

Town of Plymouth

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Board of Finance

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Call Meeting to Order: Chairman Cook called the Public Hearing on the 2014-2015 fiscal year proposed budget to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Assembly Room, Plymouth Town Hall on Monday, April 21, 2014.

Fire Exit Notification

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Cook read Legal Notice into record and introduced Board of Finance Members.

He reviewed his budget slide presentation:

General Government, Mayor's Office with savings of \$25,610; Tax Collector with increase of \$15,110; Employee Benefits with \$100,000 increase for overall General Government up \$33,735 or 0.70%

Public Safety reviewed with overall increase of \$10,985 or 0.42% and commended the Police Chief and Fire Chief for doing a tremendous job with budgets

Public Works decrease of \$55,020 or 1.77% decrease

Other Departments – review of library and parks & rec with minimal increase, contractual; Legal Services will have decrease; Economic Development reduced; Education stays same at \$23,252,790 having come in with higher number and a lot of time spent with Mayor's office finding savings in health insurance line item with budget including \$275,000 salary increases and health insurance increases of \$300,000-\$400,000.

Capitals reviewed including police cars, computer upgrades, revaluation, pager replacement, John Deere Gator, snow thrower, roads, skid steer, East Orchard Street bridge, town hall carpeting, air conditioning repair town hall, underground storage tanks and gas conversion, landfill fence, generator replacement, Plan of Development, library carpet, library elevator, facilities assessment/study, emergency plan for dam. Capitals total of \$600,000.

Total Expenditures of \$39,034,620 for a reduction of 0.21% or \$83,645.

Have contained spending to less than last year.

Revenues reviewed: charges for services; State and Federal Grants; appropriation of Fund Balance; prior year's taxes; interest and lien fees; supplemental motor vehicle; various Pilot programs.

Collection rate set at 97.6%. Grand list is \$761,185,614 with 1 mil = \$76,185 with the mill rate of 34.85 for 2014-2015.

Public Comment:

- a. Paul Gabriella, 148 East Plymouth Road, (a) came to meeting when BOE presented budget; school budgets are a touchy subject. Told not to move here because of school system and had faith in people of town and those leading would rectify and by time school aged children it would not be an issue. Clearly an issue and town as a whole has failed the community and failing children; heard 18 teachers being let go but closer to 23 when take those who took buy out and students are being left behind. Passing students to college who are not equipped to handle the basic community college; kids cannot compete and comprehend same things as peers. The school boards lack of getting items needed whether school books, getting children what they need for existing programs; we don't have enough books for our kids and those who can't bring books home to study with. Venture to guess those who have kids do not send them to this system and choose to support lowering teachers and money supporting education. Lowering mill rate but when get number to normal household it equates to \$83 a year and in his household not even a bill for most things but taking education away from my kids. Music teacher in their school is being cut and one of many would give their 83 to go toward that teacher. Give students what they need to learn but as group we decided to put 83 back in our pocket and the Mayor decided to take a raise and feel do not need that money but looking for raise a few months in and try doing job effectively and support our town with what it needs to make our community better. Most of community feels let down and realize neither side has presented a good budget and have come to agreement o.k. to pass budget and people are not happy but feel helpless. Last time came out said same thing it takes village to raise a child and we are failing our children. We have to support the children and school system and put people in place who can do that and not sure we have that. Whether a new cruiser or pickup truck and things get fixed that is budgetary item and when cut this many teachers under whatever auspice it is affecting our community and failing our children. Why is it acceptable to

knowingly not support our children with teachers in place and money in place to give books and materials needed and properly motivated teachers who are not overwhelmed by class size. Why is this o.k. Chairman Cook clarified reduction in staff in school which are 15 staff reductions, 3 additional staff were only 1 year hires for a total of 18; retirements in there are counted in number of 15. He is a long term guy and we have had 25% reduction in students and 6% reduction in staff and that number speaks for itself and does not believe the superintendent is firing people to keep at zero. The BOE put together a comprehensive plan for class size and 25 % in student and 6% reduction in staff and why we all agreed to it as adjustments were a long time coming. (b) kindergarten and class behind were too big for teachers to handle and class sizes will go through ebb and flow and as kids come in we account for that; if 3 teachers were temporary basis for class size and not moving on with students and those kindergarteners are moving to 1st with larger class size and no more support in room. 1 teacher for 19-23 children and national average states effective is 15-18 and failing students trying to excel as teacher does not have time for kids and leaving behind kids who don't have ability to keep up with class. Appreciate saving the town money but look at numbers realistically. Will numbers continue to decline. Chairman Cook stated they will continue to decline from information we get from the State.

- b. George Franek - going over budget with BOE issues and at first glance sickened with mayors raise and times being what they are and looking at economic base of town disagree with amount; John Deere gator and trailer, skid steer, cruiser replacement. He is an officer in Bristol and how often do we replace cruisers in town; has seen cruisers running and wasting gas. Understand population has dropped and a reduction in staff; would differ upon looking at school age children who attend where his go. Have students who might have special needs or need assistance in classroom with those who can excel you are dividing amount of time and cutting staff; we are not helping them. To have 15 full time, 3 temporary for total of 18; why are we cutting staff when population size is not going down and when have children or a need to hire staff for 3 classes and that says the population needs to be studied. To look at things putting in budget and disagree with and why not rent equipment for time needed. We have gone to mutual agreement with Bristol for pothole patcher and

- why not look to do that and regionalize. Thank you for the time put in and kindly disagree with some of the cuts made.
- c. Melanie Church, 328 Main Street - sat through a number of BOF meetings and became frustrated with raises on town side. Want a zero increase on BOE side but ok to give an acting, new tax collector 12.5% and to turn around and give a reception/executive secretary who was getting 10% worth of raises of 4 years approx. another 26% increase. These are not what private sector is getting; these are not union positions so the mayor can make them anything he wants. There was only one cut and for town clerk; but we also were promised when went to a company to do payroll we would need a part time payroll person 14 hours per week which went up to 30 and now to 37.5; appalled when look at raises. Capitals, we have 25 officers but we need 11 vehicles which is 2.1 vehicles per officer; it wasn't like this and never crazy like this but all of a sudden spend. Two vehicles replacing came from DARE that were only suppose to be used for DARE and now replacing them. Skid steer got added in and added to rental and we will have 2 of them. Public works number is how many employees, we have 2 more positions that haven't been filled for 2 years and asked to have them cut; a lead man and assistant mechanic and two years we didn't need them but now we need them. Adding another person for facilities and how big is this town. 30% increase for free and reduced lunches and that is serious; wants budget cut and make it fair to the people as nobody gets raises like this. This town is a distressed area.
 - d. Ralph Zovich, 4 Knight Lane – complimented Chairman Cook on presentation. Budget questions to BOF (a) to balance budget hinges on increasing collection rate and some years ago at 97.5 collection rate and never made it and that was before economic downturn. What is plan to get there and has new tax collector agreed to this. Chairman Cook stated correct on all facts and the tax collector has agreed to this; this year we have landed a few which will put above collections for first time in 20 years. New tax collector now focusing on everybody, sending out letters and taking legal steps necessary to increase collection rate. (b) need to find buyer for old Structus property. Pay increase for tax collector noting we lost previous collector after investing 3 years of training and a reasonable salary only to have her lured away. No problem paying Mr. Smith if he collects another half million in delinquent taxes but problem is to keep current taxpayers from falling behind. (c) to BOE, do we know what

percentage of our high school graduates come back to town and do we track them. Ms. Cruz stated we are setting up a process through software to track that data. (c) a lot of what is happening is happening to other towns in CT and are at mercy of massive demographic shift and reviewed census for 1990-2000. Problem with demographic shift and more problem is aging population and fastest shrinking population is 18-24. We have over 150,000 invested in average student and we need to focus on long term trend, we will become a retirement community. Number one factor for business to relocate is not taxes, infrastructure or location but availability of skilled labor. Cut electives, and need more students to go off to school and come back to town. What this town does not need is more poverty or more transients or those who use more special services. Last year the BOE shared some services such as tri town bus agreement and need to regionalize and share more services. Maybe we need legislatures to go to State Department of Ed and share services with other towns. Try to more shopping locally and spend disposable income in local businesses, hiring local contractors as keeping it helps those businesses. Need to attract skilled professionals to town; we do not need more minimum wage services.

Board member comments:

Dan Murray – thanked everyone for coming.

Pattie DeHuff = thanked everyone who came out and this is your government and thinks the public has the right to speak on every agenda item.

Mike Drozdick - thanks for coming; budgets dropped, mill rate proposed to go down. School board has big responsibility since their budget was frozen and hopes things go well for them. We welcome input and presence at BOF meetings.

MOTION: To forward the 2014-2015 \$39,034,620 budget as presented to Town Council by Vicky Carey; second Dan Murray. Discussion: none.

Vote: unanimous.

MOTION: To adjourn by Dan Murray; second Vicky Carey and the vote unanimous. Public Hearing ended at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Gudeczauskas, Recording Secretary