consideration. Chairman Bulick stated that they would discuss that at the meeting which will be held after the public hearing.

Bill Rankin asked the BOE members to give a brief explanation on the TRB and how we are possibly facing a penalty with the MBR. Ms. Cunningham stated that the state has a Minimum Budget Requirement (MBR) that requires every town to spend the same amount of money on education each year (or possibly more; as long as they do not go backwards). There are some exceptions – such as ECS (state funding – if the state reduces the amount given, the town can reduce their funding at the town level as well). Last year, the Governor proposed to have the Towns cover a portion of the Teacher Retirement Benefits (TRB) costs in their budgets to help offset the state deficit. At the time, the BOE and BOF had taken the proposal at face value and incorporated it into the Board of Education budget.

A few months afterwards, the proposed TRB laws did not pass; even though the Town had put the TRB (which was \$625,000) into the budget as a good faith effort. Ms. Cunningham noted that the TRB increase was placed in the Education budget, which caused concern to the BOE members at the time, as they were afraid the MBR would also increase by that number as well. She did caution that the state usually refers to the bottom line budget when considering funding and since this was an unusual year, adding in the MBR, it still looked like a very large increase to the bottom line. The BOE had begun looking into options seeking out a waiver; whether through the State Board of Education or Legislation. Ms. Cunningham then clarified that the money has not been spent and the Board of Education will return it to the Town at the end of the year.

Ms. Cunningham added that we are more optimistic as we continue looking at our options. If you do not meet your minimum budget requirements, you could face a 2-1 ratio reduction penalty less of payment from the state. By looking at the \$625,000 that was increased last year, could actually end up being a \$1.2 million penalty. Ms. Cunningham reiterated that they are more optimistic at this time that we might not face the penalty.

Judy Threatt asked if we still need a waiver. Peter Tanaka stated that we will not because the BOE budget is at a 2.16% increase (\$175,300) over last year. Ms. Cunningham agreed adding that the calculation is based on the K-8 plus the Region 19 numbers combined. She clarified that the Region 19 numbers are always different; (some years go up some go down) and sometimes difficult to juggle. This year it went down by 5.87% about \$10,000 less than we looked at it last week.

Vice Chairman Makuch clarified even with all of those numbers we are still in the basic position if the TRB is not an MBR penalty all of our other budget numbers do not invoke a penalty. Ms. Cunningham stated that we are pretty close but need to double check the numbers.

There were no other comments made.

The Public Hearing was closed at 7:22 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted  
*Robin Campbell*  
Recording Clerk

TOWN OF WILLINGTON, CT

Received for record *April 6, 2018*

At *11:30am* *Maweragan*