

**New Hartford Board of Finance
Special Meeting
Public Budget Hearing
April 5, 2011**

Present: Ben Witte, Reggie Smith, Jr., Jim Fitzgerald, Alesia Kennerson, Laura Sundquist and Roy Litchfield.

The Public Budget Hearing meeting opened up at 7:00 p.m. by Acting Chairman, Reggie Smith, Jr.

MOTION: by Jim Fitzgerald, second by Alesia Kennerson to seat Roy Litchfield for Dan Charest.

Aye: All members present

MOTION: by Jim Fitzgerald, second by Roy Litchfield for Acting Chairman Reggie Smith, Jr. to step aside and Ben Witte, Chairman to run the meeting.

Aye: All members present

Chairman Ben Witte gave an overview of the agenda for this meeting and presented the following timetable for the budget.

April 12th the regular Board of Finance meets to review hearing feedback

April 26th – Annual Town Meeting (adjourns to referendum)

May 2nd – Region 7 School Annual District Meeting at Region 7

Vote on Region 7 budget or adjourns to referendum

May 3rd – New Hartford Budget Referendum

Vote on town budget and local school budget

Vote on Region 7 budget

2 separate votes on same ballot

Chairman Witte went over the budget overview. This is filed with these minutes.

Region 7 Education Budget Presentation presented by Molly Sexton-Read, BOE Chair

Overview – they will be phasing out French and will be teaching Spanish, Italian and Chinese.

Budget Development Considerations:

- The Middle school enrollment is 376.
- Currently there are 757 world language students and this will increase to 920 this coming year.
- There is the need for additional high school electives.
- The New England Association of Schools and Colleges accreditation visit is in the fall of 2012.
- The high school reform act will require more credits to graduate. This should start in 2014.

The original budget proposal submitted to the superintendent: \$18,832,837 or 5.15%

Budget drivers: salaries, health insurance and special education

Current budget proposal \$18,203,223

Reductions made from original request

- Special Education Tuition

- Staffing Requests
- Eliminated a paraprofessional and bookkeeping assistant
- And other general cuts noted in following presentation.

This budget represents a 1.64% increase over last year.

This budget which we propose will reinstate the middle school teams and improve the integrity, increase the number of electives for the high school students. It reinstates the middle school teams to meet the needs of student enrollment increase. It increases two world language teaching positions to full time.

The Increase in Assessment to the towns is 1.43% or 228,163.

The increase in Budget over 2010 – 2011 expenditures is 1.64% or \$292,922.

Question: What is the cost per student at Region 7?

Answer: It is estimated for next year. The state uses this number - \$13,871.00

Question: What do you attribute the increase in world language?

Answer: The department is strong and the children connect well with teachers. The interest of the students is increasing.

New Hartford Town Government Budget presented by First Selectman Dan Jerram – a copy of his presentation is filed with these minutes.

The Board of Finance has requested a zero budget.

Last year \$4, 622,549.49 was approved and this year they are asking for \$4,624,440.70 an increase of \$1,892.21.

These budgets are estimates – some figures are contractual and others are estimates.

All town hall employees were put in at a 2% increase in salaries. There is no increase for elected officials.

We split the cost of the assessor salary & related costs with Burlington.

A new website will be going on-line soon. From there individuals can download zoning, flood plain, property maps, etc. With this new website when Beth is not in her office you will still be able to get all the mapping you need.

Page 7 – public safety – lots are flat line items.

There are two resident troopers. Mike Tranquillo transferred and we now have a new state officer. This trooper's salary is \$20,000 more. The selectmen are evaluating the cost associated with the state resident program. We need one state trooper. We do have a 2 year contract pending – with a 30 day termination clause. The Board of Selectman will stay with the plan for now but will reevaluate.

On the Ambulance association – insurance laws have changed. They are now able to bill for services.

RRDD#1 has reduced their budget by about \$8,000. They are in the process of talking with CRRA to see if the recycling costs can be reduced.

Board of Education – Dr. Philip O'Reilly – a copy of his presentation is part of the minutes filed.

Page 4 – is a summary of expenditures

Page 4a– lists the cuts they are making to reach the 0% budget as requested by the Board of Finance.

They did come in with a 0% increase but there is a 1.71% shown – this is the special education – high cost student that has moved into town.

The \$40,000 cost for legal fees – we are renegotiating with our teachers, custodians, etc. We are going into our 4th year of our contract. The board has asked him to put this money in to cover the costs of anticipated contract problems.

Kathy Fisk-Natale, Board of Education member, commented they were hesitant to put in the additional line item of \$40,000 and it may not be enough but in the long term interest of the town & taxpayers going forward it is in the best interest of the taxpayers in anticipation of contract problems.

Dr. O'Reilly said it was not true his office is getting 4% they are only getting 2% this year. The 4% is over a 2 year period. Last year in budget it was 0% and in June they approved a 2% that wasn't in the budget. This was after the referendum. It was not approved by taxpayers. Board of Finance Fitzgerald reiterated the 2% was not approved by the town.

The principals, secretaries – school office supplies – are getting a small increase. We will also be hiring a new principal to replace Kate Rieger and this new principal will be hired at a lower salary.

Steve Nadeau, principal of New Hartford Elementary & Bakerville School should be complimented on how he takes care of the two schools. He takes care of them like they were his own.

Line 692 – Heating oil costs – it is budged for \$2.95/gallon but this will be a challenge for next year.

The one item that concerns Dr. O'Reilly the most is the cut in Technology.

Question: Why do we need two Curriculum Specialists?

Answers: When the federal or state government changes the parameters – we need to make those curriculum changes. We will try to work with just one.

Chairman Witte read a few emails that had been sent to the Board of Finance. Most were in favor of a 0% increase and there were some against it.

Member of the public Maria Moore read a letter from herself and her husband that has been entered as part of these minutes.

BOF member Fitzgerald asked Dr. O'Reilly – you had \$35,000 in Technical Equipment in the current year budget and then went to \$0 for 2011-12 but you still have \$23,000 in there. Shouldn't the \$23,000 be netted out and then you would have a \$11,000 difference? Dr. O'Reilly said the \$35,000 was also net of grant money.

BOF member Fitzgerald said that in addition to letters received on the March 22nd meeting they have received emails. Chairman Witte read only a sub-section of what was received. People are not able to

put food on their tables, fuel in their tanks, etc. People will be moving out of town because they can't afford to live here.

Steve Nadeau asked that the Board of Finance not have their meetings on the same night as conferences. The teachers were not able to attend and the same for the parents. The level our schools are operating at are at the highest he has seen since he has live here – over 35 years.

Question: What is it going to cost me if we approve the budget as it is proposed?

Answer: Chairman Witte said the 1.8% increase of .431 over the current mill.

MOTION: by Sundquist, second by Fitzgerald to move the last item of the agenda to the next meeting of the Board of Finance.

Aye: All members present.

MOTION: by Fitzgerald, second by Sundquist to adjourn at 9:45 p.m .

Aye: All members present.

Respectfully submitted:

Penny Miller
Recording Secretary