Chairman Matthew Hoey called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

Present: Board Members: Michael Ayles, Louis Federici, Kenneth Gamerman, Matthew Hoey, James O’Keefe, David Egan and Kimberly Brockett

Town Officials: First Selectman Carl Balestracci, Selectmen Veronica Wallace and Joseph Mazza, Finance Director Sheila Villano, Human Resources Director Mitch Goldblatt, Tax Collector Dolly Mezzetti, Superintendent of Highways John Volpe, Building Official George Gdovin, Town Planner George Kral, Staff Accountant Sandy Offredi, Registrar of Voters Louise Graver and Grace Helen Quinlan, Town Clerk Jan Teft, Treasurer Robert Hartmann, Fire Commission Chair Ken Wilson, Jr., Economic Development Specialist Jackie Simonetti, Youth and Family Services Director Lyne Landry, Health Director Dennis Johnson, Purchasing Agent Pam Millman, Public Works Chair Gene Bishop, Town Engineer Jim Portley, Parks and Recreation Director Rick Maynard, Fire Chief/Marshal Charlie Herrschaft, Deputy Fire Chief/Marshal Wayne Vetre, Youth and Family Services Board Chair Kathy MacElhiney, Assessor Ed Corapinski and Clerk Traci Brinkman

BOE Officials: Superintendent Dr. Forcella, Business Manager Andy Potochney, Accounting Manager Linda Trudeau and Board of Education Members Bill Bloss, Dr. Alan Meyers and Ted Zuse

Others: About five residents in the audience

Media: Mike Graziano, taping for GCTV

1. **Public Forum**

None
2. **Consider and take possible action on proposed FY 2009-2010 Budget.**

**Questions for the Board of Education**

Mr. Hoey asked the BOE to outline where the impacts of any potential cuts might be in $100,000 increments.

Dr. Forcella said they tried to look at areas that would not impact staffing especially those cuts that would effect class size. He added that if there were further cuts they would look first at site improvements, professional development and supplies to get the first $50,000. Dr. Forcella said any further cuts would begin to effect personnel. The non-certified staff would be first and after that the rest of the cuts would be in certified staff.

Mr. Hoey asked for how much of a reduction would result for each certified staff member that was cut.

Dr. Forcella said it depends on the position and it is difficult to measure exactly, but $50,000 would probably be a gauge. He added that some could be part-time positions as well. Dr. Forcella said to get the budget under a three percent increase there would have to be eight total positions eliminated and they have already eliminated two.

Mr. Gamerman asked if there was any consideration to the restructuring of administrative staff.

Dr. Forcella said that they did look at that issue which was part of the reason for the elimination of the one position at central office. They have had some conversations about other areas, but they would need to look at contractual issues.

Mr. Federici said there were significant cuts in Purchased Services, Capital, Supplies and Transportation. He asked where in those line items were there risks of additional unbudgeted expenses.

Dr. Forcella said there could be additional expenses for special needs, but these areas are always unknown. He added that legal services is another area that they just don’t know what will happen. There will be negotiations with the teachers and nurses next year so they will use some of that. Dr. Forcella said with the process they used during teachers negotiations last time, however, they did not need legal counsel.

Mr. Bloss said they are assuming the Excess Cost Grant will stay the same, but they won’t know until the governor’s budget is set.

Mr. O’Keefe said with regard to certified staff he would assume that in the contract the least senior and lowest paid employees would go out first.

Dr. Forcella said that would be true.
Mr. Gamerman asked about the $175,000 decrease in Supplies and Materials and what exactly was being cut.

Dr. Forcella said they looked at a five year history of supplies and asked the principals to look at what they need to get through the year rather than having any type of surplus. He added that they also came up with a per pupil formula at the elementary schools so everyone will get the same amount in terms of dollars.

Dr. Forcella said they had several large textbook purchases over the last few years and fortunately there was no major request this year. In addition they started some new computer programs the past two to three years so the ongoing expenses to maintain those are less. He added that they have decreased furniture the technology lease and have cut back on musical instrument purchases. Dr. Forcella said the biggest area they cut was site improvements. He added that Mr. Gurnham submitted all the needs for next year and they basically decided on the highest priorities.

Mr. O’Keefe said at the Pension Committee Meeting, the actuary stated that the contribution to the pension this year should be $480,967 and he sees the BOE has $207,400 in the budget, which is half and is the minimum. He added that the BOE has been doing this amount in the past, however, at the meeting an issue came up that in the next budget cycle that $480,967 will go up to $700,000. Mr. O’Keefe said if they didn’t follow the practice the school fund which is at 100 percent could be probably around 90 percent because of the market drop.

Mr. Potochney said that is something they talked about this morning and they will have to address that in the future.

Mr. O’Keefe said he wasn’t comfortable that the BOE cut the reduction to the medical deficit plan by $100,000. He added that he would like to restore that $100,000, with the commitment from the BOE that the money will be spent on that. He knows that once the BOE gets the gross budget figure they have the latitude to do what they will with it.

Mr. Bloss explained that when the agreement was made to make the contribution times were different, the economy and the budgets were different and the rate the deficit was growing was much different. He added that the progress they have made with that account the past two years has been better than expected and that $1 million figure is now about $400,000 and they will probably make more progress just based on claims. Mr. Bloss added that they are still proposing a $60,000 contribution in the budget and they think it is reasonable to slow the pace down when the other choice they would have to make is taking $100,000 from certified staff.

Mr. O’Keefe asked for the total salary increases for teachers, support staff and administration.

Mr. Potochney said total is about $1.3 million.

Mr. Egan said they had a discussion at a previous meeting about a similar crisis.
they faced in the 1990s where they had to lay off 23 teachers. He asked if the option was available to bargaining units to take a reduction in salaries or if layoffs was the only option at that time.

Mr. Bloss said the employees did agree to a freeze after the layoffs and that came as a result of preventing future layoffs. He added that it took 10 years to bring the district back from that.

Mr. Balestracci said during that time they lost reading teachers at Adams and only had one for 600 students and they also lost Industrial Arts and Home Economics. He added that it took years to start building it up and eventually got 3 reading teachers for 600 students.

Mr. Federici asked about a 40 percent reduction in the security line.

Mr. Potochney said the BOE looked at changes that had been made getting to the level they wanted to be at and in addition they also received a grant from the state, which helped move things along.

Mr. Bloss said they made several one year improvements in the budget last year, which were one time expenses. There are some security upgrades to Adams included in their proposed bonding items for $45,000.

Questions for the Town

Mr. O’Keefe said he thinks they need to be certain that the revenue lines are right and the public should know they have reports that they have been tracking on a monthly basis. He thought it would be helpful for Ms. Villano to go through the different areas, highlight the changes and state where she thinks they will be the end of this year and what should be budgeted next year.

Ms. Villano said in 2009 they budgeted $800,000 for Interest Income, she is projecting a final number of $425,000 and $475,000 has been budgeted for 2010. She added that if interest rates don’t change much they could be short a little, however the budget is higher than last year so there is more to invest and there is only a $50,000 difference from what is being projected this year.

Ms. Villano said that $850,000 was budgeted for building permits in the 2009 budget. She is projecting $350,000 as the end of the fiscal year and $350,000 has been budgeted for 2010. Ms. Villano said they had hoped Guilford Commons would be further along this year, but she feels the $350,000 is a conservative number for next year.

She added that the Ambulance revenues were budgeted at $850,000 for the 2009 budget and she is projecting they will reach that $850,000 budget and the same amount has been put into the 2010 budget. This revenue line remains solid and steady.

Ms. Villano said that $842,000 was budgeted for Town Clerk revenues in the 2009 budget, however, projections indicate they will only reach $502,000.
She added that $560,000 has been budgeted for 2010. She added that she thinks they will be okay with this figure and the main reason for the decrease here is due to the economic conditions.

Ms. Villano said all the other local revenues (smaller departments) had been budgeted at $390,000 in the 2009 budget and she has reduced that to $316,000 in the 2010 budget. She added that most of the state grants are remaining flat and that school construction grants won’t change. Ms. Villano said she thinks the grants will be very close, but the telecommunications property tax grant may be a little less by $30,000 or so. She added that she thinks the revenue budget is on target, but it is $1.2 million less than this year.

Mr. O’Keefe said in the current year they are expecting overall revenues to be down by $1.7 million and the revenue projections going forward are not being changed so they don’t expect any departments to increase. He added that they are going to be $2.4 million in the hole in revenues starting out July 1. Mr. O’Keefe said even if there are no increases given they would still have to lay taxes for $2.4 million.

Mr. Egan stated that the Educational Cost Sharing Grant is based on the Governor’s budget and totals $3.5 million. He added that he had a discussion about this with a State Representative Candelora (R-86) who is on the finance bonding committee and he suggested a prudent course is to anticipate a possible 10 percent reduction in that, so Guilford could see $350,000 less.

Ms. Villano said she thinks that would be disastrous for all towns and in June if that is the difference in the numbers then everyone is going to be in trouble.

Mr. Hoey said before the Governor’s budget they were hearing a 10-20 percent cut, but he thought the governor did a brilliant job. He added that for the Democrats to go back and say they don’t agree to with this to their constituents it is going to be difficult. Mr. Hoey said our representatives feel their leadership will have to go along with the governor.

Ms. Brockett also noted that they no longer have the $1.2 million transfer from fund balance budgeted this year.

Ms. Villano said she hates to consider that as a revenue item, but that has been used for the past 10 or so more years to offset the budget. She added that this year nothing has been budgeted from fund balance, which is a good practice, but it affects the mill rate.

Ms. Brockett said the impression has been that this was the first time the town officials heard about this issue, but this board has talked about it several times and has been worried about dipping into it. She added that it is definitely something they have been grappling with.

Ms. Villano said she believes it was the intention of both boards to never have to use that money by making more in revenues and being over on expenditures, but that is just not happening anymore.
Ms. Brockett said they discussed last year that $1.2 million might not be prudent and after Mr. Balestracci came back from meeting with the bond rating agencies they realized that they need to do something drastic and this year they are hitting the fund balance for $1.7 million less the $600,000 they are saving on the expenditure side.

Mr. O’Keefe asked Ms. Villano to highlight there areas where the town has realized the $600,000 in savings.

Ms. Villano said it is coming from the areas of contingency, debt service and all departments in varying amounts ranging from a few hundred dollars to $100,000. They are also saving money in electricity.

Mr. O’Keefe asked the BOE about potential savings.

Mr. Potochney said at the present time based on projections they will be about $100,000 under plus another $50,000 in prior year encumbrances they will be canceling. He added that they would have had more but tuition hurt us, however, there may be a little bit more than that at the end of the year.

Mr. Federici explained that looking at the historical use of fund balance for the last 10 years or so there were many years they have had money come back in. He added that this year was really a function of the serious decline in revenues.

Mr. Gamerman said the town has made a draconian cut in the capital budget and he asked officials if they feel they are leaving the town at risk.

Mr. Balestracci explained that this is not a good budget in terms of long range planning, but they have deferred things in response to the economic times. He added that it is tough to turn back all the long range planning that was put into place, including the replacement vehicles for public works. Mr. Balestracci said he was clear when he made the initial budget presentation that if they had their druthers they wouldn’t be presenting this type of budget, but they felt given the financial situation the town and the taxpayers are faced with these decisions had to be made.

He added that it is a risky budget and is not what they want for the town, but given the realities they have tried to come in with the lowest budget they could to try to ride this out over the next 12 months.

Mr. Hoey stated that another revenue impact is the changes the board endorsed at the recommendation of the Tax Stabilization Committee to amend the Elderly Tax Relief Program so that those who had lost their benefits could be reinstated. He added that this caused a revenue deficit of about .15 mills. Mr. Hoey said for the record they all endorsed that, but it is important to understand that there are several components that are attributing to the revenue losses.

Ms. Brockett said also a lot of comments she heard from the public regarding voting for or against the budget were with regard to voting for or against
education. She added that this budget is made up of a lot of pieces. Ms. Brockett said the town has a zero percent increase and even if the BOE came in with a zero percent increase the total budget would increase by 3 percent. She added that it is not just about education, but rather running the town and the schools.

Mr. Federici said it is also about maintaining the financial health of the town.

Mr. Hoey asked if there were any further cuts to the town budget what would that mean.

Mr. Balestracci said they could not cut further without cutting personnel.

Mr. O’Keefe said the other night there was a discussion about total salary increases and the number was about $425,000 to $450,000. He added that he had a conversation with Ms. Villano and Mr. Goldblatt since that time and the total amount in the budget which are purely salary increases is about $500,000.

Mr. Goldblatt said they did do additional calculating and went through all the contracts and the total impact of salary increased in the 2009-2010 budget is $446,240. He added that this includes every single person, full-time and part-time.

Mr. Balestracci said they are all faced with a very difficult year, but he has to say that Guilford has been well run over the past 10 years. He added that they have done a lot of things they can be proud of which have given long lasting qualities of life and has made Guilford a vigorous town in growth and success. Mr. Balestracci said they have done a lot of positive things over the years that will se us through this crisis. He added that it is not all doom and gloom, but they are faced with realities and they will have to make decisions based on that. Mr. Balestracci said they have to look at it with the hope that it won’t last too long and that we’re going to come through this in good shape.

**Bonding Projects**

**BOE**

The BOE has submitted three projects for consideration:

$998,000 – Renovations and related work to address immediate facility needs at Adams Middle School including Air Quality, Electrical Upgrades, Lavatory Renovations, Roof Replacement, Locker Replacement and Security Upgrades.

$360,000 - Design Work and Interim Repairs of Roof at Guilford Lakes School.

$1,157,163 – Roof Replacement at Calvin Leete School

Mr. Hoey asked about the interim repairs to the Guilford Lakes roof.

Mr. Bloss said they will be patching the holes so the problem doesn’t get worse.
He added that this roof is going to be a big project so they thought they would do the design work, prevent the problem from getting worse and go out to bid for the project next year.

Mr. O’Keefe asked how much of that total is design work and how much is the repairs.

Mr. Bloss said most of it is for the design and only 10 percent is the repairs.

Mr. Federici asked why they need to redesign a roof that is 16-years old.

Mr. Bloss said that what was used last time were defective material and they are going to try to do things differently this time. Part of the reason the materials failed was due to a lack of ventilation, so the ventilation system needs to be redesigned.

Mr. O’Keefe asked how the numbers were developed.

Mr. Bloss said they got a new roof consultant and also received approval from the Standing Building Committee.

Mr. Gurnham said they did an extensive review of the numbers, which included examining the jobs out there and speaking with roofers. They then did a square foot analysis, which was reviewed by the roofing consultant and the SBC, which suggested some changes. He added that all the bonded items went through a similar process.

Mr. Hoey asked if the BOE would have a problem if the BOF were to lump the roof projects together and leave the remaining renovation work at Adams as a separate question under Health and Safety.

Mr. Bloss said the BOE did not have an opinion on how the items would be presented.

Town

Mr. Hoey stated that a Public Works truck, fire truck and remounting of Ambulance, were projects requested for bonding by the town.

Public Works Commission Chair Gene Bishop explained that they have 18 trucks at the department, 14 of those are used on plow routes and some of the ages of these trucks go back to 1977 and 1979. He added that they have two new ones arriving this year, however one truck needed this year was a 1990 combination vehicle that cleans out catch basins as well as plows snow and it is used 12 months out of a year. Mr. Bishop said this was removed from the budget. He added that he thought they would be okay, but two weeks ago they had trouble with that truck when the frame cracked. A welder came who was able to weld it and hopefully it will be okay for maybe another year. Mr. Bishop said the welder then looked at other trucks, but stated that if any of these cracked he would not
touch them because they are so rusty. He added that they do have a lot of old
tucks and are going to have to do something.

Mr. Balestracci said the cost of the combination truck is $195,000.

Mr. Wilson explained the Fire Department is looking for an Ambulance remount
for $85,000. This is for the 2001 Ambulance that has 150,000 miles on it. He
added that what they do is take the box of the Ambulance and slide it on a new
chassis. Mr. Wilson said ambulances are revenue generators as well.

He added that they are also requesting a new fire engine for $600,000. Mr.
Wilson said a year ago this cost was $540,000 and if they delay the cost could
increase another $100,000. He explained the fire engine was submitted in the
bond request and is in the fire department’s long range plan. It would be
replacing a 1985 engine with over 100,000 road miles and over 500,000 engine
hours, which is the equivalent to another 200,000 road miles. Mr. Wilson said
it is the first apparatus out of the station and they have had to make numerous
repairs to it including the replacement of the steering column.

Mr. O’Keefe said he knows this was a bond request and they were provided with
photographs, but he doesn’t have any further details on it.

Mr. Wilson explained that at the last meeting he handed out the photos with a
description of the vehicle they were looking to purchase. He added that he
is confident in the figure submitted.

Mr. Federici asked if they delayed purchasing this vehicle the new EPA
regulations would raise the price. He asked if these would only effect new
equipment and would not be retroactive to this vehicle. If that is the case there
would be real savings to doing it this year than a subsequent year.

Mr. Wilson noted that the regulations would not affect previously purchased
equipment.

Ms. Brockett said the original number for the Adams bonding projects was
$1,196,000 and now it is $998,000.

Mr. Bloss said there were some deductions from the original request. Originally
they were going to replace all the lockers, but decided that was not necessary so
that reduced the cost $100,000. There was another reduction of about $92,000 for
some drainage improvements that would not be able to be done until next summer
so it is more reasonable to bond that in 2010. The original figure included
sandblasting of old paint and repainting the hallways, but after a site inspection
they decided it was not bad enough.

Motion: For the purposes of discussion Mr. O’Keefe made a motion to restore
the $100,000 toward the Medical Insurance deficit program that was
cut out of the BOE budget and Mr. Hoey seconded the motion.

Mr. O’Keefe said this motion is more for principle than financial reasons. He
added that the BOF concluded that they needed a deficit reduction plan and when they start to free wheel and change policies he has a problem with that. Mr. O’Keefe said he doesn’t like to micromanage, but he believes this is not fiscally responsible so he recommends they reinstate that.

Mr. Hoey said he agrees with Mr. O’Keefe’s thinking with respect to the BOE’s decision, however, he does not think they should be adding money into this budget. He added that as of the last meeting they were projecting a positive fund balance in that account at year end and the BOE is not eliminating its entire contribution, but rather is reducing it from $166,000 to $66,000 and the town is also contributing $33,000. Mr. Hoey said in the interest of looking to save taxpayers why continue to add to it in a year when they could wind up with a surplus and he knows they don’t know what will happen next year.

Mr. Federici said he agreed with Mr. O’Keefe’s observation as to the procedure in this case and he thinks it would have been better if the BOE had maybe consulted with them first before it happened. He added that he agrees with Mr. Hoey that if it had been presented in a more orderly fashion he probably would have voted to relieve them from the policy given the progress they have made in the medical account and the pressures in this budget. Mr. Federici said he understands the spirit of the motion, but feels strongly that they are in the right spot with the outcome.

Mr. O’Keefe said the fact that we are budgeting the medical line 6 percent lower based on what the experts told us, we are already taking the risk. He added that he doesn’t want to think the BOF is making decisions that can just be dismissed, but he is concerned that they may be under budget in the Health Insurance. Mr. O’Keefe said if they pass this up this year there is very little cushion before they could be down to zeros.

Ms. Brockett said if the BOE is only contributing 40 percent why shouldn’t the town then be held to only that percentage.

Ms. Villano said it was a small enough amount and they thought it was important to keep in the budget.

**Motion:** Mr. O’Keefe made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Hoey (for the purposes of discussion) to reinstate the $100,000 toward the Medical Insurance Deficit Program that was cut out of the Board of Education budget. The board voted 4-3 against the motion.

**Vote:**
- In Favor: O’Keefe, Egan and Brockett
- Opposed: Ayles, Federici, Gamerman and Hoey
- Abstaining: None

Mr. O’Keefe said in order for the selectmen to get to a zero percent increase they had to cut capital by $1 million, leaving only $125,000 remaining in that account. He added that from a fiscal point of view this is not a good idea, it is simply a deferral. If they don’t buy it this year then they are just putting it off for another year and it is going to take two to three years to catch back up. Mr.
O’Keefe said he would like to restore $500,000 back into the town budget specifically for capital and to allow the selectmen to prioritize what they need. He added that he is not criticizing what they did, but feels it is a mistake.

Motion: For the purposes of discussion Mr. O’Keefe made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Egan to increase the BOS budget by $500,000 in capital.

Mr. O’Keefe said they have no guaranty that the financial situation will be any better next year and they are putting off the inevitable by being penny wise and dollar foolish.

Mr. Hoey said he is concerned about capital as well and it has been clearly stated that this is a risky process and that we are just putting it off. He added that the Ambulance remount and the Public Works Truck for a total of $275,000 were part of the capital budget and while that doesn’t get it up to $800,000 those items if put into bonding will have some impact, because they were two top priorities. Mr. Hoey said he would support those for bonding.

Mr. Hoey asked how long the remount would last for the ambulance. Mr. Wilson said two to three years. Mr. Hoey added that it does not meet the criteria for a bonded item.

Mr. Federici said capital does get overly cutback during difficult budget years and they could be in a similar position next year. He added that they are having difficulty in some of the non-tax revenue such as interest income, where they took a 40 percent hit, but they won’t see that same drop next year, because they are budgeting less. Mr. Federici said it is the same thing with the building department in that construction cannot get much slower. He added that just on the revenues the numbers are going to be more stable, so if a couple of things break they may be okay. Mr. Federici said he does not know that putting $500,000 into an already strained situation tax-wise is helpful.

Mr. Gamerman said he has not heard the town is facing a crisis with regard to capital. He added that if some issues come up in capital the board is always here to deal with an emergency. Mr. Gamerman said it is not a good situation, but he feels relatively safe bearing that risk.

Mr. Egan said the town’s situation is child’s play compared to the fiscal crisis the state is in. He added that he believes there is a real possibility that they will see much less from the state so it is hard to predict where the town will be a year from now.

Ms. Brockett said it seems like deja vu with the conversation regarding whether to bond or put the Public Works trucks in the budget. She thought that they came to an agreement before that they were not going to bond things that belong in the regular operating budget.

Mr. Hoey said they have done it both ways. They put a couple of trucks up for bonding two years ago, but it was rejected. He added the bonding criteria has been anything nearing $100,000 and with a useable life of 10-15 years.
Mr. O’Keefe said they did try bonding the trucks two years ago and it went down. He added that when that happened they did not have the money or approval for the trucks and they had to run to correct it. Mr. O’Keefe said his fear in these economic times it to put anything they really need into a bonding package because they run the risk of not getting the support. If there is something they need in capital they must have the money in there. He added that a lot can happen in 18 months and he believes their hands are tied.

Mr. Gamerman said it was the BOS that made the judgment and if they feel it is a risk worth taking they should the BOF micromanage them. He added that he is willing to accept their judgment.

Mr. O’Keefe said he had discussions with some of the selectmen and they have had some hesitancy after making that decision.

Motion: Mr. O’Keefe made a motion that was seconded by Mr. Egan to add $500,000 to the Capital line item of the Board of Selectmen budget. The board voted 4-3 against the motion.

Vote: In Favor: O’Keefe, Egan and Brockett
Opposed: Ayles, Federici, Gamerman and Hoey
Abstaining: None

Mr. Gamerman said in December when they began to hold workshops up to tonight a few things have come through that are clear. He added that they all acknowledge the serious economic climate and need to be mindful of this when going forward with any budget, while staying committed to the quality of life in town. Mr. Gamerman said they need to acknowledge what the BOE and BOS did was responsible and prudent. He added that the BOS brought in a zero percent increase and the BOE budget has a $1.67 million increase, but there was $2 million in increases they had no control over. Mr. Gamerman said but still this budget represents a 6.9 percent tax increase, because they cannot touch the fund balance and they cannot rely on the state so they are left on their own. He wanted to go on record supporting the budgets as submitted with no further reductions.

Mr. Hoey said non-discretionary increases took the BOE budget increase up to over $2 million, in categories such as salaries, benefits and tuition. These are things they had no control over, but they had to cut $500,000 from other budget categories and these were not cuts made easily. Mr. Hoey said they are also putting off capital items and the continuation of the technology program, so there are sacrifices being made. He added that it is not a budget they would normally put forward, but they are mindful of these economic times.

Mr. Hoey said he couldn’t ask the town to cut another nickel. He added that they took a courageous stand and it shows true leadership. Mr. Hoey said he will confess that he has concerns they are setting themselves up for some risk, but he can support moving the budgets forward. He added that it took him a while to get to that point, but they cannot cut enough to make a substantial difference and
anything over $50,000 means staffing. To drop down to anything substantial means a $1.5 million to $2 million reduction to get the budget down to 4 percent and that would be so detrimental to the system. Mr. Hoey said a $1 million cut to the BOE is 20 positions plus the 2 that were already eliminated. He added that it took him a while to get to this point and the question is out there as to the value of the BOF if it doesn’t cut. Mr. Hoey said the BOF adds value by supporting these budgets.

Mr. Ayles agreed with Mr. Hoey and Mr. Gamerman, but he came to this conclusion a while ago. He attended every Town and BOE workshop and saw where the cuts were made and where the struggles were. When you see a 2.21 percent budget increase, but a 6.9 percent tax increase this is overwhelming. He added that he has questioned some decisions, he could not believe the town had a zero percent increase and maybe these are not the best budgets, but it is the best they can do in these times. Mr. Ayles said they have heard from a couple of people who do not want their taxes to increase that much, but the majority of the community wants these budgets intact.

Mr. Federici said the role of the Board of Finance is not to judge the administrative planning choices, but to insure there has been a thoughtful analysis and that has taken place.

Mr. O’Keefe said he agrees the boards work well together, but he disagrees with sending a 7 percent tax increase to the voters. He agrees with the people who didn’t want a teacher cut or a program reduced and he thought there would have been discussions with bargaining units, which has been going on in other towns. Mr. O’Keefe said the total salary increases in this budget totals about $1.7 million, but nothing here calls for a wage concession. He added that all the employees’ lives will go on fine, but the taxpayers will have to pay and not everyone in town is wealthy and some don’t even have jobs. Mr. O’Keefe said this is an enormous burden. He added that nobody is in favor of cutting teachers, but they could make substantial cuts without laying off if they freeze wages for one year. Mr. O’Keefe said life is not going to get better in the next six months and it is poor planning to cut $1 million from capital. He added that they are saying to the voters you suffer the pain while all those working for the town suffer no pain. Mr. O’Keefe said he would not support this.

Mr. Egan agreed with Mr. O’Keefe and he is not going to vote for the budget for the reasons stated. He added that he thinks they have to put town salaries and raises on the table and it should be part of any budget package. Mr. Egan said people are getting laid off and not getting raises in the private sector, yet town employees are getting 3.5 percent and the BOE employees are getting 4 percent. He added that he can’t ask the public to support a budget under these circumstances.

Ms. Brockett said there have been valid points across the board. She sat in on the workshops and agrees that the administrators and leaders did their best to cut the budgets to the bare bones. She added that her bottom line comes down to what she feels her charge is and that is to put a budget to the taxpayers that she
feels the town can afford and she doesn’t feel it can afford a 6.9 percent increase.

Ms. Brockett said she knows there is strong support to keep the BOE funding intake and she is a parent as well, but she does not think the people coming out to show support represent the majority of the town. She added that they need to put a budget out there that is more prudent in these economic times and she has gotten several emails from people saying that.

Mr. Federici said 6.9 percent is a substantial increase and is coming in the context of all the problems discussed. He added that he does think it is interesting that there is opposition to the increase, but there were two separate motions to add $600,000 back into these budgets that are now being opposed. Mr. Federici said salary freezes difficult management choices the boards have had to confront, but there are management consequences. He added that it is newsworthy when it happens, but it can be disruptive. Mr. Federici said people are free to attend all the meetings and at Tuesday’s meeting they were overwhelmingly in favor of keeping the budgets as they are. He added that he has received some communications against and some in favor as well.

Mr. O’Keefe said the two motions to add to the budget were not about dollars, but rather how they should be fiscally managing the town. He added that he agrees every move has a consequence, but the managers have had no serious discussions and sent this budget out without that discussion. Mr. O’Keefe said this is the highest tax increase sent to voters and he does not know how they can characterize this as a responsible budget.

Mr. Hoey said he thinks they can characterize this as a financially responsible budget. He added that were it not for the elimination of using the $1.2 million from fund balance it would be a 5 percent increase. Mr. Hoey said it is not correct to say that the employees don’t suffer, because many of them work for the community they also live in and they will feel this as well. He added that if he is in charge of managing the finances he is not going to do it on the backs of employees. Mr. Hoey said that discussions have been opened with the employees and there are discussions at the BOE. He added that if some of those negotiations were successful they may have the opportunity to set the mill rate recognizing some concessions have been made and that is worth a question to town counsel.

Mr. Hoey said he heard the term “afford” earlier. He added that he is not sure where he will find the money and it is going to hurt his household as well. The question is what can they afford not to do. Mr. Hoey said what if the negotiations are successful and they cut the salaries increases out, they still don’t know how the people are going to vote on what they send out. He added that the prudent thing to do is send this to the voters and if they say “No,” then at that point they will need to take draconian steps.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Mr. Gamerman and seconded by Mr. Federici, the board voted to accept the budgets as submitted by the Board of Selectmen and Board of Education with the authorization to proceed to referendum.
Vote:  In Favor:  Ayles, Federici, Gamerman, Hoey
    Opposed:  O’Keefe, Egan and Brockett
    Abstaining:  None

Motion:  Upon a motion made by Mr. Federici and seconded by Mr. O’Keefe, the board voted unanimously to approve for bonding Renovations and related word to address immediate facility needs at Adams Middle School including Air Quality, Electrical Upgrades, Lavatory Renovations, Locker Replacement and Security Upgrades for $704,750.

Vote:  In Favor:  Ayles, Federici, Gamerman, Hoey, O’Keefe, Egan and Brockett
    Opposed:  None
    Abstaining:  None

Motion:  Upon a motion made by Mr. Federici and seconded by Mr. O’Keefe, the board voted unanimously to approve for bonding the Design Work and Interim Repairs of the Roof at Guilford Lakes School for $360,000.

Vote:  In Favor:  Ayles, Federici, Gamerman, Hoey, O’Keefe, Egan and Brockett
    Opposed:  None
    Abstaining:  None

Motion:  Upon a motion made by Mr. Federici and seconded by Mr. O’Keefe, the board voted unanimously to approve for bonding the Roof Replacement at Calvin Leete School for $1,157,163 and Roof Replacement at Adams Middle School for $294,000.

Vote:  In Favor:  Ayles, Federici, Gamerman, Hoey, O’Keefe, Egan and Brockett
    Opposed:  None
    Abstaining:  None

Motion:  Upon a motion made by Mr. O’Keefe and seconded by Ms. Brockett, the board voted unanimously to approve for bonding the Fire Engine for $600,000.

Vote:  In Favor:  Ayles, Federici, Gamerman, Hoey, O’Keefe, Egan and Brockett
    Opposed:  None
    Abstaining:  None

Motion:  Upon a motion made by Mr. Federici and seconded by Mr. Gamerman, the board voted to approve bonding for a Public Works Dump Truck for $195,000.

Vote:  In Favor:  Ayles, Federici, Gamerman and Hoey
    Opposed:  O’Keefe and Brockett
Abstaining: Egan

Mr. O’Keefe said he was opposed to bonding for this.

Mr. Federici said he doesn’t see a problem bonding for this item. It will last at least as long as the fire truck, it is in the price range that is appropriate for bonding and it is a significant capital investment.

3. Public Forum

Joseph Petrowski said he doesn’t envy the board because this is an unusual situation and he agrees with everything that has been said. He added that Ms. Brockett believes the comments from the public at the Tuesday meeting were not representative of the entire community and he believes that is correct. Mr. Petrowski said the BOE mentioned a $100,000 surplus from the current budget. He added that they have historically returned money to the town, but looking at the budget that was just approved, he encouraged the BOE to spend every nickel of that surplus.

Mr. Hoey asked Ms. Villano if there was any money in the Dedicated Road Fund that could be used for the Public Works truck.

Ms. Villano said there might be money in the stormwater fund that they could use since this truck can also be used for cleaning out catch basins. She thinks the total is about $45,000.

Mr. Hoey said they can cancel Monday’s meeting since the board took action tonight. He thanked everyone on the Town side and BOE for their work in crafting the budget.

Motion: Upon a motion made by Mr. O’Keefe and seconded by Mr. Ayles, the board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 10:25 p.m.

Voted: In Favor: Ayles, Federici, Gamerman, Hoey, O’Keefe, Egan and Brockett

Opposed: None

Abstaining: None

Respectfully submitted,

_____________________________
Traci K. Brinkman
Clerk
Board of Finance