

**Board of Finance**  
**Elmer Thienes/Mary Hall Elementary School - Cafeteria**  
**April 25, 2016**  
**Public Hearing**  
**7:00 P.M.**

**Call to Order**

Chairman Knowlton called the public hearing to order at 7:00 p.m. BOF members present were Doug Knowlton, Cliff Denniss, Ken Hjulstrom, Susan Leser, Erik Young and alternate Midge Denno.

Chairman Knowlton introduced the Board to the public. Then Secretary Hjulstrom read the legal notice.

Next Mr. Knowlton gave a PowerPoint presentation to the public explaining how the BOF determined this proposed budget. He told the public that the state general and education revenue are questionable at this time due to the possible cuts in the Governor's budget. This budget does include the first cuts the Governor announced, but we have heard there may be further cuts. There is \$291,000 in potential cuts to come in the municipal revenue sharing account. Chairman Knowlton explained that the Board added \$80,000 to Contingency to help offset any further state cuts to the town or education.

This budget shows a 2.93% increase in expenses. RHAM is 36% of the budget, local BOE is just over 30%, town operations is 20%, debt is just under 10% and capital projects are about 3.5% of the budget. Another graphic showed that our fund balance ratio to the budget is in a downward trend. We are currently at about an 8% ratio to the budget. The auditors say 11-15% is fiscally healthy. Mr. Knowlton showed slides with pictures of some of the culverts that need to be repaired. Capital expenditures will cost about \$1 million a year for the next few years. This is why we cannot put projects off. Town operations have been regionalizing as many services as possible to save money. CERC data from 2015 shows that Marlborough's debt service is about 48% higher than the state average, but it will be decreasing over the next five years.

Chairman Knowlton reminded the public the RHAM vote is May 3. Our town vote is May 9. If our budget does not pass, every three weeks the BOF will come back with a new budget to be voted on until it passes.

**Public Comments**

Riva Clark, Hall Trail, asked if the health insurance figures were final numbers and they are. Also asked if the additional money in professional services for Park & Recreation will make the employee full time and it does. First Selectman Traversa said that in time the hope is to have so many programs in P&R that the position will pay for itself. Under the Agent for the Aged, insurance and bonds was changed to \$0. That is because it was combined under administrative services. Ms. Clark said she thought it was a good idea to add money into the Contingency account, but told the Board to review the Charter to see the restrictions about how that fund can be used.

Debbie Bourbeau, North Main Street, thanked the Board and said she appreciates that they did their due diligence with the graphs and information. She questioned why electricity went up and down in different percentages throughout the budget. First Selectman Traversa said that there are many different contracts on the different buildings, with some not expiring until 2019. Ms. Bourbeau also

questioned the 2.5% pay increase for everyone across the board at town hall. Ms. Traversa said most were under union contracts, and to keep staff even at the town hall, the same raises were given to non-union employees.

Theresa Brysgel, 173 Paper Mill Road, BOE member speaking as an individual, appreciated the hard work the BOF did on the budget. She is happy about the Contingency fund because the school cannot take any more cuts. The graphs showing the town's financial strength is scary. A strong school benefits the town. Enrollment only declined by 11 students and yet 2 full time teachers were cut. Marlborough is 166 out of 169 towns in per pupil spending. Town residents are continually using the school facilities and therefore 544 students really represent thousands and thousands of people.

Christy Moraga, Flood Road, echoed what Theresa said. What makes Marlborough healthy is a great school system. More people will come to our town if we have a great school system. She asked about the difference in having Resident State Troopers (RST) versus constables in town. The First Selectman said that the town has been looking into this for a number of years. The towns used to pay 50% of the cost of the RST, now they are paying 85% and it is likely going up to 100%. We will get fully certified and qualified constables. Speeding and lack of seeing the RST in town are concerns. The RST can be called out to another town for a bigger issue when they are supposed to be covering Marlborough, or they are off at SWAT training or motorcycle training.

Mark Packard, former Marlborough RST, said that training is only 2 times a month, once during the day shift and the other at night. Motorcycle units train just four times a year. RST are not being called out of town regularly for these other trainings. Mr. Packard said he was in a car accident and within an hour, the RST program had another trooper covering Marlborough. How will this occur with a constable? Taking \$200,000 from the education budget is a disservice to the town. Getting rid of police and education gives people no reason to come to Marlborough. The difference between RST and a constable is that the state police are in charge. Constables cannot take serious or fatal accidents because they cannot do investigations. The First Selectman has say over constables only. With the heroine epidemic, the crime rate is going up. Currently there is one RST on during the day, and one at night. Then we have one full time officer and another one that works about one shift a month.

RST Dunshee, addressed the public saying there is never a vacancy in town if he is at training. The town is still covered. You definitely get your money's worth with the RST program. Constables are a liability and cost for uniforms, vehicles, tires, etc.

Mark Pace, 65 Fox Meadow Road, brought his young family to town 15 or 16 years ago. His children have aged out of the school system, but he still supports the school because it is a big reason people move to town. He does not support further decreases to the education budget.

Mimi LaPoint, 73 Millstone Drive, BOE member speaking as an individual, echoed that she moved to town because of the school system. She will continue to support public schools because children are our future. She wants to see the \$200,000 put back into the school budget.

Patty Koshkot, asked about the security upgrades. The First Selectman wouldn't give any details, but said they include locks, cameras, and lights. Ms. Koshkot also asked about the office floater position. Ms. Traversa said it is needed due to the reduced staff at town hall. This person would cover lunch hours, vacation and sick time. Staff is going to become crossed trained throughout the town hall.

Leeann Eppinger, 139 Jones Hollow Road, said her husband grew up in Marlborough and she is disappointed in the school budget cut and new families coming to town will be disappointed.

Evelyn Godbout, Selectman, said this has been another difficult year to balance the budget with public safety, schools, town, public works, etc. The town operations budget was cut \$90,000 by the Board of Finance. Ms. Godbout said all the boards and commissions did a good job balancing all the needs of the town. She hopes the budget passes.

Christine Brooks, 11 Williamsburg, said she moved here 16 years ago because of the school system. People look these things up online when they are looking at houses. Bridges and roads aren't being looked at on the web. She supports the school budget and does not want to see any more cut from it.

Bernie Odoy, 60 Fox Meadows, said he needs to learn a little bit more. If we are 166 out of 169, then he is quite happy with what we are getting for our per pupil spending. He was going to send his kids to a magnet school, but what he learned is that RHAM is a much better school.

John Stimpson, Saner Road, is pro-senior, not anti-education. Where do they cut their budget? More seniors will be driven out of town because the young families want to come live here if we spend more on the school.

Karen Courier, 25 Parker Road, moved here 60 years ago and agrees with Mr. Stimpson. She would like to see cuts across the board for all the schools. All Connecticut residents are moving out of state because they cannot afford the high taxes. Be fair to the seniors, not just the kids.

Allen Miller, North Main Street, said he once asked what percentage of the voting residents doesn't have kids in the schools. The answer was 55 percent. He is against what others are being asked to pay. This burdens those without kids. It isn't fair to think that way. Put more on those people with kids. We are not Simsbury or Glastonbury. This is not equitable. Keep the budget under control.

Jean Wilson, 17 South Buckboard Lane, is in favor of the budget. She now has her mother living with her. Investing in education makes us survive tomorrow.

Pam Farrington, 95 Jerry Daniels Road, moved to Marlborough from NYC because of the education system. She would have had hundreds of schools to choose from in New York. She is a teacher at the school, but was speaking as a parent, homeowner and a taxpayer. She said someday she will retire and she doesn't know how she will feel, but she will always support education. What else is there really other than educating our children? She believes that as of a couple of weeks ago, we were the only school district that came in with a negative 2.74 budget. The proposed budget was a positive .34 percent, not even a half of a percent increase. One of our elected officials called the budget fiscally irresponsible. I am not sure how that is considered fiscally irresponsible. Actually a negative 2.74% budget is educationally irresponsible. The BOF Chairman showed an interesting slide about the school budget and I noticed that it only went back a couple of years. I wish it had gone back a little further because I think we were at negative twos and threes then. We cannot continue that way. I am starting to wonder where all of our problems came from. Who is making all the decisions about where the money is spent in town? Why are we the only budget that is negative? I understand we are the biggest budget, how can we continue this way?

Liz Magalone, 47 Roberts Road, there are a lot of emotions here like all town meetings, but I don't see where the benefit of one child takes away from a senior citizen. I don't think the mathematical equation is that easy. I moved from Colchester because I wanted to raise my children here. We have to rely on the PTO and I can see them getting burnt out.

Fredricka Heslin, 17 Cheney Road, said she understands everyone's situation. She has the entire gamut, she taught at this school, her boys went through this school, her grandchildren are going through this school and she is a senior. It is financially tough for everyone. I think teaching in this system I taught through the best of times. We were part of a regional district. It is time to reconsider. The region worked wonderfully. We were in contact with RHAM. There were tons of benefits and we didn't have the top heavy administration.

Richard Storrs, 6 Stage Harbor Road, commented on the debt being out of control. But none of the debt on this school building renovation was incurred during the lifetime of any of these students. It's not their fault. The town made the decision. From the slides, the number of students and the reduction in costs to run the school aren't the same thing. Still need a nurse, librarian, heat, no matter how many students are at the school. Every year it is the seniors versus the school, but we have to do what is best for the town. We have to maintain what our town offers. The businesses aren't coming yet.

Wes Skorski, 3 Holly Lane, member of the BOE speaking as individual, asked how many abandoned houses are in your neighborhoods. He has three around him. If I was looking for a home, and I saw 166 out of 169 or negative 2.34% budget I wouldn't come here. The Grand List is going down because people are forced to move out for some reason.

Dave Wagner, 11 Riverview Circle, thanked the Board. He has been here 30 years, both kids went to the school here, he was part of the school renovation. Before we look at the gloom and doom for the town and the school, you put up a chart that shows budget surpluses over the years. The school administration has done an excellent job running the school and returning money at the end of the year. Unfortunately the BOE has decided to spend their surpluses on other things. But I don't see this cut as being a tremendous issue. The guy before me mentioned the empty houses, are the residents moving out because they want a better school system or because they cannot the taxes? We may have low spending but what are the test scores. People look at those too. I haven't heard anything about the test scores going low. They look at the tax rate and what they get for that. Sixteen million dollars in the education budget certainly is not skimping on anything.

Michelle Padilla, 23 Hickory, is new to Marlborough and did not look at the school system for a reason to move to town. She liked it for the lake, easy access to Route 2 and a small town community. She works full time and her husband is disabled. Nobody retired should have to get a part time job because the taxes are too high because we have to have a better school system and kids want computers in school. Medicine is expensive and healthcare is getting more expensive.

Theresa Brysgel, 173 Paper Mill Road, replied to the use of technology. She said we don't use chalkboard anymore. We don't use pens and pencils. In the working world there is computers and iPads and technology everywhere. If we don't train our children on technology they will be lost in the world. This is not pie in the sky stuff. This is how we educate kids these days.

Jean Wilson, as a college administrator, she is now teaching basic computer skills to freshmen. It is a requirement that you understand computers in college. You do your students injustice if you don't invest in technology.

Dave Farrington, 95 Jerry Daniels Road, said he pays Social Security through the nose and will not get it. I am not going to get it. It is planned to run out. None of us will be in great financial shape when the time comes. Another man mentioned that he has been here for 30 years. Well the people who have been here for 30 years are the ones who incurred the debt. My children shouldn't have to pay that debt. It is their debt. Let them pay for it. My kids and the kids of others here tonight are not going to suffer because you guys made mistakes down the road.

Dave Wagner made the point that these kids are having the benefit of this school. If you had seen the condition of this school before the renovation, you would be livid. We are still paying for this and your kids are reaping the benefits.

Mimi LaPoint believes we should present the original BOE budget to the town and see what they want.

The public hearing closed at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debby Rim  
Board Clerk