



Town of Griswold

Board of Finance
Public Hearing
April 1, 2014
7:00pm



Griswold Middle School Cafeteria UNAPPROVED MINUTES

1. **Roll Call/Call to Order:** S. Merchant, Sr., opened the Public Hearing at 7:00 PM

Board of Finance Members Present:

Steve Merchant, Sr. – Chairman
Gail Rooke-Norman – Vice Chairman
Brian Baker
Scott Davis
Peter Dorff
Gary Levy
Dan Webster

Also Present:

Erik Christensen, Director of Finance
Kevin Skulczyck, First Selectman
Steve Mikutel, Second Selectman
Elizabeth Dorff, Chair, Board of Education
Paul Smith, Superintendent of Griswold Schools
Holly McCalla, Business Manager, Griswold Schools
43 other persons

2. **Public Input on the proposed 2014/2015 Fiscal Year Budget**

- a) S. Merchant Sr. opened by stating that the budget as presented would result in a 1.52 mill increase. A house assessed at \$150,000 would have a \$227.61 increase.
 - **E. Berdick** (resident, Voluntown Road) stated it seems like a reasonable budget but the large driver of the increase in the Board of Education budget is a salary increase due to a three year contract and it seems like there will be at least a one mill increase each of the next three years.
 - **S. Mikutel, Second Selectman** stated the job of the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education is to propose a budget that they feel is to meet the needs of the Town. It is Finance Board's job to balance the needs of the Town with the ability of the taxpayer to pay for it.
 - **N. Higgins** (resident, Pleasant View) spoke in favor of the Board of Education budget and the programs that are being implemented and would like to see the Board of Education budget to go forward to the residents as is. He would like to see the Library get \$100,000. Mr. Higgins also mentioned he would like to see the school try to use a Scag mower instead of buying a \$52,000 mower especially because the Board of Education does not have a maintenance building to store it.
 - **P. Spicer** (resident, Spring Road) stated she thinks that things in the budget need to be looked at a little further because there are people on fixed incomes.
 - **Monique** (resident, Ashland St) supports restoring orchestra for seventh graders.
 - **J. Smith** (resident, Crary Road) spoke on behalf of Children First Griswold and

described what they do. She stated they requested \$25,000 and the Selectmen reduced the funding to \$6,000. She asked the Board of Finance to increase funding to at least \$10,000.

- **S. Norman** (resident, Bethel Road) spoke on behalf of the Board of Education budget and pointed out there are fixed costs that the Board of Education wrestles with.
- **B. Czmyr** (President, Griswold Ambulance) stated that if you look at the last three years of the budget \$90,000 does not cover expenses.
- **K. Skulczyck, First Selectman** stated he is impressed with what Paul Smith and the Board of Education has done. He also stated that since FY 09-10 the general government budget has seen many decreases. The \$300,000 increase this year is necessary and hopefully economic development projects will be beginning soon to help cover the costs.
- **P. Flowers** (resident, Rixtown Road) asked the Board of Finance why they give so little to the ambulance and so much to the library. S. Merchant Sr. responded that the ambulance has income and the library has very little and the library has been using \$20,000-\$25,000 per year of their endowment and he thinks in these tough economic times it is important to have the library open to allow residents to search for jobs and fill out applications using the library's computers. P. Dorff agreed that the ambulance service is different than the library and fire departments because they generate revenue but his biggest complaint is that there is an ordinance in town that requires a contract to be in place between the Town and the ambulance. He feels it is not prudent to fund the service without having that contract in place. B. Baker stated that the Town owns the assets of the fire departments and does not own the assets of the ambulance. He also stated that the Town has no financial control over the ambulance and there is an ordinance in place that all bills are supposed to go through the Town. D. Webster stated that last year he was in favor of reducing the donation to Slater Library. He stated services at the town hall have been reduced and the Board of Education cut programs so he feels the Board of Finance owes it to the Town to fund the services to the Town and everyone needs to make sacrifices. D. Webster also agreed with B. Baker that the ambulance is a private entity and many people do not realize that. He also stated that the majority of their debt is on a property that was purchased on Pine Road and Rt. 138 and he asked if they had to pay that note right now would you be able to pay it and the answer he got was yes so that he felt there was no need to fund that at any level more than what was cut already.
- **E. Berdick** (Resident, Voluntown Road) stated that the Town needs to fund the ambulance service because public safety is being jeopardized.
- **K. Skulczyck, First Selectman** stated that there is no public safety issue; the ambulance is running 24/7.
- **N. Higgins** (resident, Pleasant View) discussed the ambulance service and stated it is very effective and public safety is covered and there is no issue.
- **J. Smith** (resident, Crary Road) spoke in support of the library and is not comfortable comparing the library and the ambulance.
- **E. Dorff** (resident, Crary Road) asked the Board of Finance to send the Board of Education budget as is to the voters. She feels it is a good balance between what is needed and what is reasonable to ask the taxpayers to pay.
- **E. Berdick** (resident, Voluntown Road) stated that the morale of the ambulance employees can affect performance on the job as a result of not having a contract.
- **Monique** (resident, Ashland St) spoke in favor of the orchestra program.

3. **Adjournment:** S. Merchant Sr., closed the public hearing at 7:57 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Erik Christensen
Acting Recording Secretary