

RTM Meeting
May 8, 2012

The Call

1. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the estimate and recommendation of the Board of Finance, to adopt a budget for the Town of Westport for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable.
2. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance, to adopt a budget for the Town Railroad Parking Fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable.
3. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance, to adopt a budget for the Town Sewer Fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable.
4. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance, to adopt a budget for the Wakeman Town Farm Fund for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, and to make such specific appropriations as appear advisable.
5. To take such action as the meeting may determine to require that property taxes for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, shall be due and payable in four quarterly installments, and to designate the dates of the first days of July, October, January, and April as the dates upon which such installments shall be due and payable, and that all taxes in an amount of \$100 or less shall be due and payable in a single installment on the first day of July.
6. To take such action as the meeting may determine to require that the motor vehicle tax shall be due and payable in a single installment.
7. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance, to approve a request by the Parks & Recreation Director for an appropriation of \$55,000 to the Boating Capital Account for repairs to the Ned Dimes Marina.
8. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Board of Finance, to approve a request of the Parks & Recreation Director for an appropriation of \$425,000 from the Capital & Nonrecurring Expenditure Fund (C&NEF) Fund Balance to the Capital & Nonrecurring Expenditure Fund (C&NEF) Account, Dock Improvements, for improvements to the Ned Dimes Marina.
9. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Historic District Commission, to amend Chapter 38-24 of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Westport by adding the property and building(s) located at 42 Compo Road North as a historic property. (Second reading. Full text available at the Town Clerk Office) **Withdrawn to June meeting.**
10. To take such action as the meeting may determine, upon the recommendation of the Conservation Director in accordance with Section 2-

57(b) of the Town Code, to amend Section 2-55, Land Use Fees-Schedule, to the extent it relates to fees for land use applications reviewed by the Conservation Commission and the Conservation Department. (First reading. Full Schedule of Fees available in the Conservation Department).

11. To take such action as the meeting may determine, to amend Section 6-1 of the Code of Ordinances, "Permitted Hours for Sunday Sales", by increasing the hours during which the sale of alcoholic beverages by restaurants may take place. (First reading, Full text available in the Town Clerks Office.)

Minutes

Moderator Hadley Rose:

This meeting of Westport's Representative Town Meeting is now called to order. We welcome those who join us tonight in the Town Hall auditorium as well as those watching us streaming live on www.westportct.gov, watching on cable channel 79 or ATT channel 99. My name is Hadley Rose and I am the RTM Moderator. On my right is our RTM secretary, Jackie Fuchs. Tonight's invocation will be by Reverend John Branson.

Invocation, Reverend John Branson

As this assembly gathers to plan for the future of Westport and this town's commitment to its youth and education, we are mindful of the many responsibilities that come with our many blessings and abundance. We offer thanks for the dedication of those who have gone before, upon whose shoulders we stand, whose sacrifice of time, talent and treasure created a legacy we pass on to our children and children's children. May we gladly and with courage, integrity and hope as they take up the challenge and responsibility of faithful, honest and responsive leadership for the future.

Thank you for the generosity of benefactors who have nurtured and sustained the vision of education in this community for so many years. Thank you for Westport's school administrators and teachers all who labor for the same of our children and youth; may our progeny delight in the wonder and joy of learning. We thank you for coaches and mentors inviting our children to achieve by more than winning, to compete through participation by all, especially the least among us, as well as to excel in the pursuit of fair play, conduct becoming, adherence to the rules, discipline and sportsmanship. Thank you for our elected officials and representatives who, as visionaries, with sacrifice and service, instill in the hearts and souls of young and old alike a sense of community---of honesty, truth and integrity, a grounding in good work, as well as value and courage, which are the strengths of this great nation committed to the good of all, especially the most vulnerable. Thank you for setting us at tasks which demand our best efforts, for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight us and for those disappointments and failures giving us insight, wisdom and a renewed dedication to strive for the right and good.

We ask God's grace to be present with those who gather this evening. Remembering the corrosive nature of cynicism, selfishness and fear, may there be a will toward good will, heartfelt joy in the company of one another as we strive for excellence through cooperation with gratitude. We ask God's generous spirit to be among us, to guard us and to guide us, that this spirit be the source of this lively community and that all the angels of God shine upon us with joy, enthusiasm and vitality for ever and ever.

There were 31 members present. Mr. Keenan, Mr. Timmins, Dr. Ashman, Mr. Arthurs and Mr. McCarthy notified the Moderator that they would be absent. Ms. Olsen notified the Moderator that she would be late.

Announcements

Mr. Rose:

We went through a lot of the greetings, corrections, etc. last night.

RTM Announcements

Jeff Wieser, district 4:

Two quick things... First, I'm really excited that John Branson was here as he is getting ready to leave town next week. I especially appreciate the fact that he invited us all to stand, gently, as he has done for his 22 years here and we all stood. I want you to know that for 22 years, I have been inviting my children to make their beds, eat their peas and it hasn't worked as well as it all worked for us tonight. Good for you. Good for John and thanks for being here. This Saturday, May 12, from 12 to four, Homes with Hope, that great Westport institution is putting on the 11th annual Castles in the Sand down at Compo Beach. I urge all of you to go down, if you are taking a walk this weekend, do take a walk at Compo Beach especially between three and four when all the castles are completed and the judging is occurring. If you want to build a castle, even better. Call Homes with Hope at 226-3426. In any case, go down and see the castles. It's supposed to be a great sunny day on the beach and just a great day in Westport.

Mr. Rose:

Before we turn to item one of the call, I just want to point out, we did mention this last night, that even though tonight's proceedings might seem to be going quickly, it's a culmination of months and months of work, particularly by the Education Committee, particularly by the Finance Committee. They have been meeting with members of the Board of Education since at least back in January, if not before then. This is the end game. This is not the first night we are dealing with this and not the first night it's being presented to us.

Item #1 (part II) Education budget - By show of hands, the budget passes unanimously.

Presentation

Don O'Day, Chair, Board of Education:

Good evening everybody. Good evening everybody. Good evening Hadley, Jackie, Eileen, the rest of the members of the RTM, administrators, parents, teachers and folks who have just come out to see how the Westport Board of Education's budget will end for the 2012 – 2013 school year. I want to thank the committees as Hadley mentioned, Jeff's committee, Velma's committee, Jeff on the Finance Committee, Velma on the Education Committee who were there with us from the beginning of the process and to help us arrive at the position we are at tonight. I am very proud to announce that for the first time since I've been on the Board of Education, and that's been a while, and as long as I can remember, there hasn't been a cut to the Board of Education budget. It was unanimously approved by the Board of Finance. It was unanimously approved by the RTM Education Committee. It was unanimously approved by the RTM Finance Committee. It has to be a fairly tight price process for there to be a coalescing around the process to just say, you know what, administration, board of Ed, you've done a good job. You've done what I asked you to do. You've done what we've asked you to do. I think that not only have we done what the funding bodies have asked, but we have stayed true to our commitment to the educators first and to be there for the kids. So, I'm pretty happy with this package. I know Dr. Landon is and I'm speaking for the Board of Education and the administration as I'm going to go through this. I'm going to go through this fairly quickly because, like a movie that a lot of people have seen more than a couple of times, this is really the same process that I've gone through with the board of finance and the various different RTM committees. So, I do apologize if you seen this before. But the information is good so it is worth repeating and as Jim Marpe always reminds me, you can't repeat your message often enough. So, I'm going to repeat it again tonight and ultimately, at the end of the evening, I'm going to ask for approval, hopefully unanimous approval to keep the string going from the RTM. I know there are folks who have arrived here and are prepared to speak and last year, I was incredibly bold and cocky and said, 'You know I'm feeling the love. I don't think that you guys need to come down here again.' The love is even more present this time. Or at least that's what I'm anticipating. So, I'm going to go through this. I'll certainly entertain all of your questions. The administration is here to respond as well. But, I'm thinking that this is going to be the end of a very good process. So, with that, I'm going to get started. I hope I'll get started. I'll start with the first page. Many of you have the hard copy and described the process that we've gone through so far since December. Beginning in December, we had a kickoff meeting with the Board of Education, the Board of Finance and the RTM committees and we got guidance for what was expected to be seen in our school budget for this year. In January, January 4 to be exact, Elliott Landon and his administration presented a budget to the Board of Education for review. The superintendents recommended budget was four \$100.5 million and increase of 2.5 percent over this current year. From January into February, the Board of Education reviewed the budget and we made several changes. The net effect of those changes was a reduction of \$317,000 to Elliott's proposed budget. The

Board of Education proposed budget is, therefore, is \$100.2 million or 2.17 percent increase year over year. The Board of Finance unanimously approved the \$100.2 million as did the RTM committees and I'm just going to go through some of the details. Some of the highlights of the budget: the operating budget is \$100.2 million as I said. It's a year over year increase of \$2.1 million or 2.17 percent. Within the \$2.1 million we actually have to pay \$2.4 million more in contractual salary increases. So, the \$2.1 million does not cover the contractual salary increase requirement in our budget for our union members. That's the fourth year in a row that we have gone with a budget that didn't cover contractual salary increases. Relevant to enrollment in our schools, the total enrollment will be down by 15 students next year if our NESDEC based information comes true relative to enrollment. The enrollment will decrease in the elementary schools by 85 students. In the middle schools and in Staples, their school is going to see increases of 32. The number is also lower by six in K. Staff levels will fall by eight positions next year versus this year. The administration staff levels for those who want to know what our administration route ratio is relative to total FTE, it's about 5 percent. This is easier to do on the screen so I'll just walk you through page 4 if you've got the report in front of you. There's one number on this page that I think shows some very strong management action. It comes from changing carriers on our health insurance. We will keep next year our benefits flat, flat year over year benefits. That's tremendous. I don't know in private sector or public sector where you would actually see that, flat year over year cost and benefits. I won't really talk too much more about page four. It's just some detail. This is a page that really doesn't work unless you see it on the screen; then again it's in your budget package. The lower right-hand corner on page five, you see the \$317,000 reduction. The bottom part of that chart shows how we got there. We did do some staff reductions. We go out on the risk curve a little bit on our health insurance where we have our stop loss coverage for individuals. It went from \$175,000 to \$225,000 and that saved us a little bit over \$150,000. We also restored and many of you received I'll call it guidance from the parents and we restored the French proposed reduction and the PE time proposed reduction that was in the original Superintendents budget. Those were restored so that partially offset some of the reductions that I just described. On the five-year staffing and enrollment trends, 900 staff in 2008 -2009; 884 in 2009 – 2010; 2010-2011 is 883; 11 – 12 is 880; next year 872. Graphically, it looks better when you see the reductions sloping down of staff; although, we have a gradually increasing enrollment level, certainly, over the 2008 2009 enrollment. Sort of flat for this year, as I said in the beginning, down by 15 but still quite high and quite high at Staples. For your information, Staples was built and it's an absolutely state-of-the-art great facility but it was built for roughly 1,800 students. We are well over that now. We are over 1,850. That's something that we have to watch and we have to carefully manage. The next page is really where our administrative staff levels are. We made a change this year where we'll have a director of elementary education and a director of secondary education next year and that will increase the focus, particularly on the elementary schools. So, we are pretty happy that that is part of our budget. The next slide really only works with a visual so let me

sort of describe what the whole class size process is. We have a goal of 22 students in kindergarten and 22 students in the first grade. Our goal is 25 for grades two through five. We consistently meet that but we sometimes come very close to the level of our guideline 22 and 25 if you will. Next year is no different. The data that you have in front of you if you are on page eight, you can see the elementary level for kindergarten, it goes up a little bit next year. It stays kind of flat in first grade, second grade and third grade again sort of flat, below the guideline and the same thing with the fourth and fifth grade, relatively flat to this year (talking about next year). You may recall during the Board of Finance meeting, there were discussions about the breakpoints for how we determined when we were going to add a new teacher. I promised that I would go back and take a hard look at it and believe me I did, looking at breakpoints. What I was able to come away with, and I've shown this to a number of folks so far is that breakpoints really aren't a driver. The real key is the guidelines that I've just described, the class sizes of 22 and the 25. In fact, this year, we are working with the old breakpoint process in two of our grades, working with the new one in one of the grades and everything else is just flat. Next year, it's only one class and that's going to be adjusted so there is no impact to breakpoints. That's what my analysis showed. But there is very much of an impact in class size guidelines, the 22 and the 25. That's obviously something that the Board of Education will continue to look at. Of course, the solution is not cheap. I have two pages of budget overview relative to our peers. The first page, page 11, shows where our budget increases are relative to the District Reference Group that we operate in. I've talked about this last year and talked about it the year before and it's true again this year. Relative to our peers, we have the lowest year over year increase, actually the second lowest. Weston has a lower year over year increase than us. Darien, Redding, Region 9, Wilton, Greenwich, Easton, Ridgefield, New Canaan all have higher year over year increases and that has been the trend since the beginning of the financial crisis when I set the base here, back in 2008. the next page, page 12, shows our cost per student and that's information that comes directly from the State Department of Education. We're sort of in the middle. We actually moved up a place this year. We are at \$17,400. The highest is \$18,800. The lowest is \$14,100. On a year over year over year basis, though, we're right in the middle. We did move up a spot though but since the financial crisis started, we're just about in the middle for our District Reference Group. I thought that was important to show. We're not the highest. We're not the lowest. We're sort of in the middle. The next page, page 13 is a list of strengths and challenges. I've said before that if you talk to parents, you talk to people in the community, they'll have different ideas about what the schools' strengths and challenges are. My own personal view is that our strength is that when my two sons went through college, they were better prepared than their peers, better prepared than the kids on their floor, kids in their dorm. They were better prepared because they went to Westport schools, because they went to Staples. There are a lot of other challenges that we have to look at going forward. I mentioned Staples being overloaded from a student perspective. The cost for Special Education is always something that we have to worry about and

infrastructure. We really need to start taking care of the plant as well. What we've done is we've pushed off things that I would consider aesthetics, never pushing off safety. We may have to start spending a little bit more on the plant as the years go forward. The last page is really just a final pitch on trying to repeat what I think has been the board's objective to maintain the reputation of our schools, maintain the programs, really keep our schools great and while we're doing that, do our best to have the cost to operate the schools be as responsible as possible. So, spending what we need to but not spending more than what we have to. It is for that reason, to repeat myself from my introductory comments, that I'm asking the RTM to approve our budget as presented. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Committee Reports

Finance Committee, Allen Bomes, district 7:

You are going to hear two reports back to back and even though we met separately with the Board of Education, the reports came out remarkably similar. I have a report prepared but I'm not going to read all of it because I need to leave something for Velma to say. You've heard pretty much the picture from Don. We met with the Board of Education and while the Board of Finance approved the education budget as presented, the Superintendent's budget was cut by the Board of Education by \$317,000. Our budget presentation/discussion used what the Board of Education calls their operating budget numbers from page one in the Board of Education's budget book; however, what the town calls the operating budget and how it gets approved by us and the Board of Finance, the operating budget is page one in this book plus the revenue offset budget. So, it's a little bit confusing. A slight digression, in case someone really likes to look at the numbers, on table one, I present the 2010-11 actuals. Somehow what showed up in the town book for the 2010-11 actuals and what was put in the newspaper, it's a number that doesn't seem to reconcile. Somehow they started with the operating budget from page one and instead of adding the revenue offset they subtracted it. They didn't seem to subtract the actual revenue offset budget. They subtracted the original budget from 2010 not the actual numbers. Table one in the Finance Committee's presentation reconciles all of the numbers. Some of the numbers that we approve tonight, not all of them, are in the book. Revenue offset is in the book and the private school budget is in the book. But we are also voting on the debt service budget. That comes from the town. We're voting on it but it's not something we see. The Board of Education will face some interesting budget challenges going forward. While the overall number of students in the school system is leveling off -- fewer students are enrolling in the elementary schools, but more are going into the middle schools and Staples. The concern is that it costs more to educate students in the middle schools and even more so at Staples (per pupil costs are 20 percent higher at Staples compared to the elementary schools). Also, the current teacher's contract which expires at the end of the next fiscal year (June 30, 2013) with negotiations starting in the fall will have an uncertain impact on future budgets. Finally, Staples is already at its designed capacity and with its population growing. This

may put pressure on the needs to expand the number of classrooms. This has been said before but the Finance Committee believes that the area of revenue enhancement should also be considered by the Board of Education. Presently, school facilities are rented out to community groups at cost. However, rentals to other public and private individuals/organizations are currently not allowed. While recognizing that after-school events such as plays, concerts and sporting events take precedence, we feel that with eight schools available, more can be done in this area. We, therefore, strongly urge that the Board of Education adopt a policy that permits rental of all school facilities to others (both within and outside Westport) at a profit in order to bring in additional revenue. Following the presentation and discussion, the committee members present voted to unanimously recommend that the full RTM approve the Board of Education operating budget as supported by the Board of Education. The committee did not vote on the other Board of Education budgets (see Table I) as approved by the Board of Finance since we have no control over them.

Velma Heller, district 9

He didn't leave me a lot to say. The major thing is, if you read the reports thoroughly, we definitely have different styles of writing. He's very financial. I'm definitely coming from another direction but I think it is important to note one of the most salient features here. We're dealing with a 2.1 percent increase which is not easy when you have a far greater increase in terms of your contractual agreements. So, they've had to cut in other areas to make up the difference. Clearly, I think, as we watched the process throughout Board of Education meetings, it became very clear to us that there was thoughtful, in depth decision making going on. The problem solving that happened during that time indicated not only good financial sense but real attention to the quality of educational program and what would have the least negative impact in terms of the kinds of cuts that had to be made. I want to make a correction, if you look at the education report. I had a \$331,000 cut from the Superintendent's original budget. It was actually \$317,000 by the time everything panned out. They had made some restoration to certain accounts. Also, enrollment has gone down but it is very important that you unpeel that onion and look at what's really happening. Yes, elementary enrollment has gone down but, in particular, the middle school and the high school which is much more costly is going up so that makes an impact and they have to deal with that. You have to look, not just at the numbers, you have to look at the story behind the numbers. Of course, staff has gone down too, approximately 872 full-time equivalent employees. I don't want to be repetitious. Given the potential for ongoing financial pressures that are going to impact all the services in town and the town's ability to fund education and other services, the Board of Education acknowledged their commitment to participate in achieving cost saving efficiencies for the town as a whole. The Board of Education has been extremely proactive in looking for ways to collaborate with other town bodies. They have, in many places taken the lead and pursued it. I think it's important to note that. That doesn't happen immediately over night. A lot of it takes time to accomplish so those discussions

are ongoing and it's important to bear that in mind. At the same time, it is critical to note the challenges facing our school system with its outstanding record of achievement, excellent staff, visionary programs and, above all, commitment to maintaining high standards. Clearly the current climate of economic uncertainties produces pressures that impact the schools, i.e., possible reductions in state revenue for programs such as special education outplacement, enrollment uncertainty with its pressure on class sizes, capacity constraints at Staples putting pressure on classroom space and course availability and the need for infrastructure spending to maintain our building assets. These challenges will no doubt frame ongoing discussions in planning for the future of our schools. I encourage all of you to continue to come to Board of Education meetings or at least watch them so that you can see what's inside that onion as you unpeel it and what's the story behind the numbers. The committee acknowledged the efforts of the Board of Education in examining every area of expense in order to find significant cost savings in the 2012-2013 Budget while making every attempt to preserve the quality of our schools. The RTM Education Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the 2012- 2013 Board of Education Operating Budget of \$100,226,554 and I have a note at the bottom of our report that says this is the operating budget that we are primarily concerned with but in addition to that the total budget of \$114,580,337, as presented to the RTM includes funds for mandated private school services and debt service.

Members of the Westport electorate - No comment

Ms. Flug read the resolution and it was seconded by Mr. Lowenstein.

RESOLVED: That the Board of Education's budget items as recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the Representative Town Meeting be adopted and the sum of \$_____ for the Board of Education Budget is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures; and be it,

Members of the RTM

Bill Meyer, district 3:

Here it is, the best high school in Connecticut in *Connecticut Magazine*. Coalition for Achievement Now, there are thousands of schools in Connecticut. Guess what high school has come in first? Let's hear it. Staples! Guess what middle school came in first? Bedford Bears. Guess what middle school came in second? Coleytown. Talk about a winning combination. Besides that, Hart Trophy, best plays; Matthew's Cup in sports, best achievement in sports; Football team, number two in the state; How many schools have the best plays and the best football team? Best radio station. I checked. There are 65 high schools with radio stations. How many people have graduated from Staples? Jimmy Izzo stand up. John McCarthy, Chris Urist. One more, Cathy. That's why you've done so well. I don't have any children or grandchildren in the school system but I mentor a boy in Town who doesn't have a father. He gets excited about going to school. I never did. That school system has meant so much in his life. Also, every Monday morning, I go to the Longfellow School in Bridgeport. Eighty percent of the kids in

that school are in housing projects. What a difference between the worst and the best. The playground is the parking lot. Eighty percent of the kids do not have a dual family. That's when you realize how great our school system is. As a senior citizen, people over 60 years old, New Canaan is 19 percent, Weston is 16 percent, Wilton is 17 percent and Westport is 24 percent. We've got more seniors than any town around here. Right George! Lois, no woman gets over 39 so I can't count you. Elliott Landon, he spoke six years ago at the Y's Men when I was president. When he walked out he said he wished it was the Board of Finance because everyone there had something good to say about the school system. I deliver Meals on Wheels. The other day, I called on a lady called Lois Kaufman. She is 91 years old and she still lives in the same house she was born in. We talked for a long time and she's just lost most of her family. She said the one thing she is very proud of is the Westport School System. All her kids have gone through it. Yellowstone Park, we watched old faithful come up. It comes up every hour automatically. We talked with a man next to me and he said he was from Omaha Nebraska. I told him I was from Westport. He said he was the retired Superintendent from Omaha and he said, 'You've got one of the best school systems in the country.'

Mr. Rose: Can I assume you are voting for the budget?

Heather Cherry, district 8:

I am voting for the budget. Congratulations. Job well done. I know times are tough and we are really trying to save where we can and cut things. I'm curious, when you look at pages 11 and 12 and compare us to other towns around, we look low even on a per student basis. We are celebrating how great Staples is and other schools in town, are there things that should be in this budget that aren't that we should worry about in the future given that we are not growing as quickly on a per student basis?

Mr. O'Day:

The answer is, this Board of Education thing is hard. Full-time job and this is kind of a full-time job, too, but the thing that keeps me going is Elliott Landon has been here for a long time. He has never lost his enthusiasm and I don't think there is anything more exciting for the Westport education community than Westport 2025. For Elliott to really be behind this as much as he is, and he has a great team doing it, it's going to be the future. It is the future. It's what keeps us ahead of other districts. It's what makes us great and it's going to be what continues to make us great. We're not going to lose ground. There's going to be funding for different initiatives for Westport 2025 that will be brought up from time to time. I talked about facilities, so that's certainly an issue as well that we want to keep our plant healthy. I'm going to ask Elliott to say a word or two about Westport 2025 and when you talk to Elliott about numbers, he's on his game. But when he is really on his game is when he is talking about the vision for what education should be like and what schools should be like and what we are going to do for kids. So, Elliott, why don't you talk about 2025.

Superintendent Elliott Landon:

Twenty-twenty-five is our effort to ensure that the children who attend our schools, now and in the future, have the opportunity to develop into creative, critically thinking problem solvers who have superb communication skills and have a global way of thinking. Towards that end, we have teachers and administrators, the best of the best in the school system, working collaboratively to develop programs and develop initiatives that insure that our kids stay ahead of the curve. On one hand, we are one of the only districts who have embraced the Singapore Math as we implement it in our elementary schools. We have made profound changes in our social studies at the high school and, designing backwards, we are bringing those changes down into the middle school and the elementary schools. We have scientific research programs and inquiry methods at the elementary school that are a model for all. And in mathematics, as many of you know, we developed a program by working with our partners in India, a program that is totally interactive at the high school level. It has moved down to the middle school level and Singapore Math will be a part of this, as well. We have a world language program that embraces six languages and, to be perfectly frank, we are looking for the future for such languages as Hindi and Arabic and others beyond the six that we already offer. Yesterday, we had visitors from West Hartford school system. West Hartford is a superb school system, one of the best in the state. The people from West Hartford who came along with consultants from Montana and from Connecticut observed Singapore Math at one of our elementary schools. In the process, at the end of the day, they walked away saying, 'If only we could provide programs for our kids as you are able to do in Westport.' They acknowledge that it is a tribute not just to the excellent staff in the school system but the type of community that we live in and the support that this community has given, not only to Westport 2025 but to every aspect of our school programs and for that, we are very thankful to the RTM for supporting us all of these years and we hope that you will continue to do so.

Lou Mall, district 2:

Bill is a tough act to follow if you want to be a cheerleader over at Staples. He's quite the rabble rouser. You get the crowd going. I ran for the RTM in order to support a sound school budget and that's what this is, a fiscally sound school budget. One of the things my observation has been is that we're very fortunate to have a Board of Education; there's a continuity there. There is not the partisan politics and I think a lot of the credit goes to Don O'Day and Jim Marpe for, the focus is always what's best for our kids and I think that is very noble. The other thing is the administration and staff. We are fortunate to have great administrators. If you've gotten to know any of the principals in the schools, every principal that I've ever encountered is just terrific. Teachers, of course, we want the best and we have the best. Then there are parents who support the kids and keep wanting the best education for them. Along comes a town that is willing to pay for it. That's Westport. It's for our kids. If you look at our kids, they do perform and if you look at what they give back to our community, whether it's

academic performance, the arts; I don't know if any of you go to Staples Players. I think they are absolutely terrific. This year we went to the Christmas Concert. Jonathan Steinberg was getting up to sing Halleluiah Chorus as an alum of Staples High and, while we're sitting there to enjoy the performance, the football team is up in upstate Connecticut playing for the state championship. So you have it in the academics, the arts and the athletics. They call it the three A's over there, wanting to excel in all three and our schools do excel in all three. It's a tribute to all the people that I mentioned. One thing that I do want to bring up is something that got my attention about three years ago when cuts were made to the budget. One of the things that I have heard is that we could change parking in this town and save \$250,000 a year and I always wondered why aren't we moving this forward. Why aren't we coming up with a solution to parking? I identify the class that year, they were going into freshman year. They would be seniors next year, so, four years. Those kids, when this was first recognized, were going to be freshman. Next year, they are going to be seniors. Elaine Whitney and Michael Rea have come up with a possible solution and I think that it's really important for us, as the RTM and the town, to rally behind them and get this thing done. If you look at the budget, there is a cut of \$200,000 to secretarial positions. Those are important people in our school system. It pains me that that cut is being made because they are very key members of the education community. So, I don't think that we should let that happen for another year.

Don Bergmann, district 1:

I'd like to highlight one observation that was made, basically, that our compensation increases exceed the amount that we are increasing the budget. In other words, there is a fundamental disconnect there. That's been going on for four years now. That's a serious issue and it leads to conclusions as to how to deal with that in the future. I think the Board of Education feels that it has done the kind of cutting that it can do; therefore, the compensation levels have got to remain flat or even in some cases go down or we're going to have to increase taxes to make up those differences. That's a real tension that has been growing and I think will start to come to fruition in the next several years. I want everyone including the public, if they're watching, to be aware of that. A specific thing that ties into something that was raised last night, something that has been on my agenda, the issue of certain costs that are not in the school budget. Those are primarily in the OPEB and the pension area in which certain school employees are covered by the town program. Those costs do not yet get into the school budget. There are reasons for that but I am wondering, do you have an estimate or a guess as to what that number would be? If it was, it would increase the operating budget.

Mr. O'Day:

I honestly don't know what the number is. I do know, basically, having a background in finance, that the way I would prefer to see this done if there is going to be an allocation of OPEB and other costs to the Board of Education for Board of Education employees, it certainly seems fair, is that we go back and we

just do a functional transfer. So, you'd move the history back and then the year over year expenses aren't skewed. Then, to the extent that we can manage our part of it, that's even better because, when you have the ownership of the line, I think it's a lot easier. It's more visible as to what you're dealing with. I don't have a number for you. I think that's still in place. I'd say that one of the things that has caught us in the past that I don't want to do again sort of guessing. I think what Gary has done, he is working with Nancy on this, to work to try to really get the exact amount. When that is done, we can talk about it. I'm certainly welcome to have that in our budget as long as we adjust this.

Mr. Rose:

What number are you using for the Board of Education?

Gary Conrad, Finance Director:

The number that you are going to use is \$100,386,827 .

RESOLVED: That the Board of Education's budget items as recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the Representative Town Meeting be adopted and the sum of \$100,386,827 for the Board of Education Budget is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures;

The budget passes unanimously.

Ms. Flug begins reading the resolution for the total budget appropriation.

Point of order, Mr. Bomes:

It is out of order. There are three other Board of Education items we have to approve tonight, the private school budget, the debt service long term and the debt service bond anticipation notes which are part of the education budget.

Mr. Rose:

Here's the problem. We went through this last year. It's not on the agenda. I can't just add it. We've gone through this before.

Mr. Bomes: The Board of Finance approved it in four pieces.

Mr. Rose: This is exactly the point you made last year.

Ms. Flug read the resolution.

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Town of Westport General Fund Budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013, as recommended by the Board of Finance and approved or amended by the Representative Town Meeting, be adopted and the sum of the Board of Education Budget and the Selectman's Budget in the amount of \$188,201,587 is hereby appropriated to meet expenditures and that

for the purpose of raising a tax on the grand list of 2011, the sum of \$188,201,587 is hereby appropriated.

The resolution does not need a second.

By show of hands, the budget passes unanimously.

The secretary read item #5 of the call – Property taxes are due and payable in quarterly installments. The motion passes unanimously.

No committee reports.

Members of the Westport electorate - No comment

Ms. Flug read the resolution and it was seconded by Mr. Lowenstein.

RESOLVED: That property taxes for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2013 shall be due and payable in four quarterly installments and the dates upon which such quarterly installments are to be due and payable shall be the first days of July, October, January and April; and be it further resolved that all taxes in an amount of \$100.00 or less shall be due and payable in a single installment on the first day of July.

Members of the RTM

Gil Nathan, district 9:

I was just curious. Has there been a movement to have taxes paid online? I know you can pay by credit card and there is a fee to do bank routing information. It's talking about town automation and lowering costs and I read one of the things that's matching checks with account numbers that takes a considerable amount of time from the town so I'm wondering if we've done anything to fix that process. I don't know if Gary is the right person to ask.

Mr. Rose: I'm not sure. It might be the Tax Collector but Gary might know.

Mr. Conrad:

We have looked at online payments. Right now we are using official payments and there is a fee associated with paying your taxes online or with a credit card. The software system that we use, QDS, they have partnered up with a company called Invoice Cloud that we are looking into. I've had experience with them in the past. Some legislative movements have made it so it will be available that you can sign up to get your tax statement online via email. You can also sign up and pay online. One of the advantages of this is that they send you reminders, usually right before the 31st of December, saying 'If you want to pay your taxes now, tax advantage of the tax write off, for the current year, pay before 11:59 on Dec. 31.' That is one of the advantages. They are time stamped when you actually pay them. One of the options is that you can pay them directly from your

checking account through an ACH draw. You might find out that the money will come out of your account a few days later but it will actually be marked as a paid bill for the purpose that you will not paying on that. Those fees associated with that because of the way the system works, if you have multiple cars and personal property or anything else, no matter how many tax bills you have, it puts it into a batch and processes it as one payment and applies it back to all your accounts individually. That process has one fee and the price usually is between 70 and 95 cents for the total transaction. So, all these things probably will be available within the next year. The Tax Collector is looking at that. We're going to find a lot of efficiencies in that, especially with the email piece to it. The more people get on email, the less mail that goes out, between the printing of the bill, stuffing of it, mailing it and the transaction coming back. Overall, if you are paying \$.70, it is a lot cheaper than processing a check and also paying the stamp cost.

By show of hands, the motion passes unanimously.

Mr. Rose:

Before you go onto the last item of the call, I would like to thank you all, the committee chairs for the work that has gone into this for months and months in some cases. You guys did a very nice job.

The secretary read item #6 of the call – To require that the motor vehicle tax be payable in a single installment. The motion passes unanimously.

There was no committee report

Members of the Westport electorate - No comment.

Ms. Flug read the resolution and it was seconded by Mr. Lowenstein.

RESOLVED: That the motor vehicle tax shall be due and payable in a single installment.

Members of the RTM – no comment

The motion passes unanimously.

The meeting adjourned 8:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Patricia H. Strauss
Town Clerk



by Jacquelyn Fuchs
Secretary

ATTENDANCE: May 8, 2012

DIST.	NAME	PRESENT	ABSENT	NOTIFIED MODERATOR	LATE/ LEFT EARLY
1	Don Bergmann	X			
	Diane Cady	X			
	Matthew Mandell	X			
	Cornelia Olsen	X		X	Arr. 8 p.m.
2	Catherine Calise	X			
	Jay Keenan		X	X	
	Louis Mall	X			
	Sean Timmins		X	X	
3	Jimmy Izzo	X			
	Melissa Kane	X			
	Bill Meyer	X			
	Hadley Rose	X			
4	Jonathan Cunitz, DBA	X			
	David Floyd	X			
	George Underhill	X			
	Jeffrey Wieser	X			
5	Dewey Loselle	X			
	Richard Lowenstein	X			
	Paul Rossi	X			
	John Suggs	X			
6	Hope Feller	X			
	Paul Lebowitz	X			
	Catherine Talmadge	X			
	Christopher Urist	X			
7	Arthur Ashman, D.D.S.		X	X	
	Allen Bomes	X			
	Jack Klinge	X			
	Stephen Rubin	X			Left 8 p.m.
8	Lee Arthurs		X	X	
	Wendy Batteau	X			
	Heather Cherry	X			
	Lois Schine	X			
9	Eileen Flug	X			
	Velma Heller, Ed. D.	X			
	John McCarthy		X	X	
	Gilbert Nathan	X			
Total		31	5		