Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Aldermanic President John F. Anglace called the public hearing of the Board of Aldermen to order at 7:30 p.m. All those present rose and pledged allegiance to the flag.

Roll Call

Alderman John F. Anglace, Jr., President – present
Alderman Lynne Farrell - present
Alderman John “Jack” Finn – present
Alderman Stanley Kudej – present
Alderman Kenneth Olin - present
Alderman John P. Papa – present
Alderman Jason Perillo - present
Alderman Anthony Simonetti - present

Legal Notice

CITY OF SHELTON
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

PURSUANT TO SECTION 7.6 OF THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF SHELTON, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN WILL CONDUCT A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2008-2009 ON MONDAY, APRIL 21, 2008 AT 7:30 PM IN THE SHELTON INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL AUDITORIUM AT CONSTITUTION BOULEVARD NORTH, SHELTON, CT 06484.

ALL PERSONS WHO HAVE AN INTEREST THEREIN MAY APPEAR AND BE HEARD IN RELATION THERETO. COPIES OF THE PROPOSED BUDGET ARE ON FILE IN THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE.

WRITTEN COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS MAY ALSO BE SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN AND MUST BE RECEIVED PRIOR TO THE PUBLIC HEARING.

ANTICIPATED REVENUES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government Grants</td>
<td>5,205,136</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local Taxes</td>
<td>93,376,118</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Local Revenue</td>
<td>6,791,779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Fund Surplus</td>
<td>2,880,00</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ANTICIPATED REVENUES</strong></td>
<td><strong>$108,253,033</strong></td>
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PROPOSED EXPENDITURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Administrative Office</td>
<td>413,988</td>
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<td>Employees Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legislative</td>
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<td>Board of Ethics</td>
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<td>Elections</td>
<td>141,330</td>
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<td>Inlands/Wetlands</td>
<td>81,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Development Commission</td>
<td>71,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Development – SEDC</td>
<td>93,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning &amp; Zoning</td>
<td>323,066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>1,465,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL PROPOSED EXPENDITURES</strong></td>
<td><strong>$108,253,033</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Probate Court 11,300
Elected/Appointed Officials 18,450
Conservation Commission 41,852
City/Town Clerk 435,832
Public Employees Appeals Board 200
Senior Center 290,221
Drug & Alcohol Commission 2,500
Zoning Appeals Board 21,490
Corporation Counsel 170,140
Public Safety 48,236
EMS Commission 181,663
Fire Marshal 286,752
Animal Control 108,357
Fire Department 803,300
Police Department 5,818,350
Municipal Parking Authority 7,000
Youth Service 199,274
Public Health 221,140
Building Department 218,728
Highways & Bridges 2,474,692
Road Repairs 125,000
Public Works Director 13,125
Engineering 252,403
Tree Warden 85,000
Recycling Program 398,600
Sanitation 3,528,117
Library 1,121,710
Debt Service 11,437,354
Utilities 2,899,380

Building Maintenance 839,760
Management Information Services 358,495
Assessor 421,413
Tax Collector 306,036
Purchasing 386,783
Public Risk Management 1,817,854
Accounting 487,636
Community Development 58,208
Miscellaneous 1,140,876
Capital Spending 114,000
Vehicle Funds 208,000
Outside Agency Contributions 320,712
Contingency 200,000

TOTAL EXPENDITURES - CITY DEPARTMENTS $45,437,746
TOTAL EXPENDITURES - BOARD OF EDUCATION $62,815,287
TOTAL PROPOSED EXPENDITURES $108,253,033

Public Hearing

Alderman Anglase thanked the Board of Education for the use of the Shelton Intermediate School auditorium. He explained that the purpose of tonight’s hearing is to hear public comment on the proposed City Budget for 2008-2009.

The procedure for tonight’s hearing will be that members of the public not involved with the budget process will be recognized and given the opportunity to be heard first.
Please raise your hand to be recognized. Come to the podium or the microphone and state your name and address for the record and then let us hear what you have to say. This Public Hearing will be taped and then transcribed and the minutes will be on file in the City Clerk’s Office and be posted on the City Web Site within seven (7) days following the hearing.

The five minute limit followed at Board of Aldermen meetings will apply at this Public Hearing as well.

Since all Departments and/or Boards and Commissions have already been heard on the budget, the Board would prefer that any who wish to be heard this evening wait until the purpose of this Public Hearing has been fulfilled. That is, that public comment take precedence and be allowed to be heard first.

Joan Flannery, 8 Partridge Lane

Good evening. Let’s honor the year of the taxpayer with no increase. After that monstrous tax increase last year, Mayor Lauretti promised that taxes will not be raised in 2008. Just a few months ago his whole campaign was about low taxes, but it is budget setting time, and with this proposal Mayor Lauretti is already reneging on his promise. So what else is new?

As a homeowner who wants her house to appreciate in value like the rest of the houses in Fairfield County, I look toward other towns and how they operate. Our neighbors, Trumbull, which is comparable to Shelton in population has a well rounded and better funded school system with higher test scores, thus, higher values in their property. Why? They spend more dollars per student than Shelton. Trumbull’s 2007 school budget was over $75 million compared to Shelton’s measly $57 million. As a teacher, not in the Shelton school system but in Stamford, I know the importance of keeping class sizes low in numbers with qualified teachers. I also know the importance of having new technology and computers in the classrooms starting in Kindergarten. That is how we will bring our test scores up.

I am happy that the Board of Education spent its entire budget last year on education. I think that they should get every penny they are asking for this year also. As for the other departments? Since most of the returned money, they should have the same budget in 2007 minus the money they returned. And let’s use all of that returned money to lower our taxes now. Not just part of it, like the Mayor suggests. Plus, there should be no increases. The Fire Marshal should not have an extra $30,000 for a new secretary. There is no need for it. The Mayor should not have the pay raise that you voted on for the extra $4,000. I think he could survive without it. This is not the time to increase the expenses. Street maintenance is the only place needing an increase in order to repair all the huge potholes that are everywhere.

As a resident in the cramped third ward which we have no representative on the P and Z again, I am reminded every day about the overdevelopment in this city and how these developments are supposed to take care of our tax burden. Shelton doubled its grand list these past ten years, to $5 million. Well, where is the income it is supposed to produce? Where is the money? As a taxpayer I am wondering how I am going to pay my bills. With this poor economy, taxpayers cannot afford another dime. Since Mayor Lauretti declared this the year of the taxpayer, let’s hold him to his promise. No tax increase.
You may have read this in the newspaper. I would also like to add to it that I really think we’re cheating our children when we pay $700,000 more for a piece of property. INAUDIBLE. And you voted to buy that property. That $700,000 could have been spent on the Board of Education. INAUDIBLE. Mr. Anglace, with his statements in the paper that we shouldn’t be looking at the small parts of the budget - we should be looking at all of the budget.

Thank you.

Alderman Anglace stated, let me take a step backward here. I’d like to take a minute to introduce the Board of Aldermen. We’re not in our regular place of business, so our signs in front don’t tell you who we are.


Mark Connolly, 13 Princess Terrace

I reside at 13 Princess Terrace in Shelton, once a great City. I’d like to start by addressing several areas of the budget to look for improvements in the funding for education.

First off, is the shifting of the expense for the bus being parked at private property to a city owned parcel. Including dividing the bus storage between the grammar schools where they end their day, so that they’re shifted to those locations.

Second is, looking at privatizing some of our city departments and cost sharing issues, such as the Parks and Recreation Department. In so doing, shifting the cost burden from individual city aspect to the leagues that use them in a way that is cost controllable, such as Thomaston does. Thomaston has taken all of their recreation fields and has gone out to bid through the individual leagues to provide service to them. In return for that service, the city has gone through cost sharing for the actual insurance plans for the leagues so that the leagues themselves don’t incur a change in cost.

Next is, looking at our city buildings as we use them today. We’ve taken steps to improve the efficiency in energy, but in new projects going forward, we need to look at alternative sources of heating, cooling, and electricity, such as New Canaan and Stamford putting photovoltaic cells on their buildings to generate their own electricity, which they use during the day, and at night also can then take back and sell any extra that’s used. So instead of incurring additional costs as our oil and electrical prices go up, after becoming our own generator.

Next is, looking at leasing city buildings that are used by organizations outside of our own city aspect. One of them being the ambulance service. It’s a volunteer organization that does billing. We continue to maintain it and provide fuel for it, as well as pay radio communication fees for it, as an initial area to regain funding. Within the Fire Department, the area of the training. We pay the city volunteers to get trained. Then those city volunteers get paid to train other people. So we’re paying them, we’re paying for their class and we’re just incurring further costs. One step closer to a paid department.
The next area to look at is going forward to start bonding in our purchasing. We need to look at a stopgap approach such as, stop all unnecessary purchases that are not a life safety or community safety issue. Rein in spending such as open space purchases. Rein in capital expense replacement of all apparatus in all departments, from snow plows to fire trucks and look at buying used equipment. Many contractors in the area go out and buy used equipment and save up to a third of the cost of buying brand-new equipment. Thank you.

Alderman Anglace stated, I just want to say that we don’t respond, we just receive comments. We don’t respond to the comments. If we hear good comments when it’s printed out don’t be surprised if you get a call from us. Thank you.

Christine Testani, One Linwood Court

I am here to represent the Shelton Intermediate School PTA Board, and I’m vice-president there. This is a letter we had sent and we wanted to make sure that we also read it aloud to you. Thank you for giving me that opportunity.

We, the Shelton Intermediate School PTA Executive Board would like to express our dismay and deepest concerns regarding this year’s recommended $1.7 million shortfall in the education budget. After reviewing the lengthy list of possible cuts and reductions, we stand steadfast in our support of all students, teachers and school programs in Shelton. As active parents, citizens and voters, we want the best that will impact our students, our children’s futures. A town can measure its ultimate success on the value of places in education and in its future. It’s saddening that we face a financial battle every year in Shelton, but this year is especially frustrating. We strongly encourage you to support and pass the full education budget as requested by Superintendent Willink and approved by the Board of Education.

With the current budget surplus in our town, it is difficult to comprehend the logic behind the deepest educational cut in years. We act like a Fairfield County school system without the Fairfield County support. It’s time we started to show all Shelton citizens a strong school system benefits everyone with higher home values, increased tax revenue, lower crime rates and overall community pride. The recommended cuts and reductions will adversely affect our children of all ages, of which I have four in every school. It affects their ability level, their age level and their interest levels. Direct instruction, counseling services, athletic programs, technology and the arts and class sizes will all suffer. No one comes out a winner when students are forced into larger classrooms with fewer teachers and decreased support services. Lasting consequences such as those will be both negative and irreversible.

We implore you to take a stand on behalf of every child and parent in Shelton. There is much to be proud of here. We thank you for your support over the years and we’ve been very proud to work with you, but when we have so much more to boast about if we could stand behind our future citizens and give them the very best that we can. Please support the education budget the best way that you can. Thank you.
Kate Kutash, 275 Beardsley Road

I’m president of the Shelton PTA Council. Certainly, the people here in attendance tonight, phone calls, e-mails and mail received, are sending you a powerful statement that the Board of Education budget is important to us. Granted, there are people here who will be concerned with other issues of the budget, and of course there will be naysayers who will step forth to trash the Board of Education, tell them what a lousy job they’re doing and criticize the way they spend their money. But the parents of the children of Shelton know that is all wrong.

We trust Shelton public schools and value the education our children receive here. Many of us could have afforded to buy elsewhere, further down Fairfield County, but grew up here and chose to raise our children here. On the other hand, there are also many who scrimped and saved and searched for that bargain home so that we could raise our children where the schools offered quality education with consistently improving scores and programs.

The Board of Education has been criticized during the budget making process for the fact they alone control how and where their money will be spent. However they are the professionals who know how to do that job. I’m sure no one here would want a city board of politicians to make a medical diagnosis and decide who should have surgery. The prospects for next year are grim when you look at the ideas being discussed by the Board of Education to deal with these cuts. Closing school facilities is frightening, but it’s only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to making up the $1.7 million cut currently proposed for the Shelton public schools.

Certainly every citizen in the City shudders at the thought of another increased bill. Every one of us, whether senior citizen, single adult, or family struggles with the rising costs of electricity, oil to heat our homes, and gas to fuel our cars, among other things. But you have also heard the statistics - how Shelton ranks high in mean household income and ability to pay. You know how little it would take to fully fund the Board of Education’s request, a mere $1.53 per household per week. It would be irresponsible of us not to pay our bills, not to juggle money to meet all our own needs.

At the very least the Board of Education needs the dollars for its status quo budget. The amount it will cost next year to do exactly what we are doing this year with no extras, new programs or staff. Already evicted with the evening closings are all PTA and PTO meetings, as well as family fun nights and other fundraising activities. Family fun nights build community and camaraderie while providing meaningful family activities. Fundraising events provide the money necessary to bring cultural events to our children during the school day. PTAs and PTOs also provide money to help support field days, field trips, scholarships for eighth graders and high school seniors, supplemental materials for classrooms and many other extras. In addition, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Brownies, Cub Scouts, religious schools, Biddy Basketball, are left without places to meet. While the high school remains open for student-centered activities, please be aware that all the parent support groups that help provide additional dollars for these programs must find alternate accommodations. All of these programs help to craft the young people of today into the citizens of tomorrow that they will become. While closing the schools in the evening seems like a drastic move, it can at best only realize about a third of the $1.7 million cut that has been proposed. It frightens me to think of what else will be cut to make up for missing funds.
Certainly some of the funding blame can lie at the State level due to the decreased level in ECS funding. However, the amount we receive from the State for next year cannot be changed. The fault at the State level does not exonerate the City from providing the quality education for its children. It is our responsibility to insures that they have the quality education needed to become competitive adults in the workplace of the future.

I implore you to re-examine the cuts projected for the Board of Education and find the extra dollars to help us continue offering the quality education that has always been available in the City of Shelton. Our children are our most important financial investment. Thank you.

Joseph Knapick, 23 Stonewall Lane

The '08-09 budget moves in the right direction but requires further efforts, further efforts to bring it in line with reasonability. That is with inflation. The proposed tax increase is two percent above the inflation rate. The taxpayers of Shelton suffered a whopping 11 percent tax increase last year. A six percent increase is proposed this year. That's an 8.5 percent tax increase per year over two years. That's one half percent lower than Bridgeport's proposed tax increase of nine percent, with Shelton having a more viable grand list. Stratford's tax hike will be 2.24 percent. Monroe voters rejected a 5.29 tax increase recently. Seniors in Trumbull turned out en masse to oppose that town's proposed tax increase. Oxford residents stand up and say "enough." Eight and a half percent per each of two years is twice the rate of inflation. Not an example of the best municipal management. If the Aldermen don't trim the tax increase to the reasonable level of inflation, then will they further damage seniors, people on fixed incomes, and those otherwise compromised, and the citizenry in general.

In fairness, on the other hand, the Mayor's budget seeks to break the consistent pattern of funding, beyond inflation, the Board of Education budget. Additionally, the City administration apparently has come to the conclusion that it can no longer give away the store to other municipal unions.

During these times, seniors, people on fixed incomes, and those otherwise compromised can't afford it. Proponents of increased education funding are delusional if they think more money for the school board is going to find its way in any substantial form to the children. Two-thirds of the school budget is for salaries and benefits. Tack on maintenance and fuel, and relatively little finds it way to the students. School management skills and competencies must do more with what it has. No matter what you do for the schools is never enough. New buildings, payment of principal and interest for those buildings, it seems that it's never enough. It's always more, more, year after year, it never stops to take a breath.

The administration with historic concurrence of the bipartisan tax board has moved in the right direction to reduce the size of a tax increase. Now the Aldermen have to take it from here and knock off another two percent. Thank you.

Jenifer Mengold, 23 Carriage Drive

I'm a parent, but also the President of the Mohegan School PTO, and this letter is on behalf of that organization.
We, the Mohegan School Parent-Teacher Organization, in full support of the Board of Education’s recommended budget, are writing to explicitly state our gravest concern over the $1.7 million reduction in the City of Shelton Education budget.

We, as a whole, strongly encourage you to fully support and pass the proposed budget as submitted by Superintendent Robin Willink and the Board of Education. Please keep the children and the future growth and development of the City of Shelton in perspective. Our children are the future of Shelton.

Upon careful review of the possible reductions in staffing and programs, we are deeply saddened that our children will ultimately be the victims. The City of Shelton has a current budget surplus making it extremely difficult to understand the need for drastic educational cuts. How do your proposed reductions in staffing, counseling, programs, and technology, benefit the education of our children? A child’s education does not end when the bell rings at the end of the school day. Not only is the academic success of our children being jeopardized, but the emotional, social and athletic and health concerns of our children are also at risk. It is a shame that our children can no longer look forward to PTO and PTO-sponsored events held after school hours. How do we explain to our children that there will be no more family picnics, ice cream socials, movie nights and Breakfast with Santa events? These events INAUDIBLE attractive to families. Our children can no longer attend scouting events; no recreational sporting programs will be held in the elementary schools. Where does it end? Please think of the lasting social, emotional, and most importantly educational impact that these reductions will have on school aged children in the City of Shelton.

In closing, we, the Mohegan School PTO do hope that you put the best interests of our children to the forefront and pass the City of Shelton education budget in its entirety.

Susan Begley, 34 Ballaro Drive

Good evening. I didn’t come with any fancy, written speeches. I came as a mother of two – one in the high school, one going to the Intermediate School next year. All I can say is I have always appreciated our school system. A lot of my friends have said nasty things about the area. I have always defended it.

A couple of years ago when the enrichment program was canceled, I was embarrassed. I would have hoped that everyone in town was embarrassed. To be in Fairfield County, to be anywhere, anywhere in the United States, and not offer every child an opportunity to the education that they deserve is an embarrassment upon the system. I’m not here to talk about the enrichment program, I’m strictly here to talk about our school system.

No offense to anyone up there, I think a lot of your kids have already gone through the school system. When my children are done, I’m not going to be insulting, but when my last is out of school I probably will not come to this type of meeting either. I’m going to be more worried about my taxes going up. My taxes have gone up anyway. I’ve lived in this town since 1988 and my taxes aren’t even close to what they were. So if you’re saying that we’re not going to fund the schools because we’ll have to raise taxes, you’re going to raise my taxes anyway. All I ask if you are grandparents, if your children have children, think about what you would want for your child.
If I have to tell my daughter that there’s not going to be any intramural sports next year, I’m sorry babe, you’ve waited ‘til seventh grade to play volley ball, tough luck, maybe in high school, better luck, maybe college, better luck. But you know what? If we don’t offer a good intermediate and a good elementary school and certainly a good high school, they’re not going to a good college. And I’ll leave now, because I could probably ramble all night. INAUDIBLE.

You know, a friend of mine, and I don’t know truth from fact because I’m not political. A friend of mine said, why is it that other departments, such as, I guess police, I don’t even know the other departments, they are given a budget. Let’s just say $100, they spend $80, they hand you back $20, the next year, we hand them back another $100, maybe they get $10 to go with it. If there are, I don’t know, you are the people that would know this, if there are departments that habitually hand you back, perhaps we could take that hand back and put it to the educational system.

The fine gentleman that spoke that said, you know, our educational costs go up, go up, go up. Duh. My electricity went up $80 a month to $212. I am sure. We have got to be the largest entity in town with the largest paycheck. We’ve got six elementary schools, one huge high school, one big Shelton Intermediate School. Of course costs are going up. To fill my oil tank it’s costing me a bloody fortune. I would assume, considering my son, and this is a point I’d like to stress though, when you hit middle school, everyone starts wearing short sleeves. I said to my son, why, why are you wearing short sleeves in the dead of winter? His response was, Mom, because it’s as hot as Hades. We live in New England. Is there a reason why our children cannot go to school with sweatshirts on? Turn the heat down. INAUDIBLE. These are things I’ve moaned and groaned to myself about. There have got to be ways, but we can’t take it away from children. It’s like the old saying, taking candy from a baby. That’s what we’re doing.

We have to find other ways. I certainly can’t fund it. My salary is not the median of Shelton. I’m not one of the rich ones living up in, no offense intended, up in the Berries, but I have a few friends in there. I’m struggling. We are going paycheck to paycheck. If you’re telling me, I have to find more money to pay for my child’s education I’ll get a second job. I’ll find it. That’s all I want to say.

Carla Sullivan, Two Horse Stable Circle

I do have one of those fancy speeches. For the past several years, I have addressed the Board of Aldermen at this budget hearing with seriously contemplated words which have included heartfelt pleas, cold hard facts, clever anecdotes, personal stories and witty phrases. Through the miracle of modern technology, I’ve been able to save all of those words to my computer. I can tell you the dates of these many hearings and the dollar amounts requested. I can even look around this room and see the same faces. I’m so glad you’re all here tonight. For most of us, routine, continuity and predictability are very comforting – I can’t think of any other reason why we put ourselves through this year after year.

Tonight, I’m here to tell you that the predictability of coming to this hearing year after year to beg for the dollars needed to fund the education budget is really getting on my nerves. I can assure you that I look forward to this evening about as much as I’d look forward to a root canal.
At least that visit would allow me to continue eating without pain – this one simply gives me indigestion. I’m tired of the letters to the editor, the calls to the Mayor and Board of Aldermen, the e-mail chains, the endless hours of my personal time at meetings discussing this same topic over and over again.

I’m tired of feeling like the community I know and love does not value education the way I do. I’m tired and I’m angry and I’m sick to death of this entire discussion. But, alas, here I am again and here I go. First, a few facts. Fact. Many months and countless volunteer and staff hours are spent on preparing, analyzing and discussing this city budget. Fact. The Board of Education receives the largest share of the city budget. Fact. For eight out of the past 10 years, the Board of Aldermen have simply rubber stamped the Mayor’s recommended budget for education to the exact dollar without a penny more or less. Is this a fact? Yes. And I have attached a spreadsheet for support.

Several years ago, the Board of Education was asked to simplify its budget book and has since presented a request that clearly differentiates foundation dollars from new programming dollars. Simply stated, the Board of Ed starts at zero dollars and builds its budget from the bottom up. Each department requests the dollars necessary to operate exactly the same next year as it has this year. New programs and additional expenses are only considered after the foundation has been addressed. Every single thing is considered – the rising cost of utilities, health care, text books, supplies, contractual obligations and the list goes on and on. Each year, new programs are requested and capital expenses are considered and each year, these requests are ignored.

I don’t mean to imply that the Mayor, the Board of Aldermen and the Board of A&T are the only ones who ignore these requests. The first stop on the chopping block is internal. Sometime in October, the education budget is reviewed by department heads, principals, central office staff, the Board of Education finance committee and finally the Superintendent of Schools, all of whom agonize over rising costs, test scores, building maintenance, open head counts, teacher shortage areas and a growing list of unfunded mandates. At each of these stopping points, options are discussed, cost-saving measures are researched and more often than not, cuts are made. After a Thanksgiving break spent worrying about the budget, a weary Superintendent of Schools presents a meager list of requested improvements to an already weary Board of Education who desperately wants to fund every item on the list because every item is important and again, that blasted chopping block. In fact for nine out of the past ten years, the Board of Education has cut the Superintendent’s budget request before the first Christmas carol has been sung. I’m proud to say that my first year on the Board of Education the Superintendent’s request was not cut by the Board of Ed. It is also the only year in the last five that the Board of Ed received more than the foundation budget. From ’03 to ’06, we got less than foundation and last year, we got exactly the foundation. I suppose we should be happy with foundation. At least it allows us to keep the doors open, the lights on and the schools open after 4 o’clock and on weekends.

We don’t make much forward progress, but at least we don’t go backward. Or do we? In some ways, I feel like I’m wasting my time here tonight. Based on the facts, some statistical probability and a little politics, this Board of Aldermen will more than likely simply approve the budget recommendation of the Mayor and the Board of Apportionment and Taxation.
You’ll do it in the name of low taxes but will the decision be yours? Will you examine the request with your own mind and heart, decide what is best for our community and make your own voice heard? Will you tune out the negativity, the whining, the complaints and focus on what is best for our community, our children? Will you think creatively, negotiate reasonably and do the right thing?

I can tell you that the Superintendent and the Board of Education has done all of that and more. How else can you explain their decision to close the school buildings to all non-school related functions starting today? As much as I vehemently disagree with that decision, I commend my former colleagues on the Board for making a bold move and taking action. An equally bold move by this Board of Aldermen is desperately needed now. Taxes are going up anyhow, so why not a few more dollars for our kids? What seems like a discussion about money is really about values. Whether we spend $5 or $5 million per child, do we as a community value education? Do we treat our teachers with respect? Do we value their profession? Do we applaud our kids when they tell us they want to grow up and be teachers or they want to major in elementary education in college? Do we support adults who leave the professional world to become high school teachers? If we continue to cut education budgets and bad mouth educators and close school buildings and exist with substandard facilities and materials, we are saying loud and clear that we do not value education and therefore, we do not value the people of our community – those who are teaching and those who are being taught.

As a taxpayer of this city I call home, a strong supporter of a Superintendent of Schools and school system staff I respect and most importantly, a parent of three children I love, I again ask you to fully fund the Board of Education’s budget request for the 2008-2009 school year. Again I say that I truly believe that the children of our city deserve the best possible education we can give them. Are broad and sweeping changes needed in our public schools? Quite possibly, yes. But right now, my greatest and most immediate concern is for the children of our community, our city. The children at Shelton High School, Shelton Intermediate School, our elementary schools, our teachers, our staff members. We get so caught up in this budget rhetoric that we forget why we’re here. We’re here for our people – our citizens. By simply allowing the system to exist year after year with nothing new, we are cheating our children and we’re sacrificing our future.

I again cut and pasted my words, and I tell you that every dollar is vital to the continued success of our school system. Every program is necessary. Every expenditure is justified. With the utmost respect for our taxpayers and their hard earned money, I say loud and clear that every dollar spent on education is an investment in our future. One more time and probably not the last time, I respectfully request that you fully fund the Board of Education budget for the ’08-’09 school year. Help us to do more instead of just making do. Help us to move forward. Help us to add instead of take away. And please, most of all, help me write a new speech next year – one that applauds the bold move of a Board of Aldermen who after careful consideration did the right thing. Our community can afford it and our children deserve it. Thank you.

Alderman Anglace stated, before we go on to the next speaker, I want to ask you to keep your remarks to five minutes. Secondly, I want to tell the audience that when you applaud during the middle of a person speaking, our tape is going to come up INAUDIBLE, so you will get a lot of INAUDIBLES when you go to read these minutes.
We would like to ask you if you could to tone that down so that we can get everything that a person says into the record. Thank you.

*Loretta Tuccillo, 25 Richard Boulevard*

I don’t know what ward we’re in because Shelton keeps growing and the boundaries keep expanding. I’m in the second ward, so who is my representative? Okay. Now let me understand this. You mostly gentlemen cut the Board’s budget, which made them panic, and close the grammar schools, the elementary schools. Okay. So you guys, excuse me, are taking it out on the little girl sitting over there, the little boy over there.

[Alderman Anglace asked that the speaker return to the microphone in order to be able to pick up what she is saying.]

Okay. But here’s the point. You’re taking it out on the children, okay? I don’t know when it was the last time any of you have been through Sunnyside School, okay? There are a lot of kids in there. The library has a huge odor in it, okay? Something needs to be cleaned in there. The windows don’t open. The kids are hot in the elementary schools just as much. You’re screwing the Girl Scouts, okay? You’re screwing the Boy Scouts. End of story.

You don’t know what’s going on day to day, okay? Like today. The buses were running a half-hour late. A panicked mother tried to call the school. There’s no one there. They tried to call the bus company. The number is out of order. If you want to make judgments, go back to school learn the every day math that these teachers are trying to teach the children in a short period of time as it is, in overcrowded classrooms, in hot classrooms, okay? Give them the money. We have the money. Don’t make them take a cut like everybody else. It’s bad enough that half these parents have to take cuts in salaries. Give them the money and somebody better find out what happened to the kids on the bus because from what I understand, a half-hour late, riding around on these bumpy roads in Shelton. Have you been down Belmont lately? Okay, it’s a pothole. Get out there, talk to the people, because you’re not talking to the people.

Don’t just support high school sports. Because if little Johnny can’t play now, he’s not going to be able to play in high school. And then all of you, because I see you at the games, I see pictures of you in the paper supporting Shelton High School football, you won’t have any place to go.

Open up the schools. Let the kids enjoy their activities. Let these poor women who volunteer hours on end at the PTA do what they think they’re doing good. They think that they’re doing great for the kids. Now they have no place to do it. We can’t hold Girl Scouts in our homes because of liability. It’s not allowed. Where are we going to go? There are not many public places. As far as I know I don’t think the Library has opened up any doors. Where are we supposed to go? Is my five minutes up? Do I have more time? Don’t tell the people what they can and cannot do. You tell the people what they can and cannot do, and you guys will be sitting here. INAUDIBLE accent because yes, I’m from New York, but that doesn’t mean anything. I’ve lived here for 18 years.

*Linda Garretson, 73 Thompson Street*

I don’t have a speech. I’m going to make this short and sweet. How I feel is we have a bunch of politicians here, we’ve got a bunch of politicians on the Board of Education.
We are stuck in the middle and our kids are in the line of fire. Nobody wants their taxes to go up. With everything else going up, we have to understand that taxes do go up. And you know what they say about dying and taxes, the only two things you can count on. And as far as I can see is that we’re shooting ourselves in the foot, because what’s going to happen is, you’ve got foreclosures going on everywhere. You’re not going to be getting tax income from them, and you’re not going to want people coming into this area, moving into this area, because people are going to be moving into this area are people with kids or going to be having kids. They don’t want their kids to go to schools that don’t have the same programs that other schools do. You talk about Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts. Is that part of the educational system? As such, no. But you know what? You guys had that option when you were kids, these people had options when they were kids. Why can’t we give our children the same option? They have the same right that we did. Thank you.

TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

Ron Pavluvcik, 287 Eagles Landing

[Audience static throughout this paragraph] Good evening. Now that we have heard the self-serving comments from the school system, from the teachers, PTA members, brain-washed parents, it’s time to hear from the largest group of constituents in Shelton. That is the largest group of disenfranchised residents...

Alderman Anglace interjected, Mr. Pavluvcik, excuse me a minute. Excuse me a minute. I’d like to address the audience on behalf of the Board. Is this the kind of respect that we learn in our schools? Is this the kind of respect that you get at home? [Audience shouting] All of our speakers have the right to be heard with respect. [Audience shouting] Please be quiet when a speaker is speaking. [Audience static] Mr. Pavluvcik, hold up a minute, until the audience quiets down, we’ll just [Audience shouting].

Mr. Pavluvcik stated, I think they’re afraid to hear the truth, John. [Audience static] I’m going to start over, okay? [Audience shouting].

...Now that we have heard the self-serving comments... [Audience shouting]...from the school system...

Alderman Anglace stated, all right. I’m going to, one more. One more outburst and I will declare this public hearing closed. [Audience static] If that’s the way you want it, that’s the way it will end. Mr. Pavluvcik, go ahead.

Now that we have heard the self-serving comments from the school system, teachers, PTA members, brain-washed parents, and others, it’s time to hear from the largest group of constituents in Shelton. The largest group of disenfranchised residents. The 40,000 of us taxpayers who have to pay the budget you guys approve. You know, it was at last year’s budget public hearing, that a pompous female member of the then Board of Ed, a typical tax and spend liberal Democrat, [Audience static] complained about hearing comments from taxpayers like me. She called us red-faced negative nit pickers, saying that we represented a small minority of weary voters. Well, I’m happy to remind the audience tonight, that she was soundly defeated in her re-election bid last November, and good riddance. I commend the Mayor for trying to make the new fiscal year the year of the taxpayer by submitting a relatively lean budget.
Even though Shelton is booming in high quality development, and most of it is revenue positive like office buildings and housing that is for single people, and older people without kids, projects that don’t require large increases in city services, and even though our tax rate is still the lowest in the area, it’s clear that all of us are now faced with rapidly rising costs for food and energy. All the more reason for this to be the year of the taxpayer, and next year things could be even worse.

It looks like the municipal side of the budget is frugal as usual. However, once again, the Board of Ed has submitted an outrageous spending increase, and thus it deserves to be chopped in half. I wonder how many parents and school supporters in the room tonight know that the Board of Ed budget request includes $10,000 bonuses for some retired school administrators, and even longevity bonuses for some teachers. These are examples of wasted tax dollars. Our school system continues to be the weakest link in Shelton’s otherwise glorious rebirth and image. Student test scores continue to be mediocre, much like many of the teachers in the system, just ask the kids who know best. Unfortunately, it is the infamous tenure system backed by the teacher’s union and lobbyists that allows ineffective teachers to stay in the system. No wonder so many of our kids and graduates are dummies.

[Audience yelling] Teachers get 15 sick days a year for working about nine months. [Audience yelling] That is proportional to a year-around employee elsewhere getting 20 sick days a year. How many people in this room get 20 sick days a year, which is equivalent to their 15? And this can be accumulated year to year. Plus they get three more personal days also. And every year the records show many teachers are taking 10 or 12 of those 18 days off. No wonder we are paying a fortune for substitute teachers. Parents and others keep up the mantra of, our children are the future - that the kids will be paying the bills some day. Well, statistics show that up to 25 percent of high school and college graduates leave Connecticut because they can’t afford to live here. Guess what is the main reason? The property taxes. [Audience static]

But the future is now for most residents, who need help today paying their bills. So what is the solution? What is my recommendation to solve the big tax increase we all face? [Audience static] If all these school supporters and employees believe that the school system is that critical, then let’s have school employees forgo their annual raises and reuse those funds for books and supplies. Let’s force the teachers union to modify their contract better known as, no teacher left behind, to lay off the worst 10 percent of the ineffective teachers. Surely they know who they are, and surely the better teachers can absorb one or two more kids in their classrooms. [Audience yelling]

The teacher’s contract contains nothing that improves education. In summary, let’s be the first community in the state to fight the waste [Audience yelling] and lack of productivity in our school system. Let’s take on the unions and lobbyists, [Audience static] get rid of ineffective teachers and administrators, reduce the school budget, and demand accountability and results from the surviving staff. And reduce our taxes at the same time. Thank you very much.

[Audience member yelling]

Alderman Anglace stated, anybody that has spoken once, has spoken once.

[Audience member yelling]
Alderman Anglace stated, please control yourself.

[Audience member yelling]

**Tracy Reinhardt, 8 Greenacre Drive**

I’ve come before you also without a fancy speech. I come to you asking for help. We have Girl Scout Troop 11 here with us tonight, can you girls stand up please? This troop has been together since Kindergarten, same troop. We are now getting our bronze award. I would like to ask any one of you Board members to explain to these girls why they can’t have their meetings at the school any longer. And that’s all I ask of you. Thank you.

**Lisa Mallozzi, 24 Greenacre Drive**

To be honest with you, I’m a parent now, but as far as I’m concerned, if I stay in this town until I’m your age, I still am not going to be happy about paying for this, things that are being cut or you know, adding things, but I still would never want to see any child be neglected and taking away their education. So anyone out there sitting out there clapping your hands for this man over here, whatever it is, I mean, would you want to see this happen to your grandchild, would you want to see this happen to the future generation? Because you sit here and you talk about things but, we have a lot of people with a bad education, bad grades and everything else.

Now, I struggled a lot in school when I was a kid, but I have a kid who is in this Shelton system who is going to Shelton Intermediate School next year and you know what? I can’t help her with her homework because I can’t teach her this new math the way they want, or how we were taught. My daughter is an above average next year coming to SIS. I have to say I commend the education she is getting at Mohegan School. I am very proud of her. INAUDIBLE. When I turn 50, 60, 70, 80 years old and God only, longer than that, I don’t want to take away from anyone’s kid, anyone’s future. Because I’ll tell you right now, the leaders of this country now are worse now, and I’m hoping that my kid and all the other future kids will run this country and this town way better than what your generation is doing right now.

Alderman Anglace stated, I will ask once again. All speakers will address the Board of Aldermen, not to address members of the audience, please.

[Audience member yelling]

**Judy Migone, No address given, White Hills resident**

I didn’t come here with a planned speech. I actually don’t even have my daughter in the school system. My daughter is six years old and I had to send her to St. Jude’s private school because we don’t offer a full-day Kindergarten in Shelton. I’ve now decided to keep her in St. Jude’s because of the overcrowding.

But I stand here as a parent for everybody else. My one question is, how can we change the laws of Shelton so that we get to vote on the school budget? And I would like an answer to that, Jack. We should be able to vote and say yes or no to the school budget. Not you.

Alderman Finn stated, Alderman Anglace? Before we hear the next speaker I’d like to answer that question that was directed toward me.
The only way we could change that is, we’d have to go to a Charter Revision. Right now the Charter Revision, they are meeting...

Alderman Anglace interjected, Alderman Finn, point of order here. The Board of Aldermen does not respond.

Alderman Finn stated, INAUDIBLE.

Alderman Anglace continued, this is a public comment session.

[Audience yelling]

Alderman Finn stated, you have to go before the Charter Revision Commission to be heard on that subject matter, you can write letters to the Charter Revision Commission to change the practice.

[Audience yelling]

**Sean Sullivan, Two Horse Stable Circle**

I’m probably going to regret this. But I just wanted to ask for the same consideration from the chairman for the people speaking that he’s taking toward Alderman Finn.

This gentleman, Mr. Pavluvck, who usually leaves after he speaks, publicly caused me some serious anger. And I think you in your right as chair could have stopped him from making personal public comments about a member of my family. I expect in the future that you will INAUDIBLE.

**Joe Liscinsky, No address given**

I sat on the tax board two years ago. I have about four statements. I’m not fancy with anything. Statement number one. Your grand list is growing. Number two, you had a surplus of $10 million. Number three you have the Fire Department that returned $756,000 and you’re rewarding them with increases. I don’t understand it. Where is the money going? You’re buying property at excess prices. There was a property up on Soundview, $740,000 we paid $2.4 million. I think we ought to be checking what you guys are doing. I’m sorry for that. Thank you very much.

**Kathy Spole, 37 Matilda Lane**

I’m writing as a concerned parent and a taxpayer. I’m very disturbed by the budget cuts to the Board of Education proposed by Mayor Lauretti and the Board of Aldermen. I feel this budget would be a disservice to our children. I have a second grader and a four-year-old and I want them both to have the same opportunities and experiences. With the proposed budget cuts, I feel my four-year-old will not have the same choices as my seven-year-old.

By closing schools earlier, limits access to after school programs and evening activities. This also has the potential to decrease parental involvement in the schools for parents who work full time and can only attend evening PTA meetings and events and activities.

I’ve been learning about the budget and political process in this town. I have spoken to an Alderman. I went to a budget meeting last week. I also went to see Christopher Shays’ community meeting. I realize that this whole process is like, multi-faceted and almost like peeling an onion.
There’s layers and layers, and you take one, it affects another layer, and it’s, it gets really out of hand really easily. The locals are blaming the State. The State blames the Federal Government. Accusations are being made that maybe the Board of Education administration is too top-heavy. Which may be true. Other towns funded programs are returning monies at the end of the year. I went to that meeting last week and they were saying, well this is returning, and this is returning, and every year they’re doing that. Maybe those monies could be moved, I don’t know. I’m not, this is all new to me. If I could see that clearly at one meeting, I don’t understand how come things haven’t been changed. Adjustments need to be made on all levels. If we move monies from say, the Fire Department or Police or Senior Citizens or whatever, and then they go to the other side to the Board of Education, then the other side gets upset.

All people of Shelton have some kind of need and depend on City funds. The recession that we’re in affects all of us on a federal, state and local level. We all have to look at the way that we’re spending our money. We need to reprioritize our allocations. If the town of Shelton is not able to get more monies from other resources, then it’s up to us to ensure proper educational services for our students. I feel it’s vital for our future to fully fund the Board of Education budget. If this current budget passes with the limitations, what message are we sending to our children? Is it okay to have a substandard quality of education and to keep limiting the ability of educators to teach them? Is it okay to leave high school with an eighth to tenth grade reading level when you’re in the school system for 12 to 13 years?

I just want to say in closing that we really need to develop a budget that is more equitable. We need to prioritize where the monies should go to make the most impact. From the editorial in today’s paper, if there is to be budgetary pain, it must be shared pain. That was in The Connecticut Post today. I also work in Bridgeport and my job is in jeopardy too with the, because I work for the Health Department in Bridgeport. I know it’s everywhere. It’s every county, every town in Fairfield. I understand that there’s a lot of surpluses, I just don’t understand where all the money is going to. Thank you.

Steve Kutash, 275 Beardsley Road

I had no plans to get up here, usually my wife can handle this fine on her own. Tonight I would just like to point something out. I think the majority of the audience realizes the truth here, and the truth is that we have some excellent teachers up at Shelton High School and the elementary schools, and I don’t want to hear any of them being bashed.

The truth is, I’ve been fortunate over the years from Elizabeth Shelton to the middle school, you’ll see me at the high school most nights, either with the Fathers’ Club or the Drama Club or with the high school band. I am fortunate to be around some of the best and brightest kids this school has. We’ve put some great kids into some major universities. It’s amazing to see these kids grow.

At graduation time, there’s a booklet that’s handed out that shows all the schools that these kids have applied to. Some fantastic universities. It shows the ones they’ve applied to, the ones they’ve been accepted, and where they ultimately go. I think we have a great track record to where our kids wind up after school. I do know that all these programs that I’m involved with the kids up there are essential to them getting into these universities.
My daughter is a prime example. She is up at Western New England right now, and she got a lot of major scholarship money because of her community involvement and the things that she did within the school. They want fully rounded students. They don’t just want kids that are bright, they want kids that are involved. Number one is that we have to make sure these kids have these opportunities. If they don’t, this booklet that we have out at graduation time is going to look completely different in the coming years than what we have right now.

Please consider this. We need to keep things going. These are essential to our future and to our kids’ future. Thank you.

Sue Hanrahan, One Prospect Avenue

I just have a couple of observations. Clearly people have stated how important it is for our education system. In this day and age where two parents need to work in order to make the money to keep our homes and keep our children fed and clothed and all that stuff, we lack the ability to have our children where most of us grew up, we could go out and play all day on Saturday or after school and you never had to worry. Nowadays it’s too hard to do that because you don’t know if your kid is coming home again. So we’re limited a little bit in what our children are allowed to do.

When you take away Biddy Basketball, when you take away Scouting, when you take away the Drama Clubs or Dance Clubs or whatever, you are limiting our children in what they can expose themselves to athletically. In this day and age with the focus on overweight children, we really can’t limit those abilities. We’re just going to end up having computer-age children who sit and do nothing. In 20 years we’ll have a whole population of obese idiots running everything. We really need to focus on allowing these children to have these opportunities. I know my daughter is in high school now and was just up for National Honor Society and was denied because she doesn’t have enough co-curricular activities. I find that very difficult to understand being that she’s an involved kid. But I don’t understand how that can ever happen if you take away all these things that are now being monitored.

My second point is, looking ahead, we knew that gas prices and oil prices and all that stuff is going up. We just did over $1 million worth of renovation to the high school, and we didn’t plan for all these alternative energy sources. We just built this beautiful Shelton Intermediate School not five years ago. I don’t understand why we can always afford to do things twice, but never the right way the first time. Thank you.

Kathleen Schif, 60 Little Fox Run

This is more of a food for thought for everyone. I serve on the Shelton Intermediate School’s Executive Board and at our last meeting, one of the paid staff members who will go nameless encouraged me to spread the word, and I encourage you to possibly get some answers. I am just very confused and overwhelmed at what I heard, and two respective budgets, yes, we all have them. Some are larger than others, and I can appreciate that. However, I was informed that the former Ripton School has just recently been renovated to the nines for administrative purposes. I’m just confused as to why, I don’t even know how many people work there. I’m not a political person. I’m a taxpaying mother of three children that I love to pieces and I want the best that we can give all of our children. Why the offices, I believe, have Thomasville cherry cabinets. My husband is a contractor. Very expensive stuff. As well as granite countertops.
I’m a little overwhelmed. I’m very confused. And who approved that expenditure? Thank you.

Donna Burke, 15 Hubbell Lane

I am a proud parent, and I’m also president of Elizabeth Shelton School PTA. This letter is on their behalf.

The Board of Education proposed a budget for the 2008-2009 school year before the Board of Apportionment and Taxation, the Board of Aldermen and Mayor Lauretti asking for an increase in funding from last year in the amount of $3.7 million. Mayor Lauretti has proposed an increase of $2.0 million. The Board of Education budget has been reduced by approximately $1.7.

The Board of Education proposed increase encompasses rising energy costs, contractual obligations, teacher salaries, retirement funds and bus contracts. These financial obligations are a necessity. They are not options or items that can be reduced or renegotiated. This budget is based on foundation of priority expenses.

The Board of Education has been aware that this request may not come to fruition has been forced to find alternative ways to make ends meet. Thus, the Board of Education has decided to close all schools to non-school-sponsored activities at the end of each school day. The decision to implement the reduced hours was certainly a difficult one that the administration certainly recognizes the role of the schools in the community. By doing this, many beneficial activities and events within our school communities will no longer take place. Our schools’ PTAs will no longer be able to provide the extracurricular events that supplement the children’s social experiences and help to foster parental involvement in our schools. Sports leagues such as Biddy Basketball, Girls Rec Basketball, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, will have to find alternative venue or be canceled completely.

Overcrowding in our elementary schools has existed in Shelton for many years. Although a new school is now being constructed to help reduce the strain, the Kindergartners at Elizabeth Shelton School continue to travel by bus for the fourth year to Sunnyside. Our classroom sizes continue to rise and many schools exist without rooms for music and art. The cafeteria runs three sessions per day, some with excess of 200 students at each sitting.

Our schools are bursting at the seams. If the construction of new homes continues in developments like Twisted Vine, Wabuda Farm in White Hills which will contain 30 to 40 new three, four and five bedroom homes in the Elizabeth Shelton School district. These are family homes, not housing for singles or seniors. Where will these children from these families attend school? Will Elizabeth Shelton be forced to increase class sizes yet again?

We are all faced with rising cost of oil, gas, food and clothing. We all must tighten our belts from time to time, readjust our household budgets. The same holds true for cities and towns. In an effort to save city money, every Shelton teacher contributes toward their healthcare coverage, which saves the taxpayers $850,000 a year. The taxpayers of the City of Shelton are paying 100 percent healthcare coverage for city employees. Perhaps it’s time to tighten the belt at City Hall in order to realize some additional savings to the average taxpayer. If a cost of living increase is not financially feasible for the Board of Education, that same standard should be held across the Board for all departments. At the end of last year, City departments were said to have returned unused budgeted funds to the City.
If these departments are not utilizing money, maybe those departments should be tightened to allow budgetary increase for the Board of Education.

In this day and age it is becoming increasingly competitive to get accepted into colleges and universities. The acceptance criteria goes beyond raise and standardized test scores. Our youth are expected to be well rounded. Applications are scrutinized for extracurricular activities, sports, music, arts and community service. The proposed closing of our schools to all non-school-related events and/or activities impedes our children’s ability to develop these qualities. Education cannot be sacrificed at any cost and part of a well-rounded education is the cultural and social experiences a child enjoys. Introduction to the arts, sports, and social events are the building blocks to well-rounded, community minded, caring children. After school programs keep our children off the streets, involved and connected to their peers and adult mentors.

Currently, Shelton ranks in the top 20 communities in the State of Connecticut for income with a median income of $81,000. In order to fully fund the Shelton Board of Education’s proposed budget for 2008-2009, it would cost the average residential taxpayer in the City of Shelton an additional $1.53 per week. The City of Shelton retains 10 percent of its annual budget, $12 million for 2008-2009 in a fund to maintain its AAA bond status to ensure getting the best funding for future projects. Certainly the best project of the future in which we can invest our money is the education of our children. Many residents of this town...

Alderman Anglace noted that the five minute speaking deadline was approaching.

Many residents of this town grew up here and went away to school and returned as young adults to raise families and call this city home. Our children will hopefully do the same. Our children are the future of Shelton. Future Aldermen, City Council members, Policemen, Firemen, Teachers, and maybe even Mayor. Don't they deserve all the advantages we can provide? We all want our children to succeed beyond us. The things we have not. With the right foundation, opportunities for today's youth are endless. We urge all those in favor of fully funding the Board of Education budget to contact the Aldermen. Thank you.

Gil Pastore, 150 Yutaka Trail

I would like to address the education budget just like everybody else this evening. But one thing that nobody has mentioned this evening is, where is the money going?

One lady spoke here about the granite countertops, the nice cherry wood cabinets in the Board of Education offices on Long Hill Avenue. Everything she said tonight is true. It is actually embarrassing, because right now we're spending money hand over fist on personal offices with nice chair rails and beautiful paintings, raised panel wood on the sides of the offices.

I would like each one of your members to take a ride to Long Hill School where my daughter attends elementary school and take look at the roof over the gymnasium. The roof is completely rotted and full of mold. And it’s no lie. If you would like to look at that, I can’t understand why we’re spending money in ungodly amounts on personal offices, but when it comes to the children’s place that they go to school, they don’t take care of the buildings. One thing is, the roof is rotted because the gutter fell off eight years ago when my oldest daughter was attending Long Hill School.
A $100 gutter was never replaced and now the roof is completely rotted and full of mold. It’s probably going to cost in excess of $100,000 to fix. This is the mentality that this Board of Education has. They spend money on themselves but they don’t spend it on the students. It is very embarrassing.

I would like to see the Board of Aldermen somehow get a better handle on how the Board of Education spends it money. We give them a blank check, and it’s not going toward the city, it’s going toward their personal offices and anything grand and glorious, and the rest of the schools are terrible. This is, the Superintendent, Mrs. Willink, she came out a couple years ago with a pamphlet and it said about the maintenance of the schools, and this was funded and that was funded, and this is where the money is going to be spent. Just for instance, Long Hill School is supposed to have all the windows replaced in the school. I would say something $80,000 was set aside for it. The work was never done. It was supposed to be done in ’06-’07 and was never completed. The cost savings of energy loss from those 40 year old windows would pay for itself in literally one season. But the funds went somewhere. That is what I would like you, as Aldermen, to start looking at. Where are the funds going?

One thing I’ve heard tonight is, and nobody has come up with solutions for the lack of funding for the Board of Education. With two daughters in the education system, the public schools, which I think honestly they’re probably one of the best in the state, even though they’re ranked, I don’t know, down around 20th or so, I think they’re absolutely gorgeous compared to when I went to school here. One thing we have to look at is, we need to come up with a solution for more funding for the schools. I figure a solution is, let’s ask parents to start providing a student tax. A tax where the parents start paying some of the cost, or sharing the cost of their sons and daughters education. I am willing to pay it. As long as I’m willing to pay it I’m sure a lot of these parents here are willing to pay it. That’s something I would like you to look into, definitely not for this year, but for next year. Thank you.

Three unnamed speakers, No address given

We are the Girl Scouts from Troop 11, and we really don’t know what to say. We are just angry and disappointed that they’re taking away INAUDIBLE the school I’ll be going to next year. I was really looking forward to doing sports. It’s just sad that you cannot let us have that.

TAPE TWO

Jeff Mondi, 15 Beacon Hill Terrace

Good evening. I have two sons in the school system. I was born and raised in this town. It’s interesting because having grown up and watched what goes on, year in and year out, some years worse, some years a little bit easier, in this staged process, this budget process.

What I’d like to propose is, let’s get outside this process and let’s put aside the partisanship that goes on and let’s take steps as full disclosure on this side of the budget and that side of the budget. We’re here because we’re faced with a funding crisis that’s been precipitated by a funding stream cut from the State, which was precipitated by a funding stream cut from the Federal Government. Pretty much unanticipated over the past two years, but just the same, it’s a funding crisis. Therefore, we have to do something different.
We have to step outside the box, we have to play together, we have to open the books up, we have to present ourselves with full disclosure and we have to fix the problem. Because otherwise, this is going to go on and on and it’s not going to get fixed. So what I’d like to see happen is a committee from the management side of the town, a committee from the Board of Education and people who are responsible for the education side of the fence – our two budgets. Let’s figure this out. It’s a painful process. We’re going to have to give and take on both sides. I can’t have my taxes go up triple this year to do this. Maybe plan for it in the next couple of years. You can’t take it all from education, you can’t take it all from the town. You’ve got to step outside the box. That’s all.

Sandy Mahoney, 16 Hawley Road

Up until last June I was employed by the Shelton Public School system for many years. I’ve attended many of these hearings. I have always come to them very proudly, having been an educator and having worked in Shelton and there has never been a time that I felt disenfranchised.

So I would like to speak this evening as a senior citizen, as someone who is retired, but also someone who believes in Shelton wholly as a city and as having trust in our elected officials. Throughout all the years that I have been here, and I think for many of us we have seen many different political scenarios. And it has always been somewhat easy to say, well, you know, it’s a partisan thing, these are all partisan decisions. But personally, I would like to see every department in Shelton that is funded in the budget to use every cent that they are allotted. I would like to travel the roads in Shelton and not have to worry about knocking my car out of alignment because I hit potholes. I would like to have the youth in our town be able to enjoy recreational facilities to fulfill their leisure hours so that they would have choices as to whatever sport they want to play and whatever activity they choose to participate in. And I also would like to see that the schools are continually funded to a level that maintains the progress that we have made throughout the years.

I know it is easy to criticize the education budget because it is certainly the largest percentage of the budget in town. But it is also the most important part of the budget in town. When you look at our Superintendent, who is responsible for the welfare of over 5,000 students, and staff that probably exceeds 500, I don’t know the exact number, but who is responsible to Board of Education that I consider to be very responsible. And I’ve always considered them to be responsible. They are not paid. You are not paid to do these jobs. I would ask that you as the Board of Aldermen, the majority of whom are Republican, to trust your colleagues who are members of the Board of Education. I cannot believe that anyone who has the intense responsibility that the members of the Board of Education have are going to present to you, to the Mayor, or to anyone in the City, a budget that is not wholly responsible. I never saw that in all of the time that I worked in the school system. I continue to be very confident in them and their recommendations to you.

Shelton has made much progress over these years. All of us who have lived here and seen the boost and all of the growth and the development, both residential and economically, it’s something to be proud of. But we also need to maintain the level of education in our school system that maintains those standards. The progress we’ve made has been composed of essential ingredients to provide a sound education. I don’t think anyone here is looking to expand or to do extravagant improvements or expansion to the school system.
But I do think it’s very important that the Board of Education is funded to the extent that class sizes can be maintained at a level that is at that 20 mark, around that 20 mark. I think it’s important they have support services to provide for students to meet all of those needs that our students do bring to school with them, and I also think that it is very important that the Board of Education have the opportunity to provide leadership within those schools to maintain the standards which they have attained over these years. Thank you very much for your attention to my comments.

John McFadden, 126 Armstrong Road

Good evening. I didn’t have any intention to speak in here this evening, just like many others. But what I’m hearing scares the hell out of me. I was coaching the girls’ softball game outside tonight. I came here, despite that I have a lot of other responsibilities.

My daughter is sitting in back with the Troop 278 Girl Scouts. My son is special needs. To cut into the budget of the education department scares me. In today’s day and age and where we are, to even think for a second that we would cut back.

You know, at home, we’re a single income family of four. I would love to have the Rolex watch. I’d love to have the fancy car. But the bottom line is that I prioritize. What is most important to me, and that is my children and their education. That’s why there is no watch, no fancy car. I know where to prioritize my money. In today’s day and age where one out of 150 children are being diagnosed with autism we are just setting ourselves up here at the thought of cutting back.

My son entered Ripton at age three. He’s in mainstream now in Long Hill. I’m very pleased with the work that they’re doing with him. If we start closing the doors, where is it going to stop? So that frightens me. I hope that you act accordingly, reasonably, passionately. Think about the effects of the children, and prioritize. Thank you.

Ken Wieler, 19 Lark Lane

I applaud you for sitting up there, it’s a very difficult job. Two quick things. I support giving the education department what they need.

When I came to this town, I had more people tell me not to go to this town because the education system sucked, plainly. I’ve seen it improve, and you’ve made some good improvements. I went to a technology meeting. I’m a technology person so it’s kind of personal. They’ve made some steps in the right direction, but these are steps that I’ve seen towns in the surrounding area make seven years ago.

My kid’s in Kindergarten right now. The computer that he’s working on right now is something I threw in the garbage eight years ago. I work in the computer field. I was at the thing. I said, you know, my company throws machines away after three or four years. I’ll give them to the town. They won’t take them. Why? I could probably supply computers for a bunch of areas here. There are ways to get around it. I also made the proposal that, okay, we need more technology, we need something for this place, rather than increase the big “T” word, which nobody likes. Why doesn’t somebody come up with fundraising? You’ve got a church in Huntington Center who just raised, from what I understand, $3 million a year or so ago to put up marble floors or something.
You go around here, you have a variety of people in this room, you have a variety of people in this town from all different incomes, all different backgrounds. They will support what they feel is right. So if you can get the money in some sort of fundraising fashion then budget for the project, rather than just keep increasing taxes.

The economy sucks. Everybody knows it. It’s not getting any better any time soon. You talk to any economist and it’s going to be a while before it pulls out. Just raising taxes and just cutting the education is a wrong move. We need to come up with new ideas and that’s something we need some very smart people to look at. A couple of guys here have a couple of other ideas. Get some ideas from the town on the ways to get some money for this town for certain things that people care about. There’s a large population who save retirement money, who want to get something for retirement. You want to get something for the, I don’t know, the Public Works Department. I like to take my kid down to play, some people like that so they’ll deposit money into that. Just, I would like to say that you have to come up with better ways to come up with things, other than just raising taxes, because it just pisses people off. That’s all.

Dawn Barber, 224 Meadow Street

I am a proud mom of three kids. One is going to the middle school next year, I have another at Elizabeth Shelton School and one going to Sunnyside.

I am a very proud mother of a Girl Scout and a Boy Scout who are developing character and great morals and a wonderful camaraderie with their friends. And in their environment at school, and parents, they’re learning great things. I run programs for them at the school. There isn’t going to be a place where I can do something that’s big enough to hold the 100 Girl Scouts that attend these events. I know, and if their parents need to come, I can’t go to the Community Center to run these events, there’s not enough space downstairs to do it. I can’t do it at the White Hills Recreation Center, the space isn’t big enough.

I would love to be able to continue to do things like the disability awareness program I ran for the Girl Scouts last year. I would love to be able to do cultural events like I did for the Girl Scouts this year. INAUDIBLE. You close the schools to, and I understand that you have to do things, but where are we supposed to go to help the kids do these great moral things?

My Brownies, I have a group of Girl Scouts who asked to go to a nursing home. They added an extra Girl Scout meeting every month just to go to a nursing home because of a program we tried last year. I would love to have that open to everybody.

There are 900 Girl Scouts in this town because we could meet after school, they don’t have to go home on a bus and have their parents drive them somewhere else. There are only 200 Boy Scouts in the town. They don’t need after school. I just really hope that you think about some of these things. If you allow the Girl Scouts to continue using the buildings after school, it’s only an hour. I know that the janitors have to get things cleaned up. They’re learning really great moral character building things. Please try and let us continue to use the buildings. Thank you.
John Niski, 18 Bruce Drive

Good evening. I live at 18 Bruce Drive with my lovely wife, Marie, and my two young children, David and Joseph. I wish I could speak as eloquently as most of the speakers here tonight, but I don’t want to repeat a lot of the things that were said.

There is one point that I would love to bring out and I think is important. There was a meeting, exact same meeting as this, held just the other night in Seymour to discuss their budget. One person showed up. That spoke volumes to the Board of Selectmen in Seymour. That spoke volumes to the Board of Selectmen in Seymour that they were happy with the proposals that were going on. There is more than one person here tonight that has asked that you seriously consider the Board’s INAUDIBLE.

Glenn Gaetano, 19 Greenfield Drive

I have two youngsters in the school system and a wife who works in Milford for six years and now in Shelton for a year. I thank you all for being here tonight.

The person in the room I have the greatest respect for is Mrs. Mahoney. What she said to you was, “trust your colleagues.” What I ask is that you vote what you think is best for the youngsters. There probably are more Republicans than Democrats.

If your greatest thing is that we have the lowest taxes around, that’s not good enough. Please vote for what you think is the best. That’s what I want from you. I don’t want any partisanship on anything. Just do that. What the other fellow mentioned, my wife is in Milford for six years. If you think our technology in the schools is on par with local towns, I think you’re wrong. There are a lot of super things in this, the teachers, Mr. Gura, just great people and sure there are things in the system that can’t become, any organization can address issues, and that’s what we want to do.

Let’s give the kids something. We’ve been here seven years, and as Carla Sullivan said, you did a great job for us at Booth Hill School for years. For seven years I’ve heard this every year. It’s tiring. If you think it’s based on the lowest taxes, then please reconsider what we’re doing. Thanks.

Michelle Dingwall, 121 Saw Mill City Road

I grew up here in Shelton, and pardon me if I get a little emotional, I have two kids in the school system and I’m sad at what I’m seeing. It’s very important that you fund the Board of Education proposal.

I want to continue to be a proud parent living in Shelton, and a proud city person. Taxes are going to go up anyway. I don’t want to repeat things that people have said. I want you to think about the consequences that will come if you don’t fund the Board of Education. I hope you’re listening tonight to all the concerned parents and educators. Thank you.

Lori Allen, 4 Golden Hill Lane

I share a lot of the same feelings that a lot of the parents do this evening. I also don’t want to repeat a lot of the comments a lot of you made. One thing that I do want to say, I’ve worked in this town for 16 years. During my time here I’ve been responsible for many budgets for global organizations.
I understand what it’s like to try and manage a balanced budget. I also understand the importance of return on investments. My concern is that if we don’t invest in our schools and our children today, how are we going to attract those families that are buying these four and five bedroom houses in our town tomorrow. Approximately 30 percent of our population in this town are between the ages of one and 19. That is a significant portion of our population.

The one main thing that I think hasn’t been mentioned this evening, some people say that the schools are asking for more. I think they are actually asking for less, in my humble opinion. The schools are more crowded today than they ever have been. There are more families moving into the town. Classroom sizes are going up, and yet the Board of Education is asking for the budget to stay the same. On behalf of my family, I would ask you to please, please, please, fully fund the Board of Education. Thank you.

*Tammie Brown, 14 Ballaro Drive*

Take a moment. Technically, I’m a Shelton newlywed. I’ve lived here less than a year. I came to Shelton because I was looking for a small, a community that provides an opportunity for my kids to grow, and a good educational system, as well as activities within the town.

I have to say, I’m so disappointed after being here less than a year to hear what has happened to the education system, which is why I came here in the first place. My children are not even in school yet. I have one on the way and one who is about to start Mohegan School next year. It’s upsetting, especially coming from Bridgeport – that’s where I was living before - to hear about overcrowding in the schools, to hear that some of the schools are falling apart, we’re taking away activities. How is that different from Bridgeport? Why did I move here? I’m looking for more, not less, and not what I tried to move away from. We should be looking at what will be best for our kids. Thank you.
Carol Mavilla, 22 Great Oak Road

I am in the money thing, bookkeeper, freelance, I am the Treasurer for Booth Hill for four years, I was also Treasurer in the Town of Shelton Soccer League. I just have a few comments about people, and parents, how much we put our heart and soul into everything for these kids.

When I was the Booth Hill PTA Treasurer, four years, we have raised, hundreds of thou-, I mean, twenty-, thirty-thousand dollars. And we gave it all to the kids. And I remember Mrs. Mahoney telling me, it’s all for the kids. And when somebody said, what are we going to give them, I said, well, we’ll save all the money, we gave them projectors, we gave them cameras, stuff that the town, that we don’t ask you for, that all these parents come and donate their time or their money. And we give it back to the kids. We don’t even ask for anything.

Shelton Soccer, Treasurer over there. Thousands of dollars we have saved. The bench at Capewell Park, have you seen the sign? These are from the parents, the money that they have given us, so that their kids have beautiful fields to play on. They are maintained, there are gardens. It all comes from the parents. So we’re not here to balk and say that we’re not doing our part. Because without, we don’t mind our taxes being raised but we are also giving our money back and we’re putting it into your city, things that should be paid by the city. We’re taking care of fields. Football, flag. They put in fields up at Nike. They’re being maintained by parents. So you know what? You have to listen to us. Okay? We are helping you out. We are not telling you to give us every dime. We are helping. So I think that you just need to understand.

I understand all different budgets. I wish that we knew, I remember when I did budgets at Booth Hill, when everybody brought me their, I had everything from one fundraiser to expensing them out, I can tell you every dime that we spent. And how much that fundraiser made. And that’s what a budget is. That’s what it’s all about. Line items, the use of line items, and what we use. And you know what? Everything went to the kids. That’s all it’s about. So you do have parents caring out there, and I just want you to know the kind of money that comes into this town and into these schools.

So we’re all not just sitting here, you know, talking out our you-know-whats. All right? So why don’t you help us, and go through all the budgets, even the city, the whole deal, and let’s give accounts, what we want, what all us parents are digging, and I’m cleaning toilets, okay? Come around and see what we’re doing to help, and you can help us make it a good town too. Thank you.

Chris Panek, 19 Meghan Lane

I’m a former member of the Board of Aldermen and certainly I’ll commend all of you sitting up there listening, public hearing, I was sitting up there for the past few years myself. I know it’s a grueling process working on the City budget.

The Board of Apportionment and Taxation should be commended too for all the hours and meetings. Members of the public don’t realize the hours that go into formulating the City budget.

Certainly everybody’s entitled to their opinion. Earlier speaker who raised the ire of some people in here, I’ve spoken to him many times at City meetings, and he is entitled to his opinion.
I’ve always respected that as I did respect the opinions of those on the Board. I think that gentlemen may have taken it a little much to the extreme, as a parent being called brainwashed, him calling the graduates of the Shelton School System “dummies,” he just went a little too far, but again he’s entitled to his opinion, as all the other INAUDIBLE.

During my two years on the Board I tried to just look at every single line item of every department, attend their meeting, and present an independent viewpoint. I think our Board of Education this year, especially the Republican members, deserve to be commended, the Democrats as well, but for willingness to work together and present a budget that they felt was best for all of our school children regardless of party affiliation. The opening comments that the Republican Chairman of the Board of Education made at their presentation to your Board and the Board of Apportionment and Taxation really said it all in a nutshell. For him to stand up there and say that, he deserves to be commended. I share the concerns of Carla Sullivan who spoke earlier. It’s very frustrating.

I’m hopeful that this many people as turned out tonight will be next Monday night, I believe it’s at 7:30 at City Hall, packing City Hall when the Board of Aldermen actually speaks and goes over the budget and starts reviewing the line items. I believe there are several meetings posted on the City website. I know from experience in the past two years during the budget process, a lot of people turn out at this type of meeting where they can speak, but the meetings when they can’t speak, there are very few people that attend those meetings. I think it would be a good sign and a good showing that people attend the budget workshops and hear your elected officials speak and state their opinion. I’m hopeful that my Aldermen, Simonetti and Finn, are going to publicly state their feelings and their opinions, not only on the education budget but on every line item.

There are other line items in the budget, the Open Space Ordinance that I think should be fully funded. I worked on that Ordinance during my tenure on the Board. As I understand it right now it has not been funded as required by the Ordinance. The Road Repair account somebody spoke about that, the current year was $425,000, and the budget will be fully expended. There was a request by the Department Head for $890,000 for the upcoming year, and the Mayor cut it to $125,000, cutting it 75 percent from the current year. I mean, I drive up and down East Village Road and I know they’re scheduling for some work on that, but you go around any street in the City and there are potholes and roads are falling apart.

I’m not only just here to support education but to support many other line items. I believe it was last week that the Board of Apportionment and Taxation and the Board of Aldermen met together. President Anglace criticized the Board of Apportionment and Taxation for not thoroughly combing through the Board of Education budget. I can tell you last year, former Alderman York and myself and Alderman Finn, we probably spent 50 hours on the Board of Education budget going through all the books, and not presenting a fully funded Board of Education budget, but presenting line items that we thought would go directly into the classroom to help our school children. Unfortunately, as many speakers have spoken, as Carla Sullivan stated, the budget gets rubber stamped, whatever the Mayor puts out there, the Republican majority follows along. It’s very frustrating. Last year we put in all those hours and we said let’s give them this increase, and take out specific items.
We all know the Board of Education can direct and spend their money where they want, but the majority members who sat on the Board last year still opposed the increase. We even shifted funding out of other line items and proposed a budget less than the Mayor’s for a tax decrease last year, and it was still opposed.

One more thing I just wanted to speak about that many speakers have spoken about, is pitting our senior citizens against our children. The members who sat on the Board last year have failed our senior citizens as well. Three Aldermen, Alderman Finn, Alderman York and myself supported a senior tax relief program that was better than the one proposed by the Republican majority, that would increase the income limits to allow more of our neediest seniors to be able to apply and be permitted to get senior tax relief. But the Republican majority opposed that, went with the State income guidelines to allow fewer senior citizens. As a parent, I fully support, if you told me my taxes were going to be increased a small amount to help out more needy seniors, I think everybody in here who supports education would support that. I’m not up here to tell you tonight to fully fund the Board of Education, but to make your opinions, try to be as independent as you can and work together. I hope to see all the people that are here tonight next Monday, and the Mondays after meeting, bursting the seams at City Hall so that our elected officials know the concern that we have, not just for our children but for our entire city and our entire city budget. Thank you.

Kathleen Kellett, 12 Margaret Drive

INAUDIBLE. I went to Elizabeth Shelton School, Shelton High School, I have three kids in the Shelton school system now. My husband and I are very involved with our kids’ PTA, with Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, with flag football, with after school activities, with the Fire Department, with the Legion, with probably any other things that are going on in the Shelton community. We’re very proud to live here. Our kids are proud to live here. We hope that our kids will want to live here.

We think that not only should the Board of Education budget be looked at and should be approved, all the budgets should be approved. If you’re looking for money to help our community, at Elizabeth Shelton School they have PTA, they have the Father’s Club. Every year they have the Spring cleanup. My husband, along with many of the other fathers, they are painting classrooms to help save money, or doing Spring cleanup. The Girl Scouts are planting gardens. All this to help save money. Quite a few people have gotten up here and said, especially I think it was Booth Hill School and Long Hill School. They’re not coming to you asking for money, they’re putting it out. They are doing it, they’re doing fundraising. A lot of the schools are doing this.

But if you are still looking for more money, all these developers that are coming in building these three, four and five bedroom houses, Elizabeth Shelton School where we are busing our kindergartners. How about saying, okay, build us a school, or making some kind of tax, putting some kind of tax for developers. When I went to Elizabeth Shelton School as a kid, I could remember very vividly my parents going to Board of Aldermen meetings and hearing the same arguments 30 or 40 years ago, with them saying, they’re going to build a school in White Hills where the Rec Center is now, because they were overcrowded then and they needed to do something, budgets were being cut and we were overcrowded. Well, here we are 30 to 40 years later with the same problems. And we’re still overcrowded and we’re more overcrowded. We can’t even have our Kindergartners in the same school.
My kids, they’re well out of Kindergarten, we’re at the High School and Intermediate age now. But we’re still – all these new young families are facing that. Look at these new developers. Look for them. If they want to build all these big houses, they should have, you should be looking to them to have some kind of tax money coming from them to put toward our education budget. Thank you.

Ken Saranich, 27 Lucille Drive

I wasn’t planning on speaking tonight, but I felt it necessary after listening to INAUDIBLE. I am relatively new to Shelton. I’ve been here three years. I moved into Shelton because it’s the town my wife grew up in and the town that we chose to raise our children.

As a new resident of Shelton I have been sitting at Board of Education meetings, at the Board of Aldermen meetings in the back, I went to the Apportionment and Taxation meetings to learn more about the town. I do that and I sit and I don’t speak at those meetings, because I’m listening. I just came up to ask you to do the same. At the last Board of Aldermen meeting the chairman of A & T said that there were three choices he could go to - accept the Mayor’s proposal that would cut the Board of Education budget, fully fund the budget, and the third one slips me right now. He had said that when he went out and talked to people that most people supported the Mayor’s proposal, which is to cut the Board of Education budget. Well, if you sit and listen tonight, I wonder, who did he talk to? Because, look at the number of people that came here tonight to support the Board of Education budget.

All I ask all of you as elected officials, and now I vote for, do the same. Listen to the citizens of Shelton that have come here tonight. Please don’t make your decisions already. Please don’t make a partisan decision. Please don’t be the way things have been, we’re going to keep them the same. Listen to what the people of Shelton are saying and please do not hurt our children. Support them. Thank you.

Alderman Anglace asked twice if anyone else from the public wished to speak. He then stated, I want to thank the public for their comments.

[Audience static]

Alderman Anglace stated, wait a minute. Only one of us can run this meeting. Only one of us can run this meeting. And the way the meeting is set up, and the way we’re going to do it is that we’re going to hear from the public first. Just like I said in the beginning. When the public has made all their comments, then we’ll listen to anybody from the Department Heads or Boards and Commissions. I want to thank the Board of Education and the Board of Apportionment and Taxation for being patient with this process. But there’s a gentleman over here that wishes to be heard, I believe, from the public. Please come up. I know the hour is late, but everybody wants to be heard and we’re going to stay until they’re heard.

Ken Huzi, 84 Walnut Avenue

I support the Mayor’s budget. The Board of Education has to start saying no instead of having the Board of Aldermen and the Mayor looking like the bad guys. We hear of the cuts for the children, but at the same time the administration keeps on growing larger and larger. And all the other items, like they have at Ripton School.
Some additional cost savings could be instituted on top of what was already mentioned - reducing the heat in the winter, reducing the a/c in the summer. Energy is going through the ceiling. There are small items. Combine resources so the city doesn’t have to start renting. Tonight the City has to rent this auditorium to have this public meeting. That is kind of ridiculous.

Being that Education is one of the biggest government lobby groups, we constantly hear of unfunded mandates. At the same time, the group that writes the legislation later creates the anxiety that we’re wasting tonight – it’s just one vicious circle. Thank you.

Alderman Anglace asked three times if any other member of the public wished to speak. Being none, he stated that the Board will hear elected officials and Board and Commission members at this time.

Win Oppel, 34 Soundview Avenue, Chairman, Board of Education

Good evening. Thank you for this opportunity to address our request for 2008-2009. I will not repeat my previous comments as shared with you at the joint meeting with the tax board earlier this year. They remain as factual today as they were when we last gathered here.

I would like to start by thanking this board for the good that we’ve been able to do together over the past several years. We have worked side by side to improve our district. Specifically, I’d like to acknowledge the work of Alderman Anglace on the Technology Committee. His contributions have and will continue to have a long lasting impact on our students. As equally elected representatives of our citizens, we each have a role to carry out with regard to the development and operation of a budget.

Our board unanimously adopted a budget request that, in our opinion, allows for the best use of tax dollars in the educating of our children. Included was an enhancement component to further expand our current offerings. The foundation request provides our students and residents with a continuation of services and activities delivered by the board. In our view, the dollars requested are not excessive, but will afford us that opportunity to maintain existing programs. Yes. We can differ on the delivery of these services, or the value of certain programs. But the choice of programs and the nature of services is what the Board of Education is elected by the residents of this city to do. We the Board have as our primary focus the provision of a comprehensive educational program for all 5,676 students. From Pre-Kindergarten through High School senior, these students receive the best possible educational opportunities available with dollars provided. From National Merit Scholars to those who find academics, and life in fact, much more challenging than any one of us, we are responsible for their educational program.

At the end of this budget process, we will be given a dollar amount with which to run our district. On July 1st, we will continue the operation of our school system. We may not all agree on its form, and we may have differing opinions as to its shape, but it will be the best system we, the Board of Education, can provide for our students and the residents of our city. Our charge is simple. Provide a quality education and remain within the funds allotted. It is my hope that the Board of Education budget is not viewed as the fatted calf sacrificed to achieve a targeted mill rate, but rather, through this budget, our system becomes a vessel from which the minds of our children can glean enrichment and a desire for lifelong learning. Thank you.
Alderman Anglace stated, I would like to thank you Mr. Oppel and your predecessor, Mr. Tim Walsh. Between the two of you, you’ve worked very well with the Board of Aldermen and I’m proud to say that we’ve had a good working relationship over the last several years, and I thank you both.

Robin Willink, Superintendent of Schools

Last week, I was delighted to receive a call from The New York Times. It’s the first time I’ve ever been called by The Times. A reporter was doing a story about Shelton and wanted to ask me about the school system. As I described the terrific programs that we have and the excellent caliber of our schools, I realized once again how really proud I am of the Shelton Public Schools. However, in these months of blogs, and the rumors, and all the talk that accompanies the budget talks, it is easy, I think, to lose sight of the big picture and the importance of supporting our schools. As such, I just wanted to take about two minutes to try to dispel some of the myths that we’ve heard, that seem to be clouding the real issue of funding the school budget.

One thing that I’ve heard is that we have too many administrators. We have had the same 24 administrators since 1991.

I have heard that people don’t know what we do with our money. Yet the State has recognized Shelton for the clarity of its budget book. Our Finance Committee meetings are open to the public, and I have insisted that our finances be an open book, transparent to all.

I have heard that too much money had been spent on the Board of Education offices. In truth, the offices had to be moved from the high school in order to provide the space during renovation and program expansion. Moreover, because of changes in the law, the closing of Ripton School was imminent. The Board of Education assumed responsibility for that building, and with it’s own men created and is creating a permanent home and lasting space for the City at minimal cost.

The Board has also acted with the City’s best interest at heart in building a state-of-the-art school for fifth and sixth grade students and taking back a facility that inevitably would have been a financial drain on the city.

I’ve heard our test scores are poor. Yet the data shows a different picture. The Commissioner of Education is calling for a special passport to address weaknesses in reading across the State. Shelton’s reading scores have gone up.

I have heard that we have hired unnecessary staff members. In fact, we have responded to the need for accountability and we have acknowledged, along with you, that more accountability produces better results.

I have heard that buildings have been closed just to make a statement. The truth is that the Board of Education is striving desperately to do its job. We are in the business of educating children. We must first focus on the programs to address that. As you continue to deliberate on the school budget request, please take the time to separate the myth from the rumor from the reality. In other meetings I’ve told you about our successes and our challenges and our need for additional funding. Even more important are the most basic needs of the foundation budget. We are a system that is respected in the Valley, that has achieved recognition at the State level, and has found its niche in Fairfield County. The community has asked for results and produced them.
The cost of not spending money in our system will be greater in the future. In the last few years, you have certainly supported our schools, and you can take real pride in a system that has evolved. If we are forced to take a step backwards, I so fear that we will undo the things that we’ve worked so hard to accomplish, and it might take years to undo the damage. Thank you very much.

Tim Walsh, Board of Education

I am a senior citizen and I’m on a fixed income. Well fixed. I wish it was well fixed. I feel like I represent the largest group of people in this community - those that care about education. We all know that providing a quality education is a measure of how good a community really is. During this past election, I recall Mayor Lauretti saying that Shelton offered a quality education that he is proud of. I know first from experience that the President of the Board of Alderman John Anglase has done much to improve technology education in our schools. John has given of his time and his help to eliminate roadblocks and getting things done. I know that Aldermen Perillo, Finn and Farrell all believe in quality education. They have grown up with it and they express it. Alderman Papa’s family is deeply involved in education in our community as is Alderman Simonetti’s. Alderman Kudej has always supported what’s best for the children of our town, no matter if it’s Little League or problems that matter in our schools.

I ask that you continue to fund our budget so that we can continue to provide the quality that you expect and that this community expects - in fact, to improve over our past successes. I could go into all sorts of comparable costs with other systems, but common sense sometimes gets lost in figures. We are good, we are working to get better and we thank you for your cooperation in working with us. We shouldn’t be so shortsighted as to balance our budget on the backs of our kids. Thank you very much for your time and commitment to Shelton.

Arlene Liscinsky, 54 Country Ridge Drive, Member, Board of Education

As the process continues, I could not, obviously, pass up the opportunity to speak to you regarding the Board of Education budget request. I have stood here before you as a parent of two children that have gone through the school system, and I’m very proud, exceptionally proud to say that they have both gotten a wonderful education and have gone on to bigger and better things. I have also stood before you as a representative of the PTA, having been the former president at Booth Hill, president of PTA Council, and spoke to you about the issue of funding our education budget.

As I head into my senior years, which are coming faster than I’d like to admit, I want to say to you that I have and my husband have always said that education, as I think one gentlemen before us said, is the number one priority in our household. As a taxpayer in this community I will also continue to feel the same way.

As a Board of Education member, presently, I also feel compelled to stand here before you and certainly fight for the budget. I was part of the process and I feel it’s my obligation to stand here and support the budget. As all of you know, responsibility of funding education is falling more and more on the shoulders of local municipalities and unfunded mandates are making it more difficult than ever. Special education costs are spiraling out of control and affecting every Board of Education’s budget. I also have to sit on the CES board, and I have to tell you, every, we had a roundtable recently - every single Board of Education was being crushed by those costs.
I’ve also spoken to Mr. Perillo up in Hartford and we’ve had a very nice conversation about what he, as a State Representative, could do that would be most effective for us here, not only in our town but obviously all Boards of Education. Our board has spent a tremendous amount of time preparing the budget with an iron fist for constraint for the benefits of the taxpayers. I have to say that truthfully. This Board has been dealing with issues that every taxpayer faces, such as increased medical benefits, spiraling fuel and electricity costs. I also want you to know we’ve been very aggressive in negotiating fair and good contracts with all of our bargaining units. We have strived for increased medical cost sharing which has saved the city hundreds of thousands of dollars, and we have negotiated increased time in our teachers’ contract, which has been a direct benefit for our kids. We have the same electricity costs, we have the same fuel costs and we also have been aggressive in looking for cost savings. Just about looking under every rock we could possibly find. We’ve joined an electricity consortium to save on our electricity costs. We’ve reviewed every line item in our budget and looked at a five year average and reallocated funds to make sure that we have a better, more accurate budget document. I might add also, an award-winning budget document that we received an award from the State on. It is a very open book. Anyone who has never seen the budget book certainly could request it. It is like, seriously, an open book for everybody to read. Yet, I hear comments that the Board of Apportionment and Taxation made, that his board could do a better job. Yet, I didn’t see any recommendations coming from his board. If he feels it’s a windfall, then there’s certainly, myself, who is on the Finance Committee for the Board of Education, and the Board as a total would certainly welcome those other comments that he might have.

To maintain, and I am a business owner in this town - a competitive business environment - we owe it to our children and our grandchildren to fully prepare them on a global playing field. We need a public education system that prepares our children with skills for the 21st century. I have to tell you. I just recently attended a workshop, a Board of Education workshop that told us that the Kindergarten class of 2008 will need job skills for jobs that have yet to be created. That puts a lot of pressure on us as a Board of Education, and you as a community and the community in general, to prepare our students. Schools will have a much broader mandate, pressure will grow for communities and elected officials to prepare our children for those jobs.

It is my belief that we have made such strides in the Shelton school system. Again, I thank also, personally, Mr. Anglace as I sit with you every other Friday morning for the most part on the Technology Committee meetings, and I know you have been a strong supporter of our technology needs. I also want to just say, please don’t let us take another step backwards.

I’ve seen this, I’ve been in this town 18 years. I was here when we had Save Our Schools, resurrection of parents, because back in the early 90s we went through the same process. I would like to see us, and it would just take us almost 10 years to go back and bring back what we lost way back when. Parents don’t realize. My children had an art room. My children had a music room. My children had a computer lab. These parents don’t have that. They’ve lost it through class sizes. I keep bringing this up again and again, it worries me because they are INAUDIBLE. Our class sizes are going up further and further. I’m going to read a quote by Eric Hopper, and I just heard this recently at my Board of Education workshop, and I thought it was just great in the fact that the only way to predict the future is to shape the future. I’m asking you, you have an opportunity to shape our kids’ future. Thank you.
Mark Holden, 275 Soundview Avenue, Chairman, Board of Apportionment and Taxation

Basically there are a couple of things I wanted to mention. First off, I am very proud of the work that my board did this year. Everybody worked together as a team; it was a nonpartisan effort, and it took a lot of hours to find approximately $250,000 in cuts and approximately $100,000 in spending increases INAUDIBLE. As far as the Board of Education is concerned, I can’t speak for the rest of my board, but I’d be happy to look things over. I don’t promise it will be easy. I know you guy work hard, but I think we could probably find some additional cuts. I’ve got a very dedicated team, they’re very vigilant thank you.

Otherwise, I encourage your Board to adopt at least most of the changes that we had proposed. We put a lot of hours into developing those ideas to try to save money for the taxpayers, and I think they deserve it. Thank you.

Alderman Anglace asked if any other person wished to speak. Being none, he called for a motion to close the Public Hearing on the Budget.

Adjournment

Alderman Kudej MOVED to adjourn; SECONDED by Alderman Papa. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 8-0.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia M. Bruder, Clerk

Date Submitted: ________________

Board of Aldermen

DATE APPROVED: ________________BY: ________________

Mark A. Lauretti
Mayor, City of Shelton