



# Town of Griswold



## Board of Finance Annual PUBLIC HEARING

April 20, 2009  
7:00 pm

Griswold High School Cafeteria  
267 Slater Avenue  
Griswold, CT 06351

### MINUTES

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

**Members Present:**

Steve Merchant, Sr. – Chairman  
Peter Dorff  
Alan Geer  
Gail Rooke-Norman  
Daniel Webster  
John Wolkowski

**Also Present:**

Kathy Maxwell, Director of Finance  
Keleigh Baretincic, Recording Secretary  
Approximately 95 interested persons

**Members Absent:**

Joe Przylucki, Jr. – Vice Chairman

2. **Public Hearing on the 2009 – 2010 Fiscal Year Budgets:**

- a. **2009 – 2010 General Government Budget**

- b. **2009 – 2010 Board of Education Budget**

- **S. Merchant** noted that the State of Connecticut has no extra money and is in worse financial shape than the Town of Griswold. He asked for a show of hands in the audience of those who would support a ½ a mil increase for the upcoming 2009-2010 Fiscal Year (FY) budget. There was a substantial show of hands. He asked that those who would object to a ½ mil increase for the upcoming 2009-2010 Fiscal Year (FY) budget. A handful of people raised their hands. S. Merchant opened the floor to comments.
- **Nisa Frazer Phyllis** (resident, Carley Ave) spoke. New to Griswold, having moved from Greenwich, CT, she stated that she was unsure of the quality of the school system when she moved here. Cutting programs now would make them un-replaceable in the near future, taking ten years to recoup. The programs currently in place provide Griswold students with a competitive education. She has been extremely impressed with the professionalism of the staff and their dedication to the students of Griswold. She asked the Town to support the school budgets as presented.

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- **Stuart Norman** (resident) spoke and emphasized that the proposed (BOE) budget is currently at a flat rate increase over last years funding level. He noted that although the schools could survive with this budget, they would not thrive. Should the economy fail to improve, future years could prove devastating to the Griswold educational system. A half of a mil increase would be difficult, but he hoped that people would get out and support the budget by voting for the school budget on the day of the referendum.
- **Evon Polaski** (resident, Popple Bridge Rd) spoke. E. Polaski is the president of the Griswold Parent Advisory Council at the Griswold High School (GHS). E. Polaski stated that supporting the school budget is an investment in our future. School professionals who recently visited the GHS were very impressed with the staff as well as the student body. The GHS was also recently highlighted on a local news station. Further cuts would impact staffing positions, thus resulting in higher class sizes. She asked that the Town support future generations by supporting the budget.
- **Theresa Madonna** (resident, Osga Lane) spoke. As a Griswold Board of Education (BOE) member for the past six years, she has become more aware of the complex needs of the educational system. She noted that ¼ of the student population receives free or reduced lunch, 40% of GHS seniors work over 16 hours a week; indicative of the neediness of the student population. She stressed that the Griswold School system is a stellar system, supported by the working class residents that pay their property taxes and volunteer in the Town, increasing the tax diversity and strengthening the tax base. Making do with the level funding from the precious year, is trading water, but is manageable this year out of necessity for the trying economic time. She urged support of the school budget.
- **Ed Burdick** (resident, Voluntown Road) spoke. He noted that the school is the strength of the community, but the strength of the community can also be its weakness. He urged caution and consideration of the uncertainty of the economic times and the possibility that the next few years could be worse. He noted that twenty (20) years ago there were more businesses in Connecticut than there are today. He worried about whether or not the State funding would be further cut. He also noted that the bonding for the new school project being placed on the Town side of the budget offered a distorted perception of the BOE budget. Additionally he mentioned that the cost of education extended beyond the classroom with roads and the like also a part of the cost of education and that the education system should bear more of the burden. E. Burdick spoke to the issue of flat funding this year in the BOE budget that does nothing to address the potential need for deeper cuts in the coming years.
- Philip Anthony, (resident and First Selectman, Bishops Crossing) spoke. P. Anthony described the difficulty of the budget process, being the most difficult period of time since his term of office began. He detailed his positive working relationship with the BOE and their mutual determination for fiscal cooperation between the two sides (General and BOE) of the Town budgets. He also noted that the proposed General Government Budget is ½ million less than last years budget. Additionally he was the first person to volunteer to freeze his salary, with the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> selectmen following suit. He urged support if the proposed budget.

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- A resident of Jewett City (Erica, last name inaudible) spoke. She noted that both of her children, currently in the school system are completely different learners that have had each of their needs met by the educational system currently in place. She also noted that the high home values in the Town are a direct result of the quality of the education system in Griswold. She urged support of the proposed school budget.
- Chairman Merchant noted that the budget process started about three months ago and that this is the first time that the Board of Selectmen cut the General Budget prior to forwarding it to the Board of Finance. All three boards, BOS, BOF and BOE have been working together cooperatively and the cuts have been painful across the board. He specified that he has grandchildren in the school system and no one on the BOF wants to see the BOE budget cut; it has already been cut by 1 million dollars. He stated that the budget presented tonight will probably be the budget that will be sent to referendum. The BOF meets tomorrow night for their regular meeting (Town Hall 7:00pm).

**3. Adjournment:** S. Merchant Sr., closed the public hearing at 7:40 pm.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Keleigh Baretincic  
Recording Secretary**