

Town of Somers

**Board of Finance
Budget Public Hearing**

Monday, May 03, 2010, 7:00 p.m.
Somers Elementary School

The Public Hearing was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Board of Finance Chairman James Persano with approximately 56 citizens in attendance.

Presentations were given by the following individuals: J.Persano for an overview of the entire budget processes, the effects of the revaluation, and proposed mil rate; L.Pellegrini, First Selectwoman presented the Town Government proposed budget; M.Suffredini on the Educational budget, and J.Persano on Capitol Improvement. Town Government presented a 'flat' budget and Education a 3% increase which primarily can be attributed to salaries and insurance increases.

Mr. Persano explained that the Board of Finance is evaluating a proposed .5 mil increase. Based on the recent property revaluation, the average house was assessed at \$207,445. The current mil rate in Somers is 22.11, calculating the same amount of revenues to be generated with the revaluation numbers the mil rate would be reduced to 20.62. The Board of Finance is then proposing a .5 mil rate increase to 21.12.

Mr. Persano invited any citizen in attendance to ask questions regarding the preparation of the budget and any portion of the presentation. He requested that each individual state their name and address for the record.

Mr. Grayson, Tanglewood Road

Questioned why there would be a mil rate increase if the grand list increased by 6.6%. Mr. Persano explained the process of calculating the new revaluation figures, the mil rate that would equalize the revenues (20.62) and the proposed increase of .5 mil (21.12)

Mr. Ronald Vesper, Highland View

Congratulated all involved in the budge process for being so responsible and for being a conservation team on behalf of the residents of the Town of Somers. Everyone, including government, education, and citizens need to sacrifice and give-up 'wants'. The current economic times do not allow for 'extras' and budgets need to be innovative. The education budget is not the holy grail – everything needs to be evaluated. The private sector has not seen raises in the past 5-10 years.

Mr. Lemiech, Rosehaven Road

Questioned whether or not \$80,000 for computer technology was eliminated from CIP. Mr. Persano explained that of the \$296,000, \$86,000 would be required to take care of current leases and the Board of Finance would decide the allocation of the remaining \$210,000. Currently, there is no technology monies allocated.

Mr. Marceau, Autumn Lane

Stated that he receives no services from the town, but his property taxes are increasing 16%. Asked if salary increases were being given to employees – L.Pellegrini stated that town employees would be receiving a 3% increase. Mr. Marceau stated that everything needs to be evaluated very closely including the consolidation of bus routes.

Mr. Collins, Avery Road

The taxes on his home are increasing 20.5%. Although his home was assessed at \$261,000, it sold for only \$231,000. He did not understand how he could have a 66% increase in value based on the current state and country's economic condition. Budgets need to be lean and mean – especially the school which is the largest part of the budget.

Mr. Krasinski, Wells Road

Stated the following concerning the PILOT monies: Town of Somers cut 15% last year, 6.6% this year while the city of Hartford received increases both years. Pequot monies: 45% cut from Somers last year, 7.8% cut this year, and again, the

city of Hartford received increases both years. He encouraged all individuals to call and write their representatives concerning the inequities in money distribution.

Mr. Caravella – Horseshoe Lane

Concerned about increasing the mil rate and taking monies from the reserve fund to offset budget costs. The economic climate is projected to worsen before it gets better. Mr. Persano explained that the Board is being cautious – they are operating on the unknown and attempting to do the best job for the citizens of Somers with the information that is available. The Town will still be maintaining a healthy reserve. Mr. Caravella asked what is being done to encourage commercial activities. Mrs. Pellegrini stated the following is being done to encourage commercial development: the Probate Court being moved to Somers serving the town of Enfield, Stafford and Somers; the Somersville Streetscape, and a Small Cities Grant for sidewalks from the Sr. Housing Development to encourage walk ability to business areas. Somers is not seeking ‘big box’ stores or auto malls. Mr. Caravella asked the status of the Somersville Mill – the mill is not owned by the town, back taxes are due and may be listed on a tax sale. Somers can be classified as a bedroom community. The 55 and older developments are an asset to the community and does not place an additional strain on roadways for plowing and maintenance, and also the educational system.

Mr. Pinney, Maple Street

Suggested tax incentives be offered on vacant commercial properties in order to attract business. Also suggested that the CIP account be reduced and monies not be taken from the reserve fund. Wait to see what monies are remaining from the current budget and utilize those rather than reserve. The Finance Board should evaluate the proposed budgets that were put forth and evaluate for reductions.

Mr. Noto, Main Street

Applauds all agencies for their pro-active and excellent efforts in the current economic status. All budget line items are up for discussion and change. Read in the budget flyer that the document would not longer be produced and sent to all households – he believes this is wrong since many people do not have computers – it should continue to be received by each household. Everyone needs to listen because everything is subject to change. Our town is doing the best job with what they have.

Citizen went to microphone and stated that if the budget flyers were not distributed to every household through the mail, copies would be available at the town hall and library.

Mrs. Plotkin, Twinbrook Drive

Thanked both agencies (Town and Education) for working together in order to maintain a state of the art school complex.

Mr. Mazzoli, Bobolink Lane

The next two (2) years are definitely going to have an impact on Town and Educational budgets throughout the state. The Board of Finance, the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education are tightening all non-essential spending in anticipation. Everyone is attempting to be pro-active in the midst of this economic crisis.

Mr. Persano stated that the Board of Finance would be meeting on May 5th to deliberate the comments made at this hearing and vote on a budget number to be presented at a Town Meeting. The Town Meeting is scheduled for May 17th at Town Hall, and the proposed referendum on May 25, 2010 at the Somers Town Hall Auditorium.

The Public Hearing concluded at approximately 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Marie Logan
Recording Secretary