

Minutes of the Suffield Board of Finance Public Hearing on the 2008-09 Budget
April 30, 2008 – Suffield High School – 7:30 p.m.

Members present: Justin Donnelly, Joseph Sangiovanni, Joanne Sullivan, Dennis Kreps, David Tagliavini, Sam Fuller, Alts. Tom Frenaye
Also present: Selectmen Lingenfelter, Fitzgerald, Smith, Reynolds

Chairman Justin Donnelly asked that before the Hearing starts, for all to observe a moment of silence in memory and honor of Edgar Brown, a Suffield Senior.

Chairman Donnelly called the Public Hearing to order.
He introduced the members of the Board of Finance. He also recognized the Director of Finance, Deborah Cerrato, and the Board Secretary, Bobbie C. Kling.

He reviewed the budget process. He noted that the Board of Finance can reduce any line item in the Town government: the Bf can only recommend to the Board of Education, a dollar amount, to be reduced. The BF cannot specify line item reductions in the BOE budget. The WPCA creates its own budget. The CRRRA has increased its burning fees; we have no control over what they do. The budget does include only an estimate of trash fees; the bids are out. The BOS and BOF will meet Monday May 5 when final figures are known.

The Town has added two new positions: a social worker/Youth Services and a paid professional firefighter. The proposed budget was reduced by \$484,000. Of that figure, \$114,000 was a reduction in the BOE budget. The BOE budget is over 60% of the budget; we cut \$3 from the Town budget for every dollar we took out the BOE. The tax increase is 3.5% or an increase of .93 mills.

Board of Education – Chairman Michael Smith noted the reduction of \$114,000 and noted that the total increase for the BOE budget is 6.5%. The total of the BOE proposed budget is \$29,380,332. He reviewed the new staff positions in the budget. This budget also included \$70,000 for a half year Assistant Superintendent. He stated that he does not believe that the BOE would be continuing its request for \$70,000 for an Assistant Superintendent. He as a representative of the BOE, endorses the budget that is put forward. He asks residents to strongly support this budget that is before you tonight.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Smith for his presentation.
Chairman Donnelly stated that in no way would this budget be impacted if the Town decided to support the proposed Library. The BOF will meet Monday, to finalize the budget, to include new figures from the trash fee changes. The finalized proposed budget will be presented for a vote, May 14. Mr. Donnelly stated that the final budget will be a little less.

Comments and Questions:

Larry Edwards, 651 Bridge Street - He thinks it is a great budget. He thanks the BOF for establishing an Email address. He also stated that the Charter Revision Commission should send a survey out to residents seeking their opinions. Why are the benefits down?

Mr. Lingenfelter: The Charter Revision Commission has been funded as they requested.

The Public Works salt line item has been increased to meet the actual need and reflect a realistic number. The benefits are down as a result of collective bargaining. Employees now pick up a higher percentage of premiums and have higher co-pays.

Brian Kost, 10 Barry Place – He asked about percentage of the undesignated fund balance. It is 15.2% after the \$1,200,000 is placed in revenues.

Kris Karam, Apple Lane – She thinks that this is a good budget; happy to see a 3.5% increase.

Bruce Millick, Newgate Road commented about the op ed article in the Suffield Observe written by Michael Smith, Chairman of the BOE. It seemed to be that the school had hired 5 administrators with no prior experience and that an Assistant Superintendent would be needed to train them. He thinks a job description should have been developed before a request for funding. He urges that the BOE not hire an Assistant Superintendent.

Tony _____, Randall Drive – A job description should have been developed and justification shown for the position of Assistant Superintendent. He agrees with Mr. Millick's observations. Why are supplies always frozen. Why can't funding be placed toward supplies.

John Cown – 28 Audabon Trail – He speaks in opposition to any budget that will increase his taxes. This budget will take another bit of his fixed income.

Charles Watras, 32 Wendover Road – He complimented the BOF for crafting a fair and reasonable budget. He wanted to recognize Paul Hryniewicz who is missed. Paul did love Suffield. Mr. Watras thanked Mr. Smith for his earlier comments. The BOE does need to address the issue of funding for supplies. He asked about the 9.3%, continuing salaries. Mr. Lingenfelter stated this figure included two years of increases, it was not reflected in the current budget due to contract negotiations.

_____, 1286 Mountain Rd. – She asked is the remaining \$34,000 for the Secretary's position going to be cut.

Mr. Smith stated that the Secretary's position was not connected to the Assistant Superintendent's position.

Warren Packard, 2 Oxford Drive – The \$400,000 reduction is not a lot of money; it is less than 1 percent of the Town's budget. The \$114,000 BOE reduction is .4 of 1% of their budget.

Lester Smith – He is impressed with some of the enhancement programs within the schools.

Joyce Tierney, Plantation Drive – She thinks that the school administrators are superior.

We need to seek other ways to raise revenues.

The meeting is adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Bobbie C. Kling, Secretary to the Board of Finance

Bf.m.budget.hearing.april.30.08