



BOARD OF ALDERMEN
SHELTON, CONNECTICUT
PUBLIC HEARING ON THE BUDGET
WEDNESDAY, MAY 14, 2014

Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Aldermanic President John F. Anglace called the Public Hearing on the Budget to order at 7 p.m.

Roll Call

Alderman John F. Anglace, Jr., President – present
Alderman Lynne Farrell - present
Alderman Jack Finn - present
Alderman Stanley Kudej – present
Alderman Noreen McGorty – present
Alderman John P. Papa – present
Alderman Eric McPherson - present
Alderman Anthony Simonetti – present

PUBLIC HEARING ON THE BUDGET

Alderman Anglace stated, this is the Public Hearing on the Budget for 2014-15. The advertisement was in the newspapers and copies of the budget are on the table up in front. If you are interested in addressing the Board in respect to the budget, raise your hand. When you are recognized, please come to the podium, state your name and address for the record, and let us hear what you've got to say.

Michelle Bialek, 10 Weybosset Street

I'm going to read you a letter that was published today in The Shelton Herald.

Dear Mr. Anglace, Mr. Simonetti is not here, Ms. McGorty, Mr. Finn, Mr. Kudej, Mr. Papa and Ms. Farrell,

We as parents invest a large amount of money into our children on a personal level. From dance classes to soccer camp to 5,000 gallons of milk, to Abercrombie clothes, to Yale. Our children are our biggest investment; they are our greatest accomplishment. We want to nurture them and help them grow with all the tools they need to succeed in life. When they grow up, we hope that they will want to come back and raise their family right back here, in their own back yard. I am a true testament to that. We have to envision that same perspective on a community level.

It is our charge to foster the growth and enrichment of our kids and hope that they come back some day. Hopefully, they will want to make it better for their kids as well. Our children represent the future of Shelton.

Typically a City's Board of Education budget runs a little over 60 percent. Sadly, the City of Shelton has 57 percent allocated to their Board of Education. This may seem like a negligible percentage but if we do the math based on the 2013 budget of \$115.6 million; four percent equals \$4,624,000. This is not so small in my mind, and it is still only a portion of the budget surplus. Please also take into account that out of 167 districts in the State of Connecticut Shelton ranks 157th in per student spending. We are 10 from the bottom.

Any year in which we as a community are enjoying a substantial budget surplus doesn't it make sense for us to raise that percentage just a bit? Can't we afford to bring ourselves up in the ranks at least a couple of notches? My basic understanding of good business practices, the purpose of the surplus is to provide for one-time expenditures and should be invested back into future development. The reasonably compromised request from the Board of Education is exactly the type of expenditure for which the surplus is designed.

I am not talking about raising any taxes, but simply reinvesting a modest amount of the surplus into our educational system. The relatively minor allowances on the agenda for this year would greatly enhance the quality of our children's childhood experience and in the long term will actually save a substantial amount of money in remediation costs. When you look at it this way, it seems the bonus money would be a well-spent investment. In the coming weeks I ask that each and every one of you search your heart and soul when you make this decision and base it on reality, necessity, frugality and the sense of gravity which comes with the honor you received when your community put their trust in you to accurately and honorably represent them. I leave you with a final question. If you choose to not spend our money on our children, what will you spend it on?

This is signed Michelle Bridget Bialek, alumnus of Sunnyside Elementary School, Lafayette Elementary School, Shelton Intermediate School and Shelton High School. I am the mother of children who either are or in Long Hill School, Sunnyside School and Perry Hill School.

William Bragg, 85 Park Avenue

I don't have children in school any more. They've all graduated and gone on to different parts of their lives, but I am a homeowner. This is important economically to the City. I implore you to fully fund the Board of Education's request to include at least a full-day Kindergarten. This is not a political issue, this is an economic issue. This is an education issue. You need to get rid of the ideology and focus on what really matters for the community. The difference between funding and not funding can have a long-term economic impact on the City. In Fairfield County, 96% of the

district schools provide a full-day Kindergarten next year. Shelton is the minority. In not funding to support the services, this does not need to happen. It can be very easily funded. Long term you will become less attractive to new residents. When I look at spending per pupil, as Michelle said, Shelton is in the bottom 10 percent in the State and we are beginning to see the impact.

My wife is a licensed broker. All you have to do is look at the search engines – Trulia, Zillow, pull up the Shelton School System. This is what people do when they're looking to move – they compare crime rates, quality of life. They look at the school systems – that's what I did when I moved here from West Palm Beach. Trulia and Zillow rate the high school a 6 out of 10. This is key information for people evaluating our City. Trumbull and Monroe are ranked 8, far better. Our children deserve the skills provided by a full-day Kindergarten to develop into successful students and adults. We are not keeping up with our neighbors.

I teach graduate business students. They come from all over the world. I can tell you, first hand, the importance of education is not a local issue; we're not competing against necessarily Trumbull and Monroe. We are competing all over the world. Our kids need to be better educated. It's very, very important. This program can be funded. There is an \$11.9 million surplus from which these funds could very easily be appropriated. A full-day Kindergarten program is exactly what these surplus funds are for – on first-time events. This is not an operating expense as it was indicated – this is an investment in the future of our children. What could possibly be more important than that?

In leaving, I would like to point out something that was in the paper today that would give you an opportunity to bail this out. \$442,000 worth of funding that was sent to the City years ago has now been forgiven by the State. I would imagine this is just sitting in the General Fund and part of the surplus. It was related to the Board of Education. Why not simply note this to go to the Board of Education and get this over with? Thank you.

Mike Sciamanna, 131 Yutaka Trail

I did not come here tonight with the expectation to address you. I did not come with statistics, I did not come with research from other towns. I came from a dinner table conversation this evening. I had the opportunity to sit with my family and have dinner, and I have three children, one in first grade. We asked them about full-day Kindergarten, and we asked them how school was going. And when we asked them, "tell me, do you think that you wish that you had full-day Kindergarten?" and there was a pause and my kids were thoughtful, and they don't just answer. My first grader was very profound when he said, "you know what? I think some kids in our class really could have been helped and we wouldn't have to spend so much time reviewing things that they should know already." This is a first grader. We are sitting here, probably in the biggest crowd that this room has had in quite a while, so I hope you feel the passion, I hope you feel the energy and when you look at the

members who make up this group, we have Individuals here with families like myself, we have educators, we have people from the Board of Education, We have people that are retired that don't have a stake in this except that they care. I hope that you take the time to consider that as well. I thank you for letting me address you this evening.

Mary Sue Feige, 27 Balsam Circle

I am here as a resident and also as an educator. I am a Principal in the Seymour School District, and they've had full-day Kindergarten for the last three years. It is phenomenal. The impact it has had on our reading scores, I encourage full-day Kindergarten here in Shelton. I am fully supportive of it. Before we had full-day Kindergarten, 45% of our students were reading on or above grade level. As soon as we turned and we got full-day Kindergarten, 85% of our students in our school were reading on or above grade level. It is an advantage. This year, I have to tell you, we're above that. I don't have their scores in. But full-day Kindergarten means so much. Our teachers would never want to turn it around. I know first hand. Please, I encourage full-day Kindergarten. Thank you.

David Yegidis, 10 Molnar Drive

Much like the gentleman before me, I didn't come with a prepared statement; I don't have a paper with me. I would imagine that this is the biggest crowd you've seen in quite a while based on some information I've heard from other folks. I really don't have much to say but my little daughter does. She'll be in Kindergarten next year. She'll go to Mohegan along with her bigger sister who will be in 4th Grade. She wants to tell you something. Okay. Tell them about full-day Kindergarten.

[Small girl speaking] If it's full-day Kindergarten then I'll get to learn more.

Mike Mckeen, 54 Philip Drive

I am a neighbor of Mr. Papa. I, too, didn't plan to come up and speak today. I am the father of four children and last I heard there was a desire to hear from the fathers in the community. I don't know if there are any fathers here that want to stand up in support.

The thought I wanted to share with you folks tonight is, recently I opened up The Connecticut Post and read a story about our governor coming to Shelton to visit a school – the Susanna Wesley School. The reason why it struck me was because the gentleman who was mentioned in the article funds pre-K programs. That gentleman happens to be the longest business leader I've known in this City over the years. The Jones Family Tree Farm has been here as a landmark probably before the City of Shelton was here. The reason why I bring that up is because Mr. Jones, in order to survive, in order to thrive, in order to have a sustainable business in this town he has to have good judgment. Mr. Jones reaches into his pocket each

year and spends \$50,000 funding pre-K – not full-day Kindergarten – but pre-K programs because he sees the benefit that early intervention for education creates for the community. Not only does it save money for the community, but it produces better educated kids. At the end of the day they come back, they live here, and they prosper here in your town, voting for you. Thank you.

Laurie Mckeon, 54 Philip Drive

I have spoken in front of you now several times. I have written to all of you, several times. I am here on two issues. One is pay to participate and full-day Kindergarten.

I first want to cover pay to participate. We are currently charging our parents of children in Grades 7-12 fees for their children to participate in sports and activities. That is on top of other things that they're paying for like pictures and fundraising. What is frustrating to me in a conversation that I actually had with the Mayor is that we as taxpayers are actually paying taxes on this pay to participate because these funds have been sitting in the City budget for the last several years. \$242,000 sits in youth services, hasn't been spent, it's part of your surplus. However we are charging families \$400, \$500, \$100 to run track. \$200-\$300 to play softball. Why are we doing this? As a mother of four children, married to the guy back there, \$400 is a lot. We want our children to be engaged in sports and activities. We want them to love school, because we know in 2014 and beyond, high school education is no longer acceptable. They need college. They need Master's Degrees. We want them to love school. We want them to be involved. We want them to stay out of trouble. Why are we then making it difficult for parents here in Shelton to support their children's activities and sports? There is no reason why we should have pay to participate fees. The City has the money to pay for it. That needs to be put in the 2014-2015 school budget.

My second comment is around full-day Kindergarten. I've spoken to all of you. I've been part of the Board of Education ad hoc committee. Everyone that has seen the curriculum and the presentation knows it's the right thing to do. We have the funds. The Mayor himself told me we have the funds. Why are we not making this happen? If it is a political issue and concern about the Board of Education, I promise you, with the vigor that I've had standing at every one of these meetings, every Board of Education meeting, keeping up with Facebook messages, educating this town and parents, I promise you if you give the funds to the Board of Education I will be on them with the same vigor to make sure full-day Kindergarten happens and pay to participate fees go away. Please consider this for the 2014-2015 school budget and the City budget. We need to take these fees away. Thank you.

Heather Liebensohn, 33 Golec Avenue

I, like the others, had no intent to speak tonight. I have three children, one of whom is a 2nd Grader now. When she was going into Kindergarten we seriously thought about going just across the border – to any town across the border – that had full-

day Kindergarten because we thought it was important for her, just like many of the other towns in Connecticut do to have the full day experience. We found, as she went through Kindergarten here in the half-day, that they didn't have time for anything. She would come home with her snack because they were so rushed they couldn't even eat snack. I also now have twins who will be going into Kindergarten in two years, one of whom is on the autism spectrum. Again, I think we're going to have to reassess, depending on what happens here, whether or not to stay in Shelton. I don't feel like I'm the only one who has either thought about leaving Shelton or has left Shelton, primarily because of this. Thank you.

Mary Jane Paris, 282 Pheasant Glen

Good evening. I am very proud to say that I have been involved very actively and engaged in this full-day Kindergarten issue for a few months now, along with these other wonderful young folks. What makes me just a little different is that I am engaged in the process not only as a concerned Shelton taxpayer and I've been here since 1975, and I'm also a very small business owner, but most importantly as the Grammy of two Shelton youngsters, one soon-to-be five in June who will be going into Kindergarten up at ESS next fall and another one who has a way to go, about six months old. You may remember and the Mayor and the Board of Education, Board of A&T, I have sent two e-mail letters to you folks, I've also had two of my letters published in The Herald and The Connecticut Post regarding full-day Kindergarten.

I would like to take a little bit of your time to read some excerpts from the most recent letter which was May 7, about a week ago. I won't read the whole thing, but a lot of folks have already hit on a lot of the areas that I brought up. "If Shelton is going to continue to grow and attract new families and businesses, full-day Kindergarten is an absolute must." "Just as in real estate,, location, location, location is also education, education, education." "Kindergarten today is not like it was when we were children, or as in my case, when my two adult sons who are married now, one resides here with his family in Shelton, it's not like when they went to Kindergarten back then. It's not a day care center by any means, or are we asking for full-day childcare." You hear that brought up. We're not asking for that. Children are being taught to the new common core standards. These are the same standards that are taught to full-day Kindergarten students in neighboring communities across our state and country. However, as you've heard earlier tonight, in Shelton currently these standards are crammed into a half-day kindergarten program. A change must take place sooner than later.

I won't go into the surplus of the budget, we've heard that a few times tonight. It's there. By the way, Guilford and West Haven also recently passed full-day Kindergarten. Cities and towns in Connecticut without full-day Kindergarten are becoming fewer and fewer each year. I personally would much rather continue to see Shelton on the best list rather than the worst list. I am proud of our community. I love Shelton. Full-day Kindergarten is one of the reasons that would keep it on a

best list and move it from the worst. When we talk about Shelton as a community and making it even more wonderful it's all about implementing full-day Kindergarten, and also eliminating the pay to participate.

As a concerned Shelton taxpayer, Grammy, business owner, by the way I'm also an adjunct professor at Housatonic Community College in the Business Department. I see the fruits of the education system come through the community college ranks for over 10 years now. In a lot of cases it's very disheartening. We need to step it up folks. Someday is today. You can't wait for the someday to come; it's today. Please do what it takes to work together and find a way to allocate additional monies from the surplus that we have to educate these children. Add it to the Board of Education's budget and eliminate pay to participate, it's way overdue. It's time to spend our money, my money, the surplus money we have, in the right place. I think it would be very prudent for you folks to look for any line item that would help get this done. Let's put our children here in Shelton before politics and get it done. It's the right thing to do for all concerned. Ultimately it's your final decision. The Board of Education gave you the numbers needed; they requested meetings. What is preventing you from getting together to discuss this? Let's make this happen. You need to meet face to face. It's big people. Make it happen. It's in your hands. The votes, especially from those young families here and those of us that are the Grammys and Grampys in this community who are very concerned, will be on the line in the next election. I don't mean that in any other way other than we have to look at how our money is being spent. If it's not being spent in the right spot, we will vote accordingly. Thank you for your time.

Linda Casella, 26 Mayflower Lane

I didn't expect to speak tonight either. The last time I came in front of you guys I did a mini-lesson for you with candy bars. I didn't bring candy bars tonight, sorry. Hopefully my mini-lesson had an everlasting impression and because I'm a speech therapist of course I stick around some nights talking, and one of the Aldermen said to me, "Our job as Aldermen is to make full-day Kindergarten happen without raising taxes, and we have done our job." I hope that still remains true today.

Beverly Belden, 39 Perch Road

I have a unique position. I have lived in this town for almost my entire life. I am the Principal of Elizabeth Shelton School. I have two granddaughters who live in Shelton, currently living with me because my son is looking to save money to buy a house in this community, because he believes in it. He is invested in it as my husband and I are. I'm sure that all of you know who my husband is, and is an educator in the Seymour School System. He found that in order to find the money to fund full-day Kindergarten in Seymour, they had to be creative and they had to work with the Town of Seymour. And that's what they did. They worked together and that's what this is about.

I cannot tell you the value of full-day Kindergarten. I invite each of you to come to my school – to any of our schools that my colleagues are sitting back here now. Come and see what happens on a daily basis in our classrooms. The involvement that our parents have – I have many parents here tonight and they come and they try to help. There is so much to put in a child's day. I don't think you realize what the difference is between when you went to school, I went to school. From the time I went back to college in order to earn my degrees, how much things have changed. The Superintendent has worked very hard with us; we've been very transparent. There were lots of things that I asked for my school, as did my colleagues. I think that the Board of Education and the Superintendent came together and said, what is of value? Yes, full-day Kindergarten is of value. It is. You have to see it. You have to see today we had professional development and all of the Kindergarten teachers were at my building. And we talked about, what does the year look like. How are we going to help our children? We had two scenarios – we had full-day Kindergarten and we had half-day Kindergarten. You can't believe the difference in the amount of education that will happen. This little guy right here - he is coming to Kindergarten next year. Any of you who have grandchildren, you have to understand, you have to realize by now the diff between when you went to school and when I went to school. I'm not only here for full-day Kindergarten, I am also here for those children with Special Education needs. I have a nephew who is autistic. I understand it costs a lot of money. We're willing, as a family we support my sister and her husband on that. But Special Education - we have no control over. We have to be able to do what we can for students.

The part about pay to participate. John, you know that my husband was on Parks & Rec. We are committed to sports, fully. Fully committed. That rounds a child out. Stan, you're big in baseball. Don't you want the best for your kids in the things, the money that needs to go? My granddaughters are now playing T-Ball. I have to buy raffle tickets, \$30 worth. I am looking for the whole child. I am looking for the regular education students for the best that they can be. I want my granddaughters to go to college; I want them to be professionals. I want my granddaughters to play sports. I want all of that. I want my nephew and I want those special education students to have the best that they can. I have back here a couple of parents that are real estate agents. Talk to them about, and I thought the gentleman over here that gave you the numbers, about what people look at. It is absolutely true. They call the school and say, "I looked at your website and I looked at your scores." These people right here came from Arizona, looked at our scores and moved into our district. Do we want that to continue? We have great development along Bridgeport Avenue, that's wonderful, but we also have to build the community. The community [applause – inaudible].

The community as a whole needs this. We heard grandparents speak. My mother-in-law is a senior citizen. She doesn't understand it. You can. You have the power. There are resources. I understand there will be people who will speak against this, that we're always here waiting for money, asking for money. Times change. We are grateful to you for today. At Elizabeth Shelton they are finishing the wiring and

installing the cameras for our security system. Thank you for that. I have a meeting on Friday with the architect for the new fronts of the schools for fortification. We have that. Thank you. The technology. I cannot begin to tell you what the technology means to these kids. That is because all of you were able to work together with the Board of Education and see the value. I am asking you, and I understand the numbers, and I talk about it. I understand the numbers - the ranking, the surplus. You can do it. It is totally your choice. Will you stand up and support this community and these people as a whole? That is the question. And if it was your grandchild going into that room, or your grandchild paying to play, or your special education grandchild - would you still be feeling the way that you are or would you see what these people's points of view are?. I am sure if you call Freeman and talk to him he will work further with you. We want to make this work; we need to make it work. I ask that you look at that and consider that. Thank you.

Renee Giordano, 49 Grove Street

I am a Kindergarten at Long Hill School. I came here tonight to voice my opinion on the expectations of Kindergarten. In a half-day program they have 2.5 hours to fit in reading, writing and math. On some days, unfortunately some subjects, we're not able to get to everything. We have assemblies, we have things going on in the classroom. Unfortunately the children lose out on so many things. They are expected to be at the same levels that full-day Kindergarten children are expected to be at. Many times with intervention groups in children who need special education - they lose out because in a 1.5 hour reading block which is what we're supposed to have, which is what they have in a full-day program, we only have 30 or 40 minutes. In that time as teachers we're expected to fit in a mini lesson, have students practice an individual skill as well as work in small groups to target the skills that they need. Unfortunately all these things - on a great day sometimes get met. The reason why I'm here tonight is to tell you that throughout the year they are losing out on these things. Especially, for example, when they have snow days. Now, at the end of the year snow days are made up, but for am and pm Kindergarten they are not. Especially with early dismissals and delayed openings. If we have a delayed opening, am Kindergarten loses out. If we have an early dismissal, pm Kindergarten loses out. This year we had eight early dismissals, which are eight additional days that Kindergarten was not able to make up. These children are still expected to meet the end of the year expectations. Out of 37 children that I have in my class, 24 of them are on or above grade level. I am certain that if we had a full day program and we could emphasize reading and mathematics throughout the whole entire day, that I could have nearly all those children on or above grade level. I go above and beyond my duties as a teacher to make sure that all of my students succeed. They desperately need full-day Kindergarten. In addition to this, I am in a population where there are a lot of single parents. With single parents, they don't have that home support. A lot of times I tuck on additional homework because they need more support at home. Parents can't get to homework with these students every night and can't read every night, especially if we have a single mom, or a single father. Sometimes they don't have aunts, uncles,

grandparents that can help them. They need the help – they need the full day. If we had a full day program they would be able to practice reading, writing and math throughout the whole day for the extended time that is allotted. I strongly feel we should have full-day Kindergarten and I am in full support of that. Thank you.

Tim Oestreich, 16 Golden Hill Lane

I echo a lot of what the parents and teachers have said this evening. We moved from Arizona about 2.5 years ago, and it kind of boggled my mind that a community such as this in Fairfield County doesn't have full-day Kindergarten. Moving from Arizona you would think that, they're much lower out of the 48 states for education, and they have full-day Kindergarten. Taxes are much, much lower in Arizona. I paid ¼ of what I paid here in Shelton in Arizona. They've got full-day Kindergarten. So again, I just want to echo what everybody here says, also supporting the women who were here last meeting, that the fathers weren't here. I just wanted to get up and show the community that the Dads are here behind this as well. Thank you.

Brian Vassar, 18 Balsam Circle

I've stayed relatively quiet; I've come to a few meetings and I've listened. Like this last gentleman here, I think it's important for fathers to get involved. I am a business owner; I'm the father of four girls. First I want to say thank you to all of you for what you do. In my few decades here on the planet I've served on a board or two and I know sometimes it's thankless and you can't please everyone and there's only so much to go around and I get that. It's appreciated. I moved here from West Palm Beach, Florida and I have twins that were in the education system there. They had the opportunity to be in pre-K, they have that there, as well as full-day Kindergarten. I have to tell you, we really saw the benefit of that. When they got here, my wife was actually an educator in Seymour before I whisked her away to Florida, and she was excited about coming back to Connecticut. And now, we are not really so sure. Depending on how things go tonight, I'm not so sure that Shelton was the right option. It's a great community; there are a lot of good things happening, but boy oh boy, all this rhetoric around full-day Kindergarten – it seems like a really easy decision to me and maybe I'm just blind to a lot of facts. It could be. One thing I'm not blind to is the success that our twins had as being part of it and they actually had to pull back a bit. We've seen, when we got here they were a bit ahead. I don't really feel like they're being challenged right now because they're having to pull back a bit. I think it has a lot to do with the early foundation that they were given. I've come to a couple of meetings here. There seems to be a lot of animosity between the Board of Aldermen and the Board of Education. I don't know why, I don't really feel like that kind of animosity has a place in this type of a situation. As a result, my kids, two of them – one is going into Kindergarten and another will be shortly - are going to be negatively affected by that animosity if this doesn't get cleared up. I would just say that my opinion is I am in support of full-day Kindergarten for reasons that – I don't have the statistics – the amount of information out there in the world about the benefits of full-day Kindergarten is mind

numbing. Just Google it and it's page after page after page. Most, all of the other counties in Connecticut adopt this, what are we waiting for? I don't know. They can't all be wrong. From what I've heard and seen the money seems to be there, so why not? You have to ask yourself as a community are we leaders or are we followers? Thanks again to all of you for what you do and thank you to everyone here for coming tonight and thanks for hearing us.

Mark Holden, 275 Soundview Avenue

Good evening. I want to start off by pointing out that Shelton is the only place I know of where current property tax bills are lower than the ones we got five years ago. We make investments. We buy open space when possible if the projected revenue from new homes won't cover the cost of services that they'll need. The city bought buses last year because over the life of the buses it should save us money compared to leasing them. The Board of Education is careful with funds too. We've undertaken projects to install more energy efficient lighting to reduce electric use, we've improved the efficiency of our heating systems where we can, and we converted to natural gas where we could in order to further reduce our heating expenses. However, 90 percent of school districts in Connecticut do spend more per pupil than we do, and still our student achievement is better than most of the districts who spend more than us. Your Board of Education does believe in providing more bang for the buck, and that's one lesson I'd love you guys to learn.

In this year's budget, we proposed an idea that will reduce our expenses by over \$1 million a year in future years as kids progress through the system. It would help stabilize funding for the Board of Education over the long haul. It's full-day Kindergarten. Besides being good for the taxpayers, it is good for the kids. Everybody wins with full-day Kindergarten. The alternative budget proposal we presented in our budget interview would cost \$700,000 more than what the Mayor proposed allocating to educational expenses in his budget. We cut everything we could to the bone to still take care of full-day Kindergarten, Special Education, and we threw in pay to participate. That was a package deal. We are the Board of Education and not the Board of Sports and After-School Activities. We cannot in good conscience increase expenses from funds we control for those areas before we make sure that we're taking care of special education and we're providing meaningful classroom program improvements that are needed. If you allocate pay to participate money to us without adequate funding to take care of Special Ed and increase our classroom programs, I will advocate strongly to return those funds back to the City unspent. I don't want a rerun of whatever it was that started all of this mistrust back in 1998. We make the offer for full-day Kindergarten, Special Ed, and pay to participate before we knew our electric rates were going to be going up about 2.5 cents per kwh next year. We use about 8 million kwh. That's a chunk of change.

If you go for the deal that we proposed at the budget interview, we are morally bound to keep our word and deliver the things that we promised. We're going to do

it. I believe that if you have the will to make this happen, you can, without a tax increase and without attacking the fund balance. It's an investment in our kids; it's an investment in our City. Our standing offer to meet with you and answer any questions, to have discussion with you about our proposal at any time, at any place, in any format, still stands. Thank you.

Erica Schwartz, 54 Montgomery Street

I might be the only person tonight representing a demographic that does not have kids. I don't plan to have kids; my husband and I are certain on that. But I really care about this issue because it's a community issue. Like many other people have said, it really affects the whole community and I definitely care about things that happen that don't affect directly my household. It's also because I care about the larger community that I am a member of the League of Women Voters in Shelton. I think the better democracy we have, the more transparent government, the more we really talk about local issues, the better our community is overall. I am here asking you to be responsive to the voters. In this case we seem to be extremely highly educated. Not having kids myself I may be the least educated person in the room on the issue, but I think it's clear, there are the facts, the money, and just as important to that there is the voting public. There are so many people in this room, there must be well over 100, and I'm sure for everyone sitting here there are many more who couldn't come out tonight who feel the same way. We've yet to hear one person in disagreement and in fact, you hear a lot of applause when everyone speaks, seeming to indicate that the overwhelming majority of the people in the room, if not everybody here, seems to want full-day Kindergarten. So I am asking you, our elected officials, to be responsive to the voters and approve this thing that you've all heard is good for the community, that we have the money in our City to do it, and it's what the public and the voting public really wants. Thank you.

Marissa Telesmanick, 262 Soundview Avenue

I feel this is really important. I am a proud born and raised Sheltonite. I have two young children in the Shelton School System. I have a first grader at Elizabeth Shelton School and I have a preschooler who will be entering Kindergarten in the fall at ESS as well. My son completed the half-day program at ESS. I can speak from personal experience - something needs to change. I am living the effects of half-day Kindergarten. He is in remedial reading five days a week on top of a private tutor that we are paying for. It is very disheartening to see him struggle. I know that if full-day Kindergarten was implemented we wouldn't be experiencing what we're experiencing. It is not fair to these kids to be expected to learn so much information and process so much information in a 2.5-hour timeframe. It's not fair when all of our communities are implementing full-day Kindergarten. Our kids deserve more out of our community. We have the money to make this happen. As a taxpayer and someone who genuinely loves this community, I am asking you to make this happen. It is so important for our youth. Thanks.

Kathy Yolish, One Waverly Road

Good evening. I am a presently a member of the Board of Education, and a retired teacher of 35 years in the Shelton School System, my last 15 years were spent at Elizabeth Shelton School. I just want to clear up one little misconception. I have to tell everyone here tonight and hopefully anyone that's reading any of the coverage that about a year ago Chairman Holden had a lot of people that were asking for full-day Kindergarten, and as a retired teacher, I know in my heart that this is the right thing to do. But I have to tell everyone that there really isn't animosity between the Board of Education and Board of Aldermen. When we organized our meetings, and there were many parents that came, a lot of fathers attended our meetings, many of the Board members. As a matter of fact it got so large that we had to move from our small meeting room to the upstairs training room because there were so many people interested from the community. We met many times through the course of the year, and then our final culminating project was to Bungay School. Tina Hankle and Christen Santilli from Central Office helped arrange. We went through three schools. We went to Trumbull, to French Town in Trumbull, we went to Milford, and then we went to Bungay School. We saw that the program at Bungay School was very, very, I mean, it was inspirational. I wanted to stay there; I didn't even want to leave the school because it was so great. I should tell you that I personally sent invitations to the Board of Aldermen and asked them if they would come on a field trip with us. I arranged for a bus and several of the Aldermen did come, along with the Mayor, to see the program at Bungay School. There we met with the Principal, we had the Superintendent of Schools from Seymour there, we had a group of parents who had children in the full-day Kindergarten program and children that were not in an all-day program in Seymour. All of the Board of Aldermen members, I believe there were six that came, were very, they took the information, they went around to the different programs, they paid attention, and they were very impressed. I don't think there is truly any one of them sitting up there that is not thinking with their heart and with their head that full-day Kindergarten shouldn't be in Shelton. I think they were very impressed and they saw what it entails to be in a full-day Kindergarten program. It wasn't babysitting. Children were in stations, they were learning, they were on iPads. The teacher had full control. There might have been an aide that came in to work with some individual children. These Aldermen saw it and they were willing and they spent three hours on a Friday morning of their time, along with the Mayor and they were all very receptive to it. I just want it to be cleared up – it's not like everybody hasn't tried to work together. I do think they have a very open mind about full-day Kindergarten. I think, in my heart I feel that they're going to do what they know is the right thing to do. Thank you.

Ron Pavlucik, 287 Eagle's Landing

Good evening. There is at least one person in this room with a different viewpoint. I listened to the comments of everyone else. I wish there were millions and millions of dollars available in Shelton so that we could not only fund full-day Kindergarten, we could fund full-day pre-Kindergarten, we could fund kids starting when they're six

months old, whatever. I wish we could give every graduate of the high school a free car, maybe pay for their college education – just the first two years would be probably helpful. But we've got to draw the line someplace. The truth of the matter is, is our total public school system, not only in Shelton but in the State and across the country, is in disarray. Part of the problem is we've had nothing but gimmicks over the years to try to improve the performance of the schools, but instead of getting better they've only gotten worse.

From last Thursday's Wall Street Journal, page 2. Headline: "High School Seniors' Test Scores Stagnate." "Despite years of efforts to lift U.S. academic performance, 12th graders show no improvement in math or reading in federal test scores released Wednesday, underscoring concerns that the country isn't generating career and college-ready graduates." Progress didn't improve since 2009 the last time the study was taken, actually their proficiency has dropped. Students get a mixed message. They have a low bar to graduate from high school but it's really not a high enough bar to pursue a career actively when they leave. Now, you know that the first year in college for as many as 1/3 of kids is involved in taking remedial courses, primarily English and math, and also reading. Why have the schools deteriorated so much, especially in the last 45 years. In 1969 we put two men on the moon, and we did that five or six more times, and no other country has ever done it since. Well, we've had nothing but gimmicks ever since, and the schools keep getting worse. We had, I remember "the new math," then that was changed back to the old math again. Then we had "the new, new math." That was thrown out when that didn't work, and we went back to another version of it. We tried "Head Start" programs for some kids. We tried new curriculum, it seems like every three or four years every school system appoints a curriculum committee, they can't seem to button down what these kids should learn, in every town. What the kids seem to be learning more and more are totally unrelated to the 3 R's, and that's why a lot of them are turning out to be dummies when they graduate from high school. Now, I don't mean all of them. The top 10 percent of the kids that graduated from Shelton High School and get into the finest colleges, they are excelling not because of the Shelton School System, but despite the Shelton School System. The bottom 10 percent, the incorrigibles and misfits and troublemakers are always going to be around. I'm concerned about the middle 80 percent that are decreasing in skills and not finding jobs, and they face a very bleak future. The other programs that have popped up over the years, "Team Teaching," "let's try more teacher's aides," "let's take away SAT scores," "No, let's put them back again," – that keeps going back and forth – "let's work on self-esteem," – that's what's the problem, they're not confident enough – "Let's give the teachers big raises." Remember 1987? We had the Teacher Enhancement Act. The State decided to fix the schools by giving big raises to the teachers, and the States required that the teachers increase their standards. What did the teachers do? They sued the State for implementation to try to fight higher standards. How about "electronic black books"? Did that improve the schools?

Alderman Anglace interjected, stating, I don't want to be disrespectful for interrupting, but this is not a public hearing on the quality of education in Shelton. This is a public hearing on the budget. So if you could direct your comments to the budget aspect, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Pavlucik continued, I will try, sir. That is a fair comment. I request that they spend any excess funds that you may have for more senior citizen tax relief. Any surplus should go for the senior citizens. A lot of senior citizens would be here tonight but they're not because they are working nights at Stop & Shop and ShopRite bagging groceries right now. You people have invested a fortune in computers, laptops, tablets, Chromebooks. Has that improved the performance of the school system? No. The grades are still the same. We hit the same level; we're slightly behind State standards in most of the tests year after year. We let the teachers get Masters Degrees in online courses instead of more rigorous courses in universities. We spent a lot of time teaching about Indians because that's politically correct, teaching sex education, teaching about diversity, teaching about recycling, teaching about drugs, Earth Day, gay rights, okay? All these things should be taught in the home and not in the schools. If we ever had a school system where the focus was on the 3 R's and we cranked out kids that were great in math and science, we would not be ranked 30th as a country in the world in those two areas. That is a fact. What is also a fact is that the [inaudible] of the pre-K, after three years, it's been shown in studies that any benefit is weakened or watered down and then practically disappears by the time the kids are in 3rd or 4th Grade.

So, I am against spending any money for a full-day Kindergarten program unless you also increase the funding for senior citizen tax relief. There is a large proportion of the taxes already spent on education. You just got through upgrading every school in town. You built a couple of brand-new ones. Teachers are making a fortune in their salaries. [In response to screaming laughter from the audience] You keep forgetting that you only work 180 days a year.

[Uproar from the audience, Alderman Anglace asked the audience to control themselves]

Mr. Pavlucik continued, \$60,000 \$70,000 to \$80,000 for 180 days a year is a pretty good salary. I would take that, and for your information, I taught high school math in a public school system earlier in my life. I am now 67 and I have to work two part-time jobs to pay my bills. I admit that the taxes are low in Shelton but I think that more could be done for senior citizens. My request, as I end, is that any surplus, any extra funds, be spent on senior citizens in town that are really being neglected right now. We're being squeezed with no big increase in our savings because of the low interest rates, rising costs for everything. We don't need a full-day Kindergarten program that's just a glorified babysitting system. Thank you.

Pamela Delaguila, 24 Woodfield Drive

Good evening. I am a resident here, I am also an educator. I am not an educator in Shelton, but I am an educator. There have been numerous educators and principals coming up here to speak to tell you what is happening in the classrooms. You must listen to them. They are in the classrooms with the children every day. We give 150 percent for these kids. We give a lot of ourselves and they are coming here to tell you that. They are coming here to tell you what we need for the kids. You need to listen to them. It is imperative. These children are our future. We need to teach them well because they are going to be leading us. Thank you.

Dorette Carey, 73 Wheeler Street

Good evening. I have two young daughters, one is attending part-time Kindergarten here in Shelton and another that will be attending, not this fall but the following fall. I had the privilege of spending a morning at my daughter's Kindergarten class. They are very rushed within those two hours. It says 2.5 hours but they are also getting into class, the teacher has to organize them, put their things away, sit in their seats and prep for the day. They also have a snack, so that's another 10 minutes out of that morning. Then they pack up at the end of the day and try and have maybe five minutes of fun. I am also a working Mom. I don't get home from work until about 6 o'clock and then I have to spend that time, which I enjoy, reading and going over the homework. I think my daughter would benefit greatly if she had full-day Kindergarten. I hope by the time my four-year-old attends she will be able to spend a full day in Kindergarten. I believe the Kindergarten teachers earn every penny that they are paid. My daughter's Kindergarten teacher teaches two classes and so I think it's about 40 children. So saying that she is overpaid, I think, is ridiculous. I applaud the teachers, not only in ESS where my daughter goes, but across the town. I think they're doing a great job. Thank you,

Al Cameron, 307 Meadow Ridge Road

For the past 18 years it has been my privilege to serve as the Finance Director for the Shelton Public Schools. During that time, many, many great things have happened. They have happened because of teamwork. They have happened because of parents and teachers, Board of Education, Board of Aldermen, Mayor Lauretti, everybody working together to get great things done. That's what's got to happen again. Tonight I'd like to talk about something that happened in the past. It was technology. I see some real similarities between technology and full-day Kindergarten. 1995 is when I started, and Superintendent Sylvester said to me, "Alan, I don't care what your job description says, the most important thing you have to do is help bring technology to Shelton Schools." We started small. The Board of Education wanted to try to get technology, but we didn't know how. We had 10 computers in the offices. We had one lab at the High School that was donated by Pitney Bowes, and the schools had Apples in them that had been donated by the PTAs and PTOs. People understood there was a reason to invest in the technology,

and slowly but surely we built support in the community. The question back then was, "why technology? All the kids do is play games on that stuff!" Yet, the first thing we did was Connect 96. We had parents and teachers were wiring the schools as volunteers. We got great publicity for Shelton from that. After that, the Board of A&T and the Board of Aldermen said, "Gee, there might be something to this, we should put some money aside so that in the future we can invest when we see the merit." They put \$300,000 aside. That \$300,000 was the down payment on the Wide Area Network that our kids are using today. Every single one of our schools that connects into the Connecticut Education Network that allowed us to create a partnership with the Connecticut Education Network, so we were able to get early free Internet service. All that happened because we had support. You supported it, the Board of Education supported it, Mayor Lauretti supported it, the community supported it with a referendum.

During the 18 years I've learned some things. One of the things that I have learned is that the Shelton Board of Education – the teachers, the administrators - deliver great value. You heard it tonight. Our per pupil expenditures right now are 157th out of 166. They were 133rd in 2006-07 but they have fallen. Yet, our test scores are among the top third percent in the State, so our [inaudible – applause]. We know how to educate kids in Shelton and I'm going to borrow a line from Mayor Lauretti – "When people say what's wrong with Education in Shelton, I say, we're the model – look at the Shelton model – the State should be looking at what we're doing."

I'd like to come to full-day Kindergarten. The genesis of full-day Kindergarten. Our Board of Education chairman came from the Board of Apportionment and Taxation. He was the Chairman. He came over to find out where the Board of Education was wasting money, up close and personal. It is a never ending battle to find out where they're wasting their money. One of the things he was initially opposed to was the whole idea of full-day Kindergarten. So he appointed a committee to study it because all these parents were clamoring for it. The Committee came back with all this information and said "full-day Kindergarten works; it's really a good investment." He started paying attention. He started going on the field trips. Eventually he became a convert. Tonight you saw him up here in front of you saying, "hey, we need your support, help us implement this full-day Kindergarten."

Now, every year when the Board of Education builds their budget, now, again, we are in the bottom 10 percent, so we're not wasting money. When you look at all of the money that we spend, very carefully, we prioritize, we make sure that you get the biggest bang for the buck, and we get the biggest bang for the buck. You don't get to have results in the top 3rd with inputs in the bottom 10 percent without being very careful and investing wisely and well. This year, after meeting with all the principals and all the cost center managers, the Board of Education voted to support \$3.5 million additional request to their budget.

Just before we were going to go down to the meeting with all of you and the Board of A&T, we sat around the room and said, "Gee, \$3.5 million is just not going to be

palatable. That's going to be a big stretch for the City. We realized, full-day Kindergarten is something that we want to do and I'll explain to you why, at least for my part, at the end. But it's important. We've got to get it done. But on the way to doing that, the first thing we've got is Special Ed issues. Beverly talked about them earlier. We have worked very hard to maintain a level of spending on our Special Ed, in the face of increased enrollment. You know, our Special Ed kids cost us more than twice as much as each regular Ed kid, and we've had growth in the Special Ed side. So we've tried to create programs in house, inside of Shelton, so that we don't have to send kids out of town and incur transportation and tuition expenses. We've been doing that; we've been doing it effectively. But we've got more kids. So the first thing we have to do in next year's budget is we have to address Special Ed costs that are increasing. That's our highest priority. The next thing that we said is, "We've got to try and find a way to do full-day Kindergarten." We're sitting around trying to brainstorm, and we came up with the idea. Mayor Lauretti said there was \$500,000 on the City side beyond the \$2 million. Okay. How could we use that? Well, the City owns the buses. The City owns the dog pound that's fueled with propane. The City owns the Pink Elephant. The City owns the dispensing station for the propane. The City could qualify to be an alternative fuel dispenser and get the propane rebate. Good thing to transfer to the City. In that case, it would liberate \$225,000 in the Board of Education budget that we could reallocate to Special Ed. Then add \$500,000 new. The \$500,000 – I'm not going to tell you where to find it – but \$500,000 new takes care of the other \$100,000 we need for Special Ed and it takes care of the teachers for full-day Kindergarten. So what else needs to happen? You need to find \$200,000 on your side for the furniture, fixtures and equipment so that we can set up those classrooms. That is something you can do through your bonding, because that's stuff that has a life way beyond one year. It's not an operating expense. Then finally, there is the pay to participate. I don't really want to get into the whole history of that but I will say there is \$245,000 on the Youth Services on your side. You move that to our side and we can make pay to participate go away. The priorities have to be, for us, Special Ed. We can't escape it – it's the law – we have to provide those services. And no matter how much funding you give us, we've got to do that. The next priority is full-day Kindergarten.

I'd like to conclude with this. You know, I'm the business manager. You guys know I'm the business manager and you guys have heard me talk before. My wife and I have three children; they are all graduates of Shelton High School and they're all graduates of the University of Connecticut. One of them went on to get a Master's in Education from Fairfield University. He was a teacher. Then he went on to get a PhD in Educational Leadership at Boston College. He was awarded the Milken Award as the Outstanding Educator in Massachusetts. Today he is a Superintendent of Schools. And he is a graduate of Shelton High School. When the whole question came up about full-day Kindergarten, I said to him, is this a fight we should fight and is this something we have to stay with until we win, and why? And he said, absolutely, it's a fight you should fight. And he's the only one of our children that is a graduate of a full-day Kindergarten program down in the Caddo Parish Schools in Shreveport, Louisiana. But more than that, I said, "Why?" And he said

because, Pop, it's all about the common core. The common core has been adopted by 37 states. It's raising the bar for everybody. The states that have traditionally been excellent – Iowa, Massachusetts, Connecticut – that have performed at the highest levels, are still having to increase student achievement to meet the expectations of the common core. He said every kid in the whole United States is going to be expected to learn more and do more. How does that happen? It has to happen by starting in Kindergarten. They have to learn to read. In order to learn, you need to read. That's what he explained to me. I'm not a great educator but I have confidence in my son. I believe what he said. I told John in a private conversation, so I have become and advocate for full-day Kindergarten. I would just ask you, in conclusion, We have worked together and done some great things. The buildings are testimony to that, The technology is testimony to that. Now it's time to take the next step. Full-day Kindergarten is the next step. Tonight I thank you for your time, I thank you for your attention and I thank you in advance for your support.

Rena Hall, 10 Molnar Drive

I just want to reiterate something that Mr. Holden and Mr. Cameron had said with, yes, we spend less money on our children yet their test scores are rising. But as Mr. Cameron stated, the common core has been adopted by Connecticut along with many other states, and our children are now not just compared to the other children in Connecticut, we are compared nationally. We need our children to be able to have the time to absorb and learn that information so that they can exceed and excel just like the other children in this country.

Hilary Voytek, 25 Hiawatha Drive

I have personal experience with a 2nd Grader now who went through Kindergarten here. It was really her hardest year in school. I really believe that full-day Kindergarten more than anything gives our kids the gift of time. There is an awful lot to learn – the requirements are extremely stringent. Without that their little minds just don't have the ability to learn what they need to within the day. I'd rather spend the money to build a strong foundation in our kids than spend the money later in remediation. I'd rather have that foundation – give them what they need now rather than spend that same money and maybe even more just to keep them off the bottom. I think that's well worth the investment in our kids. Thank you.

Brian Vassar, 18 Balsam Circle

I think everyone is entitled to an opinion and I think there is some truth to everything, what everyone says, or else they wouldn't come up here and spend the time to regurgitate it. But I would like to say a couple of things that I'm sure everyone here knows - a couple of truths here. There is no change without conflict. There is no success without some failure. I'm not saying that whatever he was talking about just fell in the back, that things have failed, I don't know – I'm sure there are some statistics out there that [inaudible] credibility up, but I will say that in

life I have probably failed more than I have succeeded. And if you don't try to do new things and stay ahead of the curve, you're just going to get nowhere. To add to that, when test scores seem to be flattening, it is not the time to pull back. I would think that is the time to stretch forward. The full-day Kindergarten and pre-K that we experienced in Florida, we paid half the taxes there that we pay here, and the housing expense was half. I don't know how that all works, but it doesn't seem like it would be twice as much or more to live in Connecticut than it would be in Florida. They seem to have the resources and all the same luxuries that Connecticut has. Thanks, I don't mean to sound like I'm beating everybody up, I'm not, I'm just stating my opinion. Thanks again.

Kristy Rodrigues, 258 Walnut Tree Hill Road

I am the mother of a 1st Grader at Mohegan Elementary and I have a set of twin boys that are getting ready to start Mohegan School as well in the fall. My daughter got off the bus one day and you know, the backpack half the size that she is, and she kind of looked defeated. I asked her, "what's wrong baby?" and she said, "Kindergarten is so hard." And I asked, "what's hard about it?" and we had a little conversation back and forth about what she thought was hard. Then I sat back, because I'm a student as well, and I reflected, what was expected of me when I was in Kindergarten? I went to half-day Kindergarten as well. My main purpose was to learn to color in the lines, and get along with my friends, and to learn how to play and to interact with others. Half the days she would come home and her snack wasn't even eaten. The days that she was able to eat her snack, she had to work through snack. So it just made me think, if we are going to raise the bar, we're going to ask them to learn 100 sight word, we're going to ask them to do math, and read, if we're going to ask them to do all these things, we need to give them the time. You can't ask them to do more things in 2.5 hours that other school districts are getting 6.5 hours to do. Not to mention like you said before, early dismissal, or today was a half-day where the Kindergartners got two hours of school, that didn't include, unloading their backpack, loading their backpack, sitting down. I'm sure they didn't get a snack today either. I'm just asking, I'm not getting hung up on the dollars, I'm getting hung up on the fact that our kids need time. If we want them to learn we have to give them the resources to do it. One of those resources is time. Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

At approximately 8:36 p.m., Alderman Simonetti MOVED to close the public hearing on the budget; SECONDED by Alderman Papa. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 8-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia M. Bruder, Clerk
Board of Aldermen

Date Submitted: _____

DATE APPROVED: _____ BY: _____

Mark A. Lauretti
Mayor, City of Shelton