

**TOWN OF POMFRET
BOARD OF FINANCE – PUBLIC HEARING
TUESDAY, MAY 18, 2010 AT 7:30 PM
POMFRET COMMUNITY SCHOOL CAFETERIA**

In Attendance: Board of Finance members John DiIorio, Carolyn Gerrity, Michael Baum, Margie Huoppi, Kenneth Kristal, Mary Anthony. Approximately 100 citizens and interested parties.

- I. Public Hearing** – J. DiIorio opened the Public Hearing at 7:35 PM.
Board of Finance Presentation of Proposed General Government and Board of Education Budgets for FY 2010/2011 – J. DiIorio presented a power point presentation highlighting the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education budgets, Revenues, Future Considerations, Recent Budget History, and Solutions. An overview of each point was provided. At 8:00 PM he opened the floor to questions and comments from the public.
- II. Citizen’s Comments** - John Bala stated that 5% reserve was sufficient in the past. The fund was there for a rainy day and it seemed the rainy day was now. He also asked about PCS establishing their own program to meet the needs of special education. Pete Mann thanked all involved for the work put into this budget. He stated that in light of the revaluation many property values went up. He felt the budget was high for the times we are in. Many people have been affected by unemployment. He felt both budgets should reflect a zero increase and go to referendum. Maria Sangiolo spoke of the great teachers and programs at PCS. Any cuts will make mandates more difficult to meet. Brett Sheldon would agree with the comments made in the best of times. Himself and others had large class sizes in school. Pomfret has great teachers that can meet the challenge of larger class sizes. Kathy Stevens stated that she agreed with Mr. Sheldon’s comments and that there have been no pay increases in her household. The Town employees should not get a pay increase and she wondered if the teachers had been asked to stay at zero. Roger Black stated he would like to see any mil increase as close to zero as possible. The revaluation will still mean an increase for many. Teacher/student ratios could increase some and quality education be maintained. A woman stated that she is a volunteer at PCS. She felt the school was operating on bare bones now and she felt a good solution for all could be arrived at. Albert Washburn stated he was a modest homeowner and that a majority of homeowners will be hit hard. PCS does a great job but he felt larger class sizes would not be a hardship. Mr. Stevens stated that he has worked with budgets for years and while the sound of cuts is difficult it can be done. Big numbers need to be looked at first and people have to compromise. Keith Wilcox asked what the average tax increase would be for a 1 ½ mil increase on a \$200,000 assessment. Close to \$420 per year. David Flath asked what the current fund balance is. A reduction in fund balance use has always been incremental. The current proposal is a dramatic shift. Richard Provencher stated that property taxes can’t continue to keep getting hit. There

are older people in town on fixed incomes and those that can't go out and earn more money to cover increased taxes. Tim McNally stated that town employees are a handful of people that residents know. They aren't overpaid and are a great bargain to the Town. David Patenaude commended all for the work that has been done. The room was still a small representation of the whole town and those speaking represent an even smaller number. He felt a budget of this size should go to referendum. Paul Nelson asked if the Board of Education puts their health insurance out to bid each year. Sally Johnson stated that with the economy as it is today everyone feels some anxiety. An increase would be great if everyone could afford it but the current economy doesn't allow for that. Another woman stated that her home was in the raised assessment category, there were two adults working in the household with no raises and she was pro-education. She felt the reality is that education is under funded. Advances in technology has been huge in the past years and the school is not keeping up with that. David Loos asked if the mil rate had gone up a half last year wouldn't things be better now. Cheryl Kapelner-Champ spoke on behalf of the Conservation Commission in saying their hope was that the land acquisition proposals will continue to go forward. The Pomfret build-out shows that will be a savings over time. David Smutnick stated that with federal spending the way it is they will have to tax more. The State situation will require them to tax more. Things are not easy now and they will not get better. Brett Sheldon suggested that as the room was even matched maybe the Board would look at somewhere around half to one mil. Maybe start at $\frac{3}{4}$ and go to referendum. Sally Rogers thanked the Board for holding this additional hearing. There were no further comments or questions.

III. **Adjournment** – The Public Hearing duly adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonnie Ryan, clerk

Date approved _____