

**TOWN OF SALEM  
JOINT MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN, BOARD OF EDUCATION, AND BOARD OF FINANCE  
MEETING MINUTES  
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2019 – 7:00 P.M.  
SALEM TOWN OFFICE BUILDING**

**PRESENT**

Board of Selectmen (BOS): Kevin Lyden, First Selectman  
Hugh McKenney

Board of Education (BOE): Sean Reith, Chairman  
Sam Randell,

Board of Finance (BOF): Skip Dickson, Chairman  
Marshall Collins, Clerk

**CALL TO ORDER**

First Selectman Lyden called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Shannon Haynes, 46 Rathbun Hill Road, a member of the PTO, expressed her concerns regarding the decline of the schoolchildren's' education due to budgetary constraints. She felt that having this type of open discussion and communication between the Boards prior to the budget season was a positive step that would enable the Boards of Finance and Selectmen to understand the resulting effect of these financial burdens and the Board of Education to make any necessary adjustments to their budgetary preparations.

Sally Buller, 80 Emerald Glen Lane, stated that she moved to Salem approximately 1-1/2 years ago specifically for the school system, which is rated the highest in the area; a good school system drives home values up.

Jessica Fletcher, 231 Laurelwood Drive, stated that she is pleased to see that the representatives from each of the Boards are meeting together to discuss their budgetary issues and are being proactive. She feels that the current division of the 51 third-grade students into two classes is unacceptable.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

**a. Future Planning – Population Trends**

First Selectman Lyden believes that all three of the Boards represented at this meeting would like to have a good school system and agrees that good schools drive home values up, adding that there are also a number of other positive attributes to the town. He stated the importance of the school and the pride that the residents of the town, including the seniors who have not

had any children in the school system for numerous years, feel. The school budget will always constitute the biggest part of the town's budget. He explained that the Board of Selectmen is the Executive Board for the town, overseeing its 4,200 residents; the Board of Finance holds the purse for the town's residents, and; the Board of Education oversees the approximately 650 pre-K to 12th grade students, including special education students (up to age 21), and must deal with the State's regulations which are becoming increasingly complex. He commended the Town Hall staff, which has been upgraded over the last ten years and are now more educated and have the necessary certifications and qualifications making the town less liable, work more efficiently, and provide better service to its residents.

In terms of population trending, the town was, at one point, projected to be one of the fastest growing towns, leading to the 1990's Salem School addition. In fact, its K-8 population peaked at approximately 608 in 2002. This is no longer the case. BOE Chairman Reith added that Pfizer was a major employment force between 2006/07 to 2010. The effects of Pfizer's decision to move their facility in 2009 affected Salem as the population of K-8 students dropped from 529 to 450 from 2006/07 to 2012 and continued to decrease to 372 in 2015/16. The student population has now risen to 415 K-8 students. Like the establishment of Pfizer in New London, the new Electric Boat (EB) contract will impact the town's school population in a similar manner. Selectman McKenney agreed that the same trend that fueled the influx of young professionals to move to Salem with the opening of Pfizer will also fuel the same with the new EB contracts. In contrast, First Selectman Lyden cited a recent study by the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) which found that 5,000 new housing units will be required by 2029 to accommodate the growth. Approximately 4,200 of those 5,000 development units have already been approved in the towns of East Lyme, Groton, and Ledyard. In addition, the town's population trends show that it is not expected to grow by very much over the next ten years. Furthermore, he reported that the bulk of the engineers slated to be hired as part of the EB expansion have already been hired. BOF Clerk Collins added that the hiring process for expansion will arrive in three waves: the designers/engineers, the bulk of whom have been hired; the trades, and; the crews. Each of the three distinct groups will be looking for three different types of housing. Due to the town's lack of public services, e.g. water, sewer, trash services, its zoning regulations, and its lack of starter homes in comparison to other towns, he felt that the town would not witness a substantial growth in population. The town, which was once deemed the second youngest town in the State, is now an aging community and many young people are no longer able to afford a home in the town and commute to their jobs. Judging from the various projections, he felt that the population of the town will not grow significantly. In contrast, Selectman McKenney felt that those who work in the trades would also reside in and impact the population of Salem. BOE Chairman Reith added that EB plans to hire approximately 2,500 additional engineers by 2021. It is predicted that those engineers who are/will be residing in

the Groton/New London/Gales Ferry area will move out of their rentals and reside into towns like Salem as they are promoted into higher positions in the near future.

Ms. Fletcher felt that they should also recognize those residents who move to Salem from other areas of the State.

Ms. Buller stated that she and her husband did not have high incomes when they moved to Salem and that there are not very many towns where one could acquire the same amount of land for the same price point.

As a point of order and to recap, First Selectman Lyden stated that, based upon the studies he has reviewed, the total population of the town is likely to remain relatively stable; there are no trends indicating that the population will significantly grow and, while there are permits for new single-family residences being issued, there are no new housing developments being planned. Similarly, BOF Clerk Collins reported that all of the demographic reports he has reviewed also indicate that the State of Connecticut, as a whole, is not going to grow and the population is decreasing. In Southeastern Connecticut, the population is expected to remain stable with, possibly, slight slow growth. The question is what that demographic will look like and what the median age will be as it is those numbers that will affect their financial decisions. BOE Member Rindell questioned why there is no active force in town going to the larger companies in the region promoting the Town of Salem, adding that EB is not the only employer that is expanding its business in the region. BOF Chairman Dickson felt that the changes are inevitable and due to the inaccuracy of the projections, he stated the need to simultaneously temper and plan for the future.

In terms of the school population, BOE Chairman Reith stated that the NESDEC (New England School Development Council) projections, which the BOE relies upon and which, he noted, is approximately 15% accurate, indicate that Salem's student population will grow by 26%. Due to the inaccuracy of the NESDEC projections, he questioned whether the town would benefit from an in-depth analysis of the population trends that is specific to the uniqueness of the town. Because there is a substantial amount of available data, including CABA (Connecticut Association of Boards of Education), CAPPS (Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents), Connecticut Association of Schools, some of which are specific and relatively reliable, BOF Clerk Collins did not feel that a more specific study would be necessary or beneficial. First Selectman Lyden agreed, adding that the school's infrastructure is set in place. It is the operational costs that are in question. He commended the BOE for their recent efforts in reviewing their options and seeking better utilization and efficiencies and expressed his hope that they will continue to do so.

Selectman McKenney felt that the major issue is the impact of the population growth on the operating budget. While the Board of Finance may view the numbers as being stable and slightly increasing, the data from all of the organizations reflect the need for them to be prepared for something more than slight. BOE Member Rindell stated that the BOE's

budget presentation depicts the cost per pupil, but those numbers are not entirely accurate as they do not indicate how many of those students require special needs or the actual makeup of the student body; it is important to note the population changes within each of the grade levels. BOF Clerk Collins stated his skepticism of their reliance on the projections provided by NESDEC; their numbers should reflect meaningful growth from an operational standpoint. BOE Chairman Reith clarified that he does not feel that there will be an explosive growth, but he is concerned with the trends. The previously declining economy now shows that it has bottomed out and is now rising and, likewise, the student population is steadily growing and the School is reaching those milestones in which it is becoming increasingly necessary to do things differently.

**b. Budgets – Revenue and Expense Planning**

First Selectman Lyden expressed his and the Board of Finance's understanding of the BOE's budget fluctuations, but added the need for the BOE to look for efficiencies. He is pleased with and commended them for making tough decisions, including approving the reduction of the Vice Principal position from a 12 to 10 months. He clarified that the BOF provides them with the funds, but it is the jurisdiction of the BOE to designate how those funds are allocated. BOE Member Rindell felt that the budget process was demoralizing for the faculty and staff and the townspeople as they express their need for additional funding that is not received. As such, he proposed the possibility of the BOF providing the BOE with an amount, rather than the BOE spending countless hours developing, preparing, and presenting their budget book with an amount indicating their needs. Should the BOE need funding beyond the provided amount, a discussion between the two boards could take place. BOE Chairman Reith stated that the BOF has provided direction to each of the departments and has requested a flat budget for the past three years, but it appeared that, for whatever reason, the BOF had a different target number in mind. Last year, the BOE presented a budget with a 1.8% increase and received a 1% increase. He felt that the town's budgetary trend (1.14% increase from 2006/07 to 2019/20) in its education system is phenomenal given its increase in the student population. As such, the issue lies in the fact that while the population trend and wages have been increasing (wage growth was \$160,000.00 last year), their budgets have not. They are not able to keep their budgets flat due to the wage growth alone. Should they not receive, at minimum, that amount, funding allocated to other line items that directly affect the students are negatively affected. The issue is further exacerbated by the element of uncertainty.

Selectman McKenney suggested the possibility of creating a collaborative group that includes the members of the three Boards to develop the budget, which, he felt, would result in a smoother process with more agreeable results. Having worked on the BOE budgets for six years and now working on the town's budget, BOF Clerk Collins expressed his understanding of the difficulties they face and his appreciation for their diligence. The BOF aims to treat all of the departments equally. In contrast to the budgets for the town's other

departments, the BOF does not control the specific line items in their budget, nor is he in favor of doing so. He expressed his dismay during their last budget presentation when the BOE presented a budget with a 1.8% increase and made the significant error of overestimating the revenues they would be receiving from the State. In response, BOE Chairman Reith stated that the miscalculation of revenue funding was an error in the budget book and ensured him that the revenues were not considered in their actual operating budget calculations. Rather, the BOE views their budget from an expense perspective.

BOF Chairman Dickson stated that the town has been facing constant financial pressure due to the State's budgetary issues. One of the town's main funding sources derives from the State's ECS (Educational Cost Sharing) Program, which will continue to be reduced on an annual basis and constitutes one of the main reasons the BOF has been actively pursuing a zero percent increase and has been struggling to devise creative ways in which to deal with the added pressures. BOF Clerk Collins commended BOE Chairman Reith for his hard work and diligence and is pleased with his suggestion to organize this working group to discuss these issues. He felt that the budget needs to be viewed from both sides – the revenue and the expenses. The question is where we are going to go operationally (given the population of students, the cost to run the building, and providing the necessary tools for a good quality education) and how to fill the gap as the legislators who provide the bulk of the town's funding has determined that the Town of Salem is one of the wealthier communities and has, as the result, decreased the town's funding on an annual basis. There is, he added, no indication that the situation will be changing in the foreseeable future. Selectman McKenney stated that part of the solution is for the community to lobby the State, adding that there are a variety of studies regarding the State's deficit and surplus amounts. He felt that there was no reason why the State would not be able to reverse and maintain their ECS Funding. BOF Clerk Collins disagreed as doing so would result in a cut to another municipality(ies). He added that, as part of his work, he has represented numerous groups and organizations that dealt with youth education and recreation — all of who are lobbying and all of who continue to receive less funding.

The three primary sources of revenue for the town are State Funding, the Grand List, and taxes. BOF Chairman Dickson stated that the funding deficit in last year's budget derived from the growth in the Grand List (0.5%) and one time revenues. First Selectman Lyden added that the primary funding from the State includes the ECS Funds, which is currently \$2.7 million (reduced from \$3.3 million), and the Mohegan-Pequot Grant (\$30,000.00). BOE Chairman Reith reiterated that the BOE budget is based on their organic need and the town's revenue stream is not considered in the formation of their budget. Superintendent Joseph Onofrio confirmed that the budget is based on the current needs of the district. BOF Clerk Collins expressed his strong opposition to spending one-time revenues for ongoing operating expenditures, a practice that would set the town up for trouble in the future and is the reason behind the State's current fiscal issues.

Discussion ensued regarding the status of the town's Unassigned Fund Balance or Rainy Day Fund. First Selectman Lyden stated that the State's issues derived from their allocation of funds from the Unassigned Fund Balance for operating costs and the bonding of operating costs. The deficit has resulted in the (ongoing) reduction of funding to the towns. As the result of the State's fiscal issues, the Auditors recommended that towns maintain a healthy Unassigned Fund Balance. Though the State now has funds in its Rainy Day Fund and is more stable, it continues to have budgetary issues. As such, he expects the cuts to their ECS Funding to be more gradual and more manageable in the near future. Nevertheless, towns should remain cautious. He agreed with BOF Clerk Collins that the ECS Funds would not be returned and will continue to erode. BOF Clerk Collins felt that the BOE cannot continue to advocate for an increase in their budget while, at the same time, providing an erroneous revenue amount. BOF Chairman Dickson agreed, adding that the Boards must determine the balance between the expenses and the revenue and, though a zero percent budget increase has been held for the last few years due to the uncertainty, it is not realistic to plan for a flat budget indefinitely. Selectman McKenney agreed. BOF Chairman Dickson added that part of the BOF's frustrations is the feeling that there are actions that could be taken, efficiencies that could be created such as those that were recently taken. In response, BOE Chairman Reith stated that the Board has been looking for efficiencies as they seek to ensure that they fulfill their charter and provide the best education possible for their schoolchildren, including maintaining an appropriate morale level for the staff. To this end, the BOE seeks to avoid implementing any cuts that would reduce the morale of the staff, which would preclude the teachers from interacting with the children on a daily basis. The status of the town's Unassigned Fund Balance and whether any additional funds from the Unassigned Fund Balance could be utilized to lower the mil rate or for the general budget was questioned by Selectman McKenney. BOF Chairman Dickson stated that the BOF is planning to draft a Fund Balance Policy in which a set amount for the town's Unassigned Fund Balance is determined. Currently, the town's Unassigned Fund Balance is approximately 20%, which they plan to reduce by investing part of the funds for a one-time capital improvement project(s). First Selectman Lyden added that, per the Auditor and CPA's recommendation, it would be acceptable to utilize any overages in the Unassigned Fund Balance for capital improvements, not operating costs, and continue to maintain their bond rating. BOF Chairman Dickson added that, by applying any excess Unassigned Funds to a planned capital item(s), they would be able to better balance their budget and pay for their operating costs. The target number for capital items is currently 10% of the town's operating budget.

Discussion ensued regarding that lack of involvement by the members of the community regarding the budget. BOF Chairman Dickson stated that very few members of the community attend their Budget Public Hearings. As such, the Board has made efforts to solicit input from the townspeople, to little avail. In response to Selectman McKenney who questioned whether the responses received to the question that is asked at the referendum

regarding the school budget is not adequate enough, BOF Chairman Dickson felt that the data was not broad enough. First Selectman Lyden added that the Town has 2,700 registered voters, less than 200 of who voted at the referendum. The budget passed 2 to 1, accounting for less than 10% of the town's voting population. BOE Member Rindell asked why the question regarding the school budget is asked at the referendum if so few of the voting population votes, thereby discrediting the question. He further stated that those parents who expressed their concerns and dismay at the Public Hearing felt that their voices were not heard. Once the public begins to feel unheard, they will cease to attend the meetings and become disengaged. Though he is optimistic for the future as they have begun to engage in this conversation, the results of the last budget referendum were not satisfactory for anyone involved. Selectman McKenney added that the point of a public hearing is to hear the public comments and part of their job is to listen to those comments and utilize them accordingly. It is important for all of the boards and commissions, when they receive strong feedback in one direction, that it is encompassed in their final decision. In response, BOF Chairman Dickson stated that the BOF did listen and consider all of the public's comments, but due to budgetary constraints, they were not able to fulfill all of the requests. He noted that, while there were those on the Board who felt that the BOE's budget should be flat funded, the BOF voted in favor of increasing the BOE's budget. He agreed that this joint meeting is a positive step in the process.

BOE Chairman Reith surmised that the motivation behind those on the BOF who wished to reduce the BOE's requested increase in their budget further was because they felt that the expenses do not equate with the revenue and/or felt that the BOE presented a budget lacking efficiencies. He questioned which of these was the prevailing rationale. BOF Clerk Collins stated that the reasoning is in between the two reasons. Efficiencies are sought in the budgets for all of the departments, the difference between the BOE and the other departments is that they are able to review and cut certain line items from the other departments. While he does not wish to do the same with the BOE budget, he does feel that there are inefficiencies in their budget and that is coupled with the revenue issues. BOE Member Rindell stated that, while the BOE is also concerned with the town's revenues, their primary concern is to present a budget that would allow them to run the school system as effectively as possible and, like the Board of Finance, their job is to determine ways to fill the gap. The BOE budget, he felt, cannot be confused with the town's revenue stream. Though he understands that the BOF does not have the power to determine how the BOE allocates its funds, the BOE presented a FY2019/20 budget that included an additional teacher, but those funds were denied. In response, First Selectman Lyden felt that the budget, the revenue, and the expenses are all related, but they are not being compared in relation to each other, e.g. should the town no longer receive the \$2.7 million in ECS Funding, the BOE would not be cut that equivalent amount. BOF Clerk Collins agreed that the BOE's job is to create the best possible education for the schoolchildren, but that it is not possible to do without viewing the

entire fiscal picture. The BOF also seeks the same goal and both of the respective Boards is tasked with managing their budget. The BOF's three main funding items are education, public safety, and fire/ambulance and does not view any of these items in isolation and must consider the revenues when balancing their budget.

BOE Chairman Reith stated that the major components of the BOE budget are:

- 1) Contractual Costs – contractual expenses dealing with the student population and whether they have special needs, are attending magnet schools or East Lyme High School. This category accounts for 90% of their budget.
  - a) Certified Teacher Contract Negotiations – accounts for 55% of the Contractual Costs
  - b) Student population – this part of the budget is highly unpredictable as families move in and out of town, decide to send their children to a magnet school, and students transition in and out of 504 plans during the operating year (35% of the budget)
- 2) Negotiated Costs – includes fuel, utilities, busing. This accounts for 5% of the budget.
- 3) Discretionary Costs – includes textbooks, supplies, computers. This accounts for 5% of the budget.

The difficulty in determining the budget stems from the fact that the BOE is able to control only 10% of these costs (negotiated and discretionary) and it is these funds from which the moneys derive to balance their budget as unexpected costs arise throughout the school year. Much effort is made to ensure that the students receive the necessary services at the best possible price and in an effort to have more control over their budgetary needs, the Board has been trending the categories over the years. BOF Clerk Collins stated that those items that the BOE consider fixed and contractual costs are not considered as such by others. First Selectman Lyden commended the BOE on their negotiations with the busing company and reducing the Vice Principal from a 12 to 10 months, but added that labor and benefits are not considered a fixed cost; they are fluid. BOE Member Rindell stated that, while the BOF is able to control the line items for each of the town's departments, they are not able to do so with the BOE budget. Yet, the BOE presents the town with a line item budget, resulting in the questioning of the allocation of funds for certain line items. Theoretically, he felt that the line itemization leads to the BOF cutting their budget and undermining their efforts. The BOE is not frivolously spending their funds. BOF Clerk Collins stated that the BOF is interested in how the foundation is built and need to review the individual bricks to ensure that the foundation is sound. Selectman McKenney reiterated his suggestion to include a BOF member in the BOE's budget process. BOE Member Rindell disagreed with Selectman McKenney, citing the certified teacher contract negotiations during which a member of the BOF attended the meetings and, it was later heard that members of the BOF felt that it was not a satisfactory contract – a comment which neither the First Selectman nor BOF Clerk



Collins were aware of. BOF Chairman Dickson added that their representative reported the progress of the negotiations to the Board and comments may have been made, but those comments were the opinion(s) of the individual(s) and not the Board. BOE Member Rindell stated that, because certain members of the BOF have more gravitas in the community, such comments do not feel good, especially with respect to the time and effort the BOE members invest into the process.

**c. Strategic Planning – Dealing with Future Uncertainty**

BOE Chairman Reith, who requested this meeting, suggested the possibility of holding such meetings on a regular basis in the future. He proposed the establishment of a Non-lapsing Account as a potential solution. How the Board of Education could improve their ability to better predict the uncertainties. The trends reflect that their expenses in the population-based categories widely vary and the question arises as to how they could better stabilize this aspect of their budget. One of the suggestions and requests that was made to the Board of Finance in the past was the establishment of a Non-lapsing Account. This would avoid the need for the Board to request additional funds for large unexpected expenses and the need to schedule a Special Town Meeting for the approval of those funds as exemplified by the recent Special Town Meeting that was held for the approval of \$100,000.00 for an unexpected invoice from East Lyme High School. The BOE did not utilize all of the funds due to changes within their budget and returned \$40,000.00 to the town. The BOE has also returned nearly \$425,000.00 to the town over the past five (5) years. In an effort to avoid such an occurrence, he, again, proposed the possibility of establishing a Non-lapsing Account that is made up funds that would otherwise be returned to the town. Currently, the BOE has \$13,000.00 or 0.01% of unencumbered funds in their budget and the possibility of the need to schedule another Special Town Meeting is possible. The establishment of a Non-lapsing Account would not only help to avoid this process, but it would also help the BOE plan for any unexpected costs that might arise.

BOF Chairman Dickson stated that he is understanding of the unexpected expenses that could arise throughout the school year and suggested reviewing the variations in their budgetary data over the years and budget accordingly.

First Selectman Lyden stated that their Auditor has suggested the establishment of a Non-lapsing Account for the BOE. The amount that would be deposited into the account is limited and would be considered the Board's Unassigned Fund Balance and would provide the BOE with an incentive. He felt that the account would provide the Board with more flexibility and should be further explored; the funds would provide them with a small cushion and is an amount that has already been allocated to the BOE.

Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of the account creating the mindset that the department is over- or under-budgeted based upon their trends, resulting in the department spending all of their funding so as not to receive a reduction of funds the following year(s).

BOE Chairman Reith stated that the primary difference lays in the fact that the other departments have more predictable budgets and do not generally have the same unanticipated large expenses that the BOE could be presented with. The account would provide them with an incentive and help them deal with the uncertainties. BOE Member Rindell questioned the difference between the funds being deposited into a Non-lapsing Account versus the town's General Fund and felt that the establishment of the Non-lapsing Account would be considered during their budget deliberations and could negatively affect the BOE's budgeted amount. He stated his opposition to the establishment of the fund, for transparency's sake alone. BOF Clerk Collins agreed with BOE Member Rindell and, though torn, was generally opposed to the establishment of the fund while still being open to listening to their proposal. Selectman McKenney suggested the possibility of investigating how the fund is working for those towns that have established such a fund. BOE Chairman Reith felt that the establishment of the fund did not pass due to the lack of ground rules, including how much could be in the account and how much could be used, and suggested the possibility of crafting those rules as a group. BOF Clerk Collins preferred that the BOE present the details and information to the BOF.

Superintendent Joseph Onofrio suggested the possibility of engaging in a more collaborative process in which, following East Lyme's model of establishing budget workshops, members from the Boards of Selectmen, Finance, and Education, and the Superintendent, with an invitation extended to the administration, would meet to review and discuss the budget, line by line. Currently, the Superintendent drafts a budget in isolation and the BOE reviews and creates the budget in isolation, before it is presented to the Board of Finance for final approval. Selectman McKenney felt that the collaborative process would be beneficial and recommended the BOF consider the suggestion. BOF Chairman Dickson agreed that, together, they would be able to better budget for the uncertainties, outside of the establishment of a Non-Lapsing account.

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

BOE Member Tamara Morocco, 10 Buckley Road, who wished to speak as a member of the public, stated that the Board of Finance's request for a flat budget is not realistic as it, ultimately, hurts the children. It is unfair to the schoolchildren for the Board of Finance to request that their budget be cut in order to meet the zero increase. The increases are necessary to, at minimum, cover the costs of the wage increases. She added that resorting to parents making donations for the purchase of \$2,000.00 in music equipment is neither sustainable nor acceptable.

Shannon Haynes, 46 Rathbun Hill Road, questioned where the excess funds from the budget are deposited. First Selectman Lyden responded that any overages are deposited into the General Fund, Rainy Day Fund, or used to balance the budget. He explained that, during the last budget process, the Town was under-budgeted. As the result, funds were moved from the Town's

Unassigned Fund Balance (Rainy Day Fund) and used to balance the budget for the fiscal year, a practice which is neither recommended nor sustainable.

Sally Buller, 80 Emerald Glen Lane, stated that she is currently employed at Salem School and witnesses daily, first-hand, the effects of the cuts to the School's technology budget as teachers are regularly scrounging through usable, sometimes broken, equipment. She stated the importance of adequately funding the school to keep up with the students' educational needs.

A resident commended the BOE on a great job and their ongoing transparency, citing their record of funds being returned to the town. In speaking with those residents from other towns, she has found that their BOEs expend as much of their funds as possible in order to avoid returning a substantial amount of funds knowing that, in the following year, those funds would not be available to them. She reiterated BOE Member Rindell's comment regarding the heart wrenching/breaking feeling she had as she fought for her eight-year old child who was entering the third grade at the Public Hearing. She noted that there are currently 50 kindergartners divided into three classes, but only two classes for the 51 third-graders, which is considered a very fundamental year in a child's education.

Jessica Fletcher, 231 Laurelwood Drive, stated that they return year after year with the same or similar comments and acknowledged her belief that they are being heard. She also expressed her appreciation to the Boards of Finance and Selectmen for their hard work and efforts and for taking part in the discussion this evening and continuing to listen to their concerns. Nevertheless, she felt that the town is not providing the best school the town could afford, adding that 51 students divided into two classrooms is not acceptable; she felt that they could afford more.

Sue Spang, 129 Hartford Road, stated that the only residents who attend the meetings are those with concerns. At the Public Hearing, 10 to 15 parents spoke very passionately as they pled for the additional teacher. The following evening, she attended the Board of Finance meeting during which there was no mention or acknowledgement of those public comments. Rather, the Board of Finance, she felt, ignored the parents and their pleas, which was not only discouraging, but also a disservice to the residents of the town.

In response, BOF Chairman Dickson and Clerk Collins stated that a recap of all of their comments was provided at the following meeting. In addition, the meeting is part of the record.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**M/S/C: McKenney/Reith, to adjourn the meeting at 9:32 p.m. Discussion: None. Voice vote, 6-0, all in favor. Meeting adjourned.**

Respectfully Submitted by:

Agnes T. Miyuki, Recording Secretary for the Town of Salem