

TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC HEARING
APRIL 5, 2017
Legislative Chambers 2:00 p.m.

PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2017-18 BUDGET

Public Hearing opened at 2:02 p.m.

President Cantor: This is the 2:00 p.m. Public Hearing. I'm calling it to order. I brought my gavel, so I'm going to bang it. If you are a resident or this is the 2017-18 Fiscal Year Budget as proposed by the Town Manager and Superintendent. That is the subject of this Public Hearing. If you are a resident or taxpayer and would like to speak at today's Public Hearing on the Town Budget, please sign in as many of you have done already with your name and address. You will have three minutes to speak. If you are speaking on behalf of a group, you will have five minutes. The microphone is voice-activated, so when you start speaking, it will automatically go on. The Town Clerk will alert you when your time is up. If you are not a taxpayer or resident, please let us know so that we may entertain a motion to suspend the rules to allow you to speak. We will be calling the names in order once we grab the sheet. And then if you have not signed up, if people walk in, you will also have the opportunity to, to speak. We will start, we have, one of our Councilors, Chris Williams, is, is in court right now and Judy Casperson is here, Councilor Casperson, so roll call, Ms. Porrini.

Councilors Barnes, Cantor, Casperson, Davidoff, Dodge, Hall, Kerrigan and Wenograd were present. Councilor Williams was absent.

President Cantor: Thank you. There are copies of the Budget in brief on the table, and the Budget was presented by the Town Manager last month. It is also online in detail. You can get all the supporting documents. And so can we have the signup sheet, please? While we are waiting for the signup sheet, just so you know, I did receive a letter. I will pass it around to my colleagues a letter with a, a number of signatures regarding the, the Senior Center. And I'm not sure who actually, I think it was Danielle Fernino. So we, thank you. So we have that here, and I will pass it around to everybody. Thank you, Mr. Van Winkle. We'll start with, I'm going to say the name that is up and then the name that's on deck and I will try, if I don't pronounce your name correctly, I apologize. John Feehan is up and Alice Stoner is, is second. And don't forget to state your name and address. John Feehan? Yes. This is just a Public Hearing. We are here to listen to you. And so if you want to speak, you can come up and speak into that mic for the record.

Mr. Feehan: Is this on? Yes. Actually, I only had questions about the capital financing issues. I mean, that's not strictly true. I have a lot of questions, but I just wanted to confine my remarks to that. It says that the capital financing, the Capital Improvement Program is \$199.5 million, which interestingly enough, is just about exactly equal to the total increase in expenditures between the '17 and '18 fiscal year budgets. I assume that's just a coincidence, but the increase in the, in the budget is about 9.5 percent of the Capital Improvement Budget. And I just have to ask and I assume that you've already done this, but I still have to ask are we to assume that

everything in that 199.5 million is absolutely, completely essential at this point? In most companies where I've worked, if you had a 10 percent overage, you covered it by reducing your budget by 10 percent and you could do it somehow. Now, the examples that're listed in that paragraph, list several examples like North Main Street Bridge and the Park Road Interchange, but those add up to a long, long way less than \$16.6 million, which is 1/12th of the Capital Improvement Budget, which is a 12-year budget. So, you know, I didn't realize until today that the entire budget was online, so I've got some homework to do too, but I would just ask you is everything in that \$200 million really, really something that has to be done and budgeted for now or can't something be put off because you're talking about people if you're talking about reducing other parts of the budget. And that's really all and one other thing I had a question on. It says Bonded Debt Service is \$17.6 million. That's kind of confusing as it reads. I don't know whether that means, I think it must mean that's the whole bonded debt service right now. Again, that's a lot, a lot less than \$200 million and that's really all that I had to say. I just, you got to sharpen your knives, folks. Thank you.

President Cantor: We'll be reviewing that in committee, and you are right, the 17.6 is the debt service. Thank you. Mr. Van Winkle.

Mr. Van Winkle: A moment to clarify, 200 million is a 12-year plan. It is not what the Council is adopting. They adopt the first two years of the Capital Budget. The 18 million is the debt service that we pay principal and interest on bonds we have previously issued. We, we usually do a 15- to 20-year bond and so that could go back to the late 90s where we're still paying off debts from projects in the town. And the, there's, again, the appropriate one to look at is the first two years of the capital plan and the debt service, which is what we are raising taxes to pay off the debt service of past bonds.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. Van Winkle. This Public Hearing really is to receive comments and not to get in it or else we will not have the opportunity to hear people's comments. But we are happy to talk to you after, after the meeting. I will be here, too. So next person up is Alice Stoner and after that is Danielle Fernino.

Ms. Stoner: Thank you. How can you vote on a budget or on the mill rate without knowing what's going to be passed with the legislature for the State? Once you pass the mill rate, it is going to be locked in. Am I correct with that? I was wondering if you can put something in the budget that is amended so the budget, the, the mill rate at a later date can be, you know, set? I was wondering if that is, is possible. Why should all the taxpayers, seniors, and residents of West Hartford, it's really not fair to them. I mean, I'm on a fixed income. I'm retired, and I'm sure a lot of these other people that're here today are as well. And I don't feel we should bail out Hartford. If we were, were in the same situation that they're in now, they wouldn't bail us out. I'm sure of that. And my other comment is how can you vote on a budget or mill rate again without knowing what the legislature is going to do and that was basically, basically it. Thank you.

President Cantor: Thank you. We cannot get through the public comment if we answer questions, we're answering questions, but I will just say that when we set, there may be legislation that will allow us to reset our mill rate. We're going to have to make some unique

assumptions. We will talk about that on a budget night, but I'm happy to also have a conversation with you after. But I have to receive the comments for other people. Danielle Fernino is next and then Phil Walker.

Ms. Fernino: Hello. I'm here representing members and people who frequent the Senior Center on Starkel Road. Now, we have 1,000 members who belong there. And I, I believe that it works like this. The Director gets a budget of a certain number of dollars and she has to generate or he, she in this case of course, has to generate a certain amount of money. And I think in the report that I had in LIFE, the West Hartford LIFE said \$120,000 was the cost of maintaining the Senior Center, and I was told it was \$100,000. But on my way out the door, somebody said today, actually, the Senior Center generates money, so I don't know if that's true or not. But I want to say how very important the Senior Center is to seniors. You know, people are living longer and this Senior Center provides classes of all sorts to them, events that they can attend, and all kinds of activities that make life better for them. Many people would feel isolated if they didn't have this place to go to. You wouldn't believe how active it is. And seniors have made great contributions to our communities throughout the years, and it's nice that they're living longer, but they need a place to go to, too. For many people, that's a second home. One man says it's his family. I speak in favor of keeping our Senior Center open. It should be a very, very last, not something we should resort to at all.

President Cantor: Thank you, Ms. Fernino. As Mr. Walker makes his way up here, Tom McCormick is on deck.

Mr. Walker: Madam Mayor, members of the Council, I am Phil Walker. I live at 103 Emily Way in, in West Hartford. I'm here on behalf of my role as Chair of the Senior Citizens Advisory Commission, which is appointed by the Council to advise on, on senior matters. And there are two things that, that I wanted. The first is the increase in the, in the real estate taxes, particularly as a result of the reassessment, which has hit my, at, at 1401, but also all of the seniors here. And we're talking about people on fixed incomes on that and who have, who have, have contributed years and years and are still contributing to the, to the town. The, the second thing is on the budget. As far as doing anything about the senior centers, I couldn't say anything more eloquent than my, the preceding speaker did, but I'd like to point out just a few things. One, there, the, the members, and we're talking about 1,001 and so let's say there's 2,000 there. They all pay \$10 a piece toward it. If you go over there, which I have, as, as part of my, my duties, there's something going on all the time there. It's amazing. And then the one thing I think is very important as far as the town is concerned, the programs they have on health over there a couple of times a year where the seniors have the opportunity to meet with health services providers on that, it's, it's a unique opportunity for them, but it's something that is of no expense to the, to the town. But what a contribution it is to the health of our senior citizens. Thank you so much for the opportunity of speaking to you.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. Walker, and thank you for your service on the Senior Citizen Advisory Commission. Tom McCormick, Mr. McCormick is next and then Paul Smites, Smits, 43 Emily Way.

Mr. McCormick: I usually don't really care too much what's going on in the Town of West Hartford. I mean, I do live here, but I really, I'm just not that interested. Typically, I'm much more concerned about the United States shipping bombs to Saudi Arabia to blow the crap out of the people in Yemen, you know, war crime after war crime after war crime courtesy of U.S. bombs. But, you know, this property tax is actually getting to be a little bit too much. I pay, you know, \$13,000/\$13,500 in property taxes. And, you know, when you start increasing on that kind of figure, it's really getting to be a little bit over the top here, folks. And I'm going to address a few issues with part of the budget, nothing, you know, exactly specifically but in general, broad strokes. First of all, this debt service issue is absolutely outrageous. I mean, at least the people down in Greenwich where people know something about money, I think they do down in Greenwich, they don't have any Capital Service in their town budget. None. Zero. Why do we in West Hartford? It doesn't make much sense. When you get to the point where you're laying out the same amount of money in supposed investments, in capital services and interest for what your capital budget is for year after year, you're not investing in anything. Nothing. Period. You ought to pay for stuff as you go, really, because that way you get less. I don't know what is the total? Is it close to 10 percent in West Hartford now? I know it was a few years ago. Ten percent gets the taxpayers what? Nothing. It pays for nothing, you know? And also you got to consider, I don't know who you people represent, I really don't know enough about you, but I do know this – debt service is the greatest government debt service is the greatest transfer of wealth going on in this country that is shipping billions and trillions of dollars from the middle class straight to the top of people in our economy. The federal debt, state debt, and city debt, the greatest rip-off the middle class ever. And I don't know why you people are participating in that. Maybe you're not aware, I don't know. But, in general, I think the town has gotten a little bit ahead of itself and maybe is trying to make itself a little too nice, and it's not really quite recognizing that these things have to be paid for. A prime example is the bike path along Trout Brook. Not a huge amount of money, but God, you want to know, I've been so many places in this country and you can go along a river or a stream and there's a path there, and it didn't take any town or state to get a path there. It develops organically. Why do you got to put a concrete path? Are you in the business of making sure the concrete business and the tar people business are in business not sometimes what I think government's about. I know our street got tarred last year when it certainly didn't need it. All that happens now is cars go faster. You put these nice curbs in. The water used to run off into people's lawns and get soaked up. Now, it runs off straight into the sewers. Doesn't make much sense how you're spending your money, folks. And I want to suggest this, teacher salaries. Everyone says you can't cut education. Well, I think you can. I think you got to cap education, teachers' salaries, period. You keep paying teachers based on their longevity. Well, I don't think any of you or no one in this room can demonstrate to me that once a teacher's been in there 6/7/8 years becomes a better teacher. I've looked and tried to find studies. I have searched high and low. You cannot find anything that says a teacher, a 20-year teacher is better than a 10-year teacher, but you sure pay them a lot more money, don't you?

President Cantor: Mr. McCormick, your time is up, so wind up, please.

Mr. McCormick: Okay. So, please, look at things and try to be efficient and cut salaries across the board above \$50,000 or so progressively.

President Cantor: Thank you. Mr. Smits, Paul Smits, 43 Emily Way and then John Lemega.

Mr. Smits: Thank you, Madam Mayor and Councilors and Mr. Van Winkle. I come from a business world, and in the business world, we've always learned that after a period of time, it is always good to have a corporation review itself and say what can we do to make ourselves more efficient? I've already heard and begun to hear a lot more today about cost structures, expenses, etc. And whereas I believe that our Council here is very talented and our Mayor is very talented and the Board of Education is, I think it's about time that this town has a professional come in to examine are we operating as efficiently as possible. And I think as residents, we are entitled to that. Thank you.

President Cantor: Thank you. Is it Mr. Smits? Is that how you say it? Oh, yeah. Okay, thank you. Next is Mr. Lemega and then after that, Bob Cave.

Mr. Lemega: Madam Mayor, Mr. Van Winkle, and members of the Council, I am retired and I live on a fixed income and I live at 1401 Farmington Avenue. There are a lot of people here who live at 1401 Farmington Avenue. The Town of West Hartford neither plows nor maintains our roads. Consequently, a substantial portion of the approximately \$5,000 that my wife and I pay in condominium charges go to pay for services that the neighbors around us receive from the Town of West Hartford. In addition, there are no children at 1401, so we place no burden on our school system. I spend most of my time doing volunteer work, which redounds either directly or indirectly to the benefit of the town. But based on Mr. Van Winkle's estimated budget increase, and I know that, that's a number which is, which is moving about, my spouse and I confront a potential property tax increase of several thousand dollars, a tax increase that, frankly, I, I can't believe I'm saying this, because we're on a fixed income, we really can't afford. I'm not asking for your sympathy, though, but I have some modest proposals. The Town Manager and the Superintendent of Schools have provided lists of potential additional budget cuts. Respectfully, the Council should adopt the Town Manager's reduction list in toto. The Superintendent's list of reductions total \$9,218,000. And last night the Board of Education purported to reduce its budget by \$6 million. Now, that was either a good start or an act of epic legerdemain because I'm not sure that they did anything with their budget last night. In any event, whatever's, whatever is, is, is on that Superintendent's list, that hasn't been adopted by the, by the Board of Education, those dollars should be reduced from the Board Budget. These are hard times and these are hard cuts and, and the education, I'm a former member, I'm a former Chairman of the Board of Education, so it really bothers me to make those cuts. But when the Board of Education, you know, out of hand, declines to consider the issue of class size but declines to consider can we really afford all-day kindergarten then I think then those, in, in those circumstances, the Council should, should cut the budget, should reduce the amount of money that you allocate to the Board of Education based upon the cuts that were, that have been proposed or, or posited by the Superintendent. I also believe that in reviewing the Town Manager's Budget, I was drawn to our Fire and Police Budget. In my 45 years in West Hartford, I cannot recall any objective analysis of how much fire and police protection this town really needs. Shouldn't that kind of analysis serve as the lynchpin for a budget allocation? Whatever budgetary changes you decide to make, please make sure that any budget pain is shared by all segments of our community, the seniors and the juniors. Do not impose on seniors such as myself a tax burden that will drive us to leave West Hartford. Thank you for your attention.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. Lemega. Mr. Cave and after Mr. Cave is Chris Bennett.

Mr. Cave: Thank you, Mayor and Council. Bob Cave. I live on Emily Way and today I am speaking to you from 1401 Homeowners Association of which I'm on the Board. I'm going to ask you to consider two things today. Number one, really think you should come up as a Town Council to a max. You need to let folks know where we're at and what you're willing to accept. The second is I'm going to encourage you to spread out the allocation according to the new assessment. It should not be done in any one year. Let's talk about why the percentage should not be any greater than four percent. The past two years, it was three percent. That worked. You've done an excellent job every time you, you approve three percent. I, I congratulated our Town Manager. Most of the towns in our area are this year looking at between three and four percent. They've adjusted to all the changes that you folks are looking at, and again, kept it under four percent. The State has not given us any money, and therefore, we could be charged or have some disagreeance. The assessment re-evaluation is going to impact many of us, including the 180 folks in our neighborhood, and that is a factor. You have a lot of folks, somewhere, I've heard anywhere from 30 to 45, who are either low salary or on fixed income in the town so you need to be cognizant of them, please. Our home values. Yes, unfortunately they're dropping and one of the factors is the higher taxes. We're also not blessed but we have one of the highest mill rates. Those are not a good combinations, so that's part of why you really need to keep it under four percent. You have a problem with those two budgets. You have one from the School Board and you have your own. Ron does one and the Superintendent of Schools does the other and hopefully they meet on your, your desk. Unfortunately, this shouldn't happen and I encourage you to make it so that like it's one like Avon has or some of the other towns in Connecticut, they have one entity or one person. So what should the Town Council do? We're right at the 9th inning and you have to make some decisions. Historically, the budgets have been prepared by the people who not only prepare them but actually live with them and that's our Town Manager and the Superintendent. So therefore, they know what needs to be done in our town. They know where the things that're nice to have are and they know where the things that can be postponed or reduced, so therefore, we're going to suggest at the end of my talk that you ask them to redo the budget and come back with something less than four percent. So why should we ask the staff? Why can't you folks do it yourself? Well, I, I applaud each of you for your knowledge of the budget, for your involvement of the budget and the time that you put in, but the people who know it are Ron and Tom. They're the ones that know where the cuts, where the eliminations, where the consolidation is. They know where the overtime is. They know the operating procedures. They are the ones that can come back to us and tell us where we're at. So hopefully, you can give them the direction of coming back with a budget that's less than four percent. Now, the assessment of re-evaluation. I happen to live in an area with 180 other taxpayers and owners at 1401. Every one of us have gotten a 10 to 15 percent increase in our assessment. Under the original taxes, that worked out for me to be almost \$4,000 in one year for an increase. The previous two years when the increase was a lot lower, I was looking at \$400. So in one year I get a 10 times increase in my taxes. Spreading the evaluation out will help in relationship to folks like me and others who are in, in a similar situation. Every house is either going to go up or down. It just so happens that I'm on the upside one, but please, spread it out. Five years is, is perfect and I know you've done it before. In conclusion, there are a lot of residents and business and taxpayers like the ones that I'm representing today who are going to

see an, an increase in their assessment and who are concerned about what you're going to approve for the taxes. So the one thing you can do is when you approve the taxes, please remember that number, four percent, and stay under it. Three percent is even better. So today I'm asking two things. Number one, ask the Town Manager and your Superintendent of Schools to come back to you with a realistic, you've heard a couple of people give you some suggestions before and there're probably others, but four percent is a magic number and it has to be below, it should be below that. And the second is please approve a spreading out of the assessments for five years. One last point. Each of you are taxpayers. Each of you can ask yourselves do I want to pay, originally it was 4.8 percent. Now it's somewhere a little bit less than five. We don't know what it is. But I think each of you will ask and I'm sure the folks here would ask and those who are out watching, three to four percent is a much better number and it can be done. So we're asking you to make that consideration. Thank you.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. Cave. As Chris Bennett walks up, Jill Spier is on deck.

Mr. Bennett: Hi. I am the Chairman of the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. I have a couple of members here with me. One just felt like she had to step out. She has the sweetest little baby. That's Sarah Needham and Robin Collins. So I'm going to read an open letter from the Board. We signed it 100 percent, so it was a unanimous motion. But first, I want to tell you a short story. So the Parks and Rec Commission is, the Parks and Rec Department is so important and it touches so many lives. My family and I moved here 11 years ago from Arkansas and one of the first things we did was got the leisure services program and we signed our 12-year-old daughter up for foil fencing, just something that doesn't exist in Arkansas. So we tell these stories before and after our Board meetings. So my daughter now fights in the NCAA. She fought three Olympians at the NCAA Regional Championships a week ago, so it's part a story about the parks, part bragging, but it really, my point being it touches so many lives in ways that maybe aren't really evident when the scalpel's out for the budgets. So here's the letter. "We as a Board support the proposed Leisure Services Budget and strongly object to cuts to the Department programs. In particular, we ask that the West Hartford Senior Center and the outdoor pool operations continue to be supported in the Town's Budget. As you know, the Parks and Rec Department's mission is to enrich the quality of life of all residents through healthy lifestyle initiatives. They provide a comprehensive program of recreational activities and provide safe, accessible, and well-maintained recreational facilities for everyone to enjoy. When you read accolades in magazines and newspaper articles about how wonderful West Hartford is, the quality of amenities, such as parks and pools, are invariably mentioned. It is our understanding that only minimal savings would be achieved by closing Eisenhower Park's outdoor pool, the only public pool in the north side of town and the only pool with a deep end. You have already heard from our senior neighbors about the important role that the Senior Center plays in their lives. An unsung feature of the overall Leisure Services Budget is about 70 percent of its programs and expenses are covered by user fees and grants. What they deliver to the community cannot be measured in dollars. We are confident that the Leisure Services Department makes every effort to run its programs and facilities with utmost efficiency. Thank you for your attention."

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. Bennett. And also thank you for your service to the town. Jill Spier is next then Marcia Faggaini is after, on deck.

Ms. Spier: I do not envy you your job. I'm here today as many people are, to talk about and give you some feedback on what I feel is important to retain in the budget. I am an avid library user as are I'm sure many people in the audience. And I'm, full disclosure, I'm on the West Hartford Public Library Foundation Board and I'm a member of the, President of the West Hartford Library Board as well. One of, the only point I really have to make... My, my point is the, the West Hartford Library, as all public libraries, provides the ultimate reusable resource. Every dollar that's invested is spent, returned many times over because the assets that we purchase and provide are used over and over again. So while there are many good things that we could keep on, in the budget and they're all worthy, all worthy. As I say, I do not envy you your job, I think that the library is an asset that cuts across every demographic, every neighborhood in town, and every citizen so I'm speak on behalf of them. Thank you.

President Cantor: Thank you, Ms. Spier. Appreciate your service, too. Marcia Faggaini? Okay. Lorraine Tambutto. No, okay. Chris Beede. I'm sorry? Oh. And on deck is Janice Ciraulo, Civall?

Mr. Beede: I think I'm going to have to bend over here. All right. Thank you, Madam Mayor. My name is Chris Beede. I live at 319 North Quaker Lane. I've been a West Hartford resident for the past 11 years, and I'll confess that this is my first year of actually paying attention to the budgeting process both for our Town and for the State. And it looks like I picked a damn interesting year to do that so...in the past, in this past month I've tried to educate myself as best I can, going through the proposals, reviewing past reports, reading all the newspaper articles and coverage, and attending public forums like these. As a town taxpayer, I'm, I've come away with a very favorable impression of West Hartford's ability in the past to balance the school responsibility while providing a top-notch set of services and high-quality education for our children. As a State taxpayer, I'm just coming away very scared right now so...we're both Town and State taxpayers and I've certainly gained a much better appreciation for how dire the State's fiscal situation is and the negative ripple effects that that's likely to have on our town and all Connecticut towns in the very near future. After having done this homework, I don't have any specific pleas for not cutting a specific program or not raising taxes, but I would like to point out that in the beginning of our budget document, it says one of our town's stated organizational values is the commitment to long-range fiscal and administrative planning. And it says we are committed to a proactive approach to the issues and challenges confronting our community. Frankly, I don't see much evidence of that. I don't see us being proactive. I don't see us recognizing a lot of substantial challenges that we face. Just to be specific, even under a best case scenario, we're likely to significantly less aid from the State for education. Superior Court's ruling last September in the Governor's initial proposal to change the ECS formula the next fiscal year are proof of that. The State's pension fund for teachers is significantly underfunded and it is highly likely that we're going to see some form of cost-sharing with our towns. And in that plan, you know, obviously by the proposal of the Governor was, was hard to stomach for anybody, but something will come from that. If you look at our own budget, healthcare claims and insurance costs represent some of the town's largest year over year increases. This is a fact. This is demographics. This is what's going to keep happening. And then speaking of demographics, they're not working in our favor. Our town population is flat, our school enrollment is decreasing, and our costs of education costs are rising. These

challenges aren't going away and they're not unique to this year's plan. We can reasonably expect that these challenges will be facing us for the foreseeable future. So as a town resident and taxpayer, I have an expectation that the Town Council has acknowledged these long-term challenges and has just, and they are going to proactively develop strategies and actions for addressing them. And from what I can garner just reading through the budget, I don't see the evidence of a strong, long-term planning process in place. So my request to the town and to the Council is to, you know, you know, provide a, you know, a, or look for a way to challenge yourselves on how we do planning in this town. And you know what? Look at the current planning process. Look at opportunities to strengthen it and its long-range planning capabilities. This would enhance our ability to effectively respond to these difficult decisions. As an example, we could maybe have a principle that we don't want to increase taxes more than four percent a year, and that sets kind of our means of what we have to live within. And that gives us the chance to start saying, okay, what're the programs and so on? What're the costs increases? How do we manage to stay within our means just like we do with our own household budgets? Anyway. I, I really would encourage us to take a stronger look at what's coming not just this year but what's likely to come in, in the years to come and how does this town plan to deal with that. Thank you.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. Beede. Janice Ciraulo and on deck is Linda Webber.

Ms. Ciraulo: Madam Mayor, Council, and Mr. Van Winkle. I didn't plan on speaking, so it'll be extemporaneously. I am Jan Ciraulo. I live at 15 Gallaudet Drive here. I've lived in this town since I was 14-years-old, and in a blink here I am a senior citizen, so it will happen to all of you. I'd like to speak and support the last two speakers on behalf of the Starkel Road Senior Center. I've been attending that Center for several years now. And as a nurse practitioner, retired, I can see the quality of health that is essential for all of our seniors and maintaining that quality of health. Across the street is fellowship housing, which as you all are well-aware, there are many, it's a special cohort of individuals, which we are seniors, and many of them who have disabilities who come across the street for socialization as well as for the programs that're provided there. Another program that is provided there is there is a physical therapist who comes every Tuesday and Thursday as a volunteer there. I have met with him, and he provides ongoing physical therapy for many of the seniors who are in need of cardiac rehab or whatever the problem may be. So it is about, again, this is a, a great town in terms of the quality of health that we have within our town, and maintaining that Starkel Road, keeping it open, is essential for mainly, mostly widows that I see there so it's really, that is the population that pretty much attends there. Their programs are diversified, so again, it's about the quality of health. So I will ask you, sharpen your pencils and where it comes to Starkel Road, cross it off your list. Thank you.

President Cantor: Thank you, Ms. Ciraulo. Linda Webber and then on deck, Elliott and Meryl Rosenberg... Elliott and Meryl Rosenberg?

Ms. Rosenberg: Pass.

President Cantor: Passing. Peter Towey and then Jeff Daniels.

Mr. Towey: Peter Towey, 27 Bonny View Road. Just wanted to spend a little time to thank the Council for all the hard work in this tough budget process. I don't think anyone in this room envies you and the decisions you're going to have to make. Also wanted to thank the Town

Manager and the Superintendent for preparing what I thought was a, a very reasonable and, and thoughtful budget. I think it's important to note that if we remove the disproportionate reductions in aid from the governments, the Governor's proposed budget, that, those budgets would've come in at a 1.9 percent increase, I believe. I haven't really been on top of all the numbers, but I think that's a very reasonable number to maintain the services and the benefits and sort of keep this community thriving and moving forward. That being said, I believe or it seems there's indications that those full cuts to West Hartford aren't going to go through as proposed. It probably is naïve to assume that they're going to go back to zero and we're going to be fully-funded. So as we move forward, I think we need to realize that just as if we set our mill rate and we have a large tax increase, we can't possibly go back and change that. If we cut programs to absorb a \$14 million cut that may not occur, those programs aren't going to be able to be re-instituted mid-budget year. And those cuts will have a dramatic effect on our community. So as we move forward, we need to be fiscally responsible as I believe and I've been proud of this town being fiscally responsible moving through the years, but we need to move forward in a manner that is realizing that we're probably not going to be dealing with the \$14 million cut and take appropriate assumptions under the best, you know, best situation that we can. I would also urge you to make sure we're continuing to, you know, fund education and, and public safety. I think the services that're provided to this community, you know, our education program is still a, a rising star in Connecticut, and if we make further cuts, we've been reducing per pupil expenditures, further cuts is going to start eating away at that. And our emergency service providers have been doing more and more, providing more services as we saw with the fire department taking on paramedic service. Those are all increases in services and benefits to our community that we need to protect and make sure that we're maintaining those services to our community and our most needy. Thank you.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. Towey. Mr. Daniels is up and then Una Woods next.

Mr. Daniels: Good afternoon. Hi. My name's Jeff Daniels. I live at 102 Arundel Avenue. Thank you for listening. I wanted to empathize with what you have to deal with, some of which was not of your making. I want to cover two specific areas that're relatively small in the budget but I think are important. And the one disclaimer that I would make, I had the, the good fortune to be out of the country for the last month, so I may be a little behind on some of the specifics, and if I make an error, that, chalk it up to that. My two areas are capital investment and land, the UConn property, and second is the, there has been some discussion of instituting parking fees for use of the central branch of the library. On the UConn campus, the Council and the Staff did a rather fantastic job of negotiating what was a reasonable and good proposal to purchase that land, and that's now, I understand, in limbo. I, I would urge you to look long-term not short-term. To think boldly about protecting what may be the largest piece of land, undeveloped or soon to be re-developed, land in the town. I think it was an old sage who said that the one thing that God isn't making any more is land. The, it's vital for the future of the North Hartford area that the Council maintains maximum control of what's going to happen to land that is going to be re-developed. It could be, it could be developed right now as a matter of right as single family, which will have enormous implications for that neighborhood, all of which may not be the best use of that land. So I would urge to take another look at whether you can make a down payment on that as an element in the Capital Budget because it will, the SDD approach is just not sufficient to give us the control that will protect the wetlands, that will create enough open space,

and create a reasonable development design when that, when people start to re-develop it. The second piece relates to the proposal about the library and I hope, I don't know, hopefully it's gone already, but free parking was, the free parking was not simply administrative decision. And perhaps I can give you a little context. The action that created the free parking was a part of the process in the quasi-judicial Town Plan and Zoning, Zoning Commission process of Blue Back Square. It was not a simple administrative process by a budget decision. There was a lot of extensive hearings. There was feedback. There were a lot of changes coming at that time, a lot of which would be good and the protection of the, of the easy and free access to the library was an essential element of the parking garage negotiations. I don't remember the specifics and I'm still doing some research on it. I think it may have even been in the Conditions of Approval. And it was designed that way to be sure that the revenues to repay the bonds on the garage were not necessarily to produce revenues for the town. Perhaps long-term they would, but they were not designed to pay for other services in the way that's, you now want to use the, potentially use the fees to the garage. The library is a magnificent facility. It's more than a library. It's a resource for the community, the number of programs that go on daily and in the evenings is phenomenal, and to, to place the additional parking fee burden on it would just run that piece backwards. So I would urge you to take a look at that piece and see if there's any way that that could go back to the, to the, to the agreements that were made and the decisions in the, in the regulatory process and not try to take that away. Thank you.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. Daniels. Mary Mangan is next and then William Stolba or Mr... a pass. Mr. Stolba or Mrs. Stolba and then after is Vincent Staunton.

Mr. Stolba: Thank you for letting me speak. My name is William Stolba. I live right here on South Main Street, 108. And this afternoon I, I see that, I appreciate the Town Manager and Board of Education people doing your utmost to hash out this time, but we're, we're troubled with State funding. And it, the, we're looking at the worst case scenario, that \$14 million or something like that that we wouldn't be getting. I would ask all department heads, although they have put forth that proposed budget for, to 2018 to go back and sharpen their pencils. Looking at some of these General Fund expense fees, for example, Dues and Travel. Dues and travel for what? On the Facilities side, does the Town Hall really have to have a sprinkler system and does the lawn really have to be fertilized? I know these might be pennies, but these pennies add up to dollars. I wouldn't want to cut back on our facilities that produce income like the golf course. If anything, I would probably maybe try to get a little more funding from the golf course because it is a, a top-notch thing and also the swimming facility we have. But we're in tough circumstances now just like any of us would be in tough circumstances if let's say for example Social Security was cut. You'd have to sharpen your pencils and, and I'm hoping that you could convey that back to your department heads. That's all I have. Thank you.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. is it Staunton or Mr.? Okay. Oh, you're, I'm sorry. Mr. Stolba. Okay, yeah. And on deck is Bruce Growers or Growiss.

Mr. Staunton: Madam Mayor, Council members, and Mr. Van Winkle. This is the second time that I've come before the Council, the first time actually participating in this process. Before you, you have a document or documents and I'm from 103 Emily Way, 1401 Farmington Avenue. And I passed this document out after I spoke at the last meeting and perhaps now I'd

like to take your, put your, draw your attention to the document, and as you can see, we have '15, the assessments are 2015, the taxes, the 2016 assessments, the change in dollars, the percentage change in the assessment and then we have the 2016 taxes, which is inclusive of the mill rate, the new mill rate. So if you go down the list, there are like 26 or 27 villas here and also attached are the promenade buildings, an assessment of those, and you don't have to be a genius to understand that the impact on the 1401 communities is, is horrendous. We're talking about 34 percent. You've heard people up here speak about how they, you know, they're on fixed income, agreed. And so I, I would hope that you would pay particular attention to that. The 1401 community has a Board of Directors. The 1401 community has committees. We have an Energy Committee, we have a Water Committee, and we have a Grounds Committee, and we have made every attempt in the world to cut our costs. Association fees, they're close to \$6,000 a year, and last year alone we paid \$200,000 for road maintenance, snow removal, and some sanitation for the promenade buildings, so we're carrying our load, okay? If you read the Hartford Courant today, the Hartford Courant in the business section had an article that says home sales dropped by 4.2 percent, home prices fell by 2.2 percent, and the outlook for the future is grim, so I think we ought to take that into account. So I think that you folks have done a wonderful job with respect to budgets and the Manager too over the previous years. This year has been a, a shock to our community and I'm sure to the town as a whole. I was hoping that I could've been able to display this, but it's, it's, it tells its own story. It's very accurate and I, and I'm, and I was very happy that when I was handing these out before the meeting, that Mr. Van Winkle had indicated that he had spoken to the assessor's office. So now there's another story. So I have been to the assessor's office on three occasions, and I thought I had got, you know, I really felt that I got a, a real dose of Irish diplomacy. And Irish diplomacy is very simple and it's, it's the ability to tell someone to go to hell and help them enjoy the trip, okay? So, you know, I don't want to belabor the point here, but I'm trying to get my message across. I think you ought to seriously look at the Town Manager's Budget, what he's offering for reductions, and take it very seriously. And with that, thank you very much for your attention and I appreciate it.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. Staunton. Next up, all right, is Bruce, Mr. Grower, and then George Kennedy.

Mr. Grower: Thank you for letting us speak, Madam Mayor and Council people. The United States is a nation of have and have-nots. West Hartford is quickly becoming a community of have and have-nots. In the past week, there was a commentary from somebody in Darien who was wealthy and saying that the taxes are too high in Connecticut and they're leaving. Well, let's talk about taxes. In the United States in the 1950s, corporations paid \$1.50 for every \$1.00 that individuals pay. Right now, corporations pay \$0.25 for every \$1.00 that individuals pay. Corporations definitely are not paying their fair share. And let's talk about wealthy individuals like that person in Darien. In the 1950s when Eisenhower was President, past a certain income threshold when the United States was growing, wealthy people paid up to 90 percent in taxes after a certain income threshold. Before Ronald Reagan was President, it was 70 percent. Right now, the wealthy simply are not paying their share and corporations are not paying their share. How is the government funding without the wealthy paying their share? It's basically stealth taxes on the poor. The poor are the majority of people who buy lottery tickets, who go to the casinos, play the slot machines. Eighty-five percent of the revenue that is made by the casinos

are slot machines, so it's like a regressive tax on the poor. Let's see...and...let's see, as far as West Hartford goes...other types of debt that we have too, student debt. There's like \$1.3 trillion in student debt and basically, that's basically like glue where students can't get rid of that debt. But corporations can file for Chapter 11 and it's really easy for them to get rid of their debt and pay pennies on the dollar. And it's the same thing for wealthy people just like our President, where they brag about basically filing for bankruptcy a few times and basically discharging most of their debt. As I said at the last meeting, a way that we would get rid of a lot of the debt in the State of Connecticut if people would like to contact their legislators, would be to have a State Bank in the State of Connecticut. North Carolina, North, excuse me, North Dakota is the only state in the U.S. that has a State Bank. That means they can borrow money basically at 0 percent and fund whatever activities they want. North Dakota is funding the oil pipeline, which I'm against because I'm an environmentalist, but nevertheless they do have the money to fund that activity. If we had a State Bank here in Connecticut, communities like West Hartford could be funding different programs like having solar panels put on different city office buildings, which in the long run, would save a lot of money and basically be far more energy efficient and cut down on global warming. Oh, yeah. This here'll probably be unpopular, but I'll say it anyway. Since West Hartford does spend so much of its money on education and basically we have some of the best education in the country, I cannot really see the wealthy leaving West Hartford as that individual in Darien said, like both Conard and Hall High School are nationally known. Hall High School has a great band and basically they're known nation-wide. So if we could basically put a small tax on people that make, say, \$250,000 or more, the really wealthy people, if they could start paying their fair share since, as I stated earlier, they are saving so much money on taxes, that that small tax would not hurt them and basically it would be helping the majority of the people in West Hartford who don't have children and a lot of seniors who are on fixed incomes. I think it would be fair and just and much more progressive and help the City of West Hartford. Thank you.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. Grower. Mr. Kennedy is next, George Kennedy, and after that June Ruggiero.

Mr. Kennedy: Good evening. My name is George Kennedy. I live at 19 Waterside Lane in West Hartford. I've been a town resident except for military service when Uncle Sam was paying me to play guns since 1951. I am presently the President of the West Hartford Taxpayer Association, which is in hibernation, and I'll get back to that word in a minute. We did, we do want to thank you for the last two years that you've tried very hard with the budget and it's been under three percent. Now, why hibernation? Because of total apathy. I look around here. We have a contentious budget and 62,000 people in this town and look at the amount of people we have. They all got grey hair because a lot of them are on fixed budgets. I mean, this is ridiculous. We should have people on the front lawn, trying to support you to do the right thing with the budget, but we don't. In any event, we just put the thing on mothballs while we did some work on a website, which we're bringing up, because of lack of attendance. No one, you ask people to go to a meeting, it's monitored. They've always got an excuse. We ask people to write articles. The only people who are writing are myself and about three other people. And getting up to speak in front of you, oh no, they don't want to do that. So we went to the website and now we got a blank website sitting out there. It's very nicely designed. There's nothing in it. Why? Because, again, we can't get people to write for it. So basically, we as a town, we a

state, and we as a government, federal government get exactly what we deserve because of our apathy. You people need support. Whether you like the comments or not, you need support. And that means what you need is a Financial Advisory Board. One member told me that's sitting on the Council now, said that, I said something about cutting the budget and he said, well you tell me what to cut. That's not my job. That's what we elected you people for. You're supposed to go through it. Now, I know Mrs. Cantor happens to be a CPA, but some of the other people are lawyers or businessmen and so forth. The reality is that if you get some of the talent in this town and put them on a financial advisory/strategic planning thing, you take a burden off your Town Manager, off your education people, and off you people because you would have a go-between that probably would have the time to research. You do this part-time. You're not getting paid for it. You need this kind of help and it should be instituted. Many other towns have it. For example, my son lives in Westport. He lives in a house on three-quarters of an acre of land. The house has 10 rooms. It's just been rehabbed. He pays \$11,500. I pay over \$18,000. And you think Rockledge is good? Go look at their amenities. They have a links golf course. They have an ice skating rink. They have a bar that is sublet and run but it's basically a nightclub. They have a marina and they have a beach. What do we got? Potholes? So in any event...in support of Mr. K's comments were right on the mark. We as the taxpayers have consistently suggested several things, a Town Finance Advisory Board to help with the budgets. I'm not trying to insult you when I say this, but with the complexity of the budget and the demands everybody out there for money, you're in over your head on your own. You need help, and there's nothing to be embarrassed about for asking for help. The other thing is...in the education, the Finance Director, for example. Unless they change Finance Directors, he doesn't even live in the town and when myself and another person talked to them, not only didn't the Superintendent at that point, which is not Tom, not only did the Superintendent know what was in the budget when you asked him specific questions, but the Finance Director turns out to live in Simsbury. He says, "I didn't know you were paying taxes like that." Now, this is crazy. The Public Safety employees, well, kind of interesting. We have some very good ones. There's no doubt about it. But you ask them where they live, their answer is they can't afford to live in West Hartford. That should tell you something right there. We have always advocated a budget increase. We realize things cost more money from week to week, day to day, year to year, so a cap at two percent would be appropriate. We know things cost more. You can't go under, but I think you really have to evaluate some of the expenditures, the Education Budget, for example. At one point, we were paying for weekly Spanish lessons for kids in first grade. I've studied three languages. When I don't use them, I lose them and so do they. I asked one person who said, oh no, it helped my child. Oh? Yeah, it probably did. The kid learned about wine. But the point being it was a first grader. Do you speak French at home? No. Does she, are you going to France? No. Then what the hell good is French for the kid? What you're doing is you're paying \$70,000 to a teacher to teach a kid something he's never going to use. They don't need French. They need math, they need science, and they need to be able to learn to speak English. Thank you very much.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. Kennedy. Ms. Ruggiero. After that, Ms. Sokolow.

Ms. Ruggiero: Good afternoon. June Ruggiero, 1182 Farmington Avenue. I second what you just said. I think, I think that things have gotten out of control in West Hartford. And it's true, you can't afford to live here anymore. I think that education, we're spending hand over fist on

unnecessary things. I think the schools are overcrowded. At one, one time, the schools were excellent. Six years ago when my daughter started at Conard, she went into class, she didn't have a seat to sit in. That's how overpopulated the classes were. That's ridiculous. A few months ago, I came to a meeting completely by accident. I meant to go to the Bike Path Meeting to oppose that, thinking that it was here. It was the UConn Property Purchase Meeting. I was blown away to find somebody had asked if a property evaluation was done on the property being purchased and the answer was no. How do you put a number on something that you didn't evaluate? There were no inspections done, nothing of that sort. Then I went to the Garbage Meeting. They compared West Hartford to towns like Worcester, Bristol. We're not really in that same caliber. I think we're, we're far better than they are and I, I don't mean that in a negative way, but we pay a lot more in taxes. We have a better town than, than those towns. I think that we need to hire somebody independent to come in and look at our budget, our public administration, and, and give us points on what we could be saving money on and stop spending money on things that we don't need. We don't need bike paths. We don't need an apartment, another apartment building to be going up. We need to start cutting our budget back. The seniors, I'm here, it's 2:00 in the afternoon. I had to take time off work to come here. I don't know if any of or all the seniors have had children or not, kind of like the Social Security system, right? They've lived here, they've paid dues, let them have their senior center. If we have to take away from some of the kids at the schools, they'll make up for it somehow. Technology's amazing. Somebody said we have to re-evaluate our teachers, I agree. I think that some of the teachers have gotten way too comfortable. I ran into a teacher at a nail salon who was, in the middle of a school day, telling the girl, well, you have to hurry up because I'm going to be late for my class. That's not appropriate. You can't, you can't continue to, to keep teachers like that. But I, it is getting to the point where people cannot afford to live in West Hartford anymore. My pay doesn't go up the same amount of money that I have to pay my taxes every, every year for property taxes, for everything else that goes on around here. I, I just think everything needs to be re-evaluated. I think people, I think you need a committee, a financial committee. I think that's a fabulous idea. You've got really smart people in this town. Let them contribute. Let them help us out, help you out. That's it. Thank you.

President Cantor: Thank you, Ruggiero. Mrs. Sokolow and after that is Miriam Fleishman.

Ms. Sokolow: Hi. I'm Muriel Sokolow. I live at 39 Osage Road. My husband and I have been West Hartford residents almost 45 years and we think this is the greatest town anywhere and we feel very privileged and lucky to be living here. And as others have, I want to thank every member of the Town Council for giving your time and serving the residents of the community. I really, I want to address something that two people said about hiring outside experts. I've seen this happen with members of my family and business, where the company they were working for hired outside experts. First of all, the search for the outside expert would cost time and money. And secondly, the outside expert comes in and they usually charge a fortune. And many times, they're not as aware of the problems in the town. Someone comes in new, they give an overall survey of the town, and make suggestions. I, I personally don't think bringing in an outside expert will solve things. I, I just had to rebut that. I came to talk about the Bishops Corner Library also as others have and the West Hartford Senior Center on Starkel Road. That part of town is heavily populated with young families with children, a very large senior citizen population, and we're known for the quality of our school system. A library is an adjunct of the

school system. It would be, in my opinion, a travesty to take away that library. I could go on and on and on about the library, but others have spoken and I don't, I'm going to be cut off in five minutes and I could talk about the value just to me personally of the library for a half hour. I use every library in town not so much the main library because of the parking situation. I don't like to go into the garage. But Faxon, I belong to the book group at Faxon. Faxon is a wonderful library as is Bishop. Now, the Senior Center, other people have said how it adds to the quality of people's lives. Any of us who go there regularly realize what we have there. We have a fantastic Director, Gina Marino, and I believe that the one at the other end of town has a very good Director, too. But as I was sitting here, I started to think about another factor that makes the Senior Center so important. If you go back a couple of generations, families lived in the same area. Whether you were young or a senior, you had your family around you. You just had your support system here. Today, I'd say the last generation or a little further back, kids go away to college, they meet new people from all over the country, and very, very often, in fact I think most often, they don't necessarily come back to their hometown. And there are many seniors who have kids scattered all over the country. And for them especially, the Senior Center becomes a place like a family that they come to everyday and meet with their friends. I, I just can't picture what my own life and my husband's life would be like without it, but I'm just speaking personally. You know, I look around at the others that come to the Senior Center and I see what it does for them. And my plea is don't close those two places. I could go on and on, but I know I'm out of time. And thanks again for your service to the town.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mrs. Sokolow. Ms. Fleishman and then after that, Richard Goshdigian. All right. Okay, Mrs. Fleishman is all set. Richard Goshdigian and then Ted Rzepski.

Mr. Goshdigian: I appreciate that. Most people have trouble with Richard. My name is Rich Goshdigian. I live at 60 Cassandra Boulevard, which is part of the 1401 complex that several people have spoken about. And, but I'm speaking on behalf of myself. Ladies and gentlemen, I, I have about 25 years, even though I'm retired now, I have over 25 years of budgeting and financial analysis experience. And I'm here today to just kind of give you some input on a few items, a couple of which I think you can actually get answers to very quickly. And while I don't expect you to answer them today, I would like to frame them. So, but in general what I would, what I'd like to say to the folks out there is if, if you understand what budgeting truly is, the first thing you have to accept is that the fact that no budget is perfect. The budget is already obsolete as soon as the ink is dry, okay? But what budgeting truly is, is, in my opinion, the, the essence of it is that it's based on informed decisionmaking, okay? It tracks opportunities and risks to the budget. And what that means is, in my experience what I've always done, whenever I present a budget to someone, I give them also a list of opportunities and risks, meaning here are things that are potential upsides as far as additional revenues or lower costs and here are risks, okay, that, for example in your case, would be the State's not going to give us money we want or whatever. But you don't have a high enough certainty in them to say I'm going to bake them into the baseline of the budget, okay? And those are the kinds of things that you monitor during the course of the year. Speaking to that, if you have, I'm, I'm going to read to you from this document here, okay, and I'm, and on this particular item, I, I think you can get your Finance Director to give you an answer that would be considered as part of a risk and opportunity for that list. What I'm referring to is the item that talks about property tax collections continue to be

strong, and it is anticipated the town will achieve the budgeted 99.1 percent collection rate in the current year and fiscal year. A 1/10th increase in the collection rate for fiscal 2018 equates to approximately \$257,000 in revenue, okay? My question would be if you could ask the Finance Director to take the \$257,000 and ask him what does that translate to in terms of the mill rate? In other words, is that worth 1/10th of a percent on the mill rate? Is it worth 5/10th of a percent? I don't know the answer off here, but he should be able to give you that calculation. The second question that I would ask you to, to do as part of that and this is based on the experience that I've seen in prior budgets is if the administration, no offense, Mr. Van Winkle, is talking about the current year and history, they will tout the collection rate. So, for example, the, the question we're looking for here is if in fact you've been collecting at 99.1 percent, in, in my experience, what then happens is when they do the budget, they drop down to 90, 90 percent, okay? It's an easy way to, to, for, for people to give themselves a little bit of cushion. And what I'm saying is is rather than telling people they have to cut senior centers and stuff like that, if that in fact is what's going on than the responsible answer would be to say, no, we're going to budget what we've historically done in the past and not leave ourselves a little room for error because, if you truly understand my original comment about variances, okay, positive variances are not good news if you truly understand them. In other words, if you tell someone that your, your revenues are going to be \$1 million and they come in at \$2 million, the first question a seasoned financial person should be asking is where was your head when you put that budget together? How come you had no clue as to we're off by 50 percent. So yes, its good news in the sense of more dollars but it's not, okay? Let me just give you a couple other items because I know I'm short on time. I could, if I could ask someone to address and I, I apologize I don't know the name of the program which is the, the trash collection that you're looking at.

President Cantor: SMART

Mr. Goshdigian: Okay. Could someone clarify the impact of that on condominiums? So, for example, are we in or out of that program? I, I don't know. And as was mentioned, we pay already for our own trash collection, okay? The other thing is I, I, I'm a product on 1970 and Conard High School, the year, the last year of when Hall was built and it's the absolute peak of the school population in this town. It was over 13,000 kids. And believe it or not, much of what has happened in West Hartford in the last 25-30 years is a function of that declining school population in terms of this very building, okay...

President Cantor: Your time is up, just wind it up.

Mr. Goshdigian: Okay. All right. Okay, so what I would ask you to do is to look at opportunities such as the following, okay? Five million dollars was spent on modernizing Veterans Memorial Rink. That facility never came close to the revenue projections and one of the reasons was there was an \$80,000 user fee that was supposed to be implemented when that, when that project was facilitated. And to save you any angst, Mr. Van Winkle, a direct quote from Jim Capodese when I asked him point blank was, "We didn't include it," okay? So he acknowledged publicly that that user fee was foregone. And the last one I would say to you is, if I were coming here today and said I think that the Town of West Hartford should get into the facilities, the catering business and facilities renting situation, okay, a meeting, meeting business, and I'd like to, I'd like to build it on the side of the Town Hall, I doubt that there'd be a lot of, a

lot of support for building, it's a nice facility over there, okay, but I doubt that anyone would support that. The point being we need to look at whether or not there's an alternative use for that space. Thank you.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. Goshdigian. Okay, Ted Rzepski is the last person that has signed up to speak on this sheet unless there's another sheet over there with signatures? I don't know. But if there's anybody else that is, is present that would like to speak, you're welcome to come up after, just after Mr. Rzepski.

Mr. Rzepski: Okay. Good afternoon. I'm Ted Rzepski and I live at 64 Westland Avenue, and I've been paying taxes in West Hartford for about 35 years. And one of the things that, for me, makes West Hartford such a wonderful place to live is our outstanding library. I have friends, cousins, relatives all over the State of Connecticut and when I visit libraries, I'm an aficionado of libraries, I find that ours is just so superior. If you take a look at the children's section, it's just unbelievable the stuff that goes on there, the programs that they have for the kids. And I'd like to expand on something that Mr. Allen said. The, historically before we had this phenomena of the Blue Back Square, it was free to park at the West Hartford Noah Webster Library and when I was, it was explained at a meeting during the transition that there would be free parking for two hours for library patrons. And so now that's up on the chopping block and that would be unfortunate because I think it would be a disincentive for a lot of patrons and parents of young children who visit the library. I'm older, I'm 69, I've got health issues, I have to drive in to the library. I average three visits a week to the Noah Webster Library, so I would just ask that that not be put forth. We have the tradition of parking for free at that library. Thank you very much.

President Cantor: Thank you very much. Mr. Kennedy, I, you know, we have our, come on up and...

Mr. Kennedy: I just want to clarify a remark that I made, it caused some confusion.

President Cantor: After, after everyone has spoken you can. Come on up. Okay, thank you. Name and address.

Ms. Webber: I didn't plan to speak but Linda Webber, 1401 community. But there are a couple of things that I felt like saying. One is a lot of people move to West Hartford because of education, and we live in a community where we have nobody in the schools, but we recognize that value of our property is very much a part of the education so that's one thing. The other thing is that we need more revenue. So when people come and argue about having West Hartford Center's buildings go up or increase the breadth, they're just cutting out a lot of revenue, and I think that should be considered. When people fought the Blue Back, it turned out to be very positive, so I think at some point you should think about buildings going up in West Hartford. Thank you.

President Cantor: Thank you, Ms. Webber. Is there anybody else that would like to speak? Okay. Mr. Kennedy, please come up and you can address us at the mic. This is just a clarification.

Mr. Kennedy: My name is George Kennedy and we've already been through this. I'd just like to clarify a remark I made and in fact in response to what you said. You talked about management consulting. I was one and you're right. They come in and they don't understand something and they cause a problem. I was not talking about hiring a management consultant. I was talking about getting people, we have in this sufficient expertise. She's a CPA and there's a banker. Now they...

President Cantor: Okay, they, you, thank you. We can't have an interaction, you know, this is not, we need it part of the record and all that, so we've heard you. This is, would be a volunteer board. Thank you so much.

Mr. Kennedy: Okay. The, the other thing is that our education, the number of students has gone down to 9,000 and our budget's gone up.

President Cantor: Thank you, Mr. Kennedy. There's no other further comment? Sure. Mrs. Hall was just saying that and I heard a couple of you say that you have been to meetings. All of our committee meetings, we've had many since the budget came out, since the Governor's Budget came out actually, are open to the public. So if you would like to, they're posted on the bulletin board. They're on the website. You can call the Mayor's office, Mr. Van Winkle's office, and, and receive a schedule. So those are open for you and if it's too big then we'll move the room. So, and if you have any questions or comments, we read all of our emails and, and letters. It's easier to respond to the emails than letters, but if you prefer to write them in a snail mail, that is fine, too. We read them all. Thank you so much for coming and thank you for your input. It's very important. You can, if you don't mind, online that would be, its mayor@westhartfordct.gov. So if that's all, we'll close the Public Hearing. Thank you.

Public Hearing closed at 3:36 P.M.



Essie S. Labrot
Town Clerk/Council Clerk

ESL/dd