



Tanya Lane
Acting Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR ROY ZARTARIAN

MINUTES

SPECIAL MEETING – BUDGET REVIEW

NEWINGTON HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM
8:00 P.M.

March 31, 2016

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Zartarian called the meeting to order at 10:45 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLIANCE

III. ROLL CALL

Councilor Anest
Councilor Budrejko
Councilor DelBuono
Councilor Klett
Councilor Manke
Councilor Marocchini
Councilor Nagel
Councilor Serra
Mayor Zartarian

Staff Attendees:

Tanya Lane, Acting Town Manager
Ann Harter, Finance Director
Lisa Rydecki, Deputy Finance Director
Jamie Trevethan, Asst. to the Town Manager – Administration
Linda Irish-Simpson, Clerk of the Council

Councilor Nagel made a motion to waive the rules to permit action on items after 10:30 p.m. and the motion was seconded by Councilor Marocchini. The motion was passed 9 – 0.

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Forest Helvie, 282 Lamplighter Lane: He was disappointed at the zero percent increase and supported the BOE. The Council needed to support the programs and staff at the schools.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: She supported the return of the CIP money to the Parks and Rec Department.

Michael J. Fox, 1901 Main Street: He stated that with the cuts the 7th grade language program and the high school STEM academy would have to be put on hold and was in support of the BOE budget.

(inaudible): As a teacher in the STEM academy he urged support of the budget.

Joshua Burnham: As the AV coordinator of the auditorium he spent a lot of time with the children and their productions and urged the Council to support the budget. The teachers and students put a great deal into the productions and it was amazing to see what they could do.

(inaudible), 217 Lamplighter Lane: he urged the Council to find a way to compromise and make it happen for the children.

V. CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

A. Adjustments to Town Council's Tentative Budget, if needed

There were three motions for adjustments to the budget made by Councilor Anest and seconded by Councilor Marocchini. The motions failed on a roll call vote 4 – 5.

Yes: Councilors Anest, Klett, Marocchini, Serra

No: Councilors Budrejko, DelBuono, Manke, Nagel, Mayor Zartarian

The three motions are attached.

Councilor Klett said she found it hard to believe that after 3.5 hours nobody came to the meeting to comment on the Police or Library budgets. She said during the Mayor's presentation the town side increased while on the Board of Education side there was a decrease of \$2.4 million. The police had built in increases of \$2.8% and felt it was surprising the Council would support a 3% increase for administration and cut the BOE budget. A flat budget was really a negative budget.

Councilor DelBuono stated the process was painful but the Council had to consider all departments and see the big picture. She stated businesses were struggling, the State budget was uncertain and people could not afford more. She had many conversations with the BOE chairman and they would continue. She was not in favor of making adjustments to the budget tonight but wanted more talks with the BOE.

Councilor Marocchini had hoped the BOE would have been able to figure something out that would not have been as devastating to the schools. He wished the majority party had been at the last BOE meeting to see what would have to happen and after it was all laid out, how transparent the process was. If schools were closed at night how would that affect the scouts, sports, and other organizations he asked. The money was already in the budget to build the academy, which would not be used by anyone because of the cuts. He was in favor of the 2.8% increase.

Councilor Klett said that 85% of the budget was salaries and the Council could not cut by \$2.4 million without having layoffs. The purchase of the buses was not something the Council had to be informed of but the superintendent had informed the BOE about the purchase.

Councilor Manke stated the State had serious economic difficulties and a plan had been developed for this year but next year the deficit was going to be even larger. He felt there would be income tax increases as well as cuts to the cities in the next budget and taxes could not continue to increase.

Councilor Serra was in support of the 2.8% increase to the BOE. She explained they had gone through the budget line by line to explain how the cuts would impact the schools class by class, which was devastating. She said education was the backbone of the Town and the Council had to give the children what was needed.

Councilor Anest said the parents liked the services provided and were unhappy with the zero percent increase to the schools. Some parents might look to move out of Town or move to magnet schools if there was no increase. She felt the 2.8% increase was a compromise.

Councilor Nagel said he had listened to all the stories tonight about the budget but said the Town Council had to deal in reality and determine what the Town could afford and what was good for the taxpayers. He felt they had to be very careful in making these decisions and had concerns with transparency. He had read the BOE could get behind a 1% or 2% increase and then had heard proposals for 2.8% so was still unclear on the correct amount of increase. He said further negotiations should be made and consideration should be given of the suggestion regarding health benefits, which would not hurt the taxpayers. All departments had suffered in one way or another and the Council had to consider all departments in Town. He could not support the 2.8% increase but would continue to negotiation to reach an agreement that was palatable to all.

Councilor Budrejko stated the Council could not be myopic and the BOE affected everyone. After the November elections she expected an increase in sales tax and/or income taxes. State employees were being laid off and private industry was losing jobs to out of State. She could not support the 2.8% but hoped a compromise could be reached with the BOE.

Councilor Klett said she wanted to defend Councilor Petronio about not getting phone calls returned from the Council. The Town Council's job was not to go through the budget line by line. She said she did not understand how Councilor Nagel could vote against an increase after voting for the teachers' contract along with her.

Councilor Anest motioned to add \$50k to support Churchill Park which was later withdrawn. She stated this would help to make the park ADA accessible. Councilor Manke stated he supported the parks in Town since they were a big asset but questioned what the Town would get for the \$250k. The Council had to look at the big picture and prioritize all the projects needed. Councilor Klett indicated the \$250k was not a way to rush ahead, was not an unreasonable request and would enable them to determine the feasibility of the project. Councilor Marocchini was concerned the majority claimed to support education, parks and the library but not when it came to funding them.

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – ON AGENDA

Don Woods, 82 Ivy Lane: He had hoped the \$250k would have been restored to the Parks and Recreation budget for Churchill Park. The lack of compliance in ADA was an issue and could lead to fines against Newington. Projects in Town could not continue to be pushed down the road any longer and sympathized with the job before them.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive: She had heard about the condition of the pool at Churchill for years and recently about the ADA compliance but nothing had been added to the CIP fund. She wondered why that had not been done. She indicated the Town Hall still needed to be renovated and the lack of maintenance for the Town's buildings was awful.

Mary Houle, 253 Dix Avenue: She was concerned about the BOE budget and had moved to Newington for the school system. The Council needed to accept the budget as suggested.

(inaudible): He stated the choice the five Councilors were making was wrong and after listening to all the residents should accept the BOE budget. They were elected to listen to the people and encouraged them to do so.

VII. REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Councilor Marocchini said he was unsure why Councilor Nagel still had unanswered questions since he had plenty of time to get the answers he wanted. The majority party should be coming up with a deal and working it out so everyone can work together for an agreement.

Councilor Serra said the Council needed to look at education and parks but the Republicans just wanted to vote no on anything the minority party brought up. The Town needed the parks to be ADA compliant by July or fines would be levied.

Councilor Anest thanked the residents who came to speak at the meeting. The Board of Education was budgeted money from the Council and the Council had no say in how the money was spent. The Council needed to fix the parks and the Town Hall as well.

Councilor DelBuono indicated the money for the park would not fix the ADA requirements and was not opposed to the project; however, they needed to prioritize how the money would be spent.

Councilor Klett said that people moved to Newington because of the schools and it being a safe place to live. She hoped the budget would be resolved before Tuesday since a zero percent increase would be bad for the Town.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 12:35 a.m. was made by Councilor Marocchini and seconded by Councilor Nagel. The motion passed 9 – 0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Irish-Simpson
Clerk of the Council

Cc: T. Lane, Town Clerk

