

**-- APPROVED --**  
**BRUNSWICK TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES**  
**PUBLIC HEARING ON THE BUDGET**  
**June 5, 2003**  
**Municipal Meeting Facility**

**7:30 P.M.** Chair Priest called the meeting to order and asked for the Pledge to the Flag.

**Councilors Present:** Chair Charles R. Priest, W. David Watson, Jacqueline A. Sartoris, Robert A. Galloupe, Douglas A. Rice, Nancy E. Randolph, Forrest Lowe, and Stephen H. McCausland.

**School Board Present:** Chair Allen L. Springer, P. Dennis Lucas, Jr., Dugan C. Slovenski, Eileen B. Murphy, Corinne A. Perreault, William J. Dana, Alan G. Yuodsnukis, and Rebecca A. Shepherd.

**Others Present:** Donald H. Gerrish, Town Manager; James Ashe, Superintendent of Schools; Fran Smith, Town Clerk; Patricia Harrington, Assistant Town Manager; John Foster, Public Works Director; Jerry Hinton, Police Chief; Gary Howard, Fire Chief; Clark Labbe, Deputy Fire Chief; Thomas Farrell, Parks and Recreation Director; Cathy Donovan, Town Assessor; John Eldridge, Finance Director; Mary Reindl, Director of Human Services; Theo Holtwijk, Director of Planning and Development; Greg Bartlett, Assistant Superintendent of Schools; James Oikle, Business Manager for School Department ; several citizens, members of the press, and TV video crew.

Manager Gerrish made a brief presentation on the proposed budget. He is proposing a budget that would increase taxes by 2.86%. On the municipal side, it is a maintenance budget, maintaining current services. He said the town is proposing to privatize solid waste pick up, starting in September, and to reduce money spending on paving to two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) from three hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$350,000). He is proposing to increase sidewalk repair from forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) to one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000). Health insurance is up one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000). The Capital Improvement Proposal (CIP) spells out where to take care of facility needs for the next year and next five (5) years. It addresses the old high school, public safety building and elementary school needs. The CIP does not approve any money, but it has to be approved so it can be funded through bonds or the operating budget.

James Ashe made a presentation on the school budget. The total revised school budget, at a 2.86% tax increase level, is an overall school budget increase of 2.67% or about six hundred seventy six thousand dollars (\$676,000).

*(A copy of this presentation will be attached to the official minutes.)*

Chair Priest opened the public hearing.

## **Town Council Minutes**

**June 5, 2003**

**Page 2**

**Karen Hastings**, 25 Beech Drive, thanked the staff and boards, who were friendly and cooperative. She appreciated the work on the CIP and thanked Councilors Randolph, Watson, and McCausland for supporting the lower increase (2.38%). She hopes that is not a done deal on the vote at 2.86%. She suggested on major projects, the town look at what would be the costs to do them at a minimum price, a moderate price, or for the best. This would give the public comfort with the process. She would like a study done on the value of the town owned properties to see if they have commercial value, and what type of tax revenue they would bring in. She is in favor at looking into using the old high school as a junior high school. She wanted to know what options the town has with this building at a minimum cost or for its best use.

**Roxane Agne**, 15 Kimberley Circle, discussed Brunswick's low expenditure per student. Volunteers provide a great number of hours in schools and raise money. In this last year they raised one hundred ninety seven thousand dollars (\$197,000) in fund raisers. The junior high students have to pay a cost for special field trips or activities. Parents paid out of pocket seven thousand six hundred dollars (\$7,600) at the elementary schools, twenty seven thousand dollars (\$27,000) at the junior high, and six thousand dollars (\$6,000) at the high school. This totals over two hundred thirty six thousand dollars (\$236,000). The parents who speak in support of the school budget are donating time and money for a good education. In the future, before the Council gives a number to cut the budget to, they should first talk to the schools' staff about what it is they need. By putting off projects this year, it will guarantee higher costs in the future. The children in the Town of Brunswick deserve a good education so they can compete with other students.

**Claudia Knox**, 36 Cumberland Street, said the CIP is a good document, but something does not make fiscal sense. The town should use professional services for documents storage. She did not support closing the old high school to save two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) per year and then spend five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) for renovations to the Napa building, plus there will be a cost to operate there. Once closed, a solid and useful building (old high school) will be gone, and the Napa building was purchased to be torn down for parking. She discussed facility studies on the old high school and its value. She feels it can be preserved and used. She suggested spending the five hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) to renovate the old auditorium for the Council chambers.

**Henry Laurence**, 6 Longfellow Ave, asked the Council to not make any further cuts in the school budget. The teachers are paying out of pocket expenses. For example, at Longfellow School, the average teacher is spending two hundred dollars (\$200) to three hundred dollars (\$300) a year, with one teacher giving twelve hundred dollars (\$1,200). That is not fair.

**Charlotte Agell**, 39 Columbia Ave, spoke in support of the school budget. Brunswick is notably less funded than other towns. She discussed problems with buildings and programs in school. The town needs to work with state/federal governments to get answers. She expressed concern about the low funding per student.

## **Town Council Minutes**

**June 5, 2003**

**Page 3**

**Jeff Ward**, 10 Laurel Road, said the CIP as proposed, closing the old high school, concerns him. To close the gym before having an alternative spot for recreational use would have a major impact on the community. The question to be asking is what does the town want from schools when looking at a budget. He expressed concern about low funding per student. If thinking about the future of Brunswick, the town needs to think about maintaining a wonderful school system.

**Pem Schaffer**, 90 Crestview Lane, commented he had yet to see a Councilor or School Board member respond to any of the speakers. He discussed how there is a lack of knowing what tax increases there will be in the future. He discussed performance standards as a way to measure schools. Failures in students happen with help from the outside, not in the school. If students want to learn, any school will educate them. He summarized some school funding information. The cost per student falls as a district size increases and over certain pupil number increases. The Brunswick school district is the size that minimizes the per student cost. He discussed the burden on seniors paying for higher school spending. He proposed in each tax bill there be a table of spending and tax amounts for the last ten (10) years. It is not the taxpayers' responsibility to provide after school care and other entitlement programs. Those who want to contribute more can do so. The children are the future, but the taxpayer is the present. He discussed how the taxes will double in the next few years. He is convinced the town will be facing a ten percent (10%) increase next year. The CIP's wish list was over seventy million dollars (\$70,000,000). Everyone who pays property taxes also pays state taxes. Rolling over expiring debt service eliminates the possible reductions in the tax rate that could be realized. Spending increase and tax shifting is devastating.

*(A copy of Mr. Schaffer's statement will be attached to the official minutes.)*

**Judy Maloney**, 126 Old Pennellville Road, asked the Council not to cut the school budget. The education her sixth grader gets is not as good as her nineteen (19) year old's was. This is not acceptable. She has seen the erosion of resources and programs. She does not think the school department can maintain the good staff that it has.

**Craig Worthing**, 18 Bowdoin Street, read the School Board's mission statement and how the town is moving away from it. It is economically sound to maintain the facilities the school and town has, so it does not have to buy "new". He cannot see a child reaching his potential and having the school boards' vision realized if the budget is cut.

**Mary O'Brien**, 7 Bowdoin Street, said she is concerned about the decreases over the last few years in school funding. She would like to look at the municipal budget before cuts are made in the school budget. The people in this town cannot support increases in the budgets every year, so they must find a way to increase the tax base like creating an industrial park and working for tax reform at the state level.

**Craig Bradley**, 5 Atwood Lane, echoed his support for not cutting the school budget. The priority should be to take care of buildings, like old high school and do other maintenance. He is concerned about the programs in other communities that are not available in Brunswick. He is concerned about the labor market for teachers in Maine since recent college graduates are not returning to Maine.

**Town Council Minutes**

**June 5, 2003**

**Page 4**

**Alan Neuren**, 4 Leeward Cove, expressed concern about cuts in the school budget.

**Brian O'Connor**, 23 Kimberley Circle, said with tax increases, he will not be able to live in his house when he is sixty-five (65) years old.

**Ron Dumont**, 19 Hemlock Road, said he is retired and is concerned about his taxes. Those on fixed income cannot afford the increases.

**David Dube**, 73 Minott Shore Road, said the old high school should be saved and renovated for a new middle school. The current middle school could be an expanded elementary school. This would save six million dollars (\$6,000,000). Debt service is not included in the numbers for cost per student. The town should have only a fire station, without the police included. It should go into the Grossman location. He suggested purchasing the Times Record building for police and town offices. This would save even more money. With the tax increases, he is having difficulty staying where he has been for thirty (30) years.

**Peter Brand**, Bunganuc Road, complimented the Council for coming in at less than a 3% increase. The Council should start thinking about reviewing programs and positions for savings.

**Tom Hastings**, 25 Beech Drive, said as far as a lack of good teachers, there recently were four hundred (400) applications for three (3) open positions. The town should not give away property even for nonpayment of taxes (referring to the property on Maquoit Road being given to Habitat for Humanity), as it could be used to get additional funds.

**Ann Hayden**, 6 Bowker Street, said the school program is the lifeblood of the community and it is an engine of economic development. The town needs to educate children to compete at the global level. She urged the Council to support the school budget.

**Ervin Snyder**, 1 Colonial Drive, said on the CIP, it should be consistent with what the voters want. He would like to see the old high school turned into a middle school. The proposal to close the school in the anticipation that Brunswick will move up on the building list is not a good idea. He has concerns about this occurring. By leaving this site and not maintaining it, could lead to being in worse condition, having more vandalism.

**Richard Rock**, Jordan Avenue, asked to have Jordan Avenue repaired.

**Carol Liscovitz**, 11 Berry Street, said the key word is "community." One should not only look at how the budget affects oneself since one is not living in a bubble, but instead, a community. Education is important to the community.

Chair Priest closed the public hearing.

**Town Council Minutes**

**June 5, 2003**

**Page 5**

**PLEASE NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE NOT VERBATIM. A TAPE RECORDING OF THE MEETING IS AVAILABLE AT THE TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE DURING REGULAR BUSINESS HOURS.**

*Frances M. Smith*

*Town Clerk*

*June 16, 2003*

June 26, 2003

---

*Date of Approval*

Charles R. Priest

---

*Council Chair*