

1998-99 ANNUAL BUDGET

PUBLIC HEARING

APRIL 21, 1998 ·

6:30 P.M.

A Public Hearing on the 1998-99 Annual Budget of the Town of Wallingford was held by the Town Council in the Robert Earley Auditorium of the Wallingford Town Hall and Called to Order by Chairman Robert F. Parisi at 6:35 P.M. All Councilors answered present to the Roll called by Town Clerk Rosemary A. Rascati with the exception of Councilor Centner who arrived at 6:39 P.M. Mayor William W. Dickinson, Jr. and Comptroller Thomas A. Myers were also present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given to the Flag.

Mayor Dickinson welcomed everyone to the public hearing stating that it has been developed using principles which enhance the long term fiscal health of the Town and looking to manage the Town's assets in a way which does not put the Town in a position of harm to the best of our ability. The Town does retain its AA credit rating. He encouraged everyone to read the letter at the beginning of the budget book (Appendix I) which summarizes issues involved with the budget.

With regards to the revenue side of the budget; the grand list does provide an additional \$1.1 million; an increase of 2.0%. Grants and other reimbursements reflect an increase of \$2.3 million. Much of this is a reflection of the health of the economy. In addition we are using reserves in the amount of \$3 million. It is similar to other years; we have increased the use of the reserves by \$360,000.

On the expenditure side, the total budget increased from \$89.3 million to \$93.1 million. It is a 4.3% increase in expenditures or about \$3.8 million. If the budget goes up \$3.8 million and only \$1.1 million is received as a result of the grand list increase, revenue has to come from other places.

Education increases 4.6% or \$2.3 million; General Government increases \$1.5 million or 4%. It is a good budget; it will allow the Town to continue to provide the services that we now enjoy and we look to manage our assets in a way that will not put us in serious harm in the future. Obviously, the health of the economy is an important factor.

With regards to the utilities, the Electric Division's Budget; major issues this year will involve facets of deregulation as well as the Pierce Plant site and its potential use. There is a potential 4% increase in rates for electricity as a result of the fuel charges that are passed along to us as a result of the use of fossil fuel burning plants with the decommissioning of the nuclear plants. There is no rate increase on the Water and Sewer side of the budget this coming year. In the Water Division the major project this year will be the West Side Tankage Project. With regards to the Sewer Division, major components of the Wastewater Treatment Plant need to be replaced and they will also begin conducting studies which will begin reducing the amount of nitrogen in the effluent that ultimately reaches Long Island Sound.

Mayor Dickinson went on to say, we feel it is a good budget; it addresses the Town's needs; we thank everyone for their attendance and we look forward to comments.

#### ELECTRIC DIVISION

Frank Wasilewski, 57 N. Orchard Street remarked that he noticed an increase in the amount contributed by the Electric Division to the Town by \$80,000.

Dave Gessert, P.U.C. Chairman explained, the rate of contribution is based on the percentage of gross sales of the division.

Mr. Wasilewski asked why dollars are being budgeted for the maintenance of the Pierce Plant when it appears as though it may be leased? We will not get any more money for the site if we put \$1 million into it or not. The money should be used for other things.

Mr. Gessert explained, there are no guarantees at this time; a feasibility study is being performed on the site. It could take as long as one to two years before something happens and we still need to maintain the plant in good operating condition. The Town receives a payment of \$656,000 per year so long as the plant is operating.

Mr. Wasilewski asked if a new substation is still in the plans for construction?

Raymond F. Smith, Director of Public Utilities responded, the Citing Council has recently granted approval to initiate that work.

Mr. Wasilewski asked if the electric rates will be going up and is it because of the fuel adjustment?

Mr. Gessert responded, it does impact but if we have the ability to minimize that impact on our ratepayers we will try to do that to keep the costs from escalating as fast as they might.

Mr. Wasilewski asked that the division try to keep the cost of maintaining the Pierce Plant as minimal as possible if we are going to be getting rid of it in two years; put the money to better use.

Reginald Knight, 21 Audette Drive asked, what does the Miscellaneous Station Labor Account cover?

Mike Holmes, Assistant General Manager of the Electric Division explained that the account covers a wide range of expenses at the Pierce Plant such as, custodial services, trash removal, stationary supplies, pens, pencils, etc.

#### LIABILITY INSURANCE DIVISION

Frank Wasilewski, 57 N. Orchard Street questioned the Liability Insurance Account, asking why the account did not reflect a decrease from this year's budget when the Town has realized a large savings in this type of account in other departments?

Raymond Smith, Director of Public Utilities explained that the figure associated with that account for the current fiscal year already reflects a decrease due to a transfer out as a result of savings.

#### EDUCATION

Frank Wasilewski, 57 N. Orchard Street asked if the Communications expense in the budget is for the telephone bill and if so, how much is the telephone bill of the school system?

John Quinn, Business Manager, Board of Education explained that it is a number that is not typically referenced. The cost is split between twelve schools and four other locations besides. He offered to bring the figure to tomorrow evening's workshop for Mr. Wasilewski.

Mr. Wasilewski noted that the telephone bill for the general government side of the budget is \$117,000; combined with Education's bill, it equals nearly \$250,000 or ¼ of a million dollars. This is one area that should be cut. He questioned whether or not a surplus will be realized this year by the Board of Education?

Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Joseph Cirusuolo explained, the Board projects a \$725,000 surplus. The Mayor has proposed a \$1,227,800 cut to the Board's proposed budget. The Board will receive a 1998-99 Lower Adult Ed Grant in the amount of \$10,276 for a net result of a \$513,076 projected deficit to the proposed budget. In other words, if the Board wishes to accomplish all of its goals as proposed in its budget, there will be a \$513,076 deficit. If the Council passes the Mayor's proposed budget, it will need to cut line items by \$513,076 to stay within the budget.

Mr. Wasilewski next questioned what the per pupil expenditure is for the Town?

∴ Quinn responded, approximately \$7,500.

Mr. Wasilewski asked, is the cost higher for high school students?

Mr. Quinn responded, slightly due to the nature of the studies, courses, etc.

Dr. Cirusuolo explained, the town ranks one hundred twentieth (120<sup>th</sup>) out of one hundred sixty-eight (168) in the State for per pupil expenditures.

Mr. Quinn reminded Mr. Wasilewski that \$9 million of the Board's budget is dedicated to special education and \$2 million for transportation for the special education students.

Mr. Wasilewski asked if the sophet and windows at Moses Y. Beach School will be repaired this year? He has been inquiring of this repair for the past two years.

Gerald Powers, Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds Maintenance explained, the sophet at Moses Y. Beach School will be done this year as should the windows.

#### GOVERNMENT ACCESS TELEVISION

Andy Kapi, 6 Deme Road noted that there is one additional part time staff added to this year's budget and asked that the Council approve the concept of televising special meetings. He suggested that the Council add \$2,000 to the budget and establish a new line item specifically for expenses associated with televising special Town Council meetings.

Frank Wasilewski, 57 N. Orchard Road stated that there should be plenty of money to televise the special meetings since there was an additional \$140,000 in last year's budget for this department for other purposes.

Scott Hanley, Manager, Government Access Television explained that \$50,000 of those funds were budgeted for outfitting the new studio at the David Doherty Recreational Building.

Mr. Wasilewski agreed with Mr. Kapi, and asked the Council to consider adding \$2,000 to this budget to allow for the televising of special meetings. Once again he recommended that the Town hold onto the videotapes for they are historical information. The tapes should not be destroyed after one or two years.

Lave Canto, 4 Meadows Edge Road stated that Mr. Hanley is doing one heck of a good job considering all that he has to handle. One additional part time staff member does not mean that the department can handle the extra work generated from televising special meetings. One can bring in a camcorder and record a meeting to be televised on Public Access.

Mr. Kapi explained how there is no audio connection for a camcorder. Ambient sound creates a problem for broadcasting.

Mr. Parisi explained that an additional audio jack or connection will be made to Council Chambers to allow for such recordings.

## FINANCE

Mr. Wasilewski noted that there is \$650,000 budgeted for revaluation.

Thomas Myers, Comptroller explained, the State of Connecticut has changed its revaluation program from a ten year cycle to a twelve year cycle. The Town is scheduled for revaluation in the year 2000 with an update reval scheduled for the years 2004 and 2008 with a full revaluation to occur in 2012. The State law selected the dates for the reval. The updates will

cost 50-70% of the cost of a full revaluation. The last revaluation which occurred in 1991 cost the Town \$1.2 million.

### POLICE

Andy Kapi, 6 Deme Road asked, was any of the cost associated with the computer purchase factored into the new budget?

Chief Dortenzio responded, no, it was not.

Mr. Kapi remarked that it was amazing that the entire cost of the purchase, \$511,000 was not budgeted for in the current budget yet was absorbed.

### FIRE MARSHAL

Frank Wasilewski, 57 N. Orchard Street questioned the funding of the telephone account.

Mayor Dickinson explained, some of the accounts of the Fire Marshal's Office and Central Fire Headquarters were combined. It was then decided that it would be best to separate them unless all the accounts were going to be combined.

### WELFARE

Andy Kapi, 6 Deme Road stated that the administration should consider budgeting \$25,000 to \$35,000 to keep the department open for approximately three months for a transition period. This amount represents one quarter's salary for three positions in the department. If one person left before the end of the three months then it would enable another to stay on a few more weeks which would only benefit the department taking on the new responsibilities.

### COMMITTEE ON AGING

Frank Wasilewski, 57 North Orchard Street asked, what is the \$286,000 being spent on if we have no salary positions at the Senior Center?

Virginia Philips responded, we have submitted a full budget to the Council which reflects salaries and operations for both the Senior Center and the Elderly Transportation Program. The Town chooses to list it in one lump sum.

### HISTORIC PROGRAM MATCHING FUNDS

Frank Wasilewski, 57 N. Orchard Street noted that last year there were no funds allocated for this. In this new budget we are funding it in the amount of \$30,000. What do these funds go to, Jerry Farrell (Jr.)?

Mayor Dickinson explained, there was a request from the Historic Preservation Trust for funds to allow the raising of funds. What has been fashioned is a grant program for both the historical organizations whereby if they raise; we would match up to \$10,000 for the Historical Society and up to \$20,000 for the Historic Preservation Trust. At this point it is only a three year program.

### CENTER STREET CEMETERY

Mr. Wasilewski stated that he did not believe that \$30,000 was enough to fix up the Center St. Cemetery for he has walked through it many times and feels it is a disgrace. Additional funds should be budgeted to fix up the stones.

Mr. Farrell stated, the Center Street Cemetery Association runs that for the Town. We have been trying to increase the amount of money that has been budgeted. It is true that we would run through an endless amount of money if we were to fund all that needed to be done there. We are trying to address the most historic stones and the work that is absolutely necessary. There has been noticeable improvement over the past year.

Mr. Wasilewski suggested that the Council increase the funding by \$20,000.

### ENGINEERING

Wasilewski asked what the department is spending funds from Line Acct. #0006 and 0007 on?

John Thompson, Town Engineer explained, \$130,000 is for additional ornamental lights within the limits of the existing Quinnipiac Street Corridor Project that is currently under construction. The \$420,000 line item is for additional construction beyond the limits of the existing contract which will take new roadway construction from Washington Street out to Route 5 and from Bull Avenue to the limits of the previously completed Quinnipiac Street Bridge Project.

#### PUBLIC WORKS

Frank Wasilewski, 57 N. Orchard Street commented that \$55,000 is being budgeted for new carpeting in the Town Hall and \$365,000 for a new roof.

Henry McCully, Director of Public Works explained, the carpeting is eleven (11) years of age and the roof has leaked since the building was finished and the offices moved over to this location. They have experienced a myriad of problems since day one.

Mr. Wasilewski asked why the Town did not have the contractor make good for the roof?

Mr. McCully replied that he was not employed as Director of Public Works at that time, therefore he could not address the question.

Mr. Wasilewski commented, between the air conditioning problems and the roof, it has cost the taxpayers half a million dollars. In his opinion the taxpayers "got stuck" on the deal. He asked if the entire roof has to be taken off?

Mr. McCully responded, yes.

Albert Killen, 150 Cedar Street remarked that in past budgets expenses associated with snow removal were separated into two accounts which was a good measuring tool when budgeting funds for this expense.

McCully explained, the Finance Department has combined the expenses into one account for the past two years.

Reginald Knight, 21 Audette Drive asked what the line item, Other Pay, is used for?



Mr. McCully explained, for longevity pay and call-in pay. The longevity pay is earned by the number of years an employee works. Employees are also paid a stipend for carrying a beeper or pager to be called in on special occasions such as snow storms and the like.

Andy Kapi, 6 Deme Road asked, is the \$117,000 budgeted for in the paving equipment account for equipment to do the actual paving and not just patching?

Mr. McCully explained, it is for paving.

Mr. Kapi commented, in looking at Line Items #9154 and 9155, Paving Program and Pave Subdivision, respectfully, should Paved Subdivision be interpreted to mean the paving of new subdivision streets? And Paving Program would be different?

Mr. McCully answered, yes. The Paving Program would be in addition to that; there is \$150,000 earmarked for certain streets and \$257,000 has already been committed. A letter is it out every year listing the streets that will be taken care of.

Mr. Kapi asked, is that just re-paving?

Mr. McCully explained, it includes drainage upgrades; when we go into a subdivision we check all the drainage, change catchbasins, install drainage, if needed.

Mr. Kapi stated, I don't find the numbers unreasonable this year but I don't understand how they could not have been budgeted at all in the previous fiscal year.

Mr. McCully referred Mr. Kapi to the account titled, "Paving and Drainage Improvements" he will see that the request was made but the Finance Department has formatted the request differently. This program is in its fourth year where we take a lump sum of money and we identify a subdivision and upgrade all the drainage and pave it. Last year it was the Pierson and Calhoun area, as an example.

### CONTINGENCY

Bert Killen, 150 Cedar Street stated that the Council could make this evening worthwhile by sharpening their pencils and slashing this item from the budget. You have seen the amount of

cash that floats around during the course of a year here, from one fund to another. We have always had a sufficient amount with the "building in of a surplus". If you refer back to the Mayor's letter which reads, "The health of the economy is a principle force causing these increases. In addition, we are recommending the appropriation of \$3,083,178,000. from the audited cash balance, an increase of \$360,000 over the current year" which shows in both years you had money to play with. We keep bragging about our financial condition, we always end up with a surplus because we always tax on the basis of coming up with a surplus. We are bragging about the fact that the mill rate stayed the way it is but Bridgeport, with all of its troubles, went down twice in their mill rate. When was the last time the mill rate went down in Wallingford? You anticipated that the money you put in the pension fund would not have to be funded, we paid more than we had to in the past, how much longer are we going to pay for something like this? You could cut \$1 million out of this budget without batting an eye. Prove me a liar, I would appreciate it.

#### CAPITAL AND NON-RECURRING

Andy Kapi, 6 Deme Road stated that he had spoken with the Planning & Zoning Office this week to ask if the Town has a plan to purchase open space and they stated that we did not. In looking at the budget there is nothing listed in this account for the properties that the Town intends to purchase. Where will the funds come from?

Mayor Dickinson replied, a public hearing date has been set to discuss a funding ordinance for the purchase of open space. If necessary, the funds will come from the borrowing of money and the payment of debt on that borrowing.

Mr. Kapi asked, how much flexibility do we have with this account once this budget has been set? Is borrowing our only recourse? Is that a use the Contingency fund can be used for?

Mayor Dickinson replied, the funding ordinance is not oriented to the Capital and Non-Recurring program. This is a separate program.

Mr. Kapi asked, did we plan for this purchase? It could have been listed here if we had.

Mayor Dickinson explained, the funding for payment of any debt would be listed on the page the funds for debt payment. At this point they are not budgeted in the Capital and Non-Recurring Program.

Mr. Kapi asked, could this happen in a more routine and predictable fashion if there were a plan for that type of purchase?

Mayor Dickinson answered, we are in a position to be able to purchase some property; it is before the Town Council for purchase. It is very difficult to plan for those things. Most of the people we have contacted were not interested in selling. It would be ideal to say that we are going to purchase "X" amount of property every year or so but there seems to be a great reluctance on the part of owners at time to sell. It depends on when we are able to buy and other capital projects.

Mr. Kapi stated that he would feel more comfortable if there were a provision for the purchase of open space in this category.

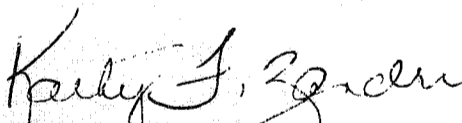
No further questions came forward on the budget.

Motion was made by Mr. Farrell to Adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Knight.

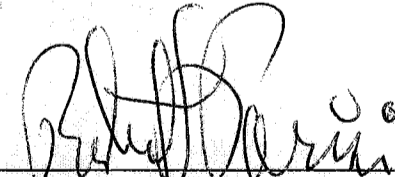
OTE: All ayes; motion duly carried.

There being no further business the Public Hearing on the 1998-99 Budget of the Town of Wallingford was adjourned.

Meeting recorded and transcribed by:

  
Kathryn F. Zandri  
Town Council Secretary

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Robert F. Parisi, Chairman

5-12-98

Date

*Rosemary A. Rascati*  
Rosemary A. Rascati, Town Clerk

5-12-98

Date