



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR JEFF WRIGHT

Minutes

Newington Town Council – Special Meeting

April 15, 2010

Mayor Wright called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm in the Council Chambers of the Newington Town Hall.

I PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II ROLL CALL

Councilors Present:

Councilor Banach
Councilor Casasanta
Councilor Cohen
Councilor Klett
Councilor Lenares
Councilor McBride
Councilor Nagel
Council Nasinnyk
Mayor Wright

Staff Present

John Salomone, Town Manager
Ann Harter, Finance Director
Lisa Rydecki, Asst. Finance Director
Jaime Trevethan, Exec. Asst. to the Town Manager
Mary Richard, Council Clerk

III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Juan Ortiz, 468 New Britain Avenue - said he is very disturbed after looking at the budget. He said that the Town Council having been elected by the public, and talking about the Board of Education and the 3% increase he feels it is appalling. He continued that no one across the Nation and this State is getting an increase, let alone 3%. He noted that it's been years since tax payers have been given even 1% tax break. He feels that pinning this on the backs of the tax payers of this Town, it is unrealistic. He wonders if every year will we get a 3% increase, which is what it sounds like. He feels that the Board of Education could manage a year or two without that 3% increase. Giving the tax payer a 1 mill rate tax cut, that would work. As far as teachers being needed for our children, this Town of Newington has very good parents. He stated that a lot of moms are raising their kids alone, without a father. Regarding Cedar Mountain he feels after being up there, some of it needs to be developed but putting more into the Board of Education; some of this could be put into the Town of Newington.

Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive - her favorite ice cream is coffee, especially at Mortensen's but the point of this is nothing more than perspective, what is important to one is not to another. We fight for the things that are important to us, and education is of the utmost importance to me. Your constituency of individuals who are powerless and have no vote, the students of the Newington school system will be affected by what the Council does tonight, for more so than voting for fake grass. She feels that considering going below what has been

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proposed, in her opinion the Manager's 3% is absolutely rock bottom, I would vote the other way and this should not even be considered, going below 3%. To place the blame for this on the shoulders of the teachers, unwilling to open up their binding contract early is deflecting responsibility. The students deserve better than that.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive – apologized to Councilor Casasanta for stating that she wanted full disclosure of Councilors Banach and Nasinnyk's finances. In reviewing her statement, she only had concerns about the statute, which by the way is not a statute but a rule of the Newington Code of Ethics. She erroneously assumed that Councilor Casasanta was piggy-backing on Council Lenares's concerns regarding personal gain, preferential treatment, financial gain and personal interest. Ms. Lyons thanked Councilor Casasanta for setting her, Mr. Lyons, and the record straight. The public expects but not accept these political tactics during election campaigns, and one would expect that if one calls 'foul' on one player, that the same rules would apply to you. She stated that after reading the Republican letter to the editor in the Newington Town Crier she realized that she could not be an objective member of the Board of Ethics. Therefore on April 9, she submitted her resignation from the Board of Ethics to Tanya Lane, our Town Clerk. She said that in the future she would hope that these games are not played with one another. She stated that if we want to start knit picking at the Newington Town Code of Ethics, then something's very wrong.

IV CONSIDERATION OF OLD BUSINESS

A. Adoption of Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2010-11

Councilor Banach moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That the following General Fund appropriations of the Town of Newington are hereby adopted for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2010 and ending June 30, 2011, in accordance with Section 805 of the Charter of the Town of Newington:

APPROPRIATIONS:

Town Government Operations:		
General Government	\$4,240,885	
Public Safety	7,301,442	
Public Works	4,809,354	
Community Planning & Development	428,965	
Public Health	121,760	
Community Services	978,686	
Public Library	1,656,090	
Parks & Recreation	1,559,063	
Insurance - Miscellaneous	7,395,175	28,491,420
Debt Service		2,162,361
Metropolitan District		2,646,308
Capital Improvements		4,084,244
Equipment Reserve		388,916
Employee Leave Liability Reserve Fund		84,100
Board of Education		59,244,755
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TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS		\$97,102,104

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with Section 805 of the Charter of the Town of Newington, the following General Fund estimated revenues be raised to meet these appropriations:

ESTIMATED REVENUES:

Current Taxes	\$75,724,675	
Prorated Taxes	550,000	
Prior Years Taxes	375,000	
Interest & Liens	250,000	
Payments in Lieu of Taxes	3,153,676	
Licenses & Permits	195,700	
Rentals	129,600	
Investment Income	200,000	
Fines	40,000	
Charges for Services	370,350	
Refunds & Reimbursements	35,000	
Sale of Town Property	200	
State Aid	13,923,400	
Federal Aid	9,000	
Miscellaneous	13,500	
Donations	4,200	
Transfers from Other Funds	127,803	\$95,102,104
General Fund Balance Applied		<u>2,000,000</u>
TOTAL ESTIMATED REVENUES AND APPLIED FUND BALANCE		\$97,102,104

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the Clerk is hereby instructed to place the accompanying General Fund Budget Summary on the record of this meeting to illustrate the above appropriations and revenue estimates.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

That the following budget is hereby adopted for the Public School Capital Improvement Projects Reserve Fund for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011:

APPROPRIATIONS:

Painting	\$30,000
Carpeting	30,000
District wide Security Devices	30,000
System-wide Air Conditioning Installation	30,000
Athletic Improvements	25,000
High School Locker Refurbishment	50,000
High School Kitchen Floor Replacement	50,000
District-wide Lighting Improvements	<u>25,000</u>
TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS	\$270,000

ESTIMATED REVENUES:	
General Fund Appropriations	\$125,000
Interest Earnings	867
Tuition Receipts	50,000
School Rental Receipts	60,000
Fund Balance	<u>34,133</u>
TOTAL ESTIMATED REVENUES AND APPLIED FUND BALANCE	\$ 270,000

Motion seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk

Discussion

Councilor Casasanta stated that she will not be supporting this budget. She finds it very disappointing that the NTA refused to come to the negotiating table. Although there are contracts involved and are up for renegotiation at this time, there is no good faith effort on the part of the NTA to show solidarity with fellow Town employees to alleviate some of the tax burden to the Town residents to make some concessions to their contract. The public whose tax dollars support education had a right to know what was being requested of the NTA and the NTA's ultimate denial of this request. It is a fact that most Town residents are continuing the effects of this negative economic climate. The conflict of interest issue is in our By-Laws and should not come as news to us who took it to serve the people in Newington. She said, be assured that there is no political motive behind it. Both as Council and Board of Education should be aware of this section of our By-Laws. In closing she thanked those members of the public who spoke on this budget, the turf field issue and the Library issue, whose input is important to us as Councilors. Also she thanked all the Councilors for the hard that was put in on this budget. She looks forward to moving on with the business of Newington.

Councilor Nasinnyk stated that she will be supporting this budget and also wanted to address the comments made by Councilor Casasanta. She believes it is in the best interest of this Town to vote on this budget and to make sure that it passes. There are a lot of good things in this budget, not being happy about everything, but everyone around the Council table had to make compromises. In voting no on this budget means voting no on the turf field, a big issue, not voting for opening the Library hours, or not funding the uniforms for the Fire Department and several other items that will be on this budget. She also feels that since it was brought up that she is one of the Councilors whose ethics was raised, but she reiterated that this vote is not a vote on the teacher contract. That contract is already in place and that the Town has to abide by. If the teachers wanted to have that opened up they could have but she believes for their own reasons they decided not to open the contract. To slash that budget even further would not have affected the teachers' salary which is the reason she is supporting the Board of Education budget. She will be supporting this budget tonight as it is in the best interest of the Town which is what you asked me to do in looking out for everyone.

Councilor Cohen also will support this budget, not agreeing with everything, considering the economy she thinks Newington is very well run and we are providing services that other towns are cutting. She said that we may disagree with the items and terms of the Health Benefit memo of understanding between the Council and the Board of Education. This is not new and those who thought that this memo could have been amended could have addressed that issue some time ago. She doesn't think that putting this on the backs of our children is really what we want be looking at. She believes that the two contracts, the Health Memo of Understand and the teachers' contract are contracts exist and have to be honored. She thanked the Town staff under the leadership of our Town Manager who came up with a terrific budget, and she will support the budget.

Councilor Lenares thanked the Town staff for providing this budget. One of his concerns is on the commercial property in Town, like the Wal-Mart, the Sam's Club, the Toys 'R Us, the Northeast Utilities etc, the value on those properties are not \$166,000, and not a \$144. Increase to them. If these stores move out because the taxes are going up too high, we'll have vacant empty buildings with graffiti etc. So if we increase the taxes by this amount, considering the businesses and personal property it's not the same situation. He is not in support of this budget. He does support a lot of things in this budget, and the votes are what they are and everyone worked hard on it together. He thanked everyone for the hard work done.

Councilor Klett said to her success means effectiveness in the world and she is able to carry my ideas and values into the world that she is able to make positive changes. She thinks that in very difficult times she is comfortable in supporting this budget and feels that it has not provided all things to all people but it has provided the necessities to try to make things work for all people. If there was an outcry from the public in these meetings to suggest that this budget wasn't acceptable we would have heard that, but we heard more from the people supporting the turf field and the Library than from any other group within the community? Based on the fact that we have not heard a lot of negative outcry opposing this budget she feels comfortable supporting it. She feels that we could do better for the Board of Education and the Town general government side but at this point in time she believes that this is the best that we are capable of providing. She thanked the Town Manager, John Salomone and his staff and Dr. Collins and his staff, both members of the Town Council and the Board of Education for all the hours that each of us in trying to do the right thing for the Town of Newington.

Councilor McBride said as a person operating a business on the Berlin Turnpike he certainly understands the concerns brought up, but being a first time home owner in Town in hopes of starting a family here and the investment that we make in the Board of Education is one that we get a great return on. But another investment we can get a greater return on and that is in our children. The Board of Education investment is determined by dollars and cents. The investment in the children, although there may not be an immediate return on it, but it's there and everyone, with or without children will see a return on that investment. He is also disappointed in the Newington Teachers Association in their leadership and inability to meet with us in these times, but underfunding the education budget really affects the children more than the teachers. He said that he will be voting for this budget.

Councilor Nagel stated that he will not be supporting this budget, while there are things in this budget that were of smaller amounts, but the overall amount of the budget and the lack of the willingness of this Council to decrease the Board of Education budget he finds it being not tolerable. He feels that a statement needs to be made saying that increases need to be limited. He said that this only shows there will only be harder times to come. He will not be supporting this budget and thanks the members of this Council, the staff and the public for sharing all this and coming to the determination that we will set tonight.

Councilor Banach stated that speaking for himself he feels that this has been an indecent political season. When we started this Council he remarked that Politics are the art of the possible. With all the effort that goes into this budget by all people, not everyone gets what they want but one has to have a clear vision of terms being against this budget, you are voting against the Firemen's uniforms, against keeping the Library open, against additional money being put aside for Market Square, for the parking lot, for the turf field and some things we wanted to get into the budget, one thing he wanted was money for the open space. He is reminded that about ago this auditorium was full because there was a threatened cut to the education budget by less than 3%. He finds it interesting that when the Republicans enjoyed a super majority they didn't make that statement. This in the minority they feel it necessary to make that statement. We have done a very effective job, in the ten years that the Democrats have controlled the Council the average increase was 2.74%. He will be supporting this budget.

Mayor Wright stated that as has been said that not everyone gets what they want. The tax payers are surely not getting what they want with the tax increase, but the teachers did get what they wanted. The teachers getting this 5.6% increase represents a 2% tax increase for you, the tax payers and for himself. He stated again that not everyone got what they wanted but the teachers did. The teachers are great people and do great services to the kids but in this environment, where no one is getting an increase, many people losing jobs, businesses are doing everything they can to stay open and keep their employees he thinks it's unconscionable that the teachers are getting a 5.6% increase in their pay for next year. We've all put a lot of work into this budget and there are a lot of things we agree on. He stated that he will not be supporting this budget, not because he doesn't support the education, not because he doesn't support the Library, the uniforms for the Fire Department etc. The Republican Councilors here have made a number of proposals to bring the tax increase down. For example if we just reduce the increase in the Board of Education, who will get a \$1,700,000 increase this year. We proposed to take away the health insurance surplus that they get to keep and is projected to be one half of a million dollars, with that Councilor Cohen had said that it would only be a .38 mils reduction and that reduction would bring the tax increase slightly at or below 2%. No seniors are getting an increase in their Social Security. We need to think about the tax payers more in this difficult time, and lots of people say there's nothing we can do about it. He said that he disagrees with that attitude, and he's disappointed that the teachers refused to meet and discuss this issue but he doesn't believe that they should get this 5.6% increase this year. Without that increase and keeping the health insurance surplus, the tax increase for the people of Newington would be effectively zero. Almost the whole increase to this budget goes to the Board of Education and when talking

about reducing, we're not reducing the budget; they're getting a \$1.7 million dollar increase. People don't want to fight anymore, they're worn out. People are leaving this State in droves because of our property tax increases. He said that he cannot vote for this budget. What's happening here is unsustainable. He thanked the Town Manager, Ann Harter and all the staff, the members of the Board of Education, Dr. Collins and all the Councilors and our Clerk Mary. With that he called for a roll call.

Mayor Wright asked for a roll call vote:

Councilor Banach	Yes
Councilor Nasinnyk	Yes
Councilor Cohen	Yes
Councilor Klett	Yes
Councilor Lenares	No
Councilor Casasanta	No
Councilor Nagel	No
Councilor McBride	Yes
Mayor Wright	N

Motion passes 5-4.

B Adoption of Long-Range Capital Improvement Plan 2010-11 through 2014-2015

Councilor Cohen moved to table this item – Seconded by Nasinnyk - Vote 9 - 0

Mayor Wright noted that The Hartford Courant was supposed to run a public notice for the meeting for April 8, they did not run that ad as directed; it didn't run until Tuesday. By Charter it's required that 5 days prior notice be given to the public and that's why we had the public hearing on Tuesday, April 13th and that vote is on this evening, April 15th. He thanked everyone for their understanding. He stated that the discussion will be held when there is more time.

Mr. Salomone explained that we're tabling the five year plan, and not the items that affected by next year's budget. The tabling is for only the five year plan but the items will not be affected.

C Set Mill Rate

Councilor Banach moved the following:

RESOLVED:

In accordance with Section 805 of the Town Charter of the Town of Newington, the Town Council hereby fixes a tax rate of 29.18 mills for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2010 and ending June 30, 2011, which shall be levied on taxable property in the Town of Newington listed on the October 1, 2009 Grand List, and said tax shall become due and payable in accordance with Section 43-1 of the Newington Code of Ordinances. The Town Manager is hereby authorized to make out and sign the rate bill in accordance with this motion.

Motion seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk. Motion passed 9-0.

V Resignations/Appointments

A. Affordable Housing Monitoring Agency

Councilor Banach moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council hereby accepts the resignation of Ellen Lyn Connery from the Affordable Housing Monitoring Agency, in accordance with a communication dated April 10, 2010.

Motion seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk. Motion passed 9-0.

B. Vehicle Appeals Board

Councilor Banach moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council hereby accepts the resignation of Ellen Lyn Connery from the Vehicle Appeals Board, in accordance with a communication dated April 10, 2010.

Motion seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk. Motion passed 9-0.

C. Board of Ethics

Councilor Banach moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council hereby accepts the resignation of Rosemarie Sarubi Lyons from the Board of Ethics, in accordance with a communication dated April 9, 2010.

Motion seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk. Motion passed 9-0.

Councilor Banach moved the following:

RESOLVED:

That the Newington Town Council hereby makes the following appointment:

Board of Ethics

7 members, 2 alternates, 4 year term
Party Max. (Reg. members): 2 Rep., 2 Dem., 3 Unaf.
Remaining members: 1 Rep., 2 Dem., 2 Unaf.
Alternates: 1 Dem., 1 Rep.

ALTERNATE: Ellen Lyn Connery	225 Robbins Avenue	D	IMMED.-11/30/12	R. Sarubi Lyons (Res. 4/9/10)
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Motion seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk. Motion passed 9-0.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Jay Bottalico, 37 Valley View Drive – feels that he has to chastise this Council because when he got the salaries of the teachers and administrators, he asked how can the Council submit a budget like this or is something being hidden, with no salary increases to be determined. He said he’s confused as to the Council setting the budget when we don’t know what we’ll give the AFSCME Union or the Police Union.

Robert Briggaman, he said that he is disappointed in the majority of this Council who have voted on this budget, when in the average home it’s only \$130. or \$140. But that’s compounded year after year and there are seniors in this Town trying to figure who should be their electric suppliers to maybe save a few dollars. This doesn’t seem to bother the majority on this Council.

Mady Kenny, 53 Crestview Drive, said that she is appalled that the teachers in Town have been made into a scapegoat when a legally binding contract is what it is. She thinks the disparaging remarks that were made against a legal binding document, she thinks it’s interesting that the money for the Board of Education has brought up such controversy when there’s no problem in moving funds from here and there into funds for

asphalt for a parking lot, and plastic grass when the argument on not adequately funding our education system is holding everyone up.

Rose Lyons, 46 Elton Drive said that she would like to bring to the Council's attention that written communications can be read into the record only if requested by a Councilor. She requests that in the future with any written communications to be read into the record, that it be done during public participation. Finally, she noted that Mr. Ancona is present and would hope that she might get an answer to her question as to who has the right to ask a legal opinion of our Town Attorney. Although there is no dialogue allowed when the public comes up to speak, she feels that questions should be answered.

VI REMARKS BY COUNCILORS

Councilor Cohen thought it would be nice if the Council had come together and supported our budget, but as said will not make everyone happy but it's the best we could come up with under the circumstances.

Councilor Nasinnyk thanked the Town staff for working hard in answering all our questions in good faith and good humor and still waiting for this night to find out they proceed. She also thanks the public who came out and participated in the process, we value your input. Newington is a Town that provides a lot of services to it's residents and the way that's done is creative and fiscally done. She is very proud to be a part of this Council.

Councilor McBride thanked the Town Manager, the Finance Director for all their hard work and the public participation we got throughout this process. Being his first budget experience, he feels it was a great educational experience and he sees now how important the public input is. He feels that the public opinion is very valuable and we need to hear all sides of every issue and he encourages everyone to keep coming out and bring more people.

Council Nagel said it was not by plan that this is Income Tax day, and he wishes everyone the best of luck in filling their returns for the Federal and State Government.

Councilor Lenares thanked everyone who participated, and he realizes that not everyone agrees with the budget 100% but we should still support it. Since the Board of Education represents 62% of the budget, 85% of the tax increase is the Board of Education's. He cannot support this budget and is hoping that we can get the teachers to relent on their massive pay increases in the future.

VI ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Lenares moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 PM
Seconded by Councilor Nasinnyk
Vote 9 – 0

Submitted Respectfully,

Mary Richard
Council Clerk