

# Town of Plymouth

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# Board of Finance

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Chairman Cook called the Public Hearing to order at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 23, 2015 in the Community Room, Plymouth Town Hall.

Legal notice read into record by Pattie DeHuff.

Fire exits and pledge of allegiance.

Chairman Cook introduced members of the Board of Finance, AnnMarie Rheault, Interim Director of Finance. Not present Dan Murray.

Power point presentation given by Chairman Cook with an overview of each department: General Government with total increase of \$228,358 or 4.68%; Public Safety increase of \$151,659 or 5.82%; Public Works increase of \$52,100 or 1.46%.

Other Departments: Building, Ambulance Corp, Library, Parks and Recreation.

Principle and Interest continues to be funded at \$3.1 million; debt service additional funding at \$222,000.

Education - \$500,000 increase over current budget or 2.15% and approximately .67 mills in tax rate. Capitols reviewed totaling \$616,109 to include Revaluation, Facilities Study, Computer Upgrades, Dam Emergency Plan, Minitor Replacement, GPS Units, Equipment Trailer, Library Parking Lot Rear, Sidewalks, Roads, GIS Mapping, Todd Hollow Road survey, Library Elevator Replacement, Police Cars, Bullet Proof Vest Replacement. Short term financing/ Leases reviewed.

Total Expenditures equal \$40,063,402 or increase of \$1,028,782 or 2.64% equaling 1.35 mills.

Revenues reviewed: Appropriation of Fund Balance, Tax Collection, Grand List with the Collection Rate set at 98%.

Mill rate calculation reviewed:

Grand List of \$764,609,478 with 1 mill equaling \$764,609.

Proposed 2015-2016 mill rate of 36.40 mill rate or 1.55 mill increase.

Public Comment

a. Alex Ieronimo, 9 Meghan Blvd., introduced friends with him Aaron Saindon, Jacob Tellier, Hunter D'Antonio. As a junior he lost some good teachers and asks why are they leaving, would like to go to college but with changes afraid it will impact college of choice, will more leave or get laid off. Believes the town is only as great as the schools and teachers, teachers are leaving and that affects the town and why people want to live here. Feels it is unfair that the Board of Finance gets to decide about his education and future.

b. Vin Klimas, 5 Coral Drive, has seen many budgets and here to say this budget was the most professional budget and AnnMarie has done an outstanding job.

c. Rae Ann Wolcott, Assessor for town and expanded on Mr. Cook's demonstration with budget that her office is the largest revenue generating department and .5 people do all that work. Grand list is climbing slowly and good news and maybe coming out of economic slump. Last appeal to please consider not cutting her office.

d. Chris Simo Kinzer, 52 Old Farm Road – Stated this meeting moved from Monday due to stipulation in Charter and thanked the mayor for catching. He has brought up issue of conflicting meetings and tonight there is a 5<sup>th</sup> grade spelling bee and there are plenty of people who wanted

to be there. Ask those responsible for scheduling to utilize tools we have such as town and school calendars for posting town events and meetings. Budget – As it is he is pushing 10,000 a year and when is it enough. Questioned the BOE fiscal responsibility on several occasions and need to question town in general. He sat through almost every meeting and heard suggestions for increases, raises and cutting of others and when all said and done looking at mill increase. One of the mayor's campaign goal was one mill decrease and last year almost half way there. We are looking at 1.2 increase and ask when is it going to be enough.

e. Janet Olmstead, has been in front regarding cutting of office and here again to say disappointed and cutting the office is huge mistake. Have reval coming up and there is a lot of work in the office and a shame and hope you will reconsider.

f. Amy Battisto, lives in Burlington but employee of BOE, 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher and co-president of the teachers union. She spoke on behalf of the teachers and how important and necessary it is to fund the budget and to cut any is unacceptable. Reviewed increase in class sizes at elementary level which impacts instruction; she went from 16 to 22 students giving examples on need for math, reading and although 22 is not an extreme case; she reviewed class sizes in other grade levels. Teachers are not just academics but provide for the whole child who brings issues in both academics and behavior; some children come from other places and it takes teacher, special ed teacher, psychologist, social worker and paras to assist those children. Education costs more now than years ago and they need help to meet students' needs today. Teachers in town love what they do and her students are amazing; teachers are highly educated and know how to deliver instruction. The town's responsibility is to support funding to do their job.

g. Brian Dunn, 19 Carriage Drive – Suggest that the votes on any budget with increase with any bond package or reallocation of funds be a no as they are not based on need and due to lack of transparency and questions not answered at meetings through FOI. Some bills come in at different rates than tax money comes in. If spending within budget and at end of fiscal year should have extra 972,000 surplus and where is it. Question on town hall carpet line item in budget and was that for work done. Where did the money go. Started asking for forensic audit and told wait until town audit done; did actually contact auditor and sent email asking her to focus on key areas and did not get response from her and called her 3 times and asked to talk to manager and no response. Sent email to firm managing partner and asked him to call. Blum Shapiro was auditing company for 2011-2013 and all years our former comptroller was stealing and should we trust them anymore. Relayed information from research on company called Forensic Auditing Services and called them; printed out web page and gave to members of the board. Can't have a budget moving forward if you don't know where you stand, everything should be cut and no raises until we find bottom line there should be no increases.

h. Kim Cook, 11 Orchard Street- concerned about BOE receiving 500,000 out of 850,000 needed. If don't receive there could be cuts to aides and far too many kids in her daughters class and now 28 student in class with a tutor to help a few hours a day. The teacher is doing the best she can but cannot address individual student needs. They are all good teachers at PCS and middle school and shame to lose them. Curriculum needs to be more challenging as her daughter is bored and it has nothing to do with the teacher but with curriculum and size of class. Team sports plays a part in education but BOE needs to consider pay to play; a child should not miss out on playing but does the BOE supply musical instruments to those who cannot afford them. How will we attract families with class sizes so large and cuts proposed. Our school system is

broken and down town stores vacant. All broken until people work together and make compromises.

i. John Murphy, 385 Greystone Road – presented key to kindness to Pattie for her comments. Budget process started 808,000 in budget and where are we with that, insurance money, are we getting it back. Chairman Cook stated that is with the lawyers. Legal issues are going up for the 89,000 and we can cut some of that back as FOI as he has sent 8 and never got an answer. Pay raises, this is the first place he has seen where they give pay raises for non-performance. Capitals for 25,000 in carpeting and who is putting in as must be nice. Replace truck 12; originally front end loader; no one seems to be forthcoming with information. Structus property, we made maybe 40,000 if lucky on sale and granted they will bring in jobs but to lose over 700,000 in taxes is bad deal. Mr. Bertnagel is getting blamed for a lot of things and pled guilty and will do time; to throw blame for him to sign 174,000 contracts he did not do on his own. GPS systems, 15,000 and is it necessary when everyone has cell phones and should put that back in schools and bring music program back. Also, 972,000 where is that at, no one will explain or account for it.

j. Amy Radke, 29 Hickory Street – thanked people for sitting on the board and knows how difficult. Mr. Cook said the BOE has done great things over the past 7 years and disagree as on paper it looks great as the BOE gave back money, cut and cut and all at a cost. You can only piecemeal and patch for so long. Have squeezed for years and nothing left and with what the BOF offered, they cannot cover current costs and what gives will be people, programs or both. To stay even need at least 300-350,000 and understand where sit financially as a town but implore the BOF to consider adding back at least 200,000 just to come close to them breaking even and not that much overall in large scheme of things but large in terms of what they can lose. If you feel the BOE has been fair all the years coming in at or near zero percent, consider helping now by adding back to the budget. Her answer as to when will be enough will be when more industry is in town and have outstanding schools to make town inviting for people to move here and industry to come. Lived here all her life and thankful for having lived here and having been employed for over 30. Again requested \$200,000 be added to the BOE budget.

k. Deb Ursini, 9 Coral Drive – asked the BOF to support the BOE proposal. In her neighborhood a lot of kids and if not funding education, families will find new towns to live in and it won't matter what the mill rate is as no one will be here to pay for it.

l. Jennie Fowler, 268 Town Hill Road - also thanked the BOF for working so hard. She is a teacher in town and knows the BOF hears a lot of opinions and collaborate to make a decision. She was born and raised here and decided to stay, built a home, pays taxes and raising two young children. She looks around the school every day and see staff working nonstop to achieve what they have to do and does not seem to be enough and not enough time and not enough resources to make it happen. To not approve the budget the BOE asks for makes her sick. For the past, the present and future and future of young people depend on it and do not disappoint them.

m. Bill DeHuff, 20 Lynne Avenue – Gave analogy of a man in senate who said a billion here and a billion there. Anybody who criticizes the budget is told you do not like nice things and is there anyone in room and we all want nice things. Numbers is issue and is issue of trust and a serious issue and hard time trusting. Lack of trust transcends and realize our town needs education and sorry teachers are being lost but how can we trust administration. Bottom line is our issues; and we all want more money.

n. Ralph Zovich, 4 Knight Lane – thanked the Chairman and members of the BOF and comptroller stating this has been the most difficult year to put together a budget and not because

of 800,000 embezzlement but a number of factors. Suggestion is in line items on page 1, revenue summary and second line item, collection of prior years' taxes, delinquent, which has accumulated for 15 years at \$2 million and now budgeting less and understands explanation. Suggests double down and every single delinquent taxpayer who owes more than 2-3 years are foreclosed on. On website of delinquent taxpayers there are dozens of property owners who owe 10,000-20,000 and it adds up and 80% of grand list is residential and personal property. Line item 2 has buffer if current taxes fall short. Have not had tax increase in 7-8 years of this amount. If budget fails, offer suggestion if had to find revenue and want to give the Tax Collector some leeway, consider taking additional 200,000 and appropriating from fund balance; leaving 200,000 in for next year's budget can provide room in case budget fails. Putting BOE in position and sympathize with students who spoke but 357,000 shortfall in self funded health budget is equivalent of 6-7 teachers and cannot absorb loss like that again. Do not want to continue to lay off youngest and most enthusiastic teachers and short term offer solution. If budget fails because the majority says mill rate too high, take 200,000 out of unreserved fund balance and put in appropriation of fund balance. End of budget to capitals and look on page 25 and at middle of list of capitals; town aid road and have second infrastructure bond and if passes can take 200,000 out of town funded portion and leave 500,000 in town aid roads which would cover basic repairs. That is 400,000 and half a mill and only as fallback position. Economy is slow from recovery; long term need to attract business to town and applaud the mayor in selling the old Structus property and Inland Fuels is putting \$5 million in taxable property and we need to do that. We need more economic development financing. Concerns of parents are valid and to attract more middle income parents to come to town you need a decent school system and need stable mill rate to attract business and industry.

o. Melanie Church, 328 Main Street – Page 10 and last year gave away some big raises to administration and asked them to cut all wages this year to zero and gave away 35% as high as 50%, 12% and 14% and start there for cuts. Believe there is a problem with overtime; Administrative Assistant year to date actual is 50,288 and budget amount is 47,500 and have to start watching overtime. Page 14, Building Inspector is a union position and increase in pay should not be there as it is not correct amount and asking to go by contract. Page 16, Parks and Rec is another union position and last year was a 10,000 hire and incorrect and need to bring down to contract and in violation of negotiations of contract. This year 8% to be increased and no one getting 8% and do not care if contract written and goes by union. Public Works, total of 12 highway department crew including transfer attendant and mechanic and 2 positions in there for a lead man and assistant mechanic and asking to cut both positions as not been filled in over two years. Understand hiring engineering tech and did not touch. Two new line items added on page 12, FOI expenses, very simple to answer FOI and cut 10,000. Laws that say give this, this, this and think we are the only town FOI'ing. Grievance resolution expenses, we don't need that and they will win it and we will spend a minimum of 30,000 to take to court; we have arbitration for someone injured for 25,000 of binding arbitration instead of negotiating with unions we go to arbitration for 45,000. New items added, unless absolute necessity it has only increased budget. You have cut BOE and we cannot tell them where to cut but before they cut a teacher, cut administration and leave the teachers alone, they are with the kids. One teacher said they have plenty of coaches but not enough teachers; the coaches are not with the kids. Listen to the staff who made suggestions. Junior high is a grammar school and you have two guidance counselors, cut one.

p. Kathy Kosak, 201 Harwinton Avenue – symptom of what could be going on when look at administrative assistant going over budget consistently. Who tracks this budget and when over tell them no more. BOE, urge the BOE to not touch classroom personnel and where the learning goes on; if it means furlough days of administrators or cut one administrator. In private industry people are doing work of two and three jobs. Learning takes place in the classroom and need teachers and aides. Do not understand when identifying offices when over budget that you would cut an office that identified revenues that would increase budget.

With no further comments:

**MOTION:** To adjourn by Vicky Carey; second Pattie DeHuff and the vote unanimous.  
Public Hearing adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin Gudeczauskas  
Recording Secretary