

**TOWN OF POMFRET - BOARD OF FINANCE  
PUBLIC HEARING - APRIL 24, 2006**

The public hearing was opened at 7:00 P.M. by Maureen Nicholson, Chairman Board of Finance. Board of Finance Members Present: Anthony Emilio, John DiIorio, Margaret Huoppi, and Carolyn Garrity. Not Present: Peter Mann. Others Present: James Rivers, First Selectman, Timothy McNally and David Patenaude, Selectmen; Louis Mager, Superintendent, Sandra Ahola, Principal, Lynda Joly, Director of Pupil Services, and Board of Education Members, Richard Schad, Susan Black, Joseph Mirgaliuolo, David Smutnick, and Elizabeth Cartier. There were approximately 40-45 citizens present.

Maureen Nicholson opened with general comments regarding the proposed budgets. There have been no changes made to the budgets presented to the Board of Finance as yet. The Board of Education proposed budget for 2006/2007 is up 8.9% from this years. The General Government budget is down 9%. David Patenaude was asked to moderator the meeting.

The moderator asked James Rivers, First Selectmen to present the general government budget. Mr. Rivers mentioned that we are still waiting for the State revenues to be approved by the General Assembly. The Education Cost Sharing Grant is only 38% of the total education budget while in the past it was 42%. The general government operating expenses are up \$99,000. This is due to the Fire Marshal budget being put back into the general government budget in the amount of \$13,000, new items to maintain the recreation fields in the amount of \$16,000, snow removal is up \$24,000 to purchase sand, insurance is up \$15,000, and wages increases amount to \$20,000. Debt payments are down \$189,000 but the revenues from the State for bonds are down \$138,000. The capital and non-recurring budget is down \$141,000 or 25%. The meeting was then opened to questions and/or comments from the public.

Ann Hennen was concerned that there was not a line item for funds to be transferred to the Pomfret Land Acquisition Fund as per State Statute. Dave Flath was glad to see the Fire Marshal back in the general government budget and hoped there was a reduction in the PFD as a result. Maureen Nicholson mentioned that there is no reduction proposed in their budget but with other appropriation increases they are proposing no increase to their mill rate. Mary Smutnick wanted to know why Jim Rivers stated on WINY radio that there would be no mill increase if the budget is proposing a 2.0 mill increase. Jim answered that he still projects that there will be no mill increase before the budget process is done. Dave Flath wanted to know why FICA was up 13% if the average wage increase is 4%.

The moderator then turned the meeting over to Richard Schad, Chairman Board of Education. Richard reviewed the Board of Education proposed budget which has increased 8.9% or \$659,146. The Special Education out-placements are currently only being reimbursed by 70% instead of 100% and the State is looking to do the same again for 2006/2007. The major increases are: Salaries up only 2.9% or \$72,690 due to senior retirements and a good contract; health insurance is up 13% or \$75,646; utilities are up \$30,000 due to the cost of fuel; and Woodstock Academy tuition is up 4.5% or \$89,895. New programs make up an additional increase of \$114,108. High school enrollment is up. Richard mentioned that the Board of Education is very concerned about the mill increase and is looking at ways to make cuts to their

proposed budget. He also mentioned that PCS is very aggressive in apply for and acquiring a lot of grant monies. He mentioned that Louis Mager will be leaving at the end of the school year and that the new superintendent, Dr. Richard Packman, will be starting on July 1, 2006. The meeting was then opened to questions and/or comments to the public.

Richard Hall asked whether our higher ERG rate attracts special education students to our town. It was asked why we were proposing another special education teacher. Lynda Joly explained that we do not out-place many of our special education students; instead, we try to main stream. So this position is needed to continue to main stream these kids. Approximately 12% of the student population in PCS is special education. Mary Smutnick mentioned that we can not discriminate against special education students but felt we discriminate against the students that excel. Several citizens spoke in support of the professional staff and help that we give to the special education students. There were questions asked about the technology/server increase and teacher staff increases. Richard Schad mentioned that we are still one of the lowest towns for per pupil expenditures.

Mary Smutnick brought the issue of the bridge from the PCS property across the Mashamoquet Brook to the Wyndham Land Trust property and will this cost us. Dave Patenaude mentioned that we have to spend this first before we get the money back. Jim Rivers mentioned that this has been on hold, but they will have to decide whether to use this grant or not. The Selectmen will have to re-evaluate this project. Ford Fay asked the Board of Finance to look at his proposal that he submitted tonight as a resolve to the mill rate increase.

The public hearing closed at 8:15 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl A. Grist, Clerk