

*The following citizens spoke to the budget proposal:*

Shane Dykeman, 107 Winchester, new resident of 6 months. This is a great city; the choice to live in Oak Ridge, with a 100% property tax increase, was made solely on the basis of the quality of the school system. The tax rate to benefit the school system is not at odds with the goal to grow; it is the opposite. Investments in education further the goals of quality growth. He pointed out the numerous awards.

Steve Reddick, President OREA. Encourages Council to fully fund the Oak Ridge Schools budget request – I'm willing to fund \$1.75/month for the schools. The schools are a positive face of a city that faces many issues. We're leaders in a state that's near the bottom in any education comparisons. We all benefit from the positive accomplishments of the school system. The schools are an excellent return on our investment.

Ellen Smith: agrees with the points of the previous speakers, but wants to ask a few questions about the current budget proposal. It's useful for everyone to understand the changes in enrollment trends. A couple of points in the multi-year model shows 3% growth in 2007, 4% in 2008, and 9% in 2009. Is that due to new buildings at Y-12 and ORNL? Also, a sizeable portion of our City sales tax is attributable to the new private buildings at the federal facilities.

(Leonard offers to answer Ms. Smith's questions "later tonight.")

The new ORNL tax collections have increased 1% for FY08 and 1% for FY08, but the new Y-12 building is expected to yield a 6% increase in FY09. – Jenkins

Ann McNees: I attended several of the Budget & Finance Committee meetings; Mr. Golden stated that "all city departments have their backs against the wall." She proceeded to cite a number of facilities that have fallen into disrepair – the amphitheatre in Bissell Park, the playground at Cedar Hill park. Hefty increases are called for in several city departments over the next several years... much larger increases than would have been necessary if repairs had been made in a timely fashion. Each of the departments need funding to meet the expectations of the community.

Cathy Toth: I appreciate the energy, effort and diligence you expend on this divisive venture. She pointed out that the original strategic plan called for maintaining quality services, but the updated version eliminated that language, while keeping a mandate for a flat tax rate through FY 2009. Each of you will cast a vote tonight that will affect every citizen of Oak Ridge; our schools cannot continue to be excellent without your support. I also urge you to fund the critical needs of other departments. Please do not sacrifice what we do very well as you strive to increase other revenues.

Pat Postma: Council's effort to keep the tax rate stable is worthy, but we have much catching up to do and the State's changes are as yet uncertain. I encourage you to accept the proposed budget and go ahead and raise the tax rate this year.

David Bradshaw asks for clarification as to when the second reading must be held, so that they may wait for additional information.

Charlie Hensley: I've been involved with the schools for 22 years, and I've seen firsthand the effects of the reduced budgets. Please consider the schools for increased funding.

Raj Jain: I came to talk about the need to keep the schools well-funded. He moved from communities where the monthly property tax rate was equal to a year's taxes in Oak Ridge. It is okay to increase property taxes. However, the people mostly affected by the walk zone are mostly low-income communities. If you're going for the seven cent increase, go ahead to eleven cents so that the bus service can be restored.

Eliza Robinson: The drug folks own every corner in Scarborough. If Chief Beams had the officers to put out there, he would – it's not just one color, it's black and white. We are paying taxes like everyone else, and we need help like everyone else. I can't cross the street to get to my car because of the drug folks.

John Smith: Mr. Abbatiello handed the Board some questions, and each of you has received a letter regarding our response to those questions. We have offered the opportunity to Mr. Abbatiello to meet and discuss those questions, and we would like to extend that offer to all Council members as well.