

SPECIAL  
MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL  
WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS  
June 27, 2016

The meeting was called to order in the City Council Chamber, Municipal Building, 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA at 6:00 PM by the President.

The City Clerk called the roll. Councilor Knapik was absent.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States was led by the President.

Upon motion of Councilor Paul, it was VOTED: That items A. and B. under "Communications from the Mayor" be read by the Clerk and REFERRED TO FINANCE COMMITTEE.

The Clerk read from the Agenda:

- A. Transfer of \$393.13 within the Fire Department from Fire, Medical account #12200000-530006 FY16 to Fire, Medical account #12200000-530006 FY15 for a prior year medical bill.
- B. Transfer of \$3,000.00 from the Purchasing Department, Purchase of Services account #11380000-520000 FY16 to Auditing Department, Purchase of Services account #11350000-520000 FY15.

A Public Hearing was held on the annual budget FY17 as submitted by the Mayor, at which all interested persons shall be given an opportunity to be heard for or against the proposed expenditures or any item thereof. Finance Chair Councilor Paul informed everyone that the FY17 budget as presented by the Mayor contains a 3.47% increase in the tax levy with assumptions of a meals tax and a hotel tax and the use of Free Cash which yields an increase of \$2,372,616 which equals \$28.00 per hundred thousand dollars of home value per million dollars of tax increase. He informed the Council that it is the goal of the Finance Committee to bring proposals to yield a zero tax increase. He informed everyone that the Finance Committee as well as any other Councilor will now take input and answer questions from the public relative to the FY17 budget.

Presented Bean opened up the floor for the public to speak.

Ms. Michelle Douglas, 1177 Shaker Road requested that the Council not cut \$600,000 from the School Budget. She informed the Council that her six year old son received special education services and that the cut would adversely affect him. Councilor VanHeynigen informed Ms. Douglas that he studied the budget and that a

cut to nonteacher items would not affect the special education. He also reminded her that the Council cannot cut specific line items in the School budget only the Superintendent is allowed to cut specific line items.

At this point Councilor Knapik arrived at the meeting and was recorded as being present.

Councilor Flaherty informed Ms. Douglas that the School budget continues to go up and that the Schools can do a better job at consolidating and negotiating. Councilor Dondley agreed with Ms. Douglas that the cut would result in cuts of teachers' assistance and that special education would be adversely affected.

With the discussion getting heated, President Bean reminded everyone to be cordial.

Mr. Bill Duval, 277 Sackett Road, addressed the Council as an individual, not as a School Committee member. He informed the Council that taxes are like an investment and for that investment the City provides excellent EMT service, Police and Fire service and good schools.

Ms. Krista Stoops, 232 Granville Road, a past special education parent council member informed the Council that her 14 year old could not be taught by Westfield therefore had to be transported out of district and that costs more money than having the services provided by Westfield. She requested that the School budget not be cut.

Ms. Esteele Streeter, 88 Furrowtown Road, a past school librarian, expressed her concerns with the proposed cut to the School budget. She informed the Council that the cut would affect the library, the paraprofessionals and the technology in the schools.

Brooke Bentley, 97 Laurel Road, Russell, MA informed the Council that her son's paraprofessional was key in her son's education and to please not cut anymore from the School budget.

Ms. Kate Phelon, 150 Hillside Road thanked the Finance Committee for all the time they put into reviewing the budgets. As Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce she requested no increases to taxes because an increase in taxes affects the businesses in Westfield.

Ms. Katherine Bentrewicz, 95 Llewellyn Drive requested no cuts for the schools and that supported the hotel tax.

Ms. Kathleen Tremblay, 473 Russellville Road requested a zero tax increases. She informed the Council that the school is a big ticket item and could studies be done comparing salaries and expenses. Councilor VanHeynigen reminded her that the City Council cannot cut individual line items. Councilor Flaherty informed her that the City Council cannot control how the School spends their money. He informed her that

education is very important to him. He informed her that the City is getting very close to the levy ceiling. Councilor Paul informed her that an upgrade in technology may help reduce the expenses in the School. Councilor Knapik informed the Council that it is the opinion of Councilor Flaherty that the levy ceiling is getting very close. He informed the Council that steps have been taken to pay into its obligations to retirement, that Boston will not help Westfield if it does not help itself by accepting the local meals and hotel tax, that life is not a spreadsheet of numbers and that the City is really not in that bad of shape. Councilor Flaherty disagreed and informed the Council that the City is actually getting close to levy ceiling and that the spreadsheet proves it.

Mr. Dave Carlin, 32 Harvest Moon Lane expressed his concern with the infrastructure of the City. He expressed his concerns with the shortfalls of Chapter 90 money. He suggested looking at ways to raise alternative revenue.

Ms. Eleanor Meyer, 54 Llewellyn Drive requested that the Council not cut the School budget because it will affect the paraprofessionals. She questioned why there has been a decrease of 600 children in the schools and why are so many people leaving Westfield. Councilor Flaherty informed her the decrease has been happening over the past seven years.

Mr. Matt Roman, Westfield requested that the training expenses and seminars of employees be cut.

Mr. Matt Emmershy, 18 State Street, owner of property at 36 Fowler Street informed the Council that he is breaking ground out of town due to the uncertainty of taxes in Westfield. He informed the Council that he wants stability for his children and the schools are not performing and that the cuts need to be from the School Administration, not to teachers so it doesn't affect the children.

Mr. Mark Cressotti, 12 Furrow Street spoke in favor of the meals tax and hotel tax. He informed the Council that the City has made strides the last few years and needs to continue forward.

Ms. Michelle Douglas, 1177 Shaker Road addressed the Council for the second time. She informed the Council that a cut to School Administration does affect the children.

Councilor Knapik requested that the new Superintendent be given a chance to prove himself and not tie his hands by making a cut to the School budget.

Ms. Christine Tolpa-Matuszczak, 115 Hawks Circle requested the Councilors to take off the gloves and work together and that 18 years ago the grass in Westfield looked a lot greener.

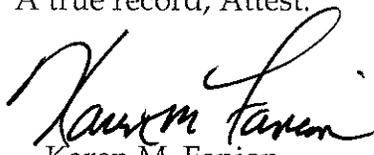
Mr. Matt Emmershy, 18 State Street, owner of property at 36 Fowler Street addressed the Council for the second time. He questioned why a house that is 70% complete pays taxes of \$7,400 and again he reiterated the uncertainty of taxes in Westfield and insisted that the City cut the spending.

Councilor Flaherty reiterated that the levy ceiling is getting close.

Councilor Paul, Chair of Finance, thanked everyone for their input.

At 7:25 PM, and upon motion of Councilor Harris, it was VOTED: To ADJOURN.

A true record, Attest:



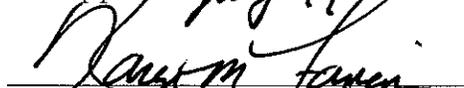
Karen M. Fanion

City Clerk/Clerk of the Council

Presented to the Mayor

Approved by the Mayor

For approval July 19 2016

  
Karen M. Fanion, City Clerk

July 20 2016

  
Brian P. Sullivan, Mayor