

CHAPLIN BOARD OF FINANCE
Chaplin Senior Center
Chaplin, Connecticut
Budget Public Hearing Minutes
April 13, 2026

Dick Weingart opened Public Hearing at 7:00 PM. Board members present: Link Diwan, Jeremiah Rufini, Victor Boomer. Others present: Selectman Juan Roman, Selectman Leslie Ricklin, Town Administrator Mary Calorio, Finance Manager Val Garrison, BOE (Superintendent Andy Skarzynski, Chair Jaclyn Chancey, Business Manager Jobina Miller, Will Hooper). Absent: Mike O'Neill, Bill Jenkins, Alternate Matt Foster, Alternate Izzy Alvarez.

3. READ PUBLIC HEARING LEGAL NOTICE:

Dick Weingart read Legal Notice for Public Hearing, published in the Chronicle and posted on town website.

4. REVIEW GROUND RULES FOR PUBLIC HEARING: Questions should be directed to Chair Dick Weingart.

5. SUMMARY STATEMENT OF BUDGET PROCES; REVIEW KEY BUDGET POLICIES AND ASSUMPTIONS:

BOS asked Town Administrators to evaluate budget process – moved forward with new process. Mary Calorio worked with Finance Manager and Administrative Assistant bringing preliminary budget packet to BOF March 2nd with final budget proposal presented March 30th for BOF to present this evening (this meeting held 2 weeks earlier with Annual Town Meeting on April 27th to be able to have joint Referendum for Town, CES, and RD11 on May 5th)

6. PRESENTATION OF BOARD OF EDUCATION AND TOWN BUDGETS; AUDIENCE QUESTIONS:

Superintendent Skarzynski presented CES Budget.

Current year – Spending monitored weekly (transfers when necessary), unexpected costs (Special Ed – extra costs, snow removal – 5 snow days with record cold weather, attrition and vacancies – some positions legally required), unexpected revenues (additional tuition for out-of-town student for Special Ed services, SEED funds – about \$8,000, DRIP funds – about \$33,000), initiated soft freeze for non-emergency spending in February, unexpected Special Ed outplacement in March (requires using Non-Lapsing Fund), enrollment trending well at 151 (growth in high needs students - SBAC tends to go in opposite direction) - better performance in Math, significant investment in Reading (brought in Instructional Coach).

Proposed Budget for next year - \$204,037 increase (4.98%). Key cost drivers - Special Ed, Bus Contract (continued contract with EASTCONN for cost savings), new Collective Bargaining Agreement for teachers (offset by retirements), bringing in out-of-district tuition, Health Insurance (6.9% renewal rate – drop in benefits with retirements and some election changes), increases - Salary & Wages, Other Purchased Professional Services (Speech & Language, O/T, P/T), Supplies. Chaplin Assessment of RD11 budget (based on student enrollment) down \$69,000 for next year. Total education budget \$135,000 increase for PreK – 12.

- Audience member asked if new Instructional Coach has goals associated with school scores (focusing more on teacher practices to improve student performance).
- Link Diwan noted cost per student at \$22,721 for CT, \$26,109 for CES, \$33,860 for RD11 (impossible to compare district of 150 with district of 5,000 – some costs the same), hopes to tell his family someday that Chaplin schools are at level they should be and asked how Chaplin educational achievement reflected (family engagement, creating nurturing community, supporting student achievement, confident teachers).

Town Administrator Mary Calorio presented Proposed Town Budget for FY 2026-27.

Historical look at Grand List - increased with Reval in 2018 and 2023, impacted by Unfunded Mandates (motor vehicles now based on depreciation value), Mill Rate drops when Grand List goes up. Compared this year's budget to next year - total change of \$50,000, not using Fund Balance as revenue source (used \$124,000 last year), proposing \$150,000 for Capital Projects (CIP Committee needs to decide priorities).

Looked at where things come from – **Proposed Revenues** (79% Property Taxes, 16% Education Grants, 4% Other State Grants, 1% Local Revenues – Town Clerk Fees, Building Fees) – big pressure on the State to modify formula for ECS funding that hasn't changed since 2013; **Proposed Expenditures** (41% CES, 35% RD11, 22% Government Operations, 2% Capital Projects, 0% Debt Service); **Proposed Town Operation Expenditures** (21.83% Town Operations (Town Hall), 18.89% Public Works, 14.53% Employee Benefits, 13.91% Sanitation, 11.32% Public Safety (FD, Ambulance, Animal Control), 9.07% Boards/Commissions, 4.39% Recreation, 3.99% Library, 2.07% Contingency). Reviewed changes to original budget proposal - reductions to General Government (Ambulance Contract – still negotiating, BOS, Inland/Wetlands, Library, Public Works, Recreation, Registrars Elections, Senior Center, Treasurer, Volunteer Fire Department), increase to Town Clerk Stipend, additional contribution to Capital Projects (total of \$150,000), reduction in RD11 assessment due to enrollment with \$135,000 overall increase to Education. Mill rate presented at 33.182 for Real Estate & Personal Property with impact to taxes (5.76% increase) using examples of real Chaplin properties (Mary appreciates the work of BOF and Town Staff – amazing crew to work with).

- Will Hooper thanked Mary for excellent presentation and appreciates talking about Educational Cost Sharing (based on cost per student, not size of district – broken for small towns).
- Dick Weingart thanked everyone for being extremely cooperative and working well together.

7. ANNOUNCE TIME AND PLACE OF FUTURE MEETINGS:

Annual Town Meeting – April 27, RD11 Town Meeting – May 4, RD11 & Town Budget Referendum – May 5.

8. ADJOURN PUBLIC HEARING: Public Hearing adjourned at 8:26 PM.

***Respectfully submitted by,
Recording Clerk Kathleen Scott***