

## BUDGET OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

May 2, 2017

**Officers**

Lucia Jansen	Chairman	District 7
Danyal Ozizmir	Vice Chair	District 5
Robert Allen	Secretary	District 3

**Members**

District	Delegate	Present or Absent	1 <sup>st</sup> Alternate	Present or Absent	2 <sup>nd</sup> Alternate	
1	James Vaughn	A	Grant Perkins	A		
2	Nancy Burke	P	Donald Conway	A		
3	Robert Allen	P	Rosalind Nicastro	P		
4	Romulo Samaniego	P	Brian O'Connor	A		
5	Dan Ozizmir	P	Jason Auerbach	A	Andy Duus	P
6	Hans Thalheim	A	George Sorenson	A	Horst Tebbe	P
7	Lucia Jansen	P	Bill Galvin	P		
8	Joe Solari	P	Thomas McGarrity	A		
9	Carol Zarilli	P	Thomas Eagan	A		
10	Bertram Metter	A	Alan Small	P		
11	Robert Maddux	A	Gregory Zorthian	P		
12	El-Shaffei Dada	A	Thomas Agresta	P	David de Milhau	P

**VISITORS:** 30+ people

**BET:** Michael Mason, Nancy Weissler, Beth Krumeich, Bill Drake, Jeff Ramer, Leslie Moriarty, Anthony Turner

**BOE/Schools:** Peter Sherr, Barbara O'Neill, Jennifer Dayton, Laura Erickson, New Lebanon Building Committee Members (Chair Walko and others)

**Office of First Selectman** Ben Branyan

**Town Departments:** Dr. Barry (Human Services), Peter Siecienski (Fire), Amy Siebert (DPW), Jim Michael (DPW)

**Other:** Mary Lee Kiernan (YWCA), Ken Borsuk (Media)

The Budget Overview Committee (BOC) meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Chairman, Lucia Jansen. There were 11 voting members, 7 delegates and 4 alternates. District 10 left after first two BOC votes.

## **BOC Motions to Amend Previous Motions and Add to Other 2017-18 TOG Budget**

- **Motion #1** to withdraw BOC motion to delete Oneida Bridge entire amount. **Motion PASSED 11-0-0**
- **Motion #2** to reduce by \$730,000 Fleet Purchase of New Vehicles. **Motion PASSED 7-1-3**
- **Motion #3** to withdraw the two previous BOC motions totaling \$301,270 and replace with a new amount of \$220,000, or 0.14% of budget, for four School Operating Budget Areas. **Motion PASSED 9-1-0**. D11 voted no.
- **Motion #4** to reduce by \$250,000 Greenwich Avenue Streetscape & Repaving Implementation. **Motion PASSED 10-0-0**
- **Motion #5** to approve the 2017-18 Town of Greenwich Budget with BOC amendments. **Motion PASSED 10-0-0**

### **1. Oneida Bridge**

Based on further research and information, the discussed removal of the cut due to the comments made by the DPW commissioner that safety might be compromised if the bridge is closed at the same time as another nearby is under construction.

**A motion was made and seconded to withdraw the BOC motion to delete Oneida Bridge. Motion PASSED 11-0-0**

### **2. Fleet Purchase of New Vehicles**

The proposal is to reduce \$730,000 of the BET approved amount of \$3 million in the 2017-18 Budget for new or replacement fleet vehicles. The reductions being considered will bring the Police, DPW, and P&R Fleet budgets to the originally projected long-term capital FY 2017-18 budget levels. The proposed reduction will in no way impact safety or effectiveness of personnel within the departments.

In the long-term capital plan, Police, DPW and P&R were originally projected at \$240,000, \$843,000 and \$598,000, respectfully, for expenditures relating to the 2017-18 Budget for Fleet Vehicles. BOC members questioned why these requests increased from the original plan? A Pumper truck for the Fire Department was deleted because it was no longer needed. The reason for this was that the new Fire Station was rejected. We appreciate the logic of adding \$730,000 of new requests after the \$675,000 was freed up in the 2017-18 budget. This said, it's not a MUST have. It's a NICE to have. Given the Financial landscape it's spending that should be cut and deferred as was the original long-term capital Plan.

**Police Vehicles.** The proposed budget for Fleet with respect to vehicles for Police in the 2017-18 Budget approved by the BET and currently being considered by the RTM for approval is \$493,000. The amount approved by the BET is \$253,000 *greater* than the \$240,000 that was originally projected and approved in last year's 2016-17 Final Capital Plan for 2017-18. In order to restore the budget to the original projected long-term capital plan for 2017-18, as stated in the 2016-17 Final Capital Plan, it is proposed that the following line items be reduced by the following amount for the Fleet Department that is found in the 2017-18 Capital Budget:

912 213 Police Interceptor SUV w/upfitting-10

Reduce by \$315,000 (for a final budget amount of \$240,000)

**DPW Vehicles.** The proposed budget for Fleet with respect to vehicles for DPW in the 2017-18 Budget approved by the BET and being considered by the RTM for approval is \$1,158,000. The amount approved by the BET is \$315,000 *greater* than what was originally projected and approved in last year's 2016-17 Final Capital Plan. In order to restore the budget to the original projected long-term capital plan for 2017-18, as stated in the 2016-17 Final Capital Plan, it is proposed that the following line items be reduced by the following amount for the Fleet Department that is found in the

312 – DPW Dump Truck (new)	\$205,000
312 – DPW Low Boy Dump Truck	\$115,000

**Note:** The revised budget for Fleet with respect to vehicles for DPW would total \$843,000 which is in line with the projections found in the 2016-17 Final Capital Budget

**P&R Vehicles.** The proposed budget for Fleet with respect to vehicles for P&R in the 2017-18 Budget approved by the BET and being considered by the RTM for approval is \$767,000. The amount approved by the BET is \$169,000 *greater* than what was originally projected and approved in last year's 2016-17 Final Capital Plan for 2017-18. In order to restore the budget to the original projected long-term capital plan for 2017-18, as stated in the 2016-17 Final Capital Plan, it is proposed that the following line items be reduced by the following amount for the Fleet Department that is found in the 2017-18 Capital Budget:

822 - P&R Dump Truck	\$115,000
822 - P&R Truck	\$ 42,000

**Note:** The revised budget for Fleet with respect to vehicles for DPW would total \$598,000 which is in line with the projections found in the 2016-17 Final Capital Plan

**Motion #2 made and seconded to reduce the 2017-18 Fleet capital budget for the reasons stated above totaling \$730,000.00. Motion PASSED 7-1-3. D10 voted no, and Districts 3,9,11 abstained.**

### 3. School Operating Budget

The BOC discussed the previous two Motions made at the previous April 26 meeting that had BOE reductions totaling just over \$300k. After further review and analysis, a new Motion was presented that lowered the net reduction amount from \$301,270 to \$220,000, or 0.14% of the schools \$153,139,102 operating budget. As can be seen, the amount is not meant to be punitive or detrimental in the delivery of education services---but meant to bring serious attention to the below described areas and that the BOC expects more from the BOE going forward.

The schools cut should be looked at in the context of the greater fiscal crisis facing both our state and the disproportionate impact it will have on the town of Greenwich. The FY 18 Board of Education budget was completed in the fall of 2016. It was only after the budget was passed that the State removed \$5.3MM in revenue that was expected to help our children and our school.

The Budget Overview Committee takes the point of view that the lost revenue and the known economic headwinds we face in the years ahead should begin to be handled now. The BET agrees and therefore had a budget with a 1.99% mill rate increase. However, while other departments faced smaller growth in their budgets, the BET prepared for the future by raising taxes \$3MM above and beyond the First Selectman's Budget. We do not believe that taxes alone should be the preparation for the future and the Board of Education cannot and should not be exempt from preparing for the

future today. Also, it should be noted, that the Town did not pass on, as other peer schools in Fairfield County, last year or FY 18 year's, State cuts. That is, the Town has absorbed 100% of the reduction in revenue, not the schools.

The Budget Overview Committee also points out that the Board of Education regularly returns funds to our General Fund. According the BET Chairman, Michael Mason, the cuts proposed by the BOC will not impact the operating budget of the schools and will not impact our children in any manner.

Finally, any cut to the schools budget is not a line item cut. We draw attention to these areas for more accountability and measurement. The areas identified are:

**1) M&C Raises**

- a) At the end of last year, Dr. McKersie without Board of Education input gave raises to his cabinet that resulted in additional wages of more than \$31,000 above the 2.5% recommendation;
- b) The Board of Education however, thru new hires and smaller than 2.5% raises for some staff exceeded the total raise budget by \$10,000;
- c) The BET confirmed in a public meeting with the Education Committee that this number was approximately \$11,000;
- d) The BOC takes the lower number and cuts \$10,000.

**2) Administrative Assistants - Curriculum**

- a) The Board of Education in a public meeting with the Education Committee confirmed that Greenwich has its own Curriculum and programming department. This cost is in excess of \$2.0MM;
- b) The BOE also confirmed in the same meeting that they have not looked at the cost benefit of outsourcing to curriculum to companies like McGraw Hill and others;
- c) The cost of this position is approx. \$54,000;
- d) The BOC identified this area as a place for the Board of Ed to study for efficiencies.

**3) Media Specialists**

- a) The Superintendents Budget sent to the Board of Education recommended reducing the number of media specialists in the schools from 14 to 13. The cost of a media specialist is over \$90,000. The Board of Education restored that position;
- b) The BOC stands with the original recommendation of the Superintendent;
- c) The BOC identifies \$90,000 to cut

**4) Fairness in Class Size**

- a) The Board of Education implemented a plan over 10 years ago to attract families to Hamilton Avenue. They did so by having different class size requirements in elementary school than any of the other schools in the district;
- b) The Board of Education in a public meeting with BOC delegates and alternates confirmed they had no data what so ever that shows the goal of bringing families to the district has been accomplished;
- c) The Board of Education in a public meeting at the regularly scheduled BOC meeting confirmed a second time that there is no data available and there are no results showing that the policy of attracting families based upon class size has worked;
- d) The Board of Education in a public meeting with the Education Committee re-iterated a third time that there is no evidence at all that the class size policy worked for 10 years;

- a. The Board of Education went further in the Education Committee and confirmed that the only reason for the class size reduction was to encourage more families at the school and that all Student Need is done on an individual basis. Furthermore, the Board of Education explained to the Education Committee that there were specialists at Hamilton Ave (and other schools) to work with children with additional needs and that classroom size is not part of that process
- e) The BOC worked with the Board of Education to confirm that if Hamilton Avenue Class Size was the same as the other schools, there would be a need for fewer teachers. Because we believe, as the Board of Education, that students with need work with specialists as they should and we should appropriate for, the BOC believes in a fair class size policies this we would cut from the budget an equivalent of 1 zeteacher with a Bachelor's degree which is rounding down to the nearest \$1,000 - \$66,000.

Overall, the Budget Overview Committee believes that this will not impact our children and Greenwich will continue to have some of the best schools, albeit most expensive, in the State of CT.

It is only fair that as the town looks at cuts to our town departments and our capital projects that the schools cannot be singled out at the expense of other priorities. We are a large and diverse town. We love our children. Our children are in the schools. This cut is fiscally prudent and does not harm student achievement.

***Motion #3 made and seconded to withdraw the two previous BOC amount totaling \$301,270 and replace with a new amount of \$220,000 for reasons stated above. Motion PASSED 9-1-0.*** D11 voted no and D10 absent left meeting early.

#### **4. Greenwich Avenue Streetscape and Paving Implementation**

Many questions were raised regarding the project, including:

- What are the projected costs of this plan?
- Where's the long-range Plan?
- Who's on the planning committee?
- What factors are driving this project?
- Has there been a discussion of tiered parking or suggested locations for a this type of structure?
- Who are the stakeholders? Any feedback from special interest groups? Who are they?

One BOC member, Carol Zarilli of D9, spent 2 years as a member of the POCD Downtown Planning Committee. She did not recall a "reshaping" Greenwich Avenue with a project of this magnitude and potential cost as suggested by the committee (reference to Downtown Planning Committee Final Report). Carol noted that lightning was a hot discussion point and that there had been 3 meetings with the then CL&P discussing street lighting along with associated costs of replacing or adding lighting to Greenwich Avenue --costs back in 2010 it was in the ballpark of \$800,000 per pole. The Town would be responsible for the additional cost of removing and replacing the sidewalks and so on.

Carol mentioned there was a lot of discussion of walkways using Belgium Block type pavers and decided they would not be beneficial for some of the following reasons:

- Would cause unfavorable conditions during snow plowing events;
- Additional costly repairs from plows dislodging pavers;
- Liability to the Town if possible dislodged pavers were propelled by plows into store fronts, hitting cars or pedestrians;
- Create unsafe walking conditions for pedestrians in the snow. Pavers creating slippery conditions for cars & pedestrians when wet from rain especially in colder months;
- Costly maintenance of cleaning pavers.

DPW in the 2016 budget received \$175,000 for this project and believe there is an unspent balance of \$89,000. By asking Ms. Siebert, the DPW Commissioner, the BOC learned that the project could be divided into two projects without disruption to the pace and time. The BOC did not want to fund the full \$500,000 appropriation until all these unknowns are addressed.

***Motion #4 to made and seconded to reduce by \$250,000 the \$500,000 item for Greenwich Avenue Streetscape & Repaving Implementation. Motion PASSED 10-0-0 D10 absent.***

#### **5. Town of Greenwich 2017-18 BET Proposed Budget**

Many BOC members voted with the assumption that all the BOC amendments pass the General Body of the RTM. Some members expressed frustration the BOC reductions did not go far enough given the State fiscal crisis and that a large reason for the Proposed FY 18 low mill rate increase was due to onetime health care savings by the State Health Care plan. With these comments included, the BOC unanimously voted to approve the FY 18 TOG budget.

The BOC did not vote on the Resolutions since it was heard that Legislative and Rules Committee had many issues that were going to be shared later.

***Motion #5 was made and seconded to vote on the TOG 2017-18 budget with the BOC amendments. The motion was made and seconded. Motion PASSED 10-0-0. D10 absent.***

**With no further business, the meeting of the BOC adjourned at 7:30 PM.**

**Submitted by Robert Allen, Secretary**