

DERBY BOARD OF APPORTIONMENT & TAXATION MEETING

MONDAY, MAY 26, 2009 – HOTCHKISS HOSE,

**7:00 P.M.
PUBLIC HEARING
MINUTES**

Call to Order Chair Carolyn Duhaime called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance All rose and pledged allegiance to the flag.

Roll Call

Present: Carolyn Duhaime, Frank Lazowski, George Kurtyka, Joseph Laskowski, Mark Nichols, Julia Romano, Judy Szewczyk, Leo DiSorbo, Paul Varsanik. There is a quorum.

Absent: Anthony DeFala Jr.

New Business a. Address any calculation errors in Preliminary Budget as adopted. Mr. Domurad explained the Board put \$8,000 into capital for an indoor air quality study. It was voted on however, it wasn't added into the total budget bottom line.

Public Portion

Tom Lionetti - 79 Sunset Drive. What is the proposed mill rate increase? Ms. Duhaime said the Board does not have that yet. This public hearing is for the public input on the budget to be used to calculate the mill rate. Mr. Lionetti said if it isn't over 2 mills there is something wrong. The Middle School next year is going to cost 2 mills alone, just on that. He doesn't want to pay .75 this year and then next year we go to 4 mills. He feels the education should be funded more, there shouldn't be any layoffs, the teachers are doing a good job, we finally got the school back on track again. Grab money from the Mayor's salary and all his assistants and throw it in education.

Dr. Stephen Tracy - Superintendent of Derby Public Schools. Dr. Tracy thanked the Board for all they have done. The tentative budget that was adopted does include significant additional dollars to the school system. That still leaves the Board of Education with 440,000 beyond what the school board will be spending this year (leaving the Federal Stimulus money aside). He asks on behalf of the school system for the Board to do a little better. He would like to see an increase in real dollars (leaving Federal Stimulus money aside) in the amount of 770,000 over last year. That is about 9/10th's of a mill or 180.00 per typical Derby homeowner. That will be an additional 330,000 more than sought tentatively last week. That will leave about 717,000 worth of a budget gap. He believes they can close that gap without doing major damage to the school system. The school board back in February requested 17.9 million dollars including the new Middle School. He is suggesting 17.4 million tonight. They will make up the difference in a new health care plan, early retirement, furlough days, and including the spending of Federal Stimulus money, they will get over two years about 560,000 new Federal Stimulus dollars. Dr. Tracy only wants to spend half of that in a given year. If you spend it all in one year, then you are in trouble. He thinks they can spend about 200,000 of that to supplant dollars already in the board's budget. They will still be looking at layoffs.

Sheila Parizo - 30 Laurel Avenue - Chairwoman of the Derby Board of Education. She said there is a 1.5 million dollar elephant that sits in the room for the Board of Education. There has been three years of consistent under funding of the Board of Education by the City. The Board has experienced a tremendous turnover in the administration of the district. They are on the right track with the addition of the Superintendent Dr. Tracy, High School principal Fran Thompson, and Special Education Director, Dr. Lois Knapton. These three individuals have managed to turn the negative issues that have plagued our district over communications with the Board of Ed, City agencies and the Mayor's office. Teachers, administrators and students are enjoying the new attitude that is so prevalent in our schools. It is important to understand the impact of 1.5 million dollar element will have on our school district. The potential loss of ten additional teachers will increase class sizes, possibly breaching contractual issues which means we are now bereaved; meaning legal fees a line item that they have significantly cut already. Ultimately it will cost the board more money, which they will have to find from another line item. This board worked tirelessly and is a bare bones budget.

Tara Hyder - Board of Education member. She is a wife a mother, teacher and a Derby resident. Her and her husband have two children who will attend Derby public schools. She is happy to say educating children is her life. She asks the Derby Board of Apportionment and Taxation remove themselves from the number crunching and think about what is most important in the world. The children are our most important natural resource in our world. Derby public schools has consistently been underfunded compared to other public school systems in Connecticut. Under-funding our children is causing the Board of Education to possibly making cuts to our teachers and athletic programs. There are standards for no child left behind and people measuring yearly progress like the last twenty five years ago. Today's kidengartender's aren't expected to go on like yesteryear's first grader's. Our children need athletic programs. She is willing to pay her taxes and her neighbor's taxes as well to raise the standards for education and for our kids.

Dan Sexton - 41 McLaughlin Terrace. He is a life-long resident of Derby. The student's deserve education that is challenging and prepares them for future endeavors. The curriculum is not what it needs to make them competitive for scholarships and admittance for choice colleges and universities. The current budget takes us back which cuts back programs, curriculum and faculty and staff. You need to do the right thing.

Ms. Anita Dugatto - 61 Elizabeth Street. A new young family would look at our funding at 13% below other similar districts in the state recommended levels. They will not come to Derby. If people don't come to Derby, we don't get revenue. It is based on quality of education. Please do not cut the school funding. We are on the right track, we have a great leader, teachers, let's make it a great city.

(Name Unkonwn) - teacher at Irving School. She is a Science teacher. She has paid for every single lab. This is what the kids deserve. She has paid for a photo copier. Also, there are 24 books which there are 71 students. We do outling which is good for the student's to learn, but she can't give them a book to study by.

Kelly Curtis - 22 Grandview Boulevard - among fire department. He presented a bare bones budget, still needed cuts, wanted to thank the Board for working so hard on this. The Town has been very good to us.

Mr. Angelo - Orangewood West. He asked the Board to think not only about the current budget but also about the next ten years. Looking at teachers taking a cut in pay and benefits, we are also looking at the downstream effects of educational talent.

Stacy Whelan - 35 Coppola Terrace. Her son just started kindergarten at Irving. She is disappointed in the school system and is willing to pay ten times more in taxes in order to have better education for her son. Four years ago they moved to Derby, and if she knew about the educational system than she knows now, they would not have moved to Derby. We need to improve our children's education. Teachers have too many kids in their class, too many kids with disabilities and issues.

Dana - 166 Sentinel Hill Road. Mayor Staffieri has been elected twice in Derby. His campaign consistently prioritized his support of education. Yet, Mr. Staffieri has been noticeably absent from the Board of Education and the Board of Apportionment and Taxation. In her opinion he has done nothing to support his campaign promises. It is time he makes good on his promises and fight for education.

Keith McLiverty - Treasurer City of Derby. He wanted to update the Board on one issue. Tomorrow morning the City will be issuing the re-financing on its existing debt. That number will play an integral role in the budget preparations. Market rates are down. A month ago the Tax Board authorized the refinancing the existing debt. There could be a savings of 250,000 in debt. It will be published for the purposes of transparency. This will impact the bottom line of this budget.

Jessica ? - teacher in Derby. She brought pictures of students who need their teachers.

John Oraziotti - 36 Sodom Lane. He is a substitute teacher at Derby High School and Middle School. He knows firsthand what is going on at the school. There are several teachers who are on the chopping blocks. He sees what these teachers do and what kids need, the one on one. If you don't fund what the superintendent is asking for the kids won't get what they need.

Chantal Gerckens - 55 Hillcrest Ave. She is an active volunteer of the City of Derby and the mother of three. The loss of any of our teachers will only hold us back. Please accept the board of ed's already very minimized budget. They have cut too much. She is a big supporter of the Middle School but doesn't see the need to open in January. Why not wait to open up in September 2010 and save 250,000.

Dina Weismann - 26 Caldwell Drive. If the City refinancing is happening tomorrow, she hopes it will be applied to education budget. It is a shame that it is coming this late in the process, although she appreciates the Treasurer's transparency. She is not sure the Board has taken in the full scope of the economic impact that is going on. She is concerned the budget they put together this year will put us in a crisis next year after the election. She believes the wages are at a zero percent increase, that is beyond horrific. There are capital planning items, that have been years in the making. To not fund those items in one year throws the budget off not just for this year but for future years. The Pequot Fund has rumors that the funding is going down. Where in the budget do you make up that shortfall?

Sam Rizzitelli - 26 Prindle Lane. He said he understands the tax proposal is to keep it flat as much as possible. He begs the board not to play politics with the children of the City of Derby. He gets real concerned when he hears about laying off teachers. He has eight children who do not go to Derby schools. But when he hears about eight teachers getting laid off, that is a significant impact to the school system. He is not for that. He does not feel we should pass a budget that doesn't fully fund the teachers at the school system. You can't cut the education. Please don't play politics with the kids of Derby.

Name unknown ? - His kids went through the Derby school system. He is a school teacher. Education is the lifeblood of the town. It keeps the town lively. Each year the school budget gets cut. This year, there is a zero increase, it's really not a zero increase it is a ten percent decrease. The board came forward with a six percent increase and it really was to be a ten percent increase to stay level. One of the steps is to cut back the aides. If the aides are cut back you are also hurting the kids that don't need the help, because the teachers will be occupied with helping the one or two students who need the help. He would willingly pay the extra to pay for the six percent increase.

Arlene Yaccobacci - 10 Lombardi Drive. It would have been helpful if this public hearing was published on the Derby website. Nobody wants to see an increase in taxes, but there is most likely going to be an increase in student population. Please consider this in your decision. The City has an obligation to educate our students. Please don't cut the budget and provide insufficient allocation to the Board of Education.

Carissa Riddle. Her concern is with any loss to the school budget. Her concern is with the loss at the lower school levels. She worries if we don't invest in the lower level grades, we will lose children at the lower level. They will be that much harder to get back. The long-term success is proven by the early investment.

Kim Krieger - 7 General Wooster Rd, Secretary of the Board of Education. She wants to reiterate this budget as it stands now was put together with great pains. What has taken them several years in making gains was removed in one fell swoop. This is an incomplete staff. It is minus twelve paraprofessionals, 2.8 teachers and two library media specialists - not only certified teachers but actually run an entire program for the school district. These are individuals whose lives have been changed. To deplete this budget any further would be devastating to the educational quality and the individuals that we count on to run it every day. As a parent and a tax payer she is willing to do her share to support the educational system.

Dan Waleski - 21 Elm Street. The Board of Education budget is 50% of the City's budget. There is an absence of industrial and commercial tax revenue. The burden lies very heavily on the residential taxpayer. Can something be done to put special education needs on a regional or more state involvement, or relief for fixed income people. Maybe the Board of Education could consider adding a tuition cost for students to help fund their budgets. He thinks the Tax Board worked hard and diligently. He asks the board to keep the tax rate as low as possible.

Carl Yaccobacci - 10 Lombardi Drive. He has a question regarding legal services. Last year it was budgeted at 581,000. He realizes there was a payout of 300,000. This year's expenditures have been 677,000 already this year. What is Derby doing to spend all this? This could close the gap in the education budget.

Anita Duggato - 69 Elizabeth Street. She knows the Tax Board has worked very hard and other departments reduced their budgets. Her question is where is the Mayor? Residents of Derby don't mind a tax increase if they know it will go to education. We are spending 12,000 for fireworks, it has already been approved. Why is it the Mayor did not reduce his budget, it was the Tax Board who reduced it.

Adjournment A MOTION to adjourn by Mr. Varsanik, second by Mr. DiSorbo, all in favor, motion carried. Meeting ended at 7:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Denise Cesaroni
Recording Secretary