

MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING

FY 2012-2013 BUDGET

APRIL 23, 2012

Mayor Spencer opened the public hearing at 7:00 p.m.

Scott Gessis, 9 Rowland Street, indicated he had a stroke in January, 2010, but the Good Lord has given him more time and he is grateful for that. He said he and his wife have purchased burial plots in Somersworth. They can afford to be buried here, but he doesn't know if they can afford to live here. They are on a fixed income and they will have to determine if they can afford to live here. He hopes the City Council will tweak the budget so they can afford it. The taxes go up every year and it is tough.

Mr. Gessis said taxpayers used to hold some influence over these things. He hopes the Council will adjust the budget to make it affordable.

Jean LeBrun, 82 West High Street, said he is here tonight because the tax rate in Somersworth is getting out of hand. He pays over \$8,000 in taxes per year at this time. With the next increase of 10% it will be up to \$9,000. He does not receive hardly any services and has no children in school. It is absolutely ludicrous. The school budget is what is outrageous. To spend \$12,000 per student per year is outrageous. Anybody who has a student in school and does not pay \$12,000 per year in taxes is technically getting welfare. He is getting sick and tired of it as are most of the people his age. The school system is out of hand. It should be half of what it is.

Mr. LeBrun said we have to put a stop to overspending on schools and start spending on infrastructure so people can get good jobs and we can improve the community. One-fourth of his money coming in goes to pay taxes.

Bill Connor, 41 Pinewood Drive, said that after reviewing the lengthy budget he feels the document was prepared in a highly professional manner. The document provides line item details with charts to demonstrate how the taxpayers' money is currently being spent, along with what appropriations and revenues might be in the near future.

Mr. Connor said the Council's job is to review this document and make the difficult decisions as to how we can afford its desired content. It is his belief that we have a wise Council and School Board and understand that both will do what is acceptable for our City's outlook.

Mr. Connor said he did find several items of interest:

- The Hilltop Elementary School Building and its current unfunded building maintenance issue. He assumes we are going to finance its upkeep and not allow it to advance its deterioration. Notwithstanding the community's courageous

efforts to save the building, we must certainly have to fund this item. Estimates for yearly fuel costs were \$3,900 and \$15,000 for building repairs. This would seem the prudent path to take for the moment.

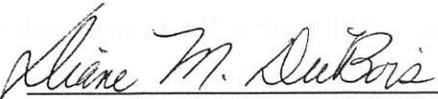
- He steadfastly considers that the City Manager needs a full time Executive Assistant in his office because of the scope of responsibility and departments that he oversees, in addition to the major events currently taking place in the City that require his full time attention. He asked that they fund this normally required organizational position.
- He asked that Council consider contracting with a professional independent budget analysis firm who would provide them with clear, objective, unbiased analysis of the ongoing and proposed budgets to provide advisement to the City Manager, City Council and School Board Chair with its recommendations. The Council should consider this requested process to be of a similar method utilized by some organizations that take into service a risk analyst to assess current ongoing conditions to provide helpful suggestions for cost saving improvements and revenue enhancements.
- Make certain that our Police and Fire Departments obtain the necessary funding for the required training and equipment they need to do their jobs safely.

Chris Santos, 8 Hawthorne Drive, said the taxes have steadily increased since he moved here four years ago. They receive nothing extra. His daughter will be going to school. He understands the schools need to have the money to run. He feels they should have built the new school to accommodate all the elementary kids instead of running two schools.

Mr. Santos said he came here from Rochester where they have trash and recycling pick up every week, their downtown is nice and the road to downtown looks nice. Some of the money you are requesting should be going into making the town look more presentable. The older people cannot afford to keep paying the high taxes. They are struggling. He has a good job, but they are cutting back on things that aren't necessities. He wishes they could come to an understanding that everyone can't afford to just keep taking money out of their pockets. They need to see something coming back into the community and into benefiting the children.

There being no further public comments, Mayor Spencer closed the public hearing at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Diane M. DuBois, City Clerk