

ANNUAL MEETING-TOWN OF MANSFIELD

The Annual Meeting for the Town of Mansfield was held in the auditorium of the Middle School at 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 13, 2003. Town Clerk, Joan E. Gerdsen read the warning of the meeting. There were approximately 210 persons present.

Town Clerk asked for nominations from the floor for Moderator of the Meeting.

Mrs. Carol Pellegrine nominated Mr. Harry Johnson as Moderator. Seconded by Mayor Elizabeth Paterson.

Being no further nominations, Mr. Johnson assumed the position as Moderator by acclamation.

Mr. Carl Schaefer, Council member and Chair of the Finance Committee of the Town Council moved that the following Appropriations be adopted:

RESOLVED: that the proposed General Fund Budget for the Town of Mansfield for fiscal year July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004 in the amount of \$25,111,980 which proposed budget was adopted by the Council on April 30, 2003, be adopted and that the sums estimated and set forth in said budget be appropriated for the purpose indicated.

RESOLVED: That in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes Section 10-51, the proportionate share for the Town of Mansfield of the annual budget for Regional School District No. 19 shall be added to the General Fund Budget appropriation for the Town of Mansfield for fiscal year July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004 and said sums currently estimated at \$7,429,902, shall be paid by the Town to the Regional School District as they become available.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Capital Projects Budget for fiscal year July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004 in the amount of \$1,569,600 be adopted provided that the portion proposed to be funded by bonds or notes shall, at the appropriate times, be introduced for action by the Town Council subject to a vote by referendum as required by Section 407 of the Town Charter.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Capital and Non-Recurring Reserve Fund Budget for fiscal year July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004 in the amount of \$1,591,775 be adopted.

And that further

RESOLVED: That the General Fund Budget for the Town of Mansfield, appended totaling \$25,111,980 is hereby adopted as the proposed operating budget for the Town of Mansfield for the fiscal year July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004.

RESOLVED: That the Capital Fund Budget for the Town of Mansfield, appended totaling \$1,569,6000 is hereby adopted as the capital improvements to be undertaken during fiscal year 2003/2004 or later years.

RESOLVED: That the proposed Capital and Non-Recurring Reserve Fund Budget for fiscal year July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004 in the amount of \$1,591,775 be adopted.

Seconded by Alan Hawkins, Council member

Mayor Elizabeth Paterson discussed the budget process and extreme difficulties the Town faced in this budget year. The staff is to be commended and under the leadership of Town Manager Martin H. Berliner and Director of Finance Jeffrey H. Smith presented a sound budget with a general increase of less than 2%. With the Board of Education the General fund budget for the Town represents an increase of \$789,660 or 3.2% over the current year. When the adopted Region #19 is included, the total increase in expenditures is 3.4 percent. If approved this budget together with the Region 19 Budget would require a tax rate of 29.94 mills, or a 2.44 mill increase. She urged support for this budget

Mr. William Simpson, Chairman of the Board of Education, basically the committee level funded the budget. Taking out the expansion of funding a full day kindergarten, also deferred the enrichment staffing at MMS and additional instructional staffing at elementary schools. 5.2% salary increase, but benefits were 40.2%. After long consultation with the Town Council, which asked us to cut the budget \$600,000, the Board was able to accommodate this reduction. He urged support for this budget.

Mr. Richard Pelegre, 269 Clover Mill Road, had several questions: 1. What revisions have occurred in the budget since the Manager presented budget to Council? 2. What are Pequot Funds and how has Mansfield used them? 3. Have any Pequot funds been funneled into our Open Space Funds? 4. How much money is in the Open Space Preservation Fund today? 5. Is any money this year to be considered for Open Space and the Mayor already answered this by saying \$100,000 was in this budget this year. 6. What action did the Town Council take on the Walking Track and where is this money coming from? 7. Will the mill rate be set tonight? And as it stands right now what would the mill rate be?

Mr. JC Martin, Crane Hill Road, Council Member, moved an amendment to this budget:

On Page 13 Top line Current Levy, to remove \$575,990 from this budget which is the equivalent of 1 mill.

Seconded by Mr. Eric Holinko

Mr. Martin stated that he felt that the effect of this amendment would not be cutting this budget bottom line. Concerned that this amount is in funds just waiting to be spent by the Council. By cutting this on the revenue page, we will be dropping taxes. The Council then will have to reallocate funds. They cannot raise the taxes if this amendment is passed.

Mayor Paterson explained that the Pequot funds are funds, which have traditionally used this one time money for such items as Open Space or project such as Ambulance, Fire truck.

Mrs. Carol Pellegrine, 269 Clover Mill Road, spoke in favor of this amendment. Mansfield is approximately 30,000 acres and about 4,000 have already been acquired by the Town of Mansfield, Federal and State lands, which lands are off the grand list. These properties also need maintenance. There will be a tax increase for a fund, which will wait to be spent. Also, the one time spending purchase is not necessarily true as money has been spent on the Community Center and the town has hired a fire person. There seems to be no set rules. We cannot support this amount this year. She urged support of this amendment.

Ms. Priscilla Douglas, 241 Wormwood Hill, asked if approval of this amendment is contingent upon the approval of the budget as presented tonight?

If the amendment is approved and the budget is not approved will it still exist? Moderator answered: If the amendment passes and the budget does not the amendment is null and void.

Mr. Chris Thorkelson, Town Council member, spoke in favor of the Open Space Fund.

Ms. Barbara Casey, Davis Road, would like to hear more debate of Open Space Fund.

Mr. Carl Schaefer, Council Member, Warrenville Road spoke in favor of the Open Space Fund.

Mr. Kurt Schletter, 19 Boulder Lane, spoke in favor of the amendment as there are seniors living in town on a limited income, there are co-workers who have been laid off, and peoples have had a wage freeze. There is a need to cut further as an 8.9 increase is unrealistic.

Ms. Sheila Clark, 43 Mountain Road, spoke in favor of Open Space funds. New development does not mean a decrease in taxes because new homes demand services. Open Space keeps Town taxes down.

Mrs. Louise Lent, 19 Daleville, urged support of this amendment

Mr. Bruce Bellm, Council member, Spring Hill Road, spoke in favor of Open Space. Open Space is a valuable resource for the town and if used as open space it will not require a great deal of maintenance.

Mr. Quentin Kessell, 97 Codfish Falls Road, spoke in favor of Open Space. It is disappearing fast and we need to keep this program going.

Mr. Tim Quinn, 101 Depot Road, spoke in favor of continuing the Open Space funding as lot-by-lot open space is disappearing. He has been in town 52 years and traveled up and down the roads of the town and is surprised how quickly open land is being developed. I will vote for this amendment even though I am on a fixed income.

Mr. Bill Thorne, 132 Bundy Lane, will vote against the amendment. He feels that for what his family receives and for what he pays as a homeowner he feels he has a great deal. He will not vote in favor of this amendment.

Mr. Fran Trialo, I have been a resident of Mansfield for over 40 years. Over the years I have supported the education and town budgets. But we are living in a different times, the employment rate is up, the state has raised taxes, there have been wage freezes. We are now receiving less money from the state, we must work together. A lot of us are now living on fixed incomes. We should implement a freeze on hiring, only fund programs to assure our children good education. Supports this amendment.

Mr. Howard Raphaelson, 119 Timber Drive, spoke against amendment. Council spends hours on developing a budget; this is a result of looking at every item. The amendment doesn't talk about Open Space specifically, but asks Council to pick away at the funding of items. This is not responsible.

Denis Merrill, State Representative, complimented the Council and Town on the hours spent on this budget. The town receives over 50% of its revenues from the state. The Town has been extremely well run over the years. The Pequot money is a one-time money, no guarantee of amount to be budgeted from year to year. Some towns have spent this money to help their general funds, and if taken away those towns will suffer. Urged to vote against amendment. What are the values of this town, education and open space are important to this town. I believe that Open Space is important to this town and state.

Motion to call the question.

Seconded.

Hand vote taken. Ayes have it.

Vote on the amendment to cut line item 40101 Current Year Levy by \$575,990.

Hand vote taken. Motion lost.

Mayor stated that the Town Council in their meeting of the previous night decided not to set the mill rate immediately after the Annual Meeting to allow time to hear from the State as to estimated revenues.

Mr. Richard Pellegrine, Clover Mill Road, discussed the funding of a walking track in the Community Center by a donor over a 10-year period. This amount would have to be paid upfront by the town.

Mr. Stephen Marks-Hamilton, Old Mill Court, will continue to support the Town because of the schools and services in this Town. Enjoys the good quality of life living in this Town. He will support the budget.

Move the question

Seconded to close debate.

Hand vote taken. Ayes had it. Debate closed.

Vote on the budget was taken by hand vote.

Ayes had it. Budget is passed.

Meeting was closed at 9:18 p.m.

Harry Johnson, Moderator

Joan E. Gerdson, Town Clerk