

MINUTES OF WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC HEARING

PROPOSED 2011-2012 FISCAL YEAR BUDGET

APRIL 11, 2011 LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER 2:00 PM

Public Hearing opened at 2:16 pm.

President Slifka: We're going to call the Public Hearing to order. This is on the proposed 2011-2012 Fiscal Year Budget. Can we have a roll call please, Ms. Labrot?

Present were Councilors Shari Cantor, Harry Captain, Leon Davidoff, Burke Doar, Denise Hall and Scott Slifka.

Absent were Steven Adler, Tim Brennan and Judy Casperson.

President Slifka: Thank you, Ms. Labrot. We may be joined by one or more people who are coming in from work as we start here. Just a couple quick things at the outset. Number 1, you will be able to speak for three minutes. If you did not sign up yet there still is a signup sheet there but I have the first page here with me and if we could ask you to hit the button that's on the mic so you make sure that this part here turns red that will be helpful and then state your name and address for the record at the outset and the last thing, just so you have updated information, since we suffer here from a time lag where the budget is introduced about a month ago and then that's the document you're probably looking at but meanwhile we work kind of day in and day out to try to change that. There is a memo out from Mr. Van Winkle as of this morning that listed options for the Council that have the budget increase down to less than 3 percent. We can't commit that that's exactly... I can't commit on behalf of any of my colleagues how anybody would vote in particular but understand that's the work that has come from the Manager at this point in time. It may change as the last two weeks go. We get new information all the time but I just wanted you to at least have that updated information as we sit here today so we will begin the testimony with John Joyce.

Mr. Joyce: John Joyce, 170 South Main Street. So what really happens when you hear the same people talk about the same issues from their unique perspectives over and over again during the Public Hearings? The typical psychological reaction is similar to what happens in arguments with your spouse. No matter how well-intentioned one is there is a point in the discussion where you shut down, you stop listening, you don't want to hear it anymore. That's it. It's over. I'm done listening. Not engaged. It's human nature in action. I have to humbly admit that I do it myself until that neuron twitches and then I say to myself this is the woman who loves me and cares about me more than anybody else in the world. She's not my enemy. She's not attacking me. She loves me. Okay, okay I coach myself. Let me find at least the slightest, I mean the tiniest bit of what she said and consider it true. I can do that. About 1/2 of 1 percent of what she said and claimed about my thinking or behavior or spending is right on. She's got me dead to rights. I do that. I think that. I spend money for the "rationalized right reason" but

without adequate cause or proof that the item will achieve the actual goal. Then another cluster of neurons fires why do I do that, think that, spend that way? Maybe more of what she is telling me is true and I would benefit from listening and regarding it as true. Now billions of neurons are firing and she is smiling. Wow! In that instance she knew me better than myself. I trust in your dedication and your goodness as responsible individuals that you will listen generously in order to grasp more than the ½ of 1 percent and then truly grow in appreciation and understand all of the gifts presented to you during this budget proposal process. Most of you know that I closely follow the Board of Education. The design and construction of the Board of Education budget is fundamentally flawed from the beginning to the end of the process. It is like sending my son to the toy store to construct his Christmas list. There's a firm conviction on his part that he should get everything he desires. Being the administrator of the family I fully but foolishly want to meet his every need knowing all along on a rational level that my judgment is misguided. He doesn't know how hard I work or what my other financial obligations are, yet in the excitement I have forgotten all about that as well but my wife remains steadfast and true to reality. She presents what stuck out for me as ½ of 1 percent of reality that I eventually come to realize is 100 percent truth. He does not need all that he wishes. If they were satisfied he wouldn't appreciate his own gifts and talents – imagination, curiosity, creativity. Furthermore, all those toys and gadgets will isolate him from spending time and enjoying his peers and his family. The same is true of education. The administration wants to provide more than is reasonable to the schools and the students. It is natural for the school administrator and administration to be unrealistic in its budget's aspirations. Although I am fully sympathetic with the intent of the Board of Education to approve the superintendent's request it is an irresponsible decision. Ask yourself how many students fully appreciate and value their abundant opportunities and respect the sacrifices of all the town citizens to provide for their quality education?

President Slifka: Mr. Joyce, you're over the time limit. Could we ask you to wrap up please?

Mr. Joyce: Okay. It is important to remember that there are risks and benefits associated with living and learning in a high-stress environment. It is important not to minimize the risk by exaggerating the benefits. Thank you.

President Slifka: Thank you, Mr. Joyce. Care to let us know who you had with you up there? The poor guy didn't get introduced.

Mr. Joyce: Do you want to say who you are? This is Liam. Thank you.

President Slifka: Thanks for coming, Liam. Our next speaker is Elissa Masters-Weiss.

Ms. Masters-Weiss I didn't realize I was signing up to speak.

President Slifka: Oh.

Ms. Masters-Weiss: When I saw it I thought it was the sign-in sheet.

President Slifka: Oh, okay. Thank you. Well, we'll mark you as present. How about Mr. Weiss?

Mr. Weiss: I'm the same.

President Slifka: Same? Okay.

Mr. Weiss: Put a mark next to my name.

President Slifka: Thank you.

Mr. Weiss: But I did come back.

President Slifka: Okay. Francis Dilion?

Mr. Dilion: I am present too, by the way.

President Slifka: Duly noted.

Mr. Dilion: My name is Francis Dilion. I live at 27 Baldwin Street in the Elmwood section. As a registered Democrat and one who has voted the Democratic ticket in past years you might think that I would favor the trends and views of the West Hartford Town Council on the budget and other matters. However, in more recent years I have come to realize that the only decisions to which I should adhere are those that are based on truth, logic, honesty and that conform to the wishes of the people who have elected you. Most often in creating an operating budget you, the Council, and other town agencies struggle and spar with one another until an agreement is reached. The problem I see with this budget battle is that the general public is left out of the actual decision-making. We're left holding the bag. The two parties in the struggle duke it out, the winner being the one who proves the strongest, and the innocent third party public is then forced to fork over the money with almost no say in the matter. This does not seem fair nor equitable. The citizens ultimately directly or indirectly vote, hire and staff the town for the mutual benefit of all its people, not just certain groups. To address the situation the Council's own competency to arrive at just decisions must be questioned. For example, why should there be significant budget gaps this year caused by lack of federal or state funds? If the Council could not readily foresee such an occurrence a year ago then their capability to make any decisions on our behalf must be questioned. If Council members jump ship from party to party personal integrity needs questioning, never mind voter confusion. If decisions are made simply to placate unusually obstreperous groups who may make such esoteric remarks as we're doing this for the children, not ourselves, has any justice been served? In other words, how truly open and honest is each of you to have your work judged trustworthy? This Council has regularly imposed increasing tax burdens upon us. In them they apparently find no waste, no extravagance, no frosting on the cake, no problem with demanding more from people on limited or fixed incomes. What seems worst of all to me is that after a budget vote each of you may look into your own consciences and find nothing lacking there, nothing needing apology. Tomorrow will be

another day just like today. You'll sit down, burp after dinner, and go on with your life. Will all West Hartford citizens be able to do that? Whom do you really serve?
[Clapping]

President Slifka: Thank you, Mr. Dilion. Our next...our next speaker is Bruce Grower.

Mr. Grower: I thought it was an attendance sheet.

President Slifka: Okay. Thank you. Matt Gordon?

Mr. Gordon: I thought it was an attendance sheet too but I'm here so I might as well...

President Slifka: Okay.

Mr. Gordon: Okay. Okay. My name is Matt Gordon and I live at 190 Woodpond Road and I'm here today because I got a reminder from my friend and neighbor, George Kennedy. I've never appeared before you. I don't think I've met all of you before so again, Matt Gordon. My initial reaction is what a country we live in and what a community we live in where we get to show up in front of our elected officials and speak our mind and express our views about what's going on in our community. I don't think I'm going to speak as eloquently as the gentleman that just spoke but I guess I just have a couple of thoughts. I'm concerned, like I'm sure everyone is, at what's happening at both the national level and in our own community. I pay a lot in taxes and I'm glad to do it. Again, it's a great country. I feel it's my obligation to do that. The only thing that, you know, I would ask is that we put a lot of time and effort into making sure we make the right decisions, like you said. I frankly publicly would like to thank everyone that's serving. You know, you folks are doing the hard work. The observation I guess I'd like to make is I'm a business owner. I started my own law firm 6 ½ years ago. Reading the distribution...the pamphlet that was circulated it seems like a lot has been done to cut wherever we can and yet we're looking at increases of 4.5, 5, 6 percent. I've been going through this as a business owner. I mean those are large increases so I guess I would just echo the comments of the gentleman before me to use your best judgment and don't make easy decisions and really, you know, do what you think is truly in our best interest. Thank you.

President Slifka: Thank you very much, Mr. Gordon. Minou Roufail?

Ms. Roufail: Minou Roufail, 11 Seymour Avenue. First I want to thank all the volunteers on the Town Council, the Mayor and Mr. Van Winkle for your service to the town. I and my family feel very, very fortunate to live in West Hartford. It's a wonderful place to live and this has been a very difficult time in which to govern. Someone else at the Board of Education's Public Hearing made a very salient point that the budget this year is meant to support the same programs and services that the voters approved in last year's referendum so this is purely a maintenance budget which I fully support. Now let's just work with the 5.2 percent tax hike that was in the Budget in Brief. I understand that it could go down. As has been said year in and year out of course the drivers of our budget are hardly local in nature. I feel like "Ms. Obvious" up

here saying this but they're mostly national and international. Globalization, the finance industry collapse, the cost of healthcare which is a national crisis – these are issues that are...that the Town Council and the Board of Education are hardly responsible for and I admire the way that you've adapted to these very difficult and overwhelming factors. Furthermore, at 5.2 percent I understand that these increases are...they're difficult for many. On the other hand, I remember last year the Taxpayer's Association. They posted their talking points for their referendum drive on Facebook and I quote that they predicted... They said that this year's budget shortfalls could translate into a 16 percent tax increase. Sixteen percent. Now I can imagine people getting rather excited about that kind of hike but it does make 5.2 percent seem rather moderate and a 10.8 windfall, a 10.8 percent windfall I would think there would be joy in the land. And, in fact, I was quite surprised that it was this low as high as it may be. There's also been talk about how especially the Board of Education did not anticipate the expiration of the American Recovery and Reinvestment funds. That's simply not the case. I have been a Board of Education watcher for some years. I don't think that the ARRA funds were mentioned without their expiration date mentioned in the same breath and as soon as they became available or no sooner did they become available than the Board and the Council as well no doubt deliberated and discussed what would happen when they did expire. Now I realize that the superintendent's budget is contingent on ECS being flat-funded this year, the state grant funding program being flat-funded this year, but it's hardly the case that the Board of Education has been oblivious to the expiration of the ARRA funds. Of course they're aware of it and of course they have planned for it and...

President Slifka: Minou, you're a little over the time limit. I'd ask you to wrap up.

Ms. Roufail: Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

President Slifka: That's okay. Thank you.

Ms. Roufail: Well, I'll wrap up. That's all I have to say. I support the budget and thank you so much.

President Slifka: Thank you. Our next speaker is Jeff Digel.

Mr. Digel: It's on if the light...

President Slifka: It's already on. You're good to go.

Mr. Digel: Okay. Good. Thank you. Thank you. Again my name is Jeff Digel. I reside at 24 Van Buren Avenue here in West Hartford. I am a rural western Republican by birth, liberal New England Democrat by education, general view of the world and voting record. I am, however, increasingly concerned that my party is beginning to stumble a bit as advocates of good government reform-mindedness and protectors of the little guy. I'm concerned that we're increasingly guilty of protecting narrow interests while we impose massive financial obligations on our kids. Now is the time for West Hartford to lead. Let's get real. Let's talk about our 200 million dollars in unfunded retiree obligations. Let's talk about the hard stuff, how that number is calculated and how the real number is

likely much higher. Let's do a multiyear projection of the status quo operating costs and include a real assessment of how we fund retiree obligations which, by the way, have to be funded by impositions of property tax. Again, let's talk about the hard stuff. Let's talk in detail and let's get real. I'm reminded of something Daniel Patrick Moynihan said which actually informed my voting history. He said the central conservative truth is that culture, not politics determines the success of society. He went on to say the central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself. Come on folks. Let's get real. Let's show how West Hartford can continue to lead. My guess is that we're fast approaching the tipping point where getting real will actually become good politics as well. I'd be delighted to help and thank you for your service.

President Slifka: Thank you, Mr. Digel. That concludes the sign-up sheet that I had. I don't know if other sign-up...

Mr. O'Brien: Here's another one. Yeah.

President Slifka: Okay. Next is Leslie Sanders.

Ms. Sanders: Thanks. Leslie Sanders, 2 Burgoyne Street. Unfortunately I don't have a lot to say regarding the entire budget but one specific budget proposal. I work at Flemings. I manage Flemings in Blue Back Square and one thing that came to my attention is the proposal regarding elongating the time period for meters to be run. Currently we have all of... Currently we have them running Monday through Saturday until 8:00 which is by far the longest than any other town in the surrounding areas and I'm sure probably the rest of Connecticut and then also to possibly add it on Sundays from 12:00 to 6:00. I know at least from a business perspective we're always trying to find out what sets us apart from the rest and I'm sure it will also carry into the town. I know West Hartford was voted one of the top ten places to live. What sets us apart are our restaurants and our stores and of course our guests and the high clientele that we do welcome in and I'm consistently fighting off angry guests. I know some of you have come into the restaurant. I recognize some of you and I am constantly fighting off not yourselves but other guests saying I have to go back out and feed the meter. I'm sorry, I don't have time for dessert. I'm sorry, I can't buy another glass of wine. We have to go and get our car. I constantly have quarters flowing in and out so people can leave the restaurant and to be honest...perfectly honest, it's taking away from business and I'm sure the other restaurants have also felt the same. This is going to of course bring down our cash flow at the end of the month which, of course, is going to affect our taxes as well. I know that Sundays... We did try doing that before where you did have that running and I've heard many people, you know, that you let when we have events going on that you let the meters run free and the parking lots go free as well. Unfortunately I don't want to just have Sunday business when there's an event going on in the center. I'd rather have people minds be able to come in. This is primarily going to affect restaurants only on the weekdays but all the shops on Sundays so, you know, people won't be able to go shopping in any of the local shops unless they have to keep...sorry...keep going out to feed their meters. That's really all I have to say. I hope that you can kind of look at that as not really a valid option. Thank you.

President Slifka: Thank you, Ms. Sanders. Next is George Kennedy.

Mr. Kennedy: Okay. My name is George Kennedy. I live at 19 Waterside Lane, West Hartford. I've been a resident of town since 1951. Before I start what I am about to say I would like to refute one comment made earlier about the 16 percent. The 16 percent was a number that we said was an initial projected revenue shortfall and it was obtained from the town staff. We did not come up with the number. And as far as the Board of Education, wonderful! I think they're irresponsible. Why and why not? We simply can't continue to absorb and sustain annual property tax increases in excess of 5 percent. Since 2001 our taxes have gone up nearly 65 percent. Taxes continue to go up but the level and amount of services go down. We have not seen tax relief but we have seen significant erosion in the quality and amount of services. We lost the leaf collection, costing many homeowners \$150 to \$400 out of pocket, another hidden tax. Even Hartford, which our state supports, still has a leaf collection. Why? I believe I get five minutes, Mr. Mayor. Is that correct?

President Slifka: That is correct.

Mr. Kennedy: We take in, and a couple of these items are repeating from Tuesday but to make the emphasis... We take in 110 Open Choice students from Hartford. That is absolutely the right and moral thing to do but why does Hartford only reimburse us \$3000 per student when Hartford receives over \$13,000 from the state for that very same student? The \$10,000 loss per student amounts to \$1,100,000 revenue lost to a budget that needs help. Why? West Hartford has the lowest test scores in our District Reference Group and the Board of Education asserts that we spend too little per student. Interestingly, the Board's own budget presentation included a Power Point slide that showed as West Hartford's per student expenditures dropped in a couple cases that test scores actually went up. Hmm. Interesting. Real estate values – People worry about the value of their home eroding. Well let me say this about that. Towns and cities are judged by a number of factors including the quality of education and the level of property taxes. As property taxes increase the value of the real estate decreases and in the case of commercial real estate investors' net return decreases, thus discouraging further local investment and business move-ins due to higher rents. A number of real estate studies, the University of Cincinnati comes to mind, found that as property taxes rise the market value of the underlying real estate will decline. The study suggested that for every \$200 property tax increase there could be a resultant \$1200 to \$1800 decline or loss in the market value of that same real estate. Add to the real estate tax model declining test scores and our town is stepping onto a slippery economic slope. In the past we had equilibrium between taxes, education and other factors. We no longer have that. High taxes and declining test scores are not a sustainable model and can combine into a downward spiral ultimately impacting both property values and educational quality. West Hartford unfortunately has both trends going and it bodes poorly for the future of the town and the value of our real estate and education. Too many town employees don't live in town. Why? When asked they say they can't afford to. A surprising number of employees across the board reside outside the town, especially safety employees. It would be in the best interest of the town for these employees to be able to reside in the town that pays their salaries. For the past several years young people have testified in

front of this Council they can't afford to move back to town. That was not the case when I grew up here. Folks, the cupboard is bare. The cupboard...the budget is beyond our means. We can't afford it. We're building a financial house of cards. We simply can't keep kicking the budget can down the road. It is time to aggressively plan and manage our financial future, not just go along, get along. Broad-based nonpartisan aggressive financial planning and management is desperately needed now to ensure West Hartford's future. Let's face it. West Hartford has become a city with a very large and complex budget, changing demographics and revenue demands that the property tax model was never designed to support as Mr. Davidoff himself said last year and I expect that Connecticut towns and cities can expect ever decreasing financial help from the state. This is precisely the reason that the Taxpayer's Association has been recommending for several years that the Town Council establish a Financial Advisory Board. The budget problem is large, getting larger and no Town Council has the depth and experience to solve it. Not just here, in most towns that are of growing size. You, our elected leaders, need to do some introspection and question. The question you should ask is what is best for our town, not necessarily my political future? The budget increase can and should be approved by the Council, the zero percent increase. Anything more than zero will not be fair to the taxpayers and future taxpayers employed and as an added final thought, are the taxpayers aware that our combined liability for both health and pensions is over 200 million dollars? That's a good-size number. Who's going to pay it? Unlike other towns we are funding it but not to the degree maybe we need to. Thank you.

President Slifka: Thank you, Mr. Kennedy. The next speaker is Tony Siegel.

Mr. Siegel: I've got these again. Yeah. Hi. My name's Tony Siegel. I was here at the last Town Council Meeting and it's a pleasure to be here again. I live at 76 Kirkwood Road and I've lived there since 1983 so it's about 28 years. I'd like to read a statement that I just presented to the Town Council. The title of the article is "West Hartford Town Budget – No Property Tax Increase Now." Currently the Town Council is preparing to impose a 4.6 percent property tax increase on our citizens based on this year's budget. An important question is whether the representatives have done everything they can to apply prudent fiscal management to all the school, department and town-wide expenses. Has everyone involved in creating an expense item done whatever is possible to include only must-have items and eliminate all want-to-have or nice-to-have items? Are all expenses eliminated or reduced to the greatest extent possible? It used to be that our fine schools were foremost on a parent's mind. This is what caused thousands of people to move to West Hartford and stay here. Schools heavily influenced the budgeting process and usually got everything they wanted. Citizens went along and didn't complain when property taxes increased. This year's budget includes a 5.8 percent increase for our schools even though almost all the salaries have not increased. However, the times are rapidly changing. Except for our less prevalent wealthy citizens people are now primarily concerned about the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Everything bad about the economy has been happening and continuing to happen. Citizens are getting hit from all sides and experiencing a widening perfect storm. Because of the unpleasant economic realities including our town's upcoming property evaluation and likely tax increase in 2012 representatives need to decrease expenditures by 8.5 million dollars to eliminate any property tax increase in this year's budget.

Representatives need to require that all the schools, departments and Town Manager only include must-have items and no want-to-have or nice-to-have items. Everyone involved has to do whatever it can to eliminate or reduce expenses so the Town Council can obtain the 8.5 million dollar reduction. Representatives should not capitulate to unions. They should make sure employees receive a fair wage and pay their fair share for all benefits every year, not just a contract negotiation year. Where should the 8.5 million dollar reduction come from? It's about 3.7 percent of the entire 229 million dollar, 364,497 dollar budget. That will come when the Town Council does its job and mandates that all the school, departments, Town Manager and unions do theirs. Thank you.

President Slifka: Thank you, Mr. Siegel. *[Clapping]* The next speaker is Paul Goldberg.

Mr. Goldberg: Okay. Hello, everyone. I'm Paul Goldberg. I live at 39 Waterside Lane. I have two things. One is I live in town. This is... I'm also have four...have had four generations living in this town so we've very familiar with it and we're also business owners. It used to be on LaSalle Road. The reason is our business is employment. If you know the economy it's been very bad employment but over the years one of the things we've had when we try to bring in people from out of state their answer is the salaries are low and the cost of living is high. Connecticut, when you look on the statistics and this area also, we're not talking about Greenwich, really has a high cost of living. Very little difference from Long Island, New York. We may think it's lower but it's really not and this has always been a problem and my opinion is part of it is that our tax structure, which used to be terrific, has gone out of control. No one cares about where the money comes from, just raise taxes, and as a resident of West Hartford I'm appalled sometimes when I see how the taxes, well they started at 5.9, 4.6... It's still a high percentage when theoretically our in...the government, federal government says this is...we haven't seen a cost of living increase of any amount so if you're on Social Security your taxes are going up 4 percent yet your Social Security is remaining the same. I don't find that equitable so I'm going to...so my opinion is try to keep taxes increase as low as possible and the other thing is keep control of the Board of Education. I'm sorry. I have to speak against... My kids were educated here. Unfortunately because of the economy and the lack of jobs in Connecticut I have one locally with a grandchild which makes four generations here and I have my other kids out in Massachusetts which has more opportunity than Connecticut so let's keep taxes down and make more opportunity in Connecticut. Thank you.

President Slifka: Thank you, Mr. Goldberg. That concluded the second signup sheet that I had. Is there anybody who did not sign up who wished to speak?

Mr. Muldoon: My name's Gary Muldoon. I live on 94 Ledgewood Road and first of all I'd like to congratulate the Town Council because you said you were going to listen and it appears that you have listened because we've already gone from 4.6, right, to under 3? That's what you're saying? Right? Good. We're getting there and that's great because that happened in a short time but I agree with what most of the people have said here tonight and there's something though that...and I spoke last time. I already mentioned some of my concerns but another concern I have that I just want to mention today too is overtime. I notice that you're constantly going up on the overtime. We're going to be

almost budgeting in the 2012 budget for almost 3 million dollars for overtime and I wonder what that's all for, you know? And I notice that some of the...they have it in their contracts, you know? Like the firemen have minimum staffing and the police probably have certain things like that. Overtime should reflect something that the town needs, when we need them to work overtime, not because people put it in their contract and I know certain...there's a lot more work to be done on the pensions and the benefits and things like that and some of them will come under future contracts and we have to keep on working on that but I was thinking that there's something that we can do even now to, you know, to make this budget even lower and I think there's some concessions and if you look around the state there's been some...the firemen in Bridgeport, they said the first three months they'll take straight time for overtime. Just different options that could come up that could even lower the budget even more and I have to say that another concern for mine too is it always seems like if you look at the budgets that when they come up it's the weaker unions, it's the weaker people that seem to get pounded on, you know? When you lay off somebody it's always a janitor or secretary or something like that, you know? But the stronger unions and the stronger people always seem to get what they want. I hope that, you know, we would have to try to be fair with everybody, you know? Because like I said there's some people...like I said everybody's down on state workers and on town workers but not everybody's getting the same deal. Everyday you see some type of scam or deal with the state workers, you know? And there's people here that haven't been dealt with, you know, as fairly as others here in this town and that's a concern of mine also. So like I said overtime... Like I said I don't see how you could possibly... Why are we budgeting a percentage more every year in overtime? It should be going down and that could save jobs, you know? In fact, that's another thing Bridgeport did. One time the Mayor just said well, we're not going to work overtime and he saved like in the matter of a few months just saved millions of dollars so that's another thing besides what just about everybody else said too so... But thank you. Like I said you said you were listening and you clearly are so thank you.

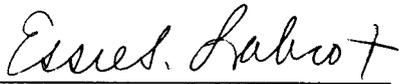
President Slifka: Thank you, Mr. Muldoon. Again we're done with the signup sheet. If anybody else wants to speak... Yes?

Mr. Bigelow: Peter Bigelow, 10 Colton Road, West Hartford, Connecticut. I know most of the people on the Council and have met them over the course of time. I'm a happy long-time resident of West Hartford. I've lived here since 1969 I believe. I formed a business after job elimination at Cigna in 1988. I have managed to sell it to my son, Todd, last July so I'm now officially semi-retired but I still work a lot. Bottom line is actual retirement is still two or three years down the road. I wasn't planning to speak today. I have no prepared comments. The only thing I did want to say is that it does appear as though the town is listening this year, perhaps a little bit more closely than they have in the past, and I appreciate that. I'd also like to make a very simple but basic observation that speaks to the level of taxation in this town and that's this. My son, Todd, lives in a house in Farmington on the east side of Farmington with a property with a square footage of 2300 square feet. His house is 300 square feet bigger than mine. His property tax bill is approximately 1/2 of my bill and we can argue services and what people have and what they don't have and this and that and the other thing but the bottom line is the taxes in this town are high in my opinion and in the opinion of most of the

people in this room they are excessive. We need to find a way somehow to do what so many other towns in Connecticut have done and that is to do a zero-based budget. I don't know all the details. I'm not an economist but economics is my background. We ought to find a way to keep taxes in this town from going up because as was commented earlier, at 70 percent increase since 2001 you're looking it doubling in about three years from 2001 or less and we are going to blow this town out of the water in terms of affordability if we keep this up. Thank you.

President Slifka: Thank you, Mr. Bigelow. Again we've concluded the signup sheet. Anybody else who did not sign up who wished to speak? Okay. With that thank you all for coming this afternoon. Thank you for speaking and we'll close the Public Hearing.

Public Hearing Closed at 2:45 p.m.



Essie S. Labrot
Town Clerk/Council Clerk

/sab

APPROVED AT MAY 10, 2011 TOWN COUNCIL MEETING