

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX
DATE: WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 2006

PORTSMOUTH, NH
TIME: 7:00PM [or thereafter]

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Marchand called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Marchand, Assistant Mayor Ferrini, Councilors Grasso, Dwyer, Reynolds, Whitehouse, Smith and Hynes

Absent: Councilor Pantelakos

III. RECESSED PUBLIC HEARING (Recessed from May 2, 2006)

A. PROPOSED FY JULY 1, 2006 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2007 BUDGET

Mayor Marchand announced that the first public hearing was held on May 2, 2006. He said reconvening the public hearing allows residents the opportunity to express their views following the budget work sessions.

IV. PRESENTATION

- Budget Summary – City Manager Bohenko

City Manager Bohenko announced that there have been four work sessions regarding the budget, which were televised. He said that there has been a great deal of discussions regarding the budget. He also advised the City Council that there have been two public hearings on the Capital Improvement Plan, one conducted by the Planning Board and one by the City Council. He informed the public that the final budget review work session of the City Council is scheduled for Tuesday, June 13, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers and the City Council would adopt the budget at the June 19, 2006 City Council meeting.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT/INPUT

Mayor Marchand announced that due to the number of residents here to speak this evening he would limit public comment to three minutes, but each speaker would be allowed three opportunities to speak for a total of nine minutes.

Rick Horowitz, Portsmouth resident, said that every department has increased spending over the last ten years. He advised the City Council that the average gross has been 4.9% well the CPI is 2.5% over the last ten year. He said that the schools make up 54% of the total budget and spend more money per student than the State average. He spoke of the need to have great schools, but at a reasonable cost to the taxpayer. He said that the community needs to work together and urged the City Council to adopt a reasonable budget that is acceptable to all taxpayers.

Boyd Morrison, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of an Athletic Director at Portsmouth High School. He said that there are a limited and inadequate number of fields and facilities available to the student athletes. He advised the City Council that the Athletic Director should be a community position and urged the City Council and School Board to work together to fund this position.

Dr. Bob Lister, Superintendent, said that he normally does not speak at public hearings or address the budget however, he felt it was necessary to express his support for the funding requested by the School Department. He thanked the School Department and the employees for their efforts and hard work over the last year. He also recognized the students and parents for their efforts. He urged the community to work together on the budget and discussed the difficulty the School Department has had in attracting teachers. The main focus and objective of the School Department is to provide the best quality education to all students and he urged the City Council to support the request of the School Department.

Tamara Leibowitz, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the School Department request for funding. She advised the City Council that by cutting the School Department funding you will not lower the cost of health care, utilities or provide more affordable housing. She said that a reduction in funding would cause a loss in positions and programs in the School Department. She urged the community to stand together in this process.

Bob Hassold, Portsmouth resident, asked why we started this budget off at an 8% increase and then reduced it down to 4%. He said that the budget should have started out at 4%. He advised the City Council that he cannot afford the increase in taxes and that his money is limited. He said he would like to see a six-month appraisal of where the taxpayers are getting a bang for their buck. He urged the City Council to hold the line on taxes and said he does not feel any person should lose their home because they can't afford to pay their taxes.

Jim Nevin, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the funding request of the School Department. He advised the City Council that parents are contributing to the needs of their students. He also spoke in favor of the Athletic Director position at the High School.

Rich Carlin, Dr. George Cushing, Martha Stone, Jack Anderson, Ann Grant, Ron King, SAU 50 School Administration and Board Members, spoke in favor of the School Department's request for funding. He advised the City Council that students from SAU 50 tuitioned to Portsmouth High School comprise of more than one-third of the high school student body. He said that the Board believes that a continuation of further staff reductions, at the middle and high school levels, will be detrimental to the excellent educational program that the school districts have come to expect from the Portsmouth School District.

Amy Schwartz, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the funding requests of the School Department. She informed the City Council that it is important to remember that schools are not just funded from property taxes. She advised the City Council that well funded schools are good for the economic vitality of a community. She urged the City Council to fund the budget as proposed by the School Board.

Cindy Hebert, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the School Department's request for funding. She said that students do better with smaller class sizes and spoke to the importance of the School Department maintaining the current class sizes. She urged the City Council to listen to the administration and their request for funding.

Jerry Stowe, Portsmouth resident, said that schools are important but we shouldn't have to break the bank to provide education. He said he feels that some class sizes are too small and could be consolidated in an effort to save money. He urged the City Council to obtain a list of courses and enrollment from the School Department to determine if classes can be consolidated. He asked the City Council to do the right thing and remember the taxpayers ability to pay when adopting the budget.

Hank Sanders, Portsmouth resident, said that the City Council needs to do a better job at controlling spending. He urged the City Council to pass a budget that the taxpayers can afford.

Marion Ellis, urged the City Council to support the entire community for the good of residents when adopting the budget. She said that the School Department has a good reputation for providing quality programs and services to our students. She urged the City Council to approve the request for funding from the School Department.

Louise McGee, Portsmouth resident, said that she wants to remain living in the City but the increase in costs may not allow her to. She advised the City Council that many taxpayers have reached the breaking point and urged the Council to consider their ability to pay taxes. She said that the natives will no longer be able to afford to live in the City of Portsmouth.

Susan Chamberlain, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the School Department's request for funding. She advised the City Council that if they don't pay for education now they would have to pay for it later. She said that the School Department's funding requests are reasonable.

Mitchell Shuldman, Portsmouth resident and School Board member, said that there are people in this community that do not like teachers and do not trust the School Department. He said that the School Department cannot continue to do more with less. He spoke to the need to provide quality education for all students so they are able to compete with their peers in the world.

Patrick Ellis, Portsmouth resident, said that the statewide property tax caused the City to make great reductions in the School Department. He advised the City Council that those cuts in the School Department were made in good faith. He said that the School Department made tough decisions and decided to do without certain positions for a short period of time. He urged the City Council to support the funding request from the Scholl Department.

Bob Brookhouse, Portsmouth resident, said that there is a limited amount of resources and we cannot continue to increase spending. He urged the City Council to make the hard choices.

Bill St. Laurent, Portsmouth resident, said he has two children that would like to live in the City of Portsmouth, but they cannot afford to. He urged the City Council to control spending now and in the future. He spoke regarding the need to upgrade the sewer treatment plant and the costs associated with that expense. He said that there should be a zero increase to the budget. He also expressed concern with the continued bonding of projects in the City. He said that the City Council needs to reduce the budget and use fiscal restraint.

John Bouchard, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the request for funding from the School Department. He said that the City Council has received hundreds of calls and letters to support the School Department budget and urged them to do so.

Andrea Ardito, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the funding request from the School Department. She urged the City Council to consider the needs of the entire community. She said that we must care for everyone and every child in the City. She asked the City Council not to turn their backs on the children of this community and their educational needs.

Maureen Donnelly, Portsmouth resident, spoke in favor of the funding requests from the School Department. She said that it is important to our economy to fund education properly. She urged the City Council to invest in our children.

Dryden Robinson, Portsmouth resident, said that she had to move to a smaller house because of the increase in taxes. She advised the City Council that she works with special education children and the importance of including them in the classrooms and providing the necessary funding required for the children. She urged the City Council to approve the funding requests of the School Department.

Dexter Legg, Portsmouth resident, spoke in favor of the School Department's request to fund an Athletic Director at the High School. He said spending the funds wisely is the responsibility of the department heads. He discussed the importance of an Athletic Director to the High School. He urged the City Council to make the investment in education.

Warren Goddard, Portsmouth resident, spoke regarding the increase in costs to the taxpayers. He discussed the health insurance benefits provided to employees. He urged the City Council to adopt a budget that the taxpayers can afford.

City Manager Bohenko advised Mr. Goddard that employees pay 18% of their health insurance premiums. He requested that Human Resources Director Fogarty address the various health insurance options available to employees and the costs associated with each.

Robert Padian, Portsmouth resident, said that the City Council needs to invest in programs and services to residents. He spoke to the importance of each department setting priorities for spending and funding.

Eric Anderson, Portsmouth resident, said that the dynamics of the community are changing. He said that 83% of the budget is made up of employees and benefits. He expressed concern with the cost of overtime in the budget and urged the City Council to review this matter. He said that taxpayers should participate in the negotiations of collective bargaining agreements. He also spoke to the need for residents to be allowed the opportunity to speak during budget work sessions.

Carol McGinty, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the funding requests of the School Department. She said that this City values its education and urged the City Council to do so as well.

Louise Duprey, Portsmouth resident, urged the City Council to support the funding request of the School Department. She asked the City Council approve the request for an Athletic Director. She said that there is currently a lack of leadership in athletics due to the Athletic Director's position being vacant. She advised the City Council that she has a list of 143 signatures in support of the Athletic Director position.

Kristin Lowe, Portsmouth resident, spoke concern regarding the increase in spending and urged the City Council to cut the budget reasonably across the board. She said that the middle class is being driven out of the City.

Xanthi Gray, Portsmouth resident, spoke concern with the recommended cuts in the School Department budget. She urged the City Council to support the budget and invest in our children and their future.

Lisa Sweet, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of reasonable funding for all budgets. She spoke regarding the services provided by City employees during the recent floods and thanked them for their efforts. She said it is important for the City Council to realize that the School Department does more with less now and they cannot afford any further reductions.

Laurie Rosa, Portsmouth resident, thanked the City Council for the education her children has received throughout the years. She urged the City Council to continue to invest in our children and their futures.

Natalie Hassold, Portsmouth resident, spoke concern with the increase in taxes. She discussed the amount of services and programs provided in the City but said that the taxpayers pockets are stretched to the limit. She urged the City Council to adopt a reasonable budget for all taxpayers.

Karen Goldberg, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the School Department budget. She said that it is important to keep class sizes small and the need to continue to provide quality education.

Leslie Stevens, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the School Department funding requests. She discussed the postcards sent to City Councilors from the PTO's in support of the School Department. She urged the City Council to approve the funding requested by the School Department.

Martin Cameron, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the recent study circles meeting relative to the budget. He asked why the School Department needs funding for seventeen new positions. He urged the City Council to pass a reasonable and acceptable budget for all taxpayers.

Helen Steele, Portsmouth resident, urged the City Council not to make budgetary decisions in a vacuum. She said that inflated budgets have been the norm for many years and urged the City Council to adopt a zero increase budget.

Britt Conway, Portsmouth High School student, spoke in favor of the School Department's funding requests and the need for a full time Athletic Director at the High School.

At 8:40 p.m., Mayor Marchand declared a brief recess. Mayor Marchand called the meeting back to order at 8:55 p.m.

Martin Cameron, Portsmouth resident, spoke regarding the increase in costs since the 2001 budget. He urged the City Council to pass a reasonable budget for all taxpayers.

Patrick Ellis, Portsmouth resident, spoke to the cuts in services of the School Department over the years. He urged the City Council to support the funding requests of the School Department.

Eric Anderson, Portsmouth resident, said that the City Council should hold a hard line when adopting the budget. He said that it is unreasonable for the taxpayers to continue to see an increase in their taxes.

Bob Hassold, Portsmouth resident, said that the taxpayers need relief. He urged the City Council to hold the line on the budget.

Jeannie Moran, spoke in favor of the School Department's funding requests. She spoke in support of the programs and services provided in the City and urged the City Council to approve the funding requests as submitted by the School Department.

Joann Adinolfi-Pohl, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the School Department funding requests. She spoke to the benefits her son has received from the various programs offered by the School Department. She addressed the need to provide quality education for all students.

Peter Bresciano, Portsmouth resident, said he would like to see his taxes lowered but at what price to services. He spoke in support of the programs and services provided in the City. He asked the City Council how far do you go in cutting services to residents. He urged the City Council to take a hard look at the budget.

Arthur DeSimone, Portsmouth resident, City Clerk Barnaby read a letter from Mr. DeSimone regarding the budget. Mr. DeSimone urged the City Council to hold the line on the budget and to consider taxpayers ability to pay when adopting the budget.

Sandy Irving, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the School Department budget. She said that the children are the future, and the City Council needs to consider their needs and quality education. She discussed the need for small class sizes and said that the children depend on the City Council to be their advocate.

Patrick Ellis, Portsmouth resident, said that the School Department is trying to address the needs of all students. He advised the City Council that there are no hidden costs in the budget.

Huldah Lashar, Portsmouth resident, spoke regarding class sizes when she attended school. She said that class sizes do not need to be small to provide a quality education to children. She urged the City Council not to increase taxes.

Lucy Salver, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the School Department budget and their funding requests. She said that the teachers deserve the support of the City Council. She encouraged the City Council to support the School Department budget and all public servants.

Lisa Sweet, Portsmouth resident, said that you cannot look at a course catalog to determine class sizes. She urged the City Council to trust the School Department and their decision on class sizes.

Peter Bresciano, Portsmouth resident, said that the small class sizes come out of taxpayer pockets and you cannot have it both ways. He said there may be cuts that can be made to the School Department budget but there are also things that must be put back into the budget as well. He spoke in support of the Athletic Director position at the High School.

Leslie Stevens, Portsmouth resident, spoke to the different needs of children. She said that small class sizes are important to a child's ability to learn. She urged the City Council to support the funding requests of the School Department.

Eric Anderson, Portsmouth resident, said cutting in his mind is taking less than the previous budget. He said that the taxpayers want the City Council to control spending and make it reasonable as well as minimize the increases.

Martin Cameron, Portsmouth resident, said that it appears that it is an us against them with speakers this evening and in the community. He spoke to the rising costs that taxpayers are experiencing with taxes and utilities and urged the City Council to consider all issues when adopting a budget.

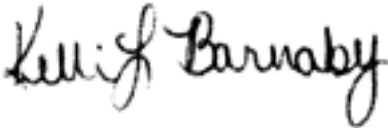
Faith Croteau, Portsmouth resident, spoke in support of the School Department budget. She said that we all need to work together and remember that the children are our future.

After three calls and no further speakers, Mayor Marchand declared the public hearing closed.

Mayor Marchand announced that there will be a final budget review work session on the City Council on Tuesday, June 13, 2006 at 6:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers. He also announced that the City Council would adopt the budget at the June 19, 2006 City Council meeting.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:30 p.m., Councilor Smith moved to adjourn. Seconded and voted.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelli L. Barnaby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelli L. Barnaby, CMC
City Clerk