

**New Hartford Board of Finance
Special Meeting – Public Hearing - Budgets
April 3, 2018 – 7:00 pm**

Present Chairman Jim Fitzgerald, Members: Reggie Smith, Jr., Steve Tuxbury, Regina Wexler, Ben Witte, Alternates: Bart Baxter, Kerry Guilfoyle, Paul LeClair

Absent Dan Charest

Others Present Supt. of Schools Region 7 Dr. Judith Palmer, R 7 BOE Chair Molly Sexton-Reed, R7 Director of Finance James Gaskins, Supt. of Schools Brian Murphy, BOE Chair Josh Adams, BOE Vice Chair Tim Goff, BOE members: Tom Buzzzi, Tim Klepps, Pat Spaziani, Jenn Benaitis, Town Treasurer Gordon Ross, Bookkeeper Annie Witte, First Selectman Dan Jerram, Selectmen Alesia Kennerson and Eric Claman, Member of the Press Kathryn Boughton (Republican American) and other members of the public.

Chairman Fitzgerald opened the meeting at 7:04 pm

Seating of Alternates

Bart Baxter seated for Dan Charest.

Opening Remarks

Chairman Fitzgerald spoke about the steps leading up the Public Hearing of the 2018-2019 Budgets. The Grand List is up about 0.95% or \$6,286,178. Total Expenditures are up with a change of \$606,563.19 (↑2.51%). Revenues (other than current taxes) are down \$230,126 (↓4.65% change). Revenue required from Taxes is up \$836,689.19 (↑4.36% change) from last year. General Town Government is up \$172,547.19 (↑3.45% increase), Debt Service is up \$216,100 (↑31.19% increase) and Capital Expenditures up \$183,000 (↑61% increase). These proposed expenditures are driving the increases / decreases. Region 7, down from last year, is requesting \$9,934,037 (↓1.78% from last year). The local BOE is requesting \$8,056,575 (↑ 2.75%). Total Education is \$17,993,386 (↑0.19%). The current mill rate is 30.276 and the mill rate required for these proposed budgets is 30.899 or a proposed tax increase of 2.06%. The presentation finished with the budget timeline ending with the New Hartford Budget Referendum on May 8, 2018.

Presentation: 2018-19 Northwestern Region # 7 Board of Education Budget. Dr. Judith Palmer, Superintendent; R7 BOE Chair, Molly Sexton-Reed; James Gaskins, Director of Finance

Ms. Reed presented the Region 7 budget. A copy of their Power Point presentation and budget is available for viewing in the Town Clerk's Office. Ms. Reed said they are in the process of developing a brand for their school in an effort to facilitate the communication about their successes. They are working to meet the needs of all of their students within the confines of their building. They are looking to develop a Capstone program that will be required under high school reform for graduation. The Connecticut State Department of Education has developed a School Accountability Index, Northwestern High School is ranked 2nd in the state with an accountability index of 92.3. Advanced placement classes are always being added to offer a rigorous and exacting opportunity for students. The total school enrollment as of October 1, 2017 is 1,071 which includes 14 students at the Highlander Transitioning Academy. There hasn't been a significant change in enrollment but they do realize that student enrollment is going down. Expenses are driven by Salary, Benefits and Special Education. The Revenue is received from the four school districts, Education Cost Sharing (ECS) and Excess Cost. Ms. Reed

continued on explaining each category. Salaries and Benefits have small increases. Three special education outplacements aged out and one special education outplacement moved out of district. This resulted in a savings of \$501,933.

Public comment and input on R7 BOE Budget

Mr. Smith asked with the Excess Cost Grant if you have to reach \$40,000 in spending before the state returns any money. Ms. Reed said that was correct.

Region 7 presentation ended at 7:45 pm with the local BOE starting at 7:48 pm

Presentation: 2018-19 New Hartford Board of Education Budget. Brian Murphy, Superintendent; Josh Adams, BOE Chair

The local Board of Education budget is available for viewing at the Town Clerk's Office. Mr. Adams spoke a few words about the budget saying they had to make some difficult decisions. Superintendent Murphy said they are trying to reinstate some of the cuts made last year. One of their areas of focus is mathematics. They are looking to improve their SBAC scores by adding a math interventionist this coming year. A new program, RISE, held at New Hartford Elementary School, is for students with specialized needs. It is open to students from both Bakerville & New Hartford Elementary Schools. Currently there is one student that will be outplaced next year. The magnet schools tuition is \$4500 per student. Currently the CREC bill is around \$90,000 for those students attending the magnet schools. That was reduced this year with one student coming back to New Hartford schools. The school will continue to fund and expand the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) program led by the Library Media Technologist, Mrs. Pfeffer. Mr. Murphy said one of the most important slides in the budget presentation is the Historical Budget Data. Over the past 4 years they have had a negative 3% and they are looking to reverse this trend. The schools are very conservative with their spending. Mr. Murphy thanked the Board of Finance for their continued support of the schools Capital Expenditures Request. The Capital request for this year is \$113,000. Included in that request is the purchase of Stand-up Desks for those students with specialized needs and the replacement of the current floor with a rubberized floor in the gymnasium / cafeteria at Antolini School. A sample piece will be installed shortly and tested at Antolini School to see if it meets the needs of the school. A new breakfast program started at Antolini School has been very successful.

Public comment and input on BOE budget

Steve Unger, 706 West Hill Rd, asked about the Talented and Gifted Program. Mr. Murphy said currently it is for 5th and 6th graders and next year it will be expanded to include 3rd & 4th graders. When asked if it was mandated by the state, Mr. Murphy said we have to identify students but we don't have to provide the program.

Corina Hughes, 17 Den Rd, asked for more information on the Unified Arts / Sports Program. Mr. Murphy said a Unified Sports Program has been started with a group of identified special needs students that are working with peers that are not identified. It gives them the opportunity to students to participate in athletics and promotes camaraderie. This program is run during the school day.

Mary Greenwood, 155 South Road, asked if the position of the Math Interventionist is a long term position. Mr. Murphy replied it is not just about standardized testing but it provides an interventionist to help those students that have been identified as needing additional help in mathematics.

Ms. Wexler, referring to page 14, asked if they had gained 9 students from the March 17th meeting. Mr. Murphy said that is a projection. Currently they have 41 students registered in Kindergarten and it is projected an additional 9 students will enroll.

Mr. Tuxbury asked about the per pupil expenditure. Mr. Murphy said that comes from the state. Mr. Tuxbury asked for a breakdown in changes made to the budget. Mr. Murphy said at the last BOE

meeting, \$61,730 was cut from the budget with the elimination of an additional Pre-K class. An additional teaching section would have cost \$50,000 and health insurance is \$11,730. The cost of the tutor in the 2nd Pre-K class would have been covered by the tuition received. Mr. Tuxbury asked if there was a procedure in place to make sure all the students attending our schools are New Hartford students. Mr. Murphy with the New Hartford Police the school does follow up on this and the parents / guardians are asked to sign an affidavit attesting to the fact that they do live in town. There was an incident this year and that child now attends schools in Winsted.

New Hartford Board of Education presentation ended at 8:22 pm with the Town starting at 8:26 pm

Presentation: 2018-2019 Town Government budget: Daniel V. Jerram, First Selectman.

Mr. Fitzgerald said he has received numerous emails from members of the Beekley Library and West Hill Lake Association. Those emails are available for viewing at the Town Clerk's Office. The local Town budget and Capital request are available for viewing at the First Selectman's Office. First Selectman Jerram in presenting the budget said the total budget including Education is \$24,750,254.95, an increase of 2.5%. Under Public Safety a new trooper has been hired. Trooper Hazen was promoted and the new trooper is Rafael Figueiral. Under Parks and Recreation some of the labor was done by DPW employees. Under Debt Service the increase of \$216,000 is in part because of the work done at Antolini. Because of the budget problems last year everything was cut back including Capital Expenditures. Some of the highway trucks because of all the plowing, mileage and continued use need to be replaced. Under Highway Mr. Jerram said they are looking to do more paving and have added \$25,000 to that account. In completing the budget presentation, Mr. Jerram went through the Capital Expenditures speaking about replacement of some Highway Department vehicles and why they need to be replaced, Police Car, Town Hall Technology, 2nd Revaluation Payment, Recreation (for Berkshire Hall, painting & roof repairs), Town Hall Equipment Replacement (replacement of heat pumps), Bruning Rd Drainage Repair, Downtown Improvements (sidewalk repairs) and Rails to Trails for a total of \$386,000. Some of the projects for future consideration are: Stedman Road Repair (currently closed to traffic, needs right of way), Satan's Kingdom Road Repair, Sewer Extension, Town Garage and Rails to Trails. Mr. Jerram said with the expenses and in consideration of grand list growth, school expenditures, capital and modifications to some of the lines it is a little over a 2% tax increase.

Public comment and input on Town Government budget

Shelly Lloyd, 29 Pioneer Drive said the groups listed under Commissions and Other Agencies are small groups of people and she applauds all that they do. As a member of the Economic Development Commission she noted that budget is being decreased 37.5% in the coming year but looking back at previous years this is actually a 50% decrease. She feels that the EDC is taking quite a big hit more than the rest of the groups. Mr. Jerram responded that previously the cost of the EDC website was in their budget but it has been moved to the General Government Town Budget.

John Burdick, 220 Town Hill Road, President of the Board of Directors on the Licia and Mason Beekley Community Library. A copy of the letter he presented, which dealt with the Town's contribution to the 2018-19 Budget of the Beekley Library, is available for viewing at the Town Clerk's Office. He ended his letter saying: *"This year we are submitting the same budget request as we did last year, \$239,832. I am asking that you reconsider the proposed Town's contribution for 2018-19 and raise it by the approximately \$10,000 to the level we are requesting."*

Steve Unger, 706 West Hill Lake, said he has a unique perspective in that he when was on the Library Board in Stratford they cut staff and hours when the budget was reduced. When someone retired or left that position wasn't filled. At the Beekley Library there are two full-time people and 8 part-timers. There is no room to cut staff without cutting hours. He doesn't think anyone in town would want this done.

Chris Brooks, 154 West Hill Road, is also on the Library Board. The common thread is how greatly valued the library is. It is the face of the town. They host more events with less municipal money than most other towns. Another key factor as to why it is loved is its precious resource, its employees. They are warm and friendly. They manage day after day to give a welcoming demeanor to all who come into the library.

Susan Devereaux, 120 Steele Road, loves going to the Beekley Library. Whenever she goes into the library she sees many children and how happy they are to be there. She is opposed to cutting any money to it.

Steve Unger, 706 West Hill Lake, is the vice president of the West Hill Lake Association. They had requested \$15,000 for continuance of engineering studies and remediation of the lake. When the lake was recently lowered samples were taken which enabled them to address the problems as to where there are septic drainage problems. They will continue to build on that data and address those problems. He asked for an increase in that line item of an additional \$3,000 to support the unfunded state mandates.

Mr. Baxter asked about the \$45,000 in this year's Capital for the police car saying that it was also in last year's capital request. Mr. Jerram said it wasn't appropriated last year. Similarly the Rails to Trails also was not funded last year.

Mr. Leclair asked if the West Hill request had also gone to Barkhamsted. Mr. Unger said they have approached them as well. When the dam was repaired both New Hartford and Barkhamsted helped with this. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the lake is in New Hartford. Barkhamsted has helped in previous years with in-kind labor.

Mr. Witte said on the West Hill request, he won't be at the next meeting but one thing to remember is if we give them what they ask for it puts them either at or where they were two years ago. When the revaluation was done most property values went down 8-9% but West Hill property values went up 5-6%. They picked up in taxes more than the \$16,000 that was in the budget.

MOTION:

By Wexler to adjourn at 9:40 pm. Second by Baxter.

Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

Penny Miller
Recording Secretary

Available at the Town Clerk for viewing
Region 7 Budget & Power Point Presentation
New Hartford BOE Budget
Letters in Support of the Beekley Library and West Hill Lake Association