

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS
APRIL 4, 2007**

The Board of Aldermen of the City of Milford held a meeting on Wednesday, April 4, 2007 regarding Budget Deliberations for FY 2007-2008 in the aldermanic chambers of City Hall. Chairperson T. Beirne called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m. pursuant to the legal notice as posted in the New Haven Register. Chairman Beirne asked everyone present to stand and join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Roll Call

Board Members Present

P. Beckwith
T. Beirne
B. Bier
B. Blake
V. Ditchkus
J. Garbus
B. Genovese
M. Hardiman
B. Lambert
J. Patterson
J. Politi (8:10 p.m.)
K. Rowland
J. Toohey
N. Veccharelli, Jr.
P. Vetro

Also Present

Mayor J. Richetelli, Jr.
J. O'Connell, Mayor's Admin. Asst.
A. Jepson, City Clerk

Chairman Beirne welcomed all those present and noted tonight's meeting was being broadcasted live to all Milford residents this evening. He asked if anyone presented wished to comment on the City side of the budget.

On the City Side:

T. Williams – 4 Beacher Road – stated he has heard 90% of the budget is fixed and commented the Board missed a golden opportunity to do something. He stated the Board had an opportunity not to accept the binding arbitration long ago and that if they really wanted to control the budget they should have done something then. He commented on appraisals and how they have doubled and stated a mill rate around 17% would be fair. He also spoke regarding elected officials and voiced his displeasure and commented he would not vote for Alan Jepson, but for who runs against him.

B. Smith – Merwin Avenue – she the Board to lower the mill rate. She commented her condominium assessment is double and questioned how the assessments were done. She implored the Board to help senior citizens and lower the mill rate.

H. Hasselcamp – 375 Orange Avenue – stated he is a lifelong resident of this city and that he works in Norwalk where he does negotiations for that city. He spoke to the issue of contract negotiations and stated this city is the last where you don't make contributions to health care. He stated increases to health contributions are extremely high and that it time and fair that everyone contributes to their healthcare. He stated the other glaring issue is retiree liability and the healthcare contributions and that in the future it will negatively affect the City's bond rating. He commented if something is not done sooner than later it only is delaying the pain. He asked the Board and city officials to look at the data statewide and commented it is time for this city to step up and regain control over costs.

J. Caravalko – 50 Beach Avenue – asked the Board to set aside the contingency fund for those who need a tax abatement. He stated with the assessment he will be paying \$20,000 in taxes. He implored the Board there needed to be control over spending. He stated he has written to the Mayor about having citizens convene and that tax abatement needs to be fair. He stated he was looking for tax deferrals for low income and elderly; to freeze assessments for the elderly; and limitation on property taxes and to limit adjustment on the tax base to 6%.

A. Jagoe – 1 Morningside Drive – stated she is here for two purposes, first to support the police department's budget and that the primary concern of all the officials in the City should be public safety. He expressed her hope the Board would support chief Mello when he comes before the Board and that he will justify every line item in his budget. She stated her second reason for speaking is the city budget and commented she swore in 1989 that she would never second-guess the mayor and in fact she has never spoken a public meeting. She commented the Board of Finance was irresponsible and did not do their part. She has lived in Milford all her life and that and spoke of the assessment and her increase is almost 153% and that if this Board adopts a budget with a 20% mill rate her taxes would go up over \$5,000. She also commented not all senior citizens live on Jepson Drive, Vicount Drive and Foran Towers and that there are seniors who are trying to continue to live in the homes they have lived in all their lives.

S. Borer – 204 Anderson Avenue – spoke concerning Acct. #4811 – Borough of Woodmont and accountability and commented it is this Board that provides the allocation and that this Board needs to demand accountability for that money. He stated there has been no audit and there are no bills provided and that the necessary documents are not in place for the monies Milford allocates to this Borough. He also stated there should be future criteria for allegations to them and asked for this Board's help. He stated this is the opportunity for this Board to implement a meaningful change.

F. Goodrich – 70 Regent Terrace – spoke regarding the Vo Ag Program in Trumbull and the personal experiences of this own children who have excelled. He asked the Board to find the money to save this program and have these kids learn what they want to learn.

B. Smith – 59 Sixth Avenue – stated he had one simple request, to hold the line on taxes. He stated people have given year after year with this administration and asked who is finally going to draw a bright line and say no more. He stated the goal has to be a zero based budget. He also commented there needed to be leadership. He spoke to last years budget and the Democrats asked the department heads to go back and make cuts and that it was politicized. He asked who is more qualified to do this. He also asked the Board to consider what is done in the private sector. He also spoke of a quote in the Mayor's part that it is because Hartford does not give enough money. He asked what is needed to stop the bleeding and asked if they are to just turn their pockets inside out. He asked the Board to have pity on the taxpayer and pass a zero based budget.

C. Nisita – no address given – stated she is a real estate agent here in Milford. She spoke regarding the assessment and that houses are going down. She also spoke of the difficulty of first time buyers in Milford and also commented this is not the market that was assessed. She reiterated prices are down 30-40% and implored the Board to look at this assessment.

C. Gagliardi – 8 Point Beach Drive – stated her taxes went up almost \$26,000. She asked the Board what they were going to do with those of them that have lived on the shorefront their entire lives. She stated she has owned her property since 1981 and that she is a retired school teacher and not out the high salaries of today. She stated she likes her little house and wants to stay there. She stated the little people are losing their house to people coming in from Fairfield County and New York. She stated it is impossible for the little people to stay in their little houses and with the high assessment and mill rate she might not be able to stay in her house. She stated she is being chased out with this mill rate and expressed her hope for some type of change.

M. McGuire – 47 Stevens Street – echoed the comments of what she has heard for zero tax budget. She added this Board has been presented with a number of challenges and that she would like to see these challenges in the budget.

J. Simoncek – 61 Governors Avenue – commented his taxes are only going up \$6,000 and also commented it is his understanding they are required to do this, but that he does not think it precludes us from doing it more often. He suggested the assessment be redone and that he would like to see who is paying less and if that is the shore. He commented taxes are going up 8% and his salary is only going up 3% and asked how long can it go up. He asked he has looked at other states and finds it hard to understand why our taxes are so high. He stated he also finds it difficult to believe budget cuts cannot be made. He referred to his own place of business and commented when they are told to cut the budget they do. He challenged every department do to this and asked the Board not to vote for this budget and bring it back.

H. Kay – Seneca Place – stated his comments are not bipartisan. He stated he has run his own business for over 30 years and that it is always paramount you protect the bottom line. He stated every year there are increases that are disproportional and he stated he wondered why the Finance Board would allow this. He spoke as to the infrastructure that needs repair in the city, especially in the schools, but expressed the need we just can't give in. He also stated taxes are out of control and that people have a remedy – the polls. He also commented as to the number of people who have come out tonight, on a rainy night, and that there probably are more. He urged the Board to review this budget with an eye towards cost reduction.

L. Costen – stated she moved into the area she lives in so her children could walk to school. He spoke of the signals on Naugatuck Avenue that are constantly broken and in need of repair. She also spoke of shoveling that does not get done. She spoke as to the common good for our city and that there are services that we all need, especially our police service. She urged the Board to pay for these things.

I. Morrison – Point Beach Drive – thanked the Board for taking the time to listen. She stated she is fighting to stay in this town and that the seniors are struggling to stay in their homes. She stated she is furious about the reval and her projected tax of \$20,000 and commented the greedy government is taking advantage. She also spoke as to our children and investments in the future and wondered if they would even be able to live here after they graduate. She stated with the increase in taxes, less and less people will be able to live here. She also commented when you raise taxes substantially, the market value of homes decreases. She also commented less

and less people will vacation and shop here and in addition the media will feed on this. She implored the Board to lower the mill rate so there isn't too much damage or to put the reval off a year. She stated she cannot survive a tax tsunami and asked the Board if they could.

Bob Weitzel – 131 Morningside Drive – stated his taxes are ten times higher than the year he moved in. He stated he has the right to appeal and he is. He also stated this town is driven by contracts and demands imposed by these contracts and that it was time to take a hard stance and review each and every one and every payment made under these contracts and make sure the next negotiations for contracts are made with the people of Milford in mind. He stated if this is not done the voters have the right to replace 100%.

J. Prisco – 11 Riverdate Road – stated he wished to protest against taxes and that they are the highest since he has been in Milford and he has been here 52 years. He stated he has been coming to these meetings for a long time and there is a lot that can be cut. He spoke as to the senior citizens, disabled World War II Veterans, who are trying to save their homes and that he too is trying to save his house. He stated he reviewed the budget and read every line item and also went to the Board of Finance meeting and there was only two people who spoke that night. He stated only one member of the Board of Finance voted against the budget. He reiterated taxes are too high and noted this Board and the Mayor have a tough job ahead.

Education Side:

L. Costen – 58 Ridge Street – stated she has three kids at Law and commented we are very elementary school oriented and our high schools are lagging behind. She stated the Law marching band is totally self-funded and that most people, including our school Board don't realize that. She spoke of kids being of the overcrowding and kids being on top of kids at Law and Harborside. She also spoke as to the \$100 fee for sports and knows of kids that didn't bother with sports this year because of the fee. She stated the schools are falling apart and noted there are no stalls on the bathrooms at Law. She also commented regarding basic maintenance at Law and the staff having the necessary tools to do their job.

M. Selvaggi – 574 Milford Point Road – stated he has been trying for many years to see the budget. He stated school officials hide the budget their budget and that it is wrong to keep records from the public. He encouraged the Board not to support the budget until the public sees it. He stated he is looking for accountability and that it is needed. He also commented parents should be looking for results. He also commented as to Special Education funding and that every year Milford falls short and the students lose out each year. He also spoke of the wasted funds on administrators and that administrators can't even write a letter so it has to come from the law firm of Berchem, Moses & Devlin. He asked the Board to stop the reckless use of funds.

D. Tomasco – 118 Cedarhurst Lane – spoke as to the Trumbull Agro Science Program. He stated the BOE needs to comply with state statute and reminded them they have to comply with one program. He also commented it is not for the Board to decide between Aqua Culture and Agro Science and spoke of their many differences. He stated by not supporting the Trumbull program we are denying our children and that children should have more options not less. He continued reading from a prepared statement and also acknowledged the job Mr. Russell has done regarding the UI savings, but cutting the VO Ag Program made no sense.

E. Tomasco (minor) – 118 Cedarhurst Lane – spoke regarding the VO Ag Program and that she had applied and been accepted to the program and now it is cancelled. She stated how she had also applied to Lauralton and

now can no longer attend because she thought she was going to attend the VO Ag Program. She stated the program is still worth keeping.

L. Williamson – 149 Wheelers Farm Road – stated she has spoken for the children of Milford for many years. She commented that money and taxes are on everyone's minds. She also spoke as to moving the children from Mathewson School for this year's kindergarten class and spoke as to reorganization and realigning funds. She also commented it is acceptable and appropriate to educate our children and that our buildings should be safe and maintained as well as having safe buses.

M. Rideout (minor) – 238 Bridgeport Avenue – stated she is an 8th grader and was looking forward to attending the VO Ag Program before it was cancelled. She also spoke of the benefits of the program. She stated despite the fact she was accepted she later found out the Board of Education cut this but that she could go to Aqua. She asked the Board to do what they could do to keep the VO Ag Program and allow her and so many others to attend.

M. Rideout – 238 Bridgeport Avenue – spoke of the accomplishments of her children and why her daughter applied to the program. She also spoke as to the process of attending the program itself and also spoke of the differences with the Aqua Program and that they are very different. She implored the Board to do whatever it could to have Milford students attend this program and fight for their right to attend.

M. Safrin (sp) – no address give – spoke regarding the VO Ag Program and its positive affect on children. He commented this is survival for the future and the fastest growing industry. He commented it is disheartening that as adults we would choose to do away with this. He stated these students were enticed to look at this program only to find out later it would be cancelled.

E. Anderson – 38 Cowles Street – stated she is the proud parent of two children. She thanked the Board for their tremendous efforts for our children and stated she is most thankful for the Board's attention tonight to what everyone is saying. She spoke of the education budget trends and commented Milford should continue to meet the educational needs of our children and continue to strive to attain goals.

A. Berman – 77 Pelham Street – stated she is Chair of the Environmental Concerns Coalition. She thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak regarding the VO Ag Program and stated agricultural is one of the up and coming fields today. She spoke as to a recent meeting of her group and the topic "Can We Afford to Fed Milford". She also noted smaller farms are producing more per acre. She stated it only behooves us to support this program and that it should be saved above all others.

D. Vasseur – 17 Devol Street – commented her children were home schooled until high school. She stated it would be short sided to eliminate a great program. She also stated the need to be prepared for the near future. She asked the Board to set goals and perhaps consider reducing bulk pickup, as these are areas that are citizens should take responsibility for.

M.J. Hyman – 102 Deerwood Avenue – stated she has bee a resident for many years, retired and on a fixed income. She stated the need for a responsible budget. She stated she is in favor of the education of our children and also spoke as to stated and federal mandates and diversity and inclusion in education. She stated children learn differently and they have different styles. She stated the opportunity to give to the VO Ag Program meets the needs of some of these students. She also stated the VO Ag Program and Aqua Program offer different

kinds of opportunities to our schools. She asked the Board to look at ways to reallocate some money and strongly consider things that will make a difference in the future.

J. Retardo – Orange Avenue – thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak tonight. He stated while he understands the decisions are made by the Board of Education he expressed his hope the Board could see a way to look at this and spoke of re-instating the VO Ag Program. He asked the Board to see what they could do to help.

C. Librandi – 21 Timber Trail – asked the Board to pass the education budget as it is. He stated he has three girls in the school system and one that received exemplary special education services. He also commented the federal government has never found a way to live up to the mandates given, but this town has. He continued reading from a prepared statement. He spoke as to students with disabilities and having the same services as those of their peers in regular school. He asked the Board not to be penny wise and dollar foolish and give each child in this district the opportunity to succeed.

H. Olexovitch – 5 Lakeview Drive - asked the Board to support the proposed budget as proposed. She stated she has an autistic son and spoke of the personal services he receives. She also spoke of the work involved in working with an autistic child and that each child is so specialized. She stated the special education staff is overloaded every day and also spoke of the services.

M. Connelly – 46 Andover Drive – stated he moved her from Pennsylvania and commented you get what you pay for. He spoke personally regarding his daughter who is a special education student here in Milford. He stated he is a very involved parent and spoke for the need for technology for our students. He continued reading from a prepared statement.

C. Collins – 135 Wilcox Road – urged the Board to support the education budget as it is. She spoke of the needs of the system to be able to continue with their training and innovative programs. She stated she is also a teacher in the Milford Public School System and the in-service training sessions provided to teachers is second to none. She spoke of in-services she attends and the comments she hears as to how wonderful Milford is. She also spoke on a personal note regarding her own child who is a special education student and commented he is where he is because of the education system in Milford. She stated Milford is on the right track and they need to continue on that track.

T. Casey – 4 Amber Lane – thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak tonight. She stated she has four children in the Milford School System. She spoke on a personal note as to how and why she relocated here from Chicago. She also spoke personally about her four children and how they have excelled in the school system. She requested they get the money they requested and implored the Board to fund what was asked for.

L. Fucci – 136 Welchs Point Road – stated she hoped this Board would not further cut this budget. She stated it was time to prioritize and not undermine an education that provides so much. She stated we are preparing student for life after high school is the goal. She urged the Board to keep the budget as presented and stated it is not the time to reduce an already strained budget.

L. Parnoff – 322 Edgefield Avenue – commented taxes are too high. She stated she is on a fixed income and there are thousands more like her. She also stated many families have to hold down to jobs to make ends meet. She stated it was time to hold the line and cut back. She stated she herself is a former employee of the Board of

Education. She spoke as to the people who have come before this Board tonight and expressed her hope it had convenience the Board how important it is. She spoke as the Board of Education budget and suggested cutting that budget. She commented the reason for our schools is education and that sports are a frill. She stated she is not against sports but reiterated it is a frill. She stated it may sound drastic but we have to cut the line somewhere and expressed her hope the Board would have the courage to do this. She spoke as to the mandate for reval and commented it used to be every 10 years. She implored the legislatures to bring this up at the State level. She also suggested a tax reform like the Boston Tea Party.

K. Costello – Seaview Avenue – stated her concern is the potential loss of Title I funding and that she is very concerned about this. She stated she felt it would be a loss of a reading teacher, reading material, etc. She stated it was time to be creative and look at more effective ways. She spoke of smaller classes in grades 1, 2 and 3 and the wonderful reading program our schools offer. She also commented based on the current mill rate our tax bills are going up 50%.

C. Rodriguez – 25 Burnt Plains Road – stated in was here to ask the Board to save the Agri Science program and expressed his hope this Board would restore that program.

E. Tamas – 14 Wayland Court – commented he has a list of people within the Board of Education budget that should be cut. He also commented they must not have looked at the budget book and that it was obvious the Board of Finance did not. He spoke as to pages 14 and 56 of the budget book and also page 55. He also spoke of the artificial turf that was supposed to save so much money and asked where it is. He referred to Acct. 3306 and asked about contracted services to lease copy machines. He stated everybody is cutting back except the Board of Education. He also commented there are 65 fewer students in the school system this year and still they added 15 more teachers and 2 paraprofessionals. He asked why. He stated the teacher ratio in grades K-5 is 1/19 and in grades 6-12 1/9, but they say there are 20 students and asked if they are hiding them somewhere. He stated it is time this Board of Education is held accountable. He pointed out only one member of this Board held them accountable when she called them greedy and selfish and they told her she would not be re-elected and she was, twice.

S. Glennon – 99 Carlson Drive – asked the Board to pass the budget without reducing it and that it was the right thing to do. She asked the Board to listen carefully, ask questions and get information as to the facts. She stated the schools are fully of specialists and they are not a part of the ratio. She also noted that teachers were added because of the special education mandates that the Board of Education has no control over. She asked the Board to listen carefully. She stated the Board of Education is doing phenomenal things in this town and that it was important this Board base their decision on facts.

J. Profetto – 48 Carrington Avenue – spoke in favor of the VO Ag Program. He spoke as to Trumbull High School and the state of the art facility they have there. He stated it was the timing of the issue that was most frustrating. He also commented there are people on this Board that have sat on the Board of Education. He asked the Board to find the money. He also spoke as to the hot topic of cell phone, health benefits and other issues brought up.

J. Prisco – 11 Riverdale Road – commented this City never gives anything back and that this has gone on for over 50 years. He stated other towns give back, but not Milford. He stated this Board can cut this budget and noted last year they took away \$1,000,000. He told the Board if they do their homework they will be able to do it. He asked the Board to help the taxpayers, but that they needed to do their homework.

Chairman Beirne thanked everyone for coming out this evening. He also extended sincere condolences to Ald. Garbus whose mother-in-law passed away.

Ald. Ditchkus and Ald. Toohey made and seconded a motion to recess at 9:20 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen K. Huber
Board Secretary