

Town of Plymouth
80 Main Street
Terryville, CT 06786
www.plymouthct.us

Plymouth Town Council
Telephone: (860) 585-4001
Fax: (860) 585-4015

Minutes

May 12, 2016

Call to Order: Mayor David Merchant called the scheduled May 12, 2016, Plymouth Town Council/Board of Finance/ Plymouth Board of Education, Special Joint meeting to order at 9:03 p.m., in the Community Room, Town Hall.

Roll Call: Present were Town Councilman Dan Gentile, Town Councilwoman Ana LeGassey, Mayor David V. Merchant, Town Councilwoman Sue Murawski, Town Councilman John Pajeski and Town Councilman Tom Zagurski. Also present from the Town of Plymouth was Director of Finance Ann Marie Rheault. Present from the Board of Finance were Vice-Chairman Vicky Carey, Board of Finance Member Pattie DeHuff, Board of Finance Member Jay Dorso, Board of Finance Member Jim Zalot and Board of Finance Chairman Ralph Zovich. Present from the Board of Education were Plymouth Board of Education Member Gerry Bourbonniere, Plymouth Board of Education Chairman Melissa Johnson, Plymouth Board of Education Member Michelle Lucian, and Plymouth Board of Education Member Anthony Orsini. Also present from the Plymouth Board of Education was Plymouth Board of Education Superintendent Dr. Martin Semmel.

Fire Exits Notification-CT General Statutes, Public Act 03-231, Sec. 29-381

Mayor Merchant noted the Fire Exits for the record.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Merchant led the Plymouth Town Council, the Board of Finance, the Plymouth Board of Education and the Public Audience, in the Pledge of Allegiance

To allow the Board of Finance members to present the recommended Budget and by a majority vote of its members* make, if necessary, changes to the Budget to be recommended at the Town Referendum (*a quorum of the Board of Finance members must be present)

Board of Finance Chairman Ralph Zovich stated the Board of Finance had a quorum for the record, which included himself, Vicky Carey, Pattie DeHuff, Jay Dorso, and Jim Zalot.

Plymouth Board of Education Chairman Melissa Johnson requested there be no more cuts to the Board of Education's budget and noted they would love to have it increased because the children were the future and they deserved it. Plymouth Board of Education Chairman Melissa Johnson stated that a lot of people speak about special education costs, noting a lot of them were mandated. She further stated it personally affects three of her children, noting she did not want to take away from the general education costs.

Gerry Bourbonniere stated the Board of Education and the Superintendent have been put in a situation that needed to be realized, noting now they had to determine what to decrease and how the \$140,000 cut to the budget would affect the children. He further stated the goal of the Board of Education was to educate every student and to ensure each child has an equal opportunity to education and briefly elaborated.

Town Councilman Gentile stated the public schools have to educate every child and if someone is acting up in a technical, charter or magnet school and are returned to the public school system

there is no choice but to fund the child, noting the costs can be high. He further stated it would be crazy to cut the Board of Education by \$140,000. Town Councilman Gentile stated 8% of the population voted, noting 92% of the people were complacent and briefly elaborated noting he didn't know why we didn't get larger voter turnouts.

Town Councilman Pajeski stated he agreed with Town Councilman Gentile's comments. He further stated he wanted to see the Town move forward with its infrastructure and its education, noting if the Town didn't spend the money now it would bite us in the rear-end down the road and cost more. Town Councilman Pajeski stated the Town needed to support its local businesses so there weren't empty stores on Main Street.

Town Councilman Zagurski stated he had no comment at this time

Town Councilwoman Murawski stated she had no comment at this time.

Town Councilwoman LeGassey stated the Town was coming out of a difficult time; noting someone had stolen money and the Town had to come through a make believe budget. She further stated the Town was trying to turn it around, noting it was dealing with the State so things were unsure and briefly elaborated. Town Councilwoman LeGassey stated this budget was pretty good considering what the Town was dealing with and we needed to seriously think about taking care of the infrastructure and the education in Town. She further stated she wanted the students to stay in Town.

Town Councilwoman LeGassey stated she did not want to see the Transfer Station closed one day a week and she also did not want to see the Board of Education budget cut. Town Councilwoman LeGassey stated furloughs in the Town Hall and shutting the Transfer Station one day per week were so small in savings that it would not help the budget. Town Councilwoman LeGassey stated if the Board wanted to give the Mayor a raise then it should, noting \$2,000 would not make the mill rate go down.

Board of Finance Chairman Ralph Zovich stated Senator Martin was optimistic because of the pushback from the other smaller town facing this loss from Motor Vehicle, noting they might be able to raise the Motor Vehicle cap and briefly elaborated. He further stated if this budget fails at Referendum and in the interim the State has a budget and they raise the Motor Vehicle cap the Town Council could decide to restore some of these items without having an impact on the mill rate. Board of Finance Chairman Ralph Zovich stated if the budget passes and the State adds money back we won't have the opportunity to come back and change the budget, however the Board of Finance might be able to set a lower mill rate. Board of Finance Chairman Ralph Zovich stated we are presenting this budget as is and if it fails it would go back to the Town Council. He further stated if it passes and we get money back from the State the timing would be critical because the Tax Collector has to send out the tax bills.

Town Councilman Gentile stated he would like to see all 169 towns in Connecticut send the State of Connecticut a letter telling them they needed to appeal the law. He further stated the Motor Vehicle money was promised to the Town when they took the taxes away and because the State was short they took the money away, noting it was discriminative because it wasn't the way they proposed it. Town Councilman Gentile stated the Town Council gets hammered every month on blight, noting the money for the Blight Fund was transferred from one fund to another and it did not affect the mill rate. He further stated the Town did not have money to knock the buildings down and when the Council put money in a fund it was questioned, noting it was a lose/lose situation. Town Councilman Gentile stated if it was preferred the Blight Fund money could be removed and the house could be left up. He further stated the Board of Finance was in control of it because it's their budget. Town Councilman Gentile stated the Town would spend more to rent a sweeper than to buy one. Town Councilman Gentile stated furlough days would not work out because the Town has union contracts and the Town could not just furlough everyone, noting it sounded great but no one did the research. He further stated other towns that have Mondays off still make their 40 hours, but they work later on a one of the days.

Ralph Zovich questioned if any of the Town Council members wanted to go "scorched earth" noting he didn't want to misspeak on the Council's behalf for the record.

Board of Finance Member Jim Zalot stated the cost to replace the Police Officer with overtime would be very substantial.

Board of Finance Chairman Ralph Zovich stated if we go forward with this cut any unforeseen absences could wipe out the savings in overtime costs.

Board of Finance Member Jim Zalot made a motion to eliminate the reduction of the one Police Officer. Motion failed for lack of a second.

Referring to Town Councilman Gentile's comments, Board of Finance Member Pattie DeHuff stated there 508 people who voted no, 310 voted yes, 1,011 voted, 11% voted, 89% didn't vote, it was a 65 to 25 ratio. Referring to Town Councilman Pajeski's comments, Board of Finance Member Pattie DeHuff stated individual people want to move forward in their own lives, redesign, painting or insulating their houses and it wasn't a matter of not wanting to move the Town forward and briefly elaborated.

She further questioned if all the buildings on Route 6 would look better by raising everyone's taxes. Board of Finance Member Pattie DeHuff stated our individual roads were called our driveways and if we have to pay taxes how do we pay for our own asphalt. Board of Finance Member Pattie DeHuff stated she wanted the Town's children educated, but more money didn't mean a better education. Board of Finance Member Pattie DeHuff stated it seemed like the Board was in the same place it was on Monday night.

Board of Finance Vice Chairman Vicky Carey made a motion, seconded by Board of Finance Member Jay Dorso, to move the General Fund Budget for FY 2016/2017 forward to the Town Council in the amount of \$39,875,063.

Vote: This motion was approved unanimously.

Pattie DeHuff stated for the record, she wanted it noted that she voted yes to move it forward because she had to by Charter, but she was not in agreement with the Budget.

To allow Town Council members to review, discuss, and take action on any Budget changes requiring Town Council approval

Board of Finance Chairman Ralph Zovich questioned if any of the Council had any objection to the Budget being sent forward.

Mayor Merchant stated the Transfer Station created overtime and the only way to save money with the Transfer Station would to be close it on a Saturday, noting if it was closed one day a week schedules would have to be changed and it would be costly. He further stated if everyone want to close it one day a week then the Town should sit down with the Union and do a MOU to make sure it could be worked out because of the Saturday issue; a brief discussion followed.

Director of Finance Ann Marie Rheault stated currently, that reduction was built into the Budget.

Town Councilman Gentile stated yes it was and to leave it alone.

Ann Marie Rheault stated the dollar amount would not be in the Budget if the decision were reversed.

Board of Finance Chairman Ralph Zovich stated there was procedural issue, noting Pattie DeHuff wanted to clarify for the record her qualified yes vote was actually a no vote and so the motion to accept the General Fund Budget was two (2) yes votes, one (1) qualified yes vote and one no vote, noting the motion still passes.

Town Attorney William Hamzy stated the vote was made and it was finalized and the only way it could come back would be if someone who voted yes made a motion to reconsider and that motion passed.

Board of Finance Member Pattie DeHuff made a motion to reconsider presenting the General Fund Budget. Motion failed for lack of a second.

Board of Finance Chairman Ralph Zovich stated for the record Board of Finance Member Pattie DeHuff's motion to reconsider failed for lack of a second and the original motions stands; the Budget is present to the Council for the dollar amount quoted.

To move to schedule a date for the annual Budget Referendum for the purpose of adopting a Budget

Town Councilman Gentile made a motion, seconded by Town Councilman Zagurski, to schedule May 20th, from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., in the Community Room, Plymouth Town Hall, as the date for the annual Budget Referendum for the purpose of adopting a Budget.

This motion was approved unanimously.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Town Councilwoman Murawski made a motion, seconded by Town Councilman Zagurski, to adjourn at 9:39 p.m. This motion was approved unanimously.