

CHAPLIN BOARD OF FINANCE
Chaplin, Connecticut
Budget Public Hearing Minutes
April 29, 2024

Chairperson Dick Weingart called the Budget Public Hearing to order at 7:02 PM. Present were Board members Link Diwan, Linda Caron, Jeremiah Rufini and Victor Boomer; Alternate Peter Haines and Alternate Matt Foster. Others present were First Selectman Juan Roman, Selectman Joe Pinto, CES Board Chair Jaclyn Chancey, Interim Superintendent James Connelly, CES Principal Kevin Chavez and Business Manager Jobina Miller. Unable to attend was Board member Bill Jenkins; Alternate Izzy Alvarez.

3. READ PUBLIC HEARING LEGAL NOTICE:

Dick Weingart read the Public Hearing Legal Notice that is posted on the town website.

4. REVIEW GROUND RULES FOR PUBLIC HEARING:

Any questions should be directed to Board Chair Dick Weingart.

5. SUMMARY STATEMENT OF BUDGET PROCESS; REVIEW KEY BUDGET POLICIES AND ASSUMPTIONS:

Reviewed the budget process with a budget calendar that includes: CIP Plan, Budget Policies, Grand List from Assessor (reval), enrollment data from Parish Hill, Budget Requests, BOS Budget Presentation, BOE Budget Presentation. The BOF will meet after the Public Hearing to finalize the budget for the Annual Town Meeting.

6. PRESENTATION OF BOARD OF EDUCATION AND TOWN BUDGETS; AUDIENCE QUESTIONS:

BOE/CES Budget - Board Chair Jaclyn Chancey presented CES budget with 4.45% increase with unanticipated Special Ed costs (closer to 2.6% on what actually spent). Accounting change for Group Insurance - everyone previously under Function 1000 moved to function where they are paid (Object 210). Increases include: Salaries (3% contractual - non-certified still in negotiations, 1 additional non-certified staff needed for Special Ed), BCBA (Board Certified Behavioral Analyst) Services (end of 3-year contract, keeps Special Ed students from being outplaced), Speech & Language Services (hired a person - previously contracted out). Magnet School Tuition decreased (state will pay for starting next year).

Questions/comments: asked for the number of students at CES and if population is going up (currently at 158 students holding steady for a couple of years - might be lower next year with change in Kindergarten start date); asked about class sizes and the number of teachers per grade (depends on the grade – class size ranges from 10-22, some classes with 1 teacher/some with 2); Jim Randall asked how many non-certified staff in 2600 Building & Grounds (1 Head Maintainer, 2 Custodians); asked if the number of Special Ed students goes down, will taxes go down (para might not be needed if a student leaves but depends on the services - higher costs for outplaced versus in-house); Bill Rose noted MBR plays into that as well - won't be able to reduce the budget (can't reduce the school budget lower than the previous year); Leslie Ricklin asked if Psychological Services and BCBA Services are contractual or a person on staff (Psychological Services contracted when needed, BCBA grant ended - program prevented 5-6 students from being outplaced); asked about kids moved not by their choice - go to Tech and then come back (count based on enrollment as of October 1st); asked about combining grades with small class sizes (haven't had to consider in at least 8 years); asked about cost per student (\$30,866 per year for RD11, \$26,343 per year for CES); Bill Rose asked if the cost per student includes ECS (without ECS).

- Dick Weingart presented RD11 Assessment Cost Comparison by Town for Chaplin, Hampton and Scotland based on enrollment (Chaplin – 50.86% (\$347,000).

Link Diwan presented graphs to explain the progression of Chaplin's budget and expenses including: Town Revenues - (vast majority for property taxes); Town Expenditures (total continues to go up with the schools

the largest portion - CIP reduced); Grand List – Real Estate (assessed value increased with the reval), Personal Property (Algonquin depreciation) and Motor Vehicles went down. The average house value increased more than 15%.

Questions/comments: what was used for average house in town (median assessed value - \$125,000 range before the reval, \$180,000 range after the reval).

Reviewed the Fund Balance Summary - projected in the 10% range for this year (low end) and 8.6% range for FY 2024-25 (equivalent to 1 month of operating expenses); Revenue Budget Summary; and Expenditure Budget Summary - Board of Finance (increase for new Auditor); Building, Grounds Maintenance (IT moved to General Government); Employee Benefits and Cost (increase for Health Insurance); Sanitation (negotiated reasonable price with Casella); Town Clerk (Legal Notices required to be published in English and Spanish); CIP (reviewed projects funded this year with net funding of \$112,674 from the General Fund).

Questions/comments – Jeremiah Rufini asked to clarify the effect of the reval on taxes – understood to be 25% increase in taxes with 8.6% Fund Balance and \$200,000 deficit; Bill Rose satisfied with 10% Fund Balance (doesn't want to see it go down) and expressed concerns about protecting the roads from disrepair down the road; Leslie Ricklin asked about rethinking Resident Trooper position (leaving) for potential savings (Juan Roman reported another trooper is filling in and doesn't include the office - \$200 a year, Troop D covers the Town overlapping with the Resident Trooper, will bring up at the Town Meeting); BOF doesn't decide on services and funds for the Resident Trooper will be in this budget (Joe Pinto noted funds would be available in the future if not used); Bill Ireland is in favor of the Resident Trooper (get lots of personal services not offered by the Troop – valuable to the Town); Jim Randall asked about Pump House Repairs project in CIP (project is ongoing).

7. ANNOUNCE TIME AND PLACE OF FUTURE MEETINGS:

- Budget posted for Chaplin Annual Town Budget Meeting
- May 6, 2024 - RSD11 Annual Budget Meeting
- May 7, 2024 - RSD11 Budget Referendum (Chaplin Fire Department)
- May 13, 2024 - Chaplin Annual Town Budget Meeting
- May 21, 2024 - Chaplin Town Budget Referendum (Chaplin Fire Department)
- BOF Special Meeting to Set Mill Rate (May)

8. ADJOURN PUBLIC HEARING:

Motion to close the Public Hearing (9:03 PM) made by Ms. Ireland, seconded by Link Diwan and carried unanimously.

***Respectfully submitted by Kathleen Scott
Recording Clerk***