

**SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
OF NORTH BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT**

8:00 P.M.

**April 2, 2002
Totoket Valley Elementary School**

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

ROLL CALL: Present were Mayor Joanne Wentworth, Council Members Mary Bigelow, Vincent Candelora, Michael Downes, Andrew Esposito, Joan Fitch, Jack Krasko and Paul Proto. Also present were Town Manager Karl Kilduff and Town Attorney John Gesmonde.

Deputy Mayor George Guertin was absent.

Mayor Wentworth called the public hearing to order at 8:00 p.m.

Town Manager Karl Kilduff presented the proposed Annual Budget for 2002-2003.

Town Manager Kilduff reviewed various issues which affect the budget including the unresolved State budget, the three union contracts which are currently under negotiation, and the CRRRA-Enron issue. He spoke on the impacts to the budget due to reduction in State aid. He noted that there is a proposed increase in CRRRA tipping fees from \$51 a ton to \$57 a ton. The Town Manager also reviewed the increases in insurance costs across the board.

Due to the recent revaluation, Town Manager Kilduff stated that the value of a mill has increased. One mill now equals \$832,879. He reviewed the Pro Rata Distribution of Mill Rate.

Town Manager Kilduff confirmed that the proposed budget for general government includes no new staff or services. He spoke on the increased pension funding for the volunteer firefighters. He stated that an additional impact on the budget is the relocation from the current Town Hall building to the former Tilcon building. He confirmed that this project is on track to move in the fall of this year.

Town Manager Kilduff stated that the proposed budget increase is 8.4% on the Town side and 8.46% on the education side. He indicated that these figures continue to fluctuate daily as new information is received. He stated that greater funds are proposed to be used from surplus in this budget than in prior years. He also confirmed that new sources of revenue are being looked into.

With respect to the Capital Improvements Plan, Town Manager Kilduff reviewed the \$274,000 which is earmarked for the replacement of fire equipment, replacement of the Valley Road bridge and a new street sweeper for the Public Works Department. He also noted that \$10,000 is included in the Capital Improvements Plan for a Senior Center van.

Town Manager Kilduff briefly reviewed the impacts of the proposed budget on the taxpayers.

Rose Angeloni, Chairperson of the Board of Education, presented to the Council the

2002-2003 North Branford Board of Education Proposed Budget in the amount of \$22,270,813, a 8.46% increase over last year's budget. She reviewed the Mission Statement recently adopted by the Board of Education as part of the Strategic Plan. Mrs. Angeloni stated that the proposed budget begins to address items which have historically been neglected, including the declining infrastructure, curriculum management and the high school accreditation. She spoke on a security audit proposed for all facilities in order to maintain a safe and orderly environment for all students and staff. She also noted that the costs of putting the new auditorium on line are included in the budget.

Mrs. Angeloni reviewed the funding sources for the Board of Education budget which include grants, State aid and town support. She spoke on the restructuring of special education by taking over the ACES program with a cost savings of \$100,000.

Dr. Robert Wolfe, Superintendent of Schools, reviewed the Board of Education's budget's fixed costs, which total 5.83%. He noted that even with the new teacher contract approved, the Town is still below the State average for a starting teacher's salary. He reviewed the costs for Employee Benefits and Costs as well as increases in utilities, transportation and special education. He also spoke on the Strategic Plan and Action Plans approved by the Board of Education and the impact of that on the budget.

With respect to Curriculum Management, Dr. Wolfe spoke on the need to maintain a four year cycle for curriculum development. The proposed budget includes a 1.0 Curriculum Specialist and a 1.0 custodian for NBIS and NBHS due to the additional square footage of the auditorium. He also spoke on the Professional Development Technology and Technology Lease Program contained in the budget.

Due to additional enrollment in the music department, Dr. Wolfe indicated that the proposed budget includes a 1.0 Music Teacher at NBHS. He reviewed the enrollment in Grades Kindergarten through 5 with 300 students in the music program. There are presently 30 students involved in the music program at the high school. He also noted that they have eliminated a third grade teacher at Jerome Harrison School.

Dr. Wolfe spoke on the need for a Special Education Coordinator. He indicated that there are currently 61 Special Education staff members and that the caseload is beyond what one person can handle. He also noted that they will be adding six special education employees in order to bring this program in house. He reviewed the request for a .5 Special Education Teacher at TVES, a school psychologist to be shared three days a week at NBIS and NBHS as well as increases in homebound instruction. He also reviewed the increases for equipment, instructional supplies and printing. Dr. Wolfe stated that the requested increase in the Board of Education budget is 8.46%

Councilor Proto departed the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

With respect to the capital improvements request, Dr. Wolfe indicated that \$75,000 has been requested for a Facilities Study at NBHS, NBIS, TVES and STW. There is also \$15,000 requested for a comprehensive Security Audit of all facilities.

Mayor Wentworth opened the hearing to public comments.

Charlie Kubala
29 Nida Drive

Re: Questioned the percent of increase in taxes compared with the percent of increase for revaluation. He questioned why the increased in real estate revenue generated is only 12.63% while most residents' reassessment values have increased from 20 to 30%.

Town Manager Kilduff briefly responded to Mr. Kabala's questions. He noted that the budget is based on a 98% tax collection rate, which is lower than was budgeted for in last year's budget due to the economic times.

Dom Maggiore
66 Oxbow Lane

Re: Board of Education budget. Questioned the Buildings and Grounds person which was recently hired at the cost of \$70,000, which he felt could be a teaching position. He noted that the Public Works Department takes care of the grounds at the schools. He also questioned the job description of the prior employee which held that position as he felt an additional position was added by the Board of Education.

Dr. Wolfe responded that the Buildings and Grounds Supervisor position had been vacant for a period of time. Mrs. Angeloni stated that that position had been split and handled by another person in Central Office.

Mr. Maggiore

Re: Expressed concern with respect to contractual services for the Board of Education for the heating and cooling systems. He questioned the study done for the high school track in 1990. He also questioned if the Board of Education is self-insured.

Dr. Wolfe responded to Mr. Maggiore's questions with respect to outside contracted services for the Board of Education.

Mrs. Angeloni responded with respect to the high school track study. She indicated that this was an A-2 survey which was done by the Rotary Club for a possible community service project. She stated that the Town is in receipt of a grant of \$285,000 for track improvements. If the improvements to the track cannot be entirely covered by the grant funds, Mrs. Angeloni indicated that it is then up to the Town Council whether or not to go forward with the project. Mrs. Angeloni also responded that the Board of Education is not self-insured.

Scott Krista
36 Holly Mar Hill Road

Re: Spoke on the increase in his taxes which will be 33% to 34%. He questioned if the Town can phase in the tax increase.

Town Manager Kilduff responded to this. He spoke on outside revenue sources which are being looked into. He indicated that department budgets have been reduced or have no increases but that there are some one-time expenditures which are included in the budget.

Councilor Fitch noted that this is the budget which has been proposed by the Town Manager. The Council will next review the proposed budget and make any changes to it. She stated that the Council members are town residents who have been reassessed and also pay taxes to the town. She also pointed out that there are no new town employees on the town side.

It was noted that the Annual Town Budget Meeting for the townspeople to vote on the proposed budget presented by the Town Council will be held on Monday, May 6.

A resident

Re: Spoke on the need to reconcile difference in town expenses versus percent increase to residents.

Stephanie Bilides
1 Angela Court

Re: Questioned what the Town is doing to bring businesses in to offset the taxpayer's liability with respect to revenue for the town.

Town Manager Kilduff briefly responded to this.

A resident

Re: Spoke on the increase in his assessment and stated that he cannot afford this tax increase.

Mr. Maggiore

Re: Board of Education budget. Pointed out that whatever is allocated to the Board of Education can be spent by them any way they want.

Assessor Donna Price-Bekech

Re: Spoke on programs for the elderly and disabled in Town which allow for tax relief.

Kevin Cassidy
16 Salem Street

Re: Had questions with respect to the Annual Town meeting. Also spoke on the five year phase in program for taxes used in the Town of Hamden. He spoke on the increase in his taxes and requested that the Council trim all waste.

Marietta Dadio
Notch Hill Road

Re: She questioned what in mills would be the impact on the Town budget if the State puts back in the money

Town Manager Kilduff briefly responded to this and indicated that the mill rate could be reduced by up to .7% with additional State funding.

David Cassidy
48 Acorn Lane

Re: Questioned the surplus which is being applied to the budget. He questioned how much needs to remain in surplus in order to maintain a good bond rating for the town. He also questioned why more of the surplus is not being used. He noted that he will experience a 23% increase in his property taxes. Requested that the Council increase only what is contractually obligated and keep to a bare bones budget.

Town Manager Kilduff responded to this. He indicated that the surplus is currently \$2.9 million. He stated that 7% of the prior year appropriation must remain in surplus for a good bond rating.

Town Attorney Gesmonde reviewed the Annual Town Budget Meeting process. He noted that if the budget is not passed at the Annual Town Meeting, it goes back to the Town Council. The Town Council then recommends a revised budget. At the second Town Budget Meeting, if the budget does not pass, the Town Council's recommended budget goes into effect.

Monica Baer
64 Beech Street

Re: Questioned if the insurance costs are a fall out from September 11. She was concerned where cuts would be made in the budget.

Town Manager Kilduff briefly responded to the issue of the rise in insurance costs.

Mr. Kubala
Mrs. Bilides

Re: Tipping fee rate.
Re: Stated that the kids are entitled to a great education.

Lisa Morris, Mansfield Drive

Re: Noted that although she is only a tenant, she knows that only 17% of the population has children in the schools. She stated that they will not consider purchasing a house in a Town which does not have

an excellent school system.

Dee McKeown, 30 Surrey Drive

Re: Felt that the education system in a town is the backbone of a town. She felt that a lot of intelligence and hard work went into the Board of Education budget and the five year Strategic Plan. She stated that historically in this town taxes are not raised, not even in good times. She felt that school builders were deteriorating and that the Town had to look what is in the best interest of the Town for the future. She also felt that the Town should move forward with economic development.

Mayor Wentworth closed the public hearing at 9:30 p.m.

Town Manager Kilduff noted that the plans distributed to Council members are the plans from the Parks and Recreation Commission for the potential use of space throughout town.

Town Manger Kilduff then reviewed the construction drawings for the Tilcon project. He presented two potential vault designs, one straight and one askew and indicated that the square footage and storage capacity is the same for both proposals.

The Council reviewed an architectural drawing of the proposed vault. After review and discussion, it was the consensus of the Council to go with the straight, square vault.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Councilor Krasko moved, seconded by Councilor Candelora, to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 p.m.

VOTE: Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosanne Krajewski
Clerk to the Council