

PUBLIC HEARING of the Town Council held Thursday, May 27, 2010 at 7:00 P.M. in Town Council Chambers, 105 Harrisville Main St., Harrisville, for and within the Town of Burrillville.

PRESENT: Council President Nancy F. Binns, Councilors Wallace F. Lees, Robert A. Bishop, Margaret L. Dudley, Kevin D. Heitke, John M. Karmozyn Jr. and Norman C. Mainville

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

Relative to discussing the School Budget

NOTE: The public hearing was duly advertised in the Woonsocket Call on May 11, 2010

1. Comments from the Budget Board

Arthur R. Hurley, Chair, Burrillville Budget Board, commented on raises awarded without a contract. Mr. Hurley noted that, while specific direction of where funding will go is beyond the purview of the Budget Board, the Board is concerned with building maintenance and too many bond situations. Mark Brizard, Vice Chair, Burrillville Budget Board, raised questions about issues with the ice rink payroll and maintenance and cautioned against repeating past problems.

2. Comments from Debra Stockwell, Chair, Burrillville School Committee

Debra Stockwell, Chair, commented on programs and policies adopted recently by the School Committee and acknowledged the efforts of the School Committee Budget Board.

3. Comments from Dr. Frank Pallotta, Superintendent of the Burrillville School Department

Dr. Frank Pallotta, Superintendent of the Burrillville School Department, commented that the budget proposed for the school department includes no raises for teachers but only required step increases. Dr. Pallotta acknowledged the task of the Town Council and offered the School Committee's support.

Dr. Pallotta made a PowerPoint presentation, a copy of which is on file with the record of the meeting. Dr. Pallotta indicated that the budget would be reviewed when the General Assembly provides 2011 state aid information.

In response to a question from the Town Council, Dr. Pallotta explained the Regents' Diploma, why it is necessary, and steps required for the School Department to qualify, which included writing a new curriculum.

4. Comments from Michael C. Wood, Town Manager

Michael C. Wood, Town Manager, commented on the extraordinarily difficult financial times and the challenges presented in working through the problems. Mr. Wood discussed the School Committee's cooperation in the past. Mr. Wood said that his budget recommendation was a worst case scenario, outlined anticipated general assembly budget action, and encouraged residents and the School Committee to stay focused and work together with the town to sustain the community.

Mr. Wood said that his budget recommendation proposed budget cuts proportionately and discussed the impact of those reductions. Mr. Wood pointed out that the proposal includes no tax increase. He reviewed the amount of tax increase allowed by state law and the affect of increases on taxpayers.

Mr. Wood advised waiting until the completion of the process at the state level, noting that the Town Council had voted to delay budget adoption until July.

Mr. Wood commented on actions taken by the General Assembly and encouraged residents to contact legislators relative to their 2011 budget decisions.

5. Public Comment:

Note: Persons who wish to address the Council shall state their name and address

Ed Varin, 36 Steere Farm Road

Mr. Varin acknowledged the hard work of teachers and the need to improve schools. Mr. Varin commented on the support the School Department has received from taxpayers and suggested that savings are possible in the School Department. Mr. Varin commented on the increase in taxes over a 20-year period.

David Place, 167 Jefferson Blvd

Mr. Place commented on the tax increase that would result from funding the School Department budget as requested by the School Committee. Mr. Place said that the teachers are compensated well and did not support an increase. Mr. Place suggested that increased taxes would force residents to choose between paying the mortgage and going to work.

Carl Toti, 285 Main Street, Pascoag

Mr. Toti referred to rumors of a Caruolo action by the School Committee, explained the Caruolo Act and his concern that such action would bankrupt the town. Mr. Toti discussed the high percentage of the budget expended by the School Department.

Judy Lopez, 133 Grove Street

Ms. Lopez recognized the Manager's comments and voiced concern

at reductions in the municipal budget. Ms. Lopez proposed reviewing administrative positions in the School Department.

David Ketcham, 760 Central Street,

Dr. Ketcham commended the Manager's budget proposal, discussed the reductions in the municipal budget and supported proportionate reductions. Dr. Ketcham discussed teachers' salaries, benefits, step increases, and health insurance. Dr. Ketcham voiced concern at a penny-wise pound-foolish approach to school building maintenance and at the School Department's unfunded liabilities. Dr. Ketcham discussed state laws that impact the budget.

Dr. Ketcham commented on the permanent effect of budget increases and the importance of recognizing that problems must be dealt with to prevent them worsening. Dr. Ketcham closed by commenting on space/building capacity issues.

6. VOTED to close the public hearing.

Motion by Councilor Norman C. Mainville. Seconded by Councilor Wallace F. Lees. The vote was unanimous. Voting in favor of the motion were Council President Nancy F. Binns and Councilors Wallace F. Lees, Robert A. Bishop, Margaret L. Dudley, Kevin D. Heitke, John M. Karmozyn Jr. and Norman C. Mainville.

7. Town Council deliberation

Councilor Margaret L. Dudley commented on the extent of the budget problems in the FY2011 budget. Councilor Dudley reviewed the municipal budget, indicating that there was no area for further reductions. Councilor Dudley discussed the amount of state aid received by the town and budgeted to the school department. Councilor Dudley advised against increases when the state funds were being severely reduced. Councilor Dudley explained that the reductions were too extreme to be absorbed in the municipal budget but must be shared. Councilor Dudley implored the school department to do nothing until final state numbers were known.

Councilor Kevin D. Heitke discussed the challenge of balancing a tax cap with decreasing state aid and motor vehicle phase out changes. Councilor Heitke discussed the Town Council and School Committee's significant budget work to devise a solution.

8. VOTED to adjourn at 8:12 P.M.

Motion by Councilor Norman C. Mainville. Seconded by Councilor Wallace F. Lees. The vote was unanimous. Voting in favor of the motion were Council President Nancy F. Binns and Councilors Wallace F. Lees, Robert A. Bishop, Margaret L. Dudley, Kevin D. Heitke, John M. Karmozyn Jr. and Norman C. Mainville.

The public hearing was recorded.

Louise R. Phaneuf, Town Clerk