

From: SimsburyCT Postings April 2, 2012 12:40:59 PM
Subject: Board of Finance Minutes 03/27/2012-Public Hearing
(Capital)
To: SimsburyCT_FinanceMin
Cc:

BOARD OF FINANCE
PUBLIC HEARING - CAPITAL PROJECTS - 7:00 PM
MARCH 27, 2012

CALL TO ORDER

Paul Henault, Chairman, called the Board of Finance Capital Projects Public Hearing to order on Monday, March 27th, at 7:00 PM, in the the Amphitheater of Simsbury High School, 34 Farms Village Road, Simsbury, CT. The following members were also present: Nicolas Mason, Peter Askham, Kevin North, Jeff Blumenthal, and Barbara Petitjean. Also present were Mary Glassman, First Selectman, Mary Ann Harris, Finance Director/Treasurer, Diane Ullman, Superintendent of Schools, Erin Murray, Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Burke LaClair, Board of Education Business Manager, Lydia Tedone, Chairman of Board of Education, Leslie Faraci, Commissions Clerk and other interested parties.

Mr. Henault began the meeting by explaining the process and procedures of the Public Hearing. He then introduced the speakers for the evening.

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Henault turned the floor over to Mary Glassman, First Selectmen.

Ms. Glassman began by thanking all of the different Boards for their hard work on the Capital Improvement Program.

Ms. Glassman began with a slide showing a list of projects that had been approved by the Board of Selectmen, and noted the projects highlighted in green as the projects that were approved by the Board of Finance. Ms. Glassman then went through the list to explain each project and how each would be funded. Then Ms. Glassman showed greater detail with regards to each of the approved projects, Ethel Walker Phase2A, Dispatch Console Replacement, Emergency Generator Improvements/Related Improvements, Owens Brook/West Street/Greenway Improvements (partial approval), and Wolcott Pump Station Rehabilitation. (The District Network Infrastructure Project

would be presented by the Board of Education next). Ms. Glassman provided an overview and the estimated cost breakdown of each project.

At this point in the meeting, Mr. Henault introduced Erin Murray, Assistant Superintendent of Schools. Ms. Murray began her presentation by thanking Diane Ullman, Superintendent of Schools, Burke LaClair, Board of Education Business Manager, Lydia Tedone, Chairman of Board of Education and Jason Casey, Systems Technology Director along with other Board of Education members. Ms. Murray said while technology is rapidly changing, we as a district, need to respond to these changes by providing improved access to technology to the students and staff. Ms. Murray continued by providing a cost overview of the District Network Infrastructure Project and the cost savings they believe it will provide in the future. Ms. Murray spoke about "virtualization" and explained who is currently utilizing it and how it ultimately works. She said it will be managed by existing staff, as a centralized operating system will not require an increase in staffing. Ms. Murray said this is a necessary step due to the aging PC's and the slowness now being experienced. Ms. Murray stated that it would cost approximately \$1.6MM to replace all of the aging PC's, but with this cloud system, everything runs from a network server and all of the memory is held on the server. Overall, Ms. Murray said, the Cloud makes for smart spending and long term savings for the Simsbury Public Schools.

After introducing the Board of Finance members, Mr. Henault said they will they would now go to Public Audience, and he asked the public to limit their questions to the subject of Capital.

Maria Ecke, 18 Meadowlark Road, said she has lived in town for 30 years. Ms. Ecke then read a memo regarding town wage plan. She asked why is economic plight not being considered with this budget.

Joan Coe, 26 Whitcomb Drive, began by saying the Town should not incur any further debt. Ms. Coe mentioned The Hartford break-up and how it will negatively impact our taxes. She asked if the Board has taken this into consideration and then asked if the increase in future debt should be reconsidered now that we have this new information. Ms. Coe said she did not think the Ethel Walker property should be purchased with tax payer money, as the land cannot be developed and will not increase our tax base. She then asked the Board to please review our long term debt policy and asked the voters to reject the Capital Plan. Ms. Coe then asked if the District Network Infrastructure Project will become obsolete and asked them to please rethink the spending on this project.

Robert Kalechman, 971 Hopmeadow Street, started by saying the Town cannot continue to defer spending and payment, as it will end up in the same position that the State currently finds itself with a huge deficit. Mr.

Kalechman then said that in hard times there should be no tax increase. He said that deferred spending is not alright and that Ethel Walker is an underlying reason we cannot pay for things. Mr. Kalechman then asked the Board to just say no, and please stick to fiscally responsible policies.

Joann Nylan, 8 Horseshoe Circle, spoke in support of the Owens Brook Project, saying there are giant pieces of sidewalk coming out of the ground and that it is an accident just waiting to happen. Ms. Nylan said this is an important gateway for the community and asked the Board of Finance to please keep in the budget, as nothing has been done on it for so long and it has become a safety issue at this point.

Susan Masino, 41 Madison Lane, addressed the Board regarding the Ethel Walker Project. Ms. Masino spoke about why the land is so important for the Town (water resources, biodiversity, trails, etc.). Ms. Masino said that since the Phase 1 purchase, there have been additional positive things happening there (hikes, safe routes to school through Tootin' Hills). Ms. Masino also wanted to second Ms. Nylan's comments regarding Owens Brook, because, she said, bike trails and getting people outside is important for this Town. Ms. Masino said we are down to final bits of Town that can be considered Open Space, which is why Ethel Walker Land purchase is so important for the future.

Jefferson Wilkes, 31 Fox Den Road, Student Representative for Board of Education and President of Simsbury High School Senior Class, addressed the Board regarding the West Street/Owens Brook Greenway project. Mr. Wilkes specifically wanted to speak with respect to the West Street project, saying there is no way to safely and legally cross that street. He described the crosswalk and how dangerous it is for students. Mr. Wilkes asked the Board to cover the cost of this project, saying it is our responsibility to take care of the kids in the Town.

Helen Peterson, 20 Longview Drive, spoke to the Board about the history of Simsbury and about the positive attributes of Simsbury and its people. She spoke about the natural heritage and how it has been preserved and respected. Ms. Peterson said Ethel Walker is a part of the legacy and we need to move forward on the purchase of the land.

Chuck Howard, 100 Terry's Plain Road, said yes, we are the great beneficiaries of this great Town. Mr. Howard continued by saying there has been a substantial downpayment on the property, we have a grant and it ties closely with work done by Simsbury Land Trust. Mr. Howard said this is an opportunity that does not come often and we should seize the opportunity while we have it. He urged the Board to support this Capital Improvement item.

Mr. Henault recognized Mr. Howard for the work he has done, and the funds he has helped raise, with regards to Tulmeadow Farm.

Carol Clark-Flanagan, Seminary Road, is a faculty member at Ethel Walker School. Ms. Clark-Flanagan said she agreed with all that Ms. Peterson said earlier regarding the wonderful attributes of Simsbury. She said the beauty of the Town is so important and she wants Ethel Walker and the citizens of Simsbury to work together for the best of the Town, acting as partners. She said she supports the purchase of this land.

Judy Schaefer, 16 Lostbrook Road, addressed the Board regarding the Ethel Walker Land. Ms. Schaefer began by saying 80% of the Town's water comes from underneath this land and that we cannot risk having something happen to this land that is currently protecting our drinking water.

Jefferson Wilkes, 31 Fox Den Road, addressed the Board again regarding the District Network Infrastructure Project. Mr. Wilkes said, as a student, he sees first hand that parts of the system don't work. He continued by saying students are expected to achieve excellence and the system capabilities are not matching the expectations.

At this point in the meeting (8:04PM), Mr. Henault closed the Public Hearing for the topic of capital projects.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Henault, Chairman
Commissions Clerk

Leslie U. Faraci,