

**MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING HELD ON
TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 2017 AT 7:00 P.M. IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS, TOWN HALL,
84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410**

Public Hearing Subject Matter

Proposed Fiscal Year 2017-2018 General Fund
Operating Budget; Water Pollution Control Fund
Operating Budget; and Community Pool Fund
Operating Budget.

Present

Council Members: Chairman Robert J. Oris, Jr.; Vice Chairman Paul A. Bowman;
Michael Ecke, Jeffrey Falk, Patti Flynn-Harris, Sylvia Nichols, Thomas Ruocco, Peter
Talbot.

Staff: Michael A. Milone, Town Manager; James Jaskot, Finance Director; Arnett
Talbot, Assistant Town Manager; George Noewatne, PW Director.

Dept. of Education: Supt. Jeff Solan; Assistant Supt. Shawn Parkhurst;
Vincent Masciana, Chief Operating Officer; BOE members Ms. Heilrich, Ms. Fabiani,
Ms. Harrigan and Ms. Pavano.

1. ROLL CALL

The clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

2. EXPLANATION OF HEARING PROCEDURE AND AGENDA

Chairman Oris explained the procedures for a public hearing of the Town Council. Mr.
Oris welcomed everyone to the public hearing.

3. READING OF LEGAL NOTICE

The clerk read the legal notice into the record.

4. PRESENTATION ON HEARING SUBJECT

Town Manager Milone stated that he received the Board of Education (BOE) proposed
budget, approved it, and sent it to the Town Council as part of the proposed operating
budget for FY 2017-2018. He noted that the Council has not touched the operating
budget. There will be a public information session on April 4th to discuss revisions to
the operating budget.

The total FY 18 Operating Budget is \$110,392,735; an increase of \$2,591,507, 2.40%.

There are five components to the Operating Budget.

- General Government - \$31,070,115; increase of \$718,140, 2.37%
- Education - \$70,831,288; an increase of \$1,435,778, 2.07%
- Debt - \$7,266,332, an increase of \$437,589, 6.41%
- Capital Non-Recurring (CNR) - \$1,100,000 (0 increase)
- Contingency - \$125,000 (0 increase)

CNR is the cash the Town uses for non-capital projects; and without borrowing for these projects there has been interest savings of \$7 million.

This proposed budget is the least combined increase on General Government in 10 years.

Debt service - is increasing for the first time in 10 years when it was \$10.4 million. With a AAA credit rating the Town has been borrowing at lower interest rates; debt has been refunded over the last 7-8 years resulting in \$3.4 million in savings; debt is increasing due to the \$32 million cost of the treatment plant upgrade. The project had \$7.5 million in grants from the State and a low interest loan. This is the first year of the normal loan repayment, and the large interest rate (2 years of interest) for the project. The debt service increase is \$3.3 million. The Town has a debt reserve of \$7 million and other reserve funds in order to defray and mitigate the debt.

Governor's proposed budget - Mr. Milone reviewed the Town's losses in State revenue. Education Aid - revenue loss of \$1,023,075; General Government Aid - revenue loss of \$770,706; Mandated contribution for Teacher's Retirement - \$3,508,100; Mill rate gap of 32 mills on motor vehicles - \$166,546; new expenditure for mandated storm water regulation - \$65,100.

Mr. Milone advised that the \$3.508 million mandated contribution for the Teacher's Retirement is not included in the proposed Town Operating Budget. He said this mandate will break the backs of 169 municipalities; it will continue to increase in the coming years; could be \$4 million next year for Cheshire and then \$5 million the following year. If this happens, municipal government loses control of its financial destiny. Mr. Milone stated that Cheshire has a strong financial foundation, but its credit rating will be diminished and reserve accounts depleted with this mandate.

Mill Rate Proposed - 32.72 mills for real estate and personal property; 32.00 mills for motor vehicles. Every 1/10th of a mill rate reduction generates \$23 in tax savings for the taxpayer. The current mill rate is 31.9 mills; there is a cap in the State budget for 32 mills on motor vehicle taxes.

32.72 mills - the average taxpayer with real estate (average assessment) and two motor vehicles will have a FY 2018 tax bill of \$7,592; \$342 increase; 4.72%.

Ten Year Annual Tax Increase History - FY 2008, average taxes were \$6,625; FY 2017 average taxes were \$7,179; 1.84% increase.

General Government Expenditures (non-education) - Personnel Services, \$302,202, 2.24% increase; Contractual Services, \$116,856, 3.91% increase; Pensions \$279,518, 10.42% increase; total increase \$698,576.

Contractual Services includes the \$65,000 State mandate for storm water regulation; RWA 7% rate increase; and Solid Waste Contract.

Pensions - Town, Police and Fire pensions were fully funded in 2008; 35% to 40% of assets were lost during the 2008 recession; pension plans were closed out 5 years ago

with a trade-off of a new plan; BOE had a similar situation without such a dramatic effect.

Town Departments in the General Government Budget - the departments are Administration and Finance; Planning & Development; Public Safety; Public Works; Social Services; Cultural Services; Leisure Services; Public Health.
Total \$31,070,115; increase of \$718,10, 2.37%.

Revenue Variances - FY 2018 increases include current tax levy, \$4,547,638; LoCIP \$330,733; Fund Balance \$200,000.
FY 2018 Decreases include PILOT - \$299,690, Alexion Tax Incentive Repayment, \$330,400; Revenue Sharing-Bond Projects Distribution \$737,700; Special Education Excess Cost \$750,000; Public School Transportation \$154,687.

LoCIP funds are for capital improvement projects; can be used as General Fund revenue for infrastructure expenses.

Alexion Pharmaceutical moved out of Cheshire and had to pay back a tax incentive forgiveness, which will not be in the FY 2018 budget revenue.

Fund Balance - \$700,000 has been consistently used to balance the budget.

Multi-Year Budget Comparison (10 Years) - in the last 10 years the Town budget has increased by an average of 2.1% or \$2,016,316.

Cheshire is on a big downward slide in State aid. If the State budget is adopted, the Governor could take another \$800,000 from Cheshire. Last year's loss of State aid was about \$2 million.

COMMUNITY POOL BUDGET - Total revenue of \$901,896; \$4,239 increase, .47%.

WATER POLLUTION CONTROL DEPARTMENT- Total revenue of \$3,600,22; \$174,080 increase, 5.08%.

Town Manager Milone informed the public on the budget schedule, with adoption of the Operating Budget on April 12th by the Council. There will be a Public Information Session on April 4th on budget revisions and changes by the Council.

Major Projects - the list of 15 major projects and 7 operational projects were cited in the presentation. Mr. Milone reported that the Town has spent \$307 million on capital initiatives since 1985; has done a good job maintaining infrastructure; continues to use proceeds frugally; insures no maintenance is deferred; does not incur public safety or significant expenses through neglect. Cheshire has a high rate of support for capital projects at referendum, which indicates people are satisfied with what is being done, want to keep up with the Town infrastructure, and enhance the quality of life in Cheshire.

Mr. Milone reviewed the "Summary of Options" for FY 2017-2018.

- AAA Credit Rating from the credit agencies;
- Fund balance of \$9.8 million or 9.18% of the operating budget; debt reserve of \$4.62 million, after utilization of \$2.5 million in the FY 2018 budget;
- Town and BOE self insured for medical benefits;
- Town medical benefit trust fund has a balance of \$4.2 million;
- WPCD has \$972,082 fund balance, 28.7% of its operating budget expenditures, after utilization of \$200,000 for debt service support;
- Energy rebate of \$214,000;
- Recent and anticipated personnel retirements will provide additional saving opportunities;
- Lawsuit against the State Dept. of Corrections for \$2.7 million is awaiting a verdict for prison under-reporting flows to the WWTP.

Mr. Milone commented on some expected revenue and further budget reductions being helpful for a reasonable mill rate to continue the great quality of life in the community.

BOARD OF EDUCATION BUDGET

Supt. Solan acknowledged Town Manager Milone, Town Council, Board of Education and Mr. Masciana on their preparation and work in the proposed Town Operating Budget.

Supt. Solan reported that the BOE looked at identifying two focal points for the budget. There were meetings with parents, PTA organizations, students and residents for development of the BOE budget. Supt. Solan talked about development of students to include complex thinking and social-emotional learning as part of the BOE budget.

Budget 2017-2018 - \$70,831,288; increase of 2.07%. Certified Salaries are \$35.5 million or 50% of the budget. Of the \$70,831,288 budget, 79% is for salaries and benefits.

Supt. Solan briefly reviewed the BOE budget recommendations history from 2013-14 to 2017-18. The proposed budget is the smallest increase by percentage in the last 15 years - at 2.07%.

Budget increases for FY 2017-2018 of \$100,000 or more included Teacher Salaries (\$885,379,); Instructional Assistants (I.A.) increase of \$331,354 for 13 more I.A. staff needed for special education; Special Education (savings of \$400,000), Maintenance (\$169,934), Pupil Transportation (\$165,647), Textbooks and Software (\$102,297) and Employee Benefits (\$582,601).

Supt. Solan noted the budget does not reflect the \$207,434 arbitration savings or \$38,527 pension increase; adjusted budget increase would be 1.83%. 50.2% of the budget is spent on certified salaries, and this included administrators. There are 391.9 employees in the certified group (teachers, administrators, special education directors

and supervisors, student activity stipends, substitute teachers, homebound tutoring, adult education.

Student Enrollment - FY 2017-2018. Projected number is 4,200; a change of 109 students. In 2021 the projected enrollment is 4,000 students, and staffing has been done correspondingly. Project Choice students attend Cheshire schools, and \$3,000 tuition per child is paid to the BOE.

There will be 10 elementary school teachers next year due to declining enrollment. There will be 15 fewer elementary teachers next year; this means termination of some staff members; and it is built into the operating budget. At this time there have been no teacher retirements submitted to the administration.

Average elementary class size is 18 students; primary grades are smaller; 6th grade averages 22 - 23 students; 7th and 8th grade average is 23 - 26 students.

There is a new program at Doolittle School called "Bridges" which keeps special ed students in district and reduces future costs. Cheshire is looking to bring in outside students to this program on a tuition basis if they are a fit for the program. Special ed continues to provide high quality service. "Bridges" is a full school day for special ed students with social emotional needs.

Key Budget Assumptions -

- Chromebooks for 9th graders - \$75,000.
- K-6 Technology Coach for STEAM, Robotics, Coding. Supt. Solan commented on problems with reading and math specialties and coaching demands on technical issues. It is better to have a teacher/coach work within each elementary building, focusing reading and math specialties, and helping teachers with technology issues.
- Elementary World Language - 6th grade Spanish provided by 1.4 teachers; funded through reduction in Library staffing in grade 6.
- Two (2) new positions in mental health for increased social emotional support resources.
- Social Worker at Dodd and School Counselor at CHS; special education staff with two (2) additional resources offset by reduction in tuition for outplacement students. Reduction in medical benefits under new union contracts, cost saving measures, increased HSA enrollment.

Social Emotional Support - this need was expressed from teachers and administrators; it supports the district goal to develop strong social-emotional skills in students; parent and student focus groups shared this need as a priority. Cheshire has 22.6 mental health providers; 201 students per one counselor; adding two (2) positions could get Cheshire to the average in DRG-B.

Mandates - Supt. Solan briefly reviewed the list of unfunded mandates from the State of Connecticut, and the newest mandates which require better and more training, costing money and time and energy.

Budget Reduction Measures - reduce staffing, 6.1 certified positions and 2 Instructional Assistants; freeze or reduce accounts; Health Savings Accounts/Self Insurance; Multi-function printers and managed print services; Energy purchasing; Consortium Purchasing.

Per Pupil Expenditure - Cheshire PPE is \$15,236, which is on the low end of DRG-B; Cheshire ranks #120 out of 166 school districts; State PPE average is \$17,085; \$16,340 is the average per pupil expenditure in DRG-B. If Cheshire had an average PPE, it would cost the town \$4.86 million more per year. Cheshire provides an excellent education at the best costs. The Cheshire School System is ranked 26th best in Connecticut; 20th best high school in Connecticut; 23rd most cost effective district; 371st best high school in America.

Supt. Solan commented on "our success is our success as a community". This is attributed to the Town Manager, Town Council, Board of Education, dedicated school system staff, involved parents and families, and students coming to school to learn each day.

5. QUESTIONS AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR.

Frances Storm, 58 Greenhill Road, asked about the \$3.5 million increase from the State for the teacher's retirement contribution. She questioned this fund when there is pension in the budget.

Chairman Oris explained that Cheshire provides pension for Town employees. The teacher's pension plan is through the State, which now wants municipalities to pay one-third of this liability.

Supt. Solan stated that the BOE has pension for non-certified staff (Custodians, Secretaries, Maintenance personnel). The Cheshire budget has nothing to do with the State retirement system. Certified staff pay 7.5% into the State retirement system, which has been under-funded by the State for many years, and has a significant deficit.

Ms. Storm asked about the \$3.5 million not being in the operating budget; it could be a \$350 average tax increase; and a supplemental tax bill could be sent.

Stating that is correct, Mr. Oris affirmed that the \$3.5 million is not in the operating budget. There is no decision on how this will be handled. One suggestion was a supplemental tax bill. The mandated amount could be less as we await hearing from the State. The Council is trying to craft a budget, must be prepared for the mandated amount, and it is possible the \$3.5 million would be addressed with a supplemental tax bill.

William Keeley, 20 Harvest Court, stated this is the lowest budget in a long time, and this is due, in part, to no major school construction issues added to the budget, or pool project. Overall, it could be a greater budget increase.

The public was told by Mr. Oris that those would be capital projects, and would not be in the operating budget.

Town Manager Milone stated that capital projects are in the Five Year Capital Expenditure Plan (CEP). Funds may not be appropriated for projects in this fiscal year in the CEP, and they can be pursued in the out years of this budget.

In response to a question from Mr. Keeley about the average household assessment, Mr. Milone said it is \$213,550 (at 70% of market value), and motor vehicle average assessment is \$9,450 per vehicle.

Mr. Keeley asked about the arbitration award.

Chairman Oris stated that going to arbitration benefited the Town with about \$850,000 over four years. There is potential on the BOE side to save an additional \$200,000 relative to the arbitration ruling. The teacher's salary increase will still average about 3.1%, while other unions were in the 2.4% range.

Dorf Kleist, 251 Lancaster Way, said 2017 taxes may go up over 3/10th of 1% with social security increase for seniors. He asked if tax credits for economically challenged senior citizens and disabled citizens would increase more than 3%.

Town Manager Milone advised that the Council is reviewing the elderly tax credit program, and noted Cheshire has one of the most generous programs in the State. The credit program was extended in January and Council will have an analysis, and be re-evaluating the program.

Mr. Kleist talked about the proposed message sign at the police headquarters at \$30,000 cost, and if this is part of the budget.

Mr. Milone said that will be a Council decision.

That is a request from the Cheshire Police Department for use of the gift account funds, and Mr. Oris said the Council has made no determination on this issue at this time.

6. PROPONENTS AND OPPONENTS STATEMENTS ALTERNATELY EXPRESSED.

Tucker Deming, 230 Oregon Road, commented on this being a challenging year, the uncertainty of financial aspects all filtering down, sanctuary cities being in violation of federal law, the D.O.J. issuing an ultimatum or all Connecticut federal funds are in jeopardy. He said it is best to reduce the town budget rather than increase it, and recommended a 2% to 3% reduction across the board.

Mary Burham, Tress Road, talked about having two grandchildren in the school system, knowing this is one of the hardest years and understanding the State problems, and stated her support of the education budget. She said the legislature should not be pushing the teacher retirement contribution onto municipalities.

Jamie Ferguson, 105 Copper Beach, President of the Townwide PTA, thanked the Council and BOE for their dedication and great service and time. Ms. Ferguson noted that people are wearing red in support of education, and requested adoption of the Superintendent's proposed BOE budget. In reading a prepared statement into the record, she cited her understanding of the impact of the State budget in ways unknown, Cheshire parents willing to make hard decisions, the value of the schools, protection of funding for education as the best way to go, the BOE team working to reduce spending, keep costs down, the budget being a true representation of the education funds needed, it is not inflated, and without adoption of the budget students will be impacted by changes of curriculum priorities and education maintenance.

Annamarie Kemp, 20 Northpond Road, talked about real estate values in town going down, empty storefronts, and pre-k to 6 enrollment seeing a big decrease, and said this is a trend not desirable for the town. She has concerns about young families not looking at Cheshire and moving into other towns. As a taxpayer and homeowner she wants value in her property and maintenance of the school system, and supports the education budget which is not frivolous spending.

Regarding growth of real estate and the grand list, Mr. Milone clarified that the average residential property value increased \$1,000 to \$1,500. The revenue generated from the grand list declined last year, and the Town lost \$8 million when Alexion moved out of town. Property values are not declining; they are going up; and have increased over the last three years.

John Bulger, 61 Warren Street, is a proponent of the budget, and said Council and BOE have done all they could in making decisions with a decent number. He said Cheshire is known for its school system. He is a real estate agent, and the first reason people look to our town is the school system. If trims need to be made, they should be elsewhere...not in the school system.

Simon Shagoury, 410 Juniper Lane, commended Town Manager Milone and Supt. Solan for their budget presentations. He said the BOE budget has been trimmed too much, and he supports the school budget. He is now retired. Mr. Shagoury commented on the good education his sons received, their graduating from prestigious universities, the need to keep a good school system, and his willingness to pay taxes. He said teachers are dedicated, students are smart, and without the school system up to par, there is a decrease in property values.

Louis Nero, 55 Jesse Court, thanked the Council and BOE for their work on a difficult budget. He talked about State education aid decreasing, the greater impact on the local taxpayer, decline in student enrollment; 2004 had 5,100 students at a \$49.1 million

budget; and 2018 has 4,100 students and a \$70 million BOE budget. Another area for savings is the police department overtime budget of +\$400,000 spending for 48 police officers, or \$8,000 per officer in overtime costs. Mr. Nero said there are issues to be addressed with savings to the town and he hopes the Council uses its power to come up with a responsible budget under trying circumstances.

Kathy Takizawa, 139 Eastgate, 15 year resident, chose Cheshire for the school system for her three children, and she supports the BOE budget. The school system speaks to the town as a great place, and without support, it sends a message that education is not supported. This affects the morale of the students, and she supports the social and emotional support of the students.

Denise Hersey, 721 Ives Row, reiterated support for the school system, saying she came to Cheshire for the schools which are important for the community. She is happy to pay more in taxes if it means keeping our excellent schools. Ms. Hersey asked that the school infrastructure proposal be brought to referendum for a voter decision.

Brian Lopez, 44 Guinevere Ridge, is a Dodd Middle School staff member and sports coach. He talked about it being great to be a school teacher, his worries about the kids, which teachers will be let go, the need for every teacher in the system, helping the kids, and his moving to Cheshire for his kids. Mr. Lopez has concerns about no sports in middle school, when sports should be available for all kids, along with music and the arts. He wants all programs available to his kids and all kids. He asked for the Council to take the Superintendent's budget and follow it for the future of Cheshire generations.

Doug Noble, 30 Jesse Court, moved to Cheshire three years ago for low taxes and the education system. He talked about there being a fine line between taxes and budget, and increase in taxes means losing businesses. The major problem is State leadership, the Governor not knowing how to do a budget, wanting road tolls back in Connecticut, and kids and neighbors hurting the most. Mr. Noble said companies are leaving the State, houses are up for sale, property values go down, and the entire State is in decline. Our children are at stake, and people should remember what is going on at the State level on election day. He commented on the new school infrastructure projects, thinking about how to spend money, \$120 million for building a new middle school, and inability to rely on State funding for these projects.

Barbara Collins, 50 Braymer Drive, has middle and high school students, and said people move to Cheshire for the schools and low taxes, and programs offered. Without the BOE budget fully funded, track will be cut. She understands what is going on with the State, and to balance the town budget we must look at other things to cut. Ms. Collins said if this continues the town will lose people coming to Cheshire. She is disturbed about the student/teacher ratio for 8th grade next year; 26 students per teacher is too high; and the budget is too lean this year.

Eric Muller, 10 Abbey Court, has a son in the theater group, who plans to study music theory, and arts is a part of his family. Another son struggles academically, but is good in soccer, representing the school and the town, with soccer opening up the door for college. Mr. Muller said everything is important for kids to gain confidence.

Bob Davis, Merwin Circle, thanked Mr. Milone and Supt. Solan for their budget presentations. He moved to Cheshire for the school system. He said the BOE budget is responsible and lean, and thanked the BOE staff. The social/emotional program is important for student well being, and as a member of the J.R.B. he has seen many kids not available for learning. This area of the budget should be increased. Research shows that kids who play sports and doing extra-curricular activities do better in school, learn time management and organizational skills. Mr. Davis said Chromebooks are a critical piece for learning, are a good piece of technology. He supports the BOE budget and encourages the Council to leave the budget as presented.

Kelly Gilchrist, 669 Dogwood Drive, stated she is a special education teacher, knows what the DRG means. To maintain quality education in DRG-B it is necessary and vital to fund programs and education. It is admirable Cheshire continues a good education system while being at the bottom level of the DRG. She moved to Cheshire for her young children. This budget is lean, and Ms. Gilchrist said further cuts make her nervous. She supports participation in athletic and arts programs. Ms. Gilchrist said pressure on kids continues to get larger and resources smaller, and putting sports and education at the forefront of the budget makes her proud to be a resident of Cheshire.

Derf Kleist talked about the Memorial Day Parade consuming more than 1% of the CPD budget, and asked where is the other 99%. Cheshire's mill rate is 31, Southington's is 30, and Wallingford 28, and existing and new businesses look at the mill rate.

Kevin Ferguson, 105 Copper Beach, thanked the Council and BOE for their work, stating this year's budget is in over 2%. It is as lean as it gets without cutting programs and school curriculum, and he said there is a return on the investment in education. Mr. Ferguson asked that choices be weighed, and said the education budget is out-performing the money spent.

Matt Planetta, 200 Jinny Hill Road, supports the education budget, has a kindergarten child this year who loves school, and said he has been coaching the middle school softball team for 11 years. He talked about the social/emotional piece of the budget, and its relationship to sports and academics, and his coaching connection with students. Mr. Planetta noted the leadership skills of students working with coaches on their strengths and weaknesses. Without sports, clubs, and activities, connections would not be made, and cutting sports also cuts the social/emotional piece as well.

Marion Nero, 55 Jesse Court, said the State is kicking the can down the road, and the one thing affecting Cheshire is funding the teacher's retirement contribution, at one-third of the total cost. This is then added to the upcoming WWTP debt and the BOE's lofty proposal for new schools. Ms. Nero said this spending has to stop; we must live within

our means; school enrollment is declining and the budget increases in millions of dollars. She thanked the Council for its foresight in sending the teachers' contract to arbitration, and understanding that many residents cannot afford more taxes.

Judy Villa, 1020 Danard Place, commended Town Manager Milone and Supt. Solan, and thanked the Council and BOE members for their hard work on the budget. Ms. Villa has served on the Council and BOE, has heard all this before. She taught at Quinnipiac University for 25 years and knows the value of education. Ms. Villa encouraged everyone to contact their State Legislators, who work very hard, as these are the people doing their job. At the Women in Blue event in Hartford today, Ms. Villa advised there were complaints made about cuts to education and pushing retirement costs from the State onto the backs of municipalities. There is a need for better planning, better proposals, and end of torture to the citizens of the communities.

Nicolle Galiette, Maple Avenue, said education should not be cut, it should be embraced by the town; standards should not be lowered; kids need the opportunity for knowledge in things which make them happy, healthy and involved in the community. She said those kids involved do better; there is promotion of growth; and the Council must look other places for money, not education. Cheshire is a great town with more potential and educational benefits for students.

Lisa Murray, 140 Charter Oak Drive, has two sons who went through the school system, and she is proud of the strong college opportunities due to sports, education, and music programs. Cutting the education budget will not enable other children the enriching academic, extra-curricular and sports programs and become good members of society. Ms. Murray stated her support of the BOE budget.

Terry LaChance, King Road, supports the education budget. Regarding the projected average class sizes she said we are losing a 1st grade teacher at Norton School, and 2nd grade will have 22 students per class.

Connie Polizzano, 100 Harrison Road, 33 year resident, values education, but would like other services, such as bulky waste pickup and curbs in her neighborhood. In hearing parents and teachers supporting education, she recommended a 3rd mill rate for residents over 65 years old who have paid taxes for 30 years...give them a break and increase taxes for the younger citizens.

Heather Barghout, Tuttle Avenue, moved to Cheshire for the school system, and said Wallingford CT has a lower mill rate. She supports the BOE budget.

Kathy Hellreich, BOE Chair, 525 Wood Hill Road, thanked Mr. Milone, Supt. Solan, Mr. Masciana, Town Council and BOE members for their work on the budget. She thanked those present who talked for and against the BOE budget. She asked people to stay involved. The list of cuts to sports and music was put together by Supt. Solan, but the BOE has not gone through this list. If the budget increase is lowered everything will be on the table, and BOE will look at everything. There are rumors out there that the

budget increase will be lower. She said Supt. Solan started working on the social/emotional learning and this will be taken into consideration with the budget, and public input to the BOE is welcomed. The BOE has finance meetings, open to the public, and needs to hear from the public again. Ms. Hellreich stated the BOE and Council must work together for the benefit of the Town.

Chairman Oris thanked BOE members for their work and efforts on the budget, and noted it has not been an easy budget for anyone.

Mr. Oris read a letter into the record about the proposed Town and BOE budgets, from Guy Darter, Cheshire resident.

Judy Villa asked if there is a day that will come when we are doing the town budget after the State does its budget. The Cheshire budget is due the middle of April, and the State budget, this year, is due June 7th, and sometimes the Legislature comes back for a summer session.

This has been talked about and Chairman Oris said the budget schedule is driven by the Charter, which is now under review. Budget dates can be looked at under this review. There are some logistical concerns about delaying the budget too long...the impact on the fiscal year.

Town Manager Milone said this is a problem we have, in that the State determines the uniform fiscal year, July to June. Some dates in Cheshire could be smoothed out but there must still be a July to June fiscal year. The easier thing would be for the State to operate on a calendar year, and there would be no uncertainty, but the State does not want to be inconvenienced. The Town Charter is being revised now, budget dates are being looked at, but no matter what is done, we still face the prospect of having to develop a budget before the State's final budget. If we know what we are dealing with, we can react with good management. The target moves every few months and Mr. Milone said this year the Town adopted its budget, and in July he had to go back to the Council and BOE and tell them we lost \$500,000. Then, in December, Mr. Milone said he had to go back and tell them we lost another \$400,000. Even if we had certainty, Mr. Milone said the State will take money away from the municipalities during the fiscal year, and this will continue.

Doug Noble asked if other towns are going to the State and telling them they cannot afford the \$3.5 million retirement contribution increase. Mr. Noble said our State is so poorly run, and noted \$3.5 million is no big deal for New Haven, but it is a huge number for smaller towns. He also asked if there is any movement by the 169 municipalities who cannot afford this bill, and telling the State to figure it out.

According to Chairman Oris, the Town of Cheshire is doing everything it can through its legislators about this issue. The best thing the community can do is to engage in this process, and the Town is making people aware at the Capitol how disheartening and discouraging, and financially problematic this situation is for all the communities. Mr.

Oris stated that the people hold more power than the Council, and encouraged people to get involved and continue the process at the State level. This year the retirement contribution is \$3.5 million, and Mr. Oris advised that this liability will grow each year going forward...with the State pushing this onto the municipalities.

Breina Schain, 52 Hilltop Road, said she lost her job with the Dept. of Correction because of the Governor's cuts. The Council is doing a great job against great odds. She encouraged people to contact their State legislators.

7. REBUTTAL AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIR.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Before adjourning the public hearing, Chairman Oris thanked everyone for attending, stating their comments and questions, and becoming involved in the critical important job of running Town Government.

The Town Council will hold a public information session on April 4th.

MOTION by Mr. Slocum; seconded by Ms. Flynn-Harris

MOVED to adjourn the public hearing at 9:26 p.m.

VOTE The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Chairman Oris closed the public hearing.

Attest:

Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk