



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR JEFF WRIGHT

MINUTES

NEWINGTON TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

March 17, 2008

Mayor Wright called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers of the Newington Town Hall.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

Councilors Present:

Councilor Banach
Councilor Boni
Councilor Bottalico
Councilor Bowen
Councilor Cohen
Councilor Lenares
Councilor Nagel
Councilor Nasinnyk
Mayor Wright

Staff Present:

John L. Salomone, Town Manager
Ann Harter, Finance Director

Mayor Wright invited members of the public to sign up to speak about the proposed budget.

Town Manager Salomone presented an overview of the 2008-2009 budget:

Overview

- Total Town combined Government Operations and Board of Education budget request of \$92,962,629, an increase of about \$3,028,141 or 3.37%
- Board of Education budget request of \$56,072,42, an increase of \$2,508,870 or 4.68%
- Non-tax revenue projected to be \$20,023,891, a decrease of \$105,916 or -.53%

Major Changes Summary

Expenditure	Change
Full-time salaries	\$678,568
MDC	\$112,230
Solid Waste	\$103,720
Fire Dept. Pay Per Call Program	\$90,000
Debt Services	(\$71,874)
Employee Benefits	(\$111,397)

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Capital Improvements	(\$379,388)
Total Increase	\$421,859

Grand List Growth

- 1.6%
- Applied fund balance = \$2,000,000
- Non-tax revenue = \$20,023,891

Revenue	2007-2008	Net Changes from 2006-2007
Prior tax	\$1,285,000	\$20,000
State Aid	\$16,414,764	\$571,120
Permits	\$385,700	(\$200,000)
Interest	\$900,000	(\$525,000)
Service Charge	\$505,750	(\$200,270)
Other/Transfers	\$532,677	\$228,234
Total	\$20,023,891	(105,916)

State Aid Changes

- 2004-2005 – no change
- 2005-2006 – approximately \$750,000 increase
- 2006-2007 – approximately \$500,000 increase
- 2007-2008 – approximately \$2,000,000 increase
- 2008-2009 – approximately \$500,00 increase projected

Organizational Changes

- Facilities
 - Establish comprehensive maintenance program
 - Centralize maintenance budgets of Town-owned buildings
 - Eliminate one Administrative Coordinator position
 - Add one new Heating and Ventilation Mechanic
 - Split new Administrative Secretary position 50/50 with Engineering Department
 - Transfer part time custodian position from Parks and Recreation Department
- Senior and Disabled Center
 - Dial-a-Ride program changes to replace full time driver with two part time drivers
- Newington Police Department
 - Continuation of right-sizing the Police Department
 - Maintain adequate shift levels without adding overtime
 - Addition of three new officers including one Youth Officer

Capital Improvement Initiatives

- Evaluate project priorities
- Coordinate CIP with operating budget
- Integration of Town and Board of Education priorities
- Finance plans for capital improvement projects
- Establish annual funding level
- Pay-as-you go funds

General Fund Expenditures (Proposed)

Item	Percent
Education	60.3%
Town Operations	30.3%
Debt Services	3.4%
MDC	3.0%
CIP	3.0%

Revenue

Item	Percent
Property Tax	79.0%
State Aid	18.0%
Fund Balance	2.0%
Service Charges	1.0%

Mill Rate Impact

- Assumes a residential assessment of \$166,380

Year	Mill Rate	Tax Based on \$166,380 Assessment
2007-2008	26.91	\$4,477.00
2008-2009	27.69	\$4,605.00

- Tax increase = \$130.00 or 2.9%

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mary Magnusen, 127 Southwood Road: Ms. Magnusen indicated that perhaps one of the reasons for the small amount of public participation is due to the three minute time-limit imposed on members of the public who wish to speak. She stated that property taxes cannot be used to fund education. She recommended that the property tax be limited to one-percent of the property value and that the Town impose an income tax. She cautioned that the nation wide mortgage mess is about to hit Connecticut due to problems with mortgage company's deed listings and escrow problems when a mortgage is sold between lenders. Ms. Magnusen spoke of tax programs in Indiana and again implored the Council to find an income-based tax solution. She commented that the State of Maine limits tax to 6% of household income. She noted that she had to take time off from work last year due to illness and as a result paid about 30% of her income towards property taxes. She noted that her street has not seen any improvements to the paving or curbs on her street in thirty years despite numerous tax increases. She stated that the basic problem lies in the current tax structure.

Stanley Ostrowski, 200 John Street: Mr. Ostrowski stated that prosperity does not come from extra spending. He stated that he has been a Newington resident for 38 years and with the continuous increase in taxes it is scary to retire on a fixed income. He asked the Town to curb spending, as people are hurt financially more and more every year. Mr. Ostrowski stated that people who don't receive raises every year still must pay increased taxes every year, and in some cases the tax expenses can equal monthly mortgage expenses. He stated belief that the budget may need to be increased from year to year but that the Town should try to find ways to cut down and minimize the increases.

Gary Bolles, 28 Burdon Lane: Mr. Bolles stated that as a retired accountant he has noticed a flaw in the lock-box tax collection procedures. Mr. Bolles stated that he mailed his property tax check to the Hartford lock box on January 23, 2008. He stated that his check should have been posted the following day, but subsequent daily inquiries showed that the check did not post until January 31, 2008. He stated that the delay in posting his payment cost the Town 5-7 days worth of interest revenue. He stated that tax payments should go directly to the Town and he offered to help process incoming payments on a timely basis in order to retain as much interest income as possible. Mr. Bolles noted that his vehicle tax payment posted only two days after it was sent, and noted that the much higher property tax payments should post as quickly as the lower amount car tax payments.

Eric Andrews, 1081 Willard Avenue: Mr. Andrews noted that he moved to Town from New Britain a few years ago due to an increase of taxes in New Britain for four years in a row. He stated that elderly residents of the Town are struggling on a fixed income and some are forced to leave Newington. He stated that forcing elderly residents out allows for more families with children to move in, therefore creating additional strain on the budget. Mr. Andrews stated that the Town must view its elderly residents as being more valuable in Town than families with children. He remarked that he is unsure that it even worthwhile to own property anymore. He stated that the rising education budgets are out of control and stated that teachers are retiring on the backs of people who are working until death because they cannot afford to retire. Mr. Andrews stated that a fundamental philosophical shift needs to occur in regards to recognizing the value of those without families.

ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no further public comment, Mayor Wright reminded the public in attendance that a special meeting of the Town Council will be held immediately following the adjournment of the Public Hearing.

Councilor Bottalico moved to adjourn the Public Hearing at 7:35pm. Motion seconded by Councilor Boni.

Motion passed 9-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Mrs. Jaime Trevethan
Clerk of the Council