

**TOWN OF DARIEN
BOARD OF FINANCE
PUBLIC HEARING
MARCH 8, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: Jon Zagrodzky, Chairman; Frank Huck, Bruce Orr, David Lopiano, James Palen (7:40 p.m.)

ABSENT: James McLaughlin, Diana Maguire

OTHERS: Walter Casey, Jill McCammon, Shelly Skoglund, Theresa Vogt, Steve Olvany, Lilly Wuam, Rob Trifone, Mark Evanchick, Jack Kniffen, Kristen Harnish, Sarah True, Mo Minicus, Tara LeClerc, Dorinda Bonanno, Stacey Tie, Vance Wilber, Mark Beaven, Julia Mengwall, Wendy Wald, Patti Uhlman.

CALL TO ORDER.

Mr. Zagrodzky called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. A quorum was present. He announced that the purpose of meeting was to hear the public on the matter of the Town's budget. Mr. Zagrodzky said that the sign up list was in the front.

The first speaker was Mr. Walter Casey. Mr. Casey came forward and greeted the Board members. He said that he was present to ask that additional funding be added to the budget for the paramedics. It is long overdue. Darien is lagging behind everyone else. There is a study that is coming out shortly that should have been an implementation study rather than a study to determine whether or not the Town should have paramedics. The question is ridiculous. This puts people at risk in the town. There should be funding in the budget for this and enough to do it right so that the town does not have an EMS fiasco.

Ms. Jill McCammon and Ms. Shelly Skoglund of CDSP came forward to address the Board members next. (See attached).

Mr. Palen joined the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

Ms. Susan Vogel came forward to address the Board members regarding Darien High School. (See attached).

The next speaker was Mr. Steve Olvany, who came forward and greeted the Board members. He said that he has four children in the Darien Public Schools. He said that in his role as Vice Chairman of the Darien Zoning Commission, he has worked on the Town Plan of Conservation, which projects the planning for the town for the next ten years.

Mr. Olvany said that he felt the new BOE administration was doing a great job with the School District and reiterated what a previous speaker had said about the BOE facilities study. He went on to speak about the landscaping around the BOE building in terms of real estate perspective. Regarding the BOE Operating Budget, Mr. Olvany said he was in support of the instructional specialists. He added that one of the best nights for him was the Middlesex Back to School Night because everyone was so enthusiastic.

Ms. Lily Wuam, a fifth grader at Royle School, was the next speaker to address the Board members. (See attached.)

Mr. Rob Trifone and Mr. Mark Evanchick came forward to present their comments to the Board members.

Mr. Trifone came forward to speak about the state of the turf field at the Darien High School. It is in its 11th year of use and is used not only by the football team, but the field hockey teams, the soccer teams and the lacrosse teams. He said that there was a G-max rating on fields that determined the field's ability to absorb impacts. Turf fields are much safer than grass fields. Concussions in sports are not generally caused by head to head contact, but by the athlete's head striking the ground. The field is currently safe, but the new fields at the High School have a much higher rating than the current field because the technology has improved. The field is beyond its life span. He requested that the Board consider funding the replacement of the field in view of future safety.

Mr. Evanchick came forward to speak about the condition of the field. He said that it would be in the best interest of the athletes' safety to replace the field soon. The BOE is investing in JV and Varsity equipment and this would be a good investment also.

Mr. Jack Kniffen then came forward to address the Board regarding Darien High School. (See attached.)

Ms. Kristen Harnish was the next speaker. She addressed the Board regarding Hindley School. (See attached.)

The next speaker was Sarah True, who also spoke about Hindley School. (See attached.)

Ms. Mo Minicus came forward next to speak about Hindley School.

Ms. Tara LeClerc addressed the Board regarding Middlesex Middle School. (See attached.)

Ms. Dorinda Bonanno spoke about the various issues at Hindley next. (See attached.)

Ms. Stacey Tié then addressed the Board about the ELP program. (See attached.)

Mr. Vance Wilber came forward to speak about the gym floor replacement at Ox Ridge. (See attached.)

Mr. Mark Beaven was the next speaker to address the Board members. He spoke about Hindley School.

Ms. Julia Mengwall spoke next regarding Tokeneke School. (See attached.)

Ms. Wendy Wald spoke next about Holmes School. She said that she had attended Ox Ridge, Middlesex Middle School and Darien High School. She said that she had lived through too many short sighted decisions in this town in which Darien typically cut off its nose to spite its face. She said that Ox Ridge still strongly resembles the school that she left in 1984. Updates have been avoided for too long. The expanded Middlesex School project is now on or close to capacity and the newly constructed high school is unable to support students' most basic needs. It is time to stop the culture of band aid solutions. It is time to stop the culture of disagreeing until the proposed solutions are so diluted that they no longer serve the long term needs. Ms. Wald said that she supported the budget and encouraged the Board of Finance to look positively at the extensive, long term scholastic capital improvements. Putting these projects off will only result in them being more expensive in the coming years.

The final speaker that was signed up was Ms. Patti Ullman who spoke about Royle School.

Mr. Zagrodzky asked if there was anyone else present who wished to address the Board members at this time. Hearing none, Mr. Zagrodzky closed the public hearing on the Darien Budget for 2016-2017 at 8:24 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** MR. LOPIANO MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. ORR SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Zagrodzky
Chairman, Board of Finance
Prepared by,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

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