

MONROE TOWN COUNCIL
Monroe, Connecticut

Public Hearing on Proposed 2015/2016 Budget
DRAFT
February 10, 2015
Town Hall Council Chambers
Monroe, CT

A Public Hearing on the Proposed 2015/2016 Town of Monroe Budget was held on Tuesday, February 10, 2015 at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Hall Council Chambers, located on 7 Fan Hill Road, Monroe, Connecticut. The purpose for this hearing is to receive input from the public regarding the Proposed 2015-2016 Town of Monroe Annual Budget.

PRESENT: Chairman Frank Lieto
Vice-Chairman Enid Lipeles
Councilmember Deborah Heim
Councilmember Phyllis Kansky
Councilmember Raymond Knapp, Jr.
Councilmember Kenneth Kellogg
Councilmember Dee Dee Martin
Councilmember Sean O'Rourke
Councilmember Kevin Reid

Also Present: First Selectman Stephen J. Vavrek

Chairman Frank Lieto started the public hearing on the 2015-2016 Town of Monroe Budget at 7.00 p.m. The First Selectman, Stephen J. Vavrek will present his part of the budget first and then Superintendent of Schools, James Agostine will present his part of the budget next.

FIRST SELECTMAN

First Selectman Stephen J. Vavrek expressed his thanks to the many people that helped coordinate in getting the budget proposal done, especially Ron Bunovsky, acting Finance Director, and Heidi Meade, Deputy Finance Director. He noted all progress that has been done in the past six years includes major road improvements through continued implementation of our Road Maintenance Plan, reinvestment of resources into Town and Board of Education buildings (Town Hall, Masuk/Fawn Hollow roofs, the Honeywell Energy Conservation Project, the New Police Department), and a new interactive town website to better serve the residents of Monroe. His main priority for 2015-2016 is to focus on balance of town and education needs consisting of \$2,400,000 bonding and \$500,000 budget in road improvements, continued excellence in education, facility repairs and maintenance, emergency services needs, technology and security upgrades, evaluation of programs and services offered by the town, and continued improvement of the fiscal health of the town. First Selectman Vavrek noted other budget considerations are the struggling state economy, high insurance increases, many state and federal unfunded mandates, and the priority of maintaining Monroe's respectable Aa2Bond Rating. First Selectman Vavrek also presented slides showing the general fund balance, town revenue consisting of licenses, permits, fines, intergovernmental, charges for services, interest, dividends and

liens, miscellaneous, total municipal revenue, and education revenue, proposing town total revenue of \$10,949,047, a percentage change of 0.44%. He presented a slide explaining the expense budget summary consisting of municipal, debt service, reserve, Board of Education, Board of Education programs, and Board of Education grants, proposing \$84,247,538. First Selectman Vavrek's municipal expense budget summary, consisting of general government, public safety, public works, sanitation, health and welfare, culture and recreation, and special projects, proposing \$21,534,079. He noted the town cost drivers consist of public safety, police salary-uniform officer, general government insurance – health, LAP and W/C, public works snow operating expense, and general government salary-Deputy Tax Collector, proposing \$6,845,117 and debt service consisting of bond principal, bond interest, new debt, bond note expense, lease payments, and internal financing-equipment replacement, proposing \$6,246,261. He also presented a chart on long-term debt and an allocation of long-term debt. He concluded his budget presentation noting a 0.0% change in reserve funding with a 2.79% approved expenditure budget (not including the Lillian Wilton Parks and Recreation Expenditure Appropriation). First Selectman Vavrek stated the 2015-2016 Budget Overview, will be a proposed increase in expenditures of 2.79% (2.25% Education/3.14% Town) keeping Monroe on the right track of providing a safe community, improving our roads, educating our children, maintaining our buildings and parks, and continuing to offer the many programs and services we currently provide to the citizens of Monroe.

First Selectman Vavrek invited Superintendent of Schools, James Agostine to present his part of the Budget.

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

James Agostine, Superintendent of Monroe Schools presented a proposed Board of Education estimate of Operating Expenditures for 2015-2016. He started his presentation with the mission of the Monroe Public Schools is to ensure that all students reach their full potential as innovative thinkers and responsible citizens through a challenging, inquiry-based curriculum delivered by skilled, dedicated, and engaging educators. He noted the educational goal is to provide the support for all students to graduate with college and career ready skills. He noted the fiscal goal is to continue to be fiscally responsible through contract negotiations, new energy savings, and other cost containment strategies. Mr. Agostine noted the parameters to guide the budget process are to seek funds to support our mission and vision, class size matters, core academics programming is supported by elective and co-curricular programs, and budget reductions, if necessary, will always be made to impact the least number of students. He noted the

budget assumptions that they are operating under include 5.2 FTE certified staff reductions due to enrollment decline, 3 non-certified staff reductions, medical and dental insurance increase of \$0.00, \$50,000 contingency for unforeseen Special Education costs, state grants (e.g. Educational Cost Share, Excess Cost, etc.) are uncertain at this time, includes \$405,035 for Honeywell lease payment, and contractual salary increases. Mr. Agostine presented slides on the Budget Increase vs. CPI and key drivers of the budget are Mathematics Resources K-5 of \$120,000, Contract Obligations (Salaries) of \$432,107 a 1.27% increase, Transportation costs of \$226,785 a 7% increase and an increase in utilities of \$377,393 a 40.1% increase, noting this was high due to rate increases. His budget overview is a 2.25% increase. Mr. Agostine also presented slides on electricity, natural gas, and oil. He noted the in-district enrollment patterns are shrinking with a projected enrollment of 3140. He discussed enrollment and proposed staffing changes noting enrollment down in 2015, losing approximately 100 students every year. The risks to the budget may include decrease in state and federal funding,

unanticipated special education costs in excess of \$50,000, unfunded mandates, consortium rates from oil costs not set, unanticipated maintenance/emergency repair costs, and renewals of copier and phone system contracts. The proposed budget is to purchase K-5 mathematics resource materials, provides support for all students in meeting the Connecticut Core Standards, provides adequate maintenance of all school buildings, and provides teacher training in all district initiatives (Columbia Writing Project Inquiry Learning, BYOT, CCSS, Teacher Evaluation, etc.). He concluded his presentation of the budget revenue sources such as tax revenues, education cost sharing (ECS Grant) Grants (e.g. Title Grants, Perkins Grant), Excess Cost (SPED), facility usage, and Pay to Play. Mr. Agostine noted Monroe and Masuk received grant funding and the other three schools are Schools of Excellence. His final presentation included a 5 year Capital Needs Projection and an Equipment Replacement Plan.

First Selectman Vavrek stated this was a team effort and he is trying to get the best budget out as the community deserves a lower budget. He feels the budget is a good sound budget and wants everyone to remind their friends and neighbors to go out and vote.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Nick Kapoor, 11 Cardinal Lane spoke about the Health District and is fully aware discussions are ongoing. He is concerned about the costs and hopes there will be more information in the budget process. He does not want to see the town budget go up after voting is done if the Health District is not budgeted appropriately.

Steve Schapiro, 42 Harvester Road noted every year he comes before the Town Council and the Board of Finance and looks at the budget differently than everyone else. He noted what the budget was compared to and what the actual budget was from the town side. The budget we are in now is 5.4% higher than what we actually spent last year just on the town side, 7.8% the year before, 4.7% the year before that, and 3.8% the year before that. He feels we are doing an injustice to the public by telling them we are doing a 2%-3% higher increase more than the budget that is in place. He noted when we pay our taxes, we pay based on the budget and we spend actually what is spent. He would like to see the Board of Finance forecast the rest of this year. Mr. Schapiro concluded by stating he wants to see the actual amount that was spent in the last few years.

Chairman Lieto noted a workshop meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 11, 2015 and Wednesday, February 18, 2015. The public is invited to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: (E. Lipeles)

There being no further questions, Town Council Chairman, Frank Lieto adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Second: (K. Kellogg)

Motion passes 9-0

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Cerreta
Town Council Clerk