



LOGAN JOHNSON
Chairman

STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED 1786

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

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ELIZABETH NORD
Vice Chairmen

BOARD OF FINANCE BUDGET HEARING

April 14, 2026

MAURICE BLANCHETTE
DOUGLAS HARDING
DANIEL KEUNE
GOMATHI RAMACHANDRAN

Minutes

Members Present: Logan Johnson, Liz Nord, Dan Keune, Doug Harding, Maurice Blanchette, Gomathi Ramachandran.

Others Present: Tiffany Pignataro – Finance, Laurie Burstein – First Selectman, Matt Reed – Town Administrator, Sheila Grady – Senior Center, Tyler Devine – Assessor, Rebecca Stack – Human Services, Jacob Bundy – Finance, Tom Modzelewski – DPW, Alisha Carpino – BOE, Oliver Barton – Acting Superintendent, Kathy Heminway – Resident, Lori Spielman – Resident, Peg Busse – Resident, Susan Philips – Library, Cathryn Couzens – Resident, Phyllis Miller - Resident, Joyce Ouellette – Resident, Jerry Ouellette – Resident, Sridhar Vellore Subramani – Residnet, Dave Panagrosso – Resident, Ellen Panagrosso – Resident, Melinda Ferry – Resident, John Ferry – Resident, Brent Skypek – Resident, Matthew Skypek – Resdient, Julianna Rogalla – resident, Craig Webb – EMS Director, Ron Stomberg – Resident, Rich Malone – Resident, Matt Mullin – Resident, Carol Schindler – Resident, Linda Hanifin – Resident, Sgt. Tim Merrill – State Police, Peter Hany – EVAC, Alisha Smith – EVAC, Jamie Boucher – Resident, Kevin Barrett – Parks & Rec, Tom Boscarino – Parks & Rec, Mary Bartley – Parks & Rec, Michelle Everard – Residnet, David Stevens – Resident, Betsi Feldman – Resident, John Turner – Resident, Cole Prato – EVFD, Megan Johnson – BOE, Christal Banville – Resident, Karl Stocker – BOE, Mary Cardin – BOS, Su Thanvanthri – BOS, Patti Wendell – Resident, Lori Holden – Resident, Ruthanne Jarvis – Residnet, Brian Topor – Resident, Bruce Harding – Resident, Diane Harding – Residnet, Joan – Resident, Kerry Socha – BOE, John Kuehn – Resident, Susan Keuhn – Resident, Miranda Graziani – Resdient, Christina Keune – Library, Robert Burns – Resdient, Arthur Caldwell – Resident, Fonna Eitelman – Resdient, Jo Lambert – Resident, Harry Lambert – Resident, Donna Darling – Resident, Ken Darling – Resident, Gail Gessay – Resident, Mariella Luginbuhl – Resident, Glenn Luginbuhl – Resident, Tom Palshaw – Resident, Jenna Miller – Residnet, Russ Miller – Resident, Nancy Mullen – Resident, Alicia Neville – Resident, Cathy Pinard – Residnet, Charles McCleary – Resident, Tim Seitz – CLFD, Joseph Burns – Resident, Keith Danforth – Resident - Others Present Via Zoom: John Cone, Mary Cone, Ross Omelchenko, Melissa Scarbrough , Melinda Stimac.

Call to Order

The Chairman called the hearing to order at 7:03 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call

All members present.

Public Comment

Mr. Johnson presented a slideshow outlining the budget. He explained that reassessment has been the biggest challenge this year, as assessed home values have increased significantly and residents are unhappy with the proposed mill rate. Residential real estate has increased from 66.3% to 71.7% of the tax base, meaning homeowners are now responsible for a larger share.

He noted that the overall budget is comprised of three components:

- **Education Budget:** \$49,274,008 (approved by the Board of Education)
- **General Government:** \$25,566,179 (approved by the Board of Selectmen)
- **Capital Improvement:** \$2,720,522 (approved by the Board of Selectmen)

He reviewed revenue, education, general government, and capital improvements, noting increases due to public safety purchases, including police interceptors, tasers, a new fire truck, a snow plow truck, sidewalks, and previously deferred capital items.

Joseph Burns, 8 East Shore Road asked how assessed residential property values could increase by as much as 100%. Mr. Johnson explained that property owners who disagree with their assessment may appeal to the Board of Assessment Appeals. He noted that full revaluations occur every 10 years, with interim adjustments every 5 years, and that home values have risen significantly since COVID and the last assessment.

Sridhar Vellore Subramani, 34 Steeple View Drive stated that his income has not increased, yet their taxes have. Mr. Johnson again recommended appealing through the Board of Assessment Appeals.

Jo Lambert, 82 Middle Road stated that Social Security has not kept pace and that seniors cannot afford to remain in town due to rising residential property taxes. Mr. Johnson asked which services residents would be willing to reduce and welcomed suggestions from the public.

Matt Mullin, 14 Maplewood Drive asked where cuts could be made and suggested looking at the Board of Education budget, including delaying furniture purchases. Mr. Johnson responded that a \$30,000 reduction in furniture is already included in the proposed cuts.

Michelle Everard, 2 Sugar Hill Road stated that her projected tax increase is much higher than expected. She asked whether the town is seeking competitive pricing for services and why residents are facing higher increases than businesses. Mr. Johnson explained that residential

property values have increased significantly more than commercial properties, shifting a greater tax burden to homeowners.

Christal Banville, 5 Standish Road stated she has five children in Ellington schools and works in education. She expressed concern that the Board of Education is only requesting a 2.8% increase despite rising costs and emphasized the importance of adequately funding schools to attract and retain families.

Kerry Soacha, Board of Education Chair, stated that the Board of Education reduced the budget as much as possible without cutting teachers, services, or programs.

Dan Keune noted that shared services between the town and Board of Education such as combining IT have helped reduce costs and save taxpayer money.

Peggy Busse, 37 Abbott Road asked whether there would be costs associated with reducing staff if the budget fails. Mrs. Pignataro stated that there would be costs, including payouts for accrued benefits such as vacation time.

Miriam Underwood, 15 Eva Circle asked whether the town would be responsible for unemployment costs if positions were eliminated. Mrs. Pignataro confirmed that it would.

Ron Stromberg, 145 Jobs Hill Road stated that he understands the reassessment situation and that there is little flexibility to avoid the impacts.

Cathy Pinard, 12 East Shore Road asked about the percentage increase in residential versus commercial property values. Mr. Devine, Town Assessor, stated that residential values increased approximately 59%, while commercial increased about 30%. Mrs. Pignataro added that residential values had not increased significantly for several years, while commercial properties had been carrying a larger share of the tax burden; this has now shifted. She also noted that residents who have not purchased a new vehicle recently may see a decrease in their vehicle taxes.

Phyllis Miller, 14 East Shore Road asked whether the mill rate will continue to increase in future years. Mr. Johnson explained that contractual obligations, including payroll and health insurance, account for approximately 77% of annual budget increases.

Cathryn Couzins, 28 East Shore Road asked about available senior programs. Mr. Devine stated that programs are available for residents over age 65, with an application deadline of May 15 and income eligibility requirements.

Bob Burns, 8 East Shore Road asked whether Zillow estimates are considered in property assessments. Mr. Devine explained that the revaluation company analyzes actual sales data and uses state-approved statistical models to determine values.

Tom Palshaw, 120 Pinney Street asked about the deadline for appeals. Mr. Devine stated that the deadline has already passed.

Alicia Neville, 118 Sandy Beach Road noted a significant tax increase due to a newly constructed barn and asked whether staffing levels could be reduced or phased in over time, suggesting a step approach (ex. hiring one firefighter this year and another next year).

Cathy Pinard, 12 East Shore Road asked where the list of proposed cuts originated. Mr. Johnson explained that the Board of Finance requested both the Town and the Board of Education to submit potential reductions.

David Wandzy 136 Jobs Hill Road commented on proposed cuts such as removing portable restrooms and expressed concern about maintaining affordability for seniors.

Mr. Johnson stated that budget discussions will continue on **April 16th**.

Adjournment

The Public Hearing Adjourned at 9:16pm.

Respectfully submitted:

Elizabeth Luginbuhl

Elizabeth Luginbuhl, Recording Secretary