

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION
APRIL 24, 2012**

The Board of Aldermen resumed their budget deliberation session on Tuesday, April 24, 2012 in the aldermanic chambers of City Hall. Chairman Vetro welcomed everyone to the April 24, 2012 meeting of the proposed budget for the City and Board of Education for fiscal year 2012-2013. He asked those present to join in saluting our flag and reciting the Pledge of allegiance.

1. Roll Call

Board Members Present

B. Anderson (8:22 p.m.)
G. Gasper
D. German
A. Giannattasio
J. Golden
R. Nunno
S. Shaw
F. Smith
P. Smith
G. Stanford
N. Veccharelli
P. Vetro
R. Vitali

Also Present

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake
L. Stock, City Clerk
P. Erodicti, Finance Director
S. Fournier, Mayor's Admin. Asst.

Excused

B. Bier
R. Dickman

Ald. Veccharelli and Ald. Nunno made and seconded a motion to come out of recess at 7:09 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

4133 Probate Court – Judge Beverly Streit-Kefalas was present for questions. She stated she wished to remind the Board and the new members that they are in the first year of the merger of the Milford/Orange Probate Courts. She went on to explain how the budget works with the joined towns, explaining the 25/75 split. Judge Streit-Kefalas stated the budget before the Board is for Milford's share only. She stated there is a separate Fund 76 for the Town of Orange. She also stated their only new expense is a rental for a copy machine. She stated their previous machine was out of service a lot and they were having problems with statutory obligations. She also stated they have a 20 year old fax machine which can no longer be serviced.

Chairman Vetro congratulated Judge Streit-Kefalas on being elected President of the Connecticut Probate Court Judges.

Ald. Stanford thanked Judge Streit-Kefalas for all she and her department do for the towns of Milford and Orange, adding their work is very important.

Ald. P. Smith asked if Orange still maintains an office.

Judge Streit-Kefalas replied no. She stated everything is in Milford unless someone cannot physically get there, then she goes to them.

Ald. P. Smith noted the City provide space and asked if they charge rent.

Judge Streit-Kefalas replied yes. She also stated this budget represents the statutory obligations of the town.

4340 Animal Control – Rick George, Janet Pero and Marilyn Blake were present for questions.

Mr. George stated they are also into the first year of a contractual agreement with the Town of Orange and that it is working out well. He stated next year a good part of the budget will revolve around the money received from Orange, but no major increase is expected. He spoke of veterinarian costs which he stated are going up.

Ald. P. Smith referred to the contract providing services to Orange and stated it was her understanding they get \$75,000.

Mr. George stated that was correct. He explained a Fund 76 special revenue account was established when the Board of Aldermen approved the contract. He continued with an explanation of the services to Orange.

Ald. P. Smith asked if any of the money was being used in this budget.

Mayor Blake stated this budget is relatively flat, so if extra costs arrive, such as veterinarian costs, they would come out of that fund.

Ald. P. Smith stated the department request was \$379,000, but the new department total is \$355,487. She asked if that would short change the department.

Mayor Blake stated if they were over the \$379,000 they would have the \$75,000 to draw from. He commented he did not foresee tapping into those funds.

Ald. Golden acknowledged the hard work of Mr. George and his staff and commented about their volunteer staff.

Ald. P. Smith asked about line item 4798 0000 and asked why it was reduced to \$3,276.

Mr. George explained they now have a kennel keeper and that they upgraded that to kennel keeper/animal control officer which gives them the support they need in emergencies.

Ald. Shaw asked about a recent transfer the aldermen approved and if that came out of the Fund 76 account.

Mr. George stated it has not as yet, but that it would in the near future.

Ald. Shaw asked about the overtime account noting it has been lowered and if there is a shortfall if it would come out of the Fund 76,

Mr. George replied yes.

Ald. Veccharelli asked where the trailers are kept.

Mr. George stated they are kept at the firehouse on Melba Street and in Orange.

Ald. F. Smith asked about the dog fund and redemption program.

Mr. George stated the redemption program is when they redeem dog food.

Ald. F. Smith asked about the \$7,000.

Mr. George stated it is the City Clerk's budget and for dog licenses.

4157 Harbor Commission – Ray Swift, Director was present for questions.

Ald. P. Smith asked about the funds the City is no longer receiving.

Mr. Swift explained that was a program that is no more. He noted it was money they were accustomed to that they received from the State, but that program was cut.

Ald. Vetro asked about the town dock project.

Mr. Swift stated it is coming along.

Ald. Stanford stated she noticed the Board of Finance eliminated the office manager position.

Mr. Swift that that position was eliminated by the Harbor Commission and himself. He stated it was a very, very difficult decision, but they could cover the work through the seasonal temporary account. He reiterated it was very difficult, but they needed to recoup the funds they were losing through the State.

Ald. P. Smith asked about the seasonal temporary account and if the amount would be enough.

Mr. Swift replied he believed it would be. He stated they would find out as the season goes by.

Ald. P. Smith referred to the revenue side of the budget and asked how they were doing with reservations.

Mr. Swift stated five weekends are sold out and that they have a good base through Labor Day. He stated overall they are going well.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about parking at the boat ramp, noting there are two spaces for parking currently. He asked if there was a possibility for a third.

Mr. Swift stated he has not had any complaints. He noted the two spaces do get used, but that he has not heard of any problems.

4320 Fire Department – Chief LaVecchia, Battalion Chief D. DeVecchio and Battalion Chief R. Turner were present for questions.

Chief LaVecchia stated he had submitted a budget that was \$500,000 above last year, but that the Mayor challenged them to bring that down, which they did. He stated the Mayor then challenged him again and they brought the budget down an additional \$98,000 from last year. Chief LaVecchia stated this cut will be very difficult for the department, but that they were pursuing outside funding. He then referred to his handout for a brief presentation.

Chairman Vetro extended congratulations to the new Battalion Chiefs and wished them well. He asked the Chief when he anticipated the completion of the new fire house and also if there would be any savings in the budget with that station and the closing of the other two stations.

Chief LaVecchia stated the other two stations are a quarter of the size of the new building, but that there would be some cost savings.

Ald. Shaw questioned the \$100,000 that is not in the budget.

Chief LaVecchia explained they submitted a budget that is \$100,000 less than last year. He stated if they do not secure other funding they will fall short.

Ald. Shaw asked about life packs and if that was a replacement or increase.

Chief LaVecchia explained they are on an upgrade plan with a phase in of the chest compression, adding it was extremely important they stay funded.

Ald. Stanford asked about line item 4942 0240 and 4942 0260 where two EMT's were requested and one IT tech, which was not added.

Chief LaVecchia stated they have applied for a "safer" grant which would give them a few years of salary. With regard to the IT person he stated they have one individual who is shared 50/50 with the police department.

Ald. German asked the Chief if he could expand upon the alternative funding.

Chief LaVecchia stated they are looking at ways the fire department can secure revenue. He stated one is through EMS billing and the other would be fire marshal inspections.

Ald. German asked if there are any projections at this point.

Chief LaVecchia replied not at this time.

Ald. Golden acknowledged the hard work of the department and all they do in the city.

Ald. F. Smith asked about batteries, which is maintenance for the equipment, but that the Chief was also asking for a separate account. He asked the Chief to provide some details.

Chief LaVecchia explained this was not on the original supplemental budget. He explained how they currently buy batteries through several different accounts, so they had no way of tracking them and how much they were spending.

Ald. F. Smith asked where each of the accounts are found in the budget.

Chief LaVecchia stated they are found in several accounts such as haz mat, equipment maintenance, defibrillators, radios, etc. He stated, regardless it is a battery.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about line item 4923 0350 and why it was cut to \$20,000 from \$50,000.

Chief LaVecchia explained it was a project going from firehouse to firehouse.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about line item 4942 0000 the reduction from \$30,000 to \$20,000.

Chief LaVecchia pointed to the line item above, 4923 0351, which he stated is also a new account.

Ald. Veccharelli asked if it would be appropriate to add monies to line item 4325 0012.

Chief LaVecchia responded no, stating it would be a separate 4700 line item and explained they were looking for a new account next year.

Ald. Vitali asked about line item 4782 0000 Film and Photography.

Chief LaVecchia explained they do still take a lot of photographs, especially in the Fire Inspector's Office.

Ald. P. Smith asked about line item 4119 0000, which she noted is \$0.

Mr. Erodiaci explained the allocation transfer which is done every year at the end of the fiscal year.

Ald. P. Smith asked about line item 4120 0000 which was reduced and asked if that is because they expect less to go to the academy.

Chief LaVecchia explained they now pay full tuition.

Ald. P. Smith asked how many retirees were expected over the next year.

Chief LaVecchia stated there are currently 3 openings. He stated they would be sending two to the September class. He also stated it is hard to figure when someone will retire and therefore is something that is difficult to project.

Ald. German asked the opening of the new firehouse and what was the original date.

Chief LaVecchia stated the original date was January 2012. He stated they expect to be in the end of June.

Ald. P. Smith asked about line item 4942 0254 Life Packs. She noted it is a \$0 budget and questioned rotating stock.

Chief LaVecchia stated the current model is a Life Pack 15, which has a cost of \$20,000. He stated they also have a Life Pack 12 on many engines. He went on to explain the phase in program. He also stated they obtained a grant three years ago which help replace these. He stated they are looking for alternate funding.

Ald. P. Smith spoke of public safety and making sure the citizens are safe. She state she was not comfortable with a \$0 budget for this item and further that she was not comfortable not upgrading on a continual basis.

Chief LaVecchia stated they have a total of 11, of which 6 or 7 have been replaced. He stated it more funds were needed he would come back before this Board.

Ald. Shaw asked if these are on every truck.

Chief LaVecchia provided the Board with a lengthy explanation of the need for life packs on the truck and how they are utilized by the firefighters and paramedics.

Ald. P. Smith referred to line item 4942 0259 and asked how many the \$24,000 would purchase.

Chief LaVechhia responded two.

Ald. P. Smith commented it was her recollection that several years ago the department received a grant to purchase these.

Chief LaVecchia explained they currently have three and they are assigned to the rescue trucks. He went on to explain the difference between the Lucas chest compressions.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about line item 4942 0240 and noted the department request was cancelled out.

Chief LaVecchia explained those are the rafts the department uses during flooding conditions. He stated the department is in good shape right now, but would like to see them replaced in the future.

Ald. P. Smith asked about line item 4120 0000 and if that would be expanded before June.

Chief LaVecchia explained this line item is used for tuition for the recent program. He stated the next class will be in September and they would likely send 3 or 4.

Ald. P. Smith stated it was her understanding this would be expanding and put into a reserve account.

Mr. Erodicti stated it was his understanding and that it would be by the end of the year.

Ald. Veccharelli commented this is a very tight budget and that it seems likely transfers from accounts might be necessary.

4331 Civil Preparedness – Chief LaVecchia was present for questions/comments. He stated this is basically a flat line budget with the only new account being the temporary emergency shelter. He went on to explain the loss of the Red Cross at emergency calls and how that changed the departments needs.

Chairman Vetro asked where they put people when those types of emergencies arise.

Ald. Vitali interjected stating there are sources that supplement that account such as Human Resources and United Way,

Chief LaVecchia concurred with Ald. Vitali, adding when it happens over a weekend or late at night that is when they need additional help.

Ald. Vitali commented there should be conversations with United Way because there are additional services that can be utilized.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about line item 4989 0335.

Chief LaVecchia stated that is primarily for flooded basements.

Ald. Veccharelli asked if that was a need or a replacement.

Chief LaVecchia stated there is a need for the pumps, but that they could get by for another year with what they have.

4805 CMED – Chief LaVecchia was present for questions/comments. Chief LaVecchia explained this is the communication link between the paramedic in the field and the hospital they bring the patient to. He stated it per call and that it is a formula basis. He stated this is Milford's fee for this year. Chief LaVecchia also pointed out they have someone who sits on the Board and monitors this closely.

Ald. Stanford asked why the Board of Finance raised the number.

Chief LaVecchia explained from the time the budget was proposed to now, CMED was in negotiations. He stated this is the final number arrived at as a result of the formula.

4360 Lights, Hydrants, Water – Chief LaVecchia explained this is the current fee they are getting from the water company. He explained the RWA owns all of the hydrants and leases them to the City and charges a fee for water usage.

Chairman Vetro asked about the increase in numbers.

Chief LaVecchia explained this is an account they added about 15 years ago. He explained this fee covers the cost for the installation of about 4 hydrants.

Ald. German asked about street lighting. He stated it was his understanding a better rate had been negotiated.

Mayor Blake stated this is what the pay UI directly. He stated what Ald. German is referring to is the generation rate.

Chief LaVecchia stated two years ago the City picked up the maintenance of the hydrants as condominiums. He noted there are approximately 1,400 hydrants in the city which the water company maintains.

4420 Public Works Office – Bruce Kolwicz, Public Works Director was present for questions. Mr. Kolwicz stated for all intense purposes that Public Works is out of money this year. He stated his office and all of the departments are out of money, adding this was one of the worst years in 20 years. He pointed out they are \$4,000-\$5,000 less in most of their accounts. He also stated they have lost 19 positions in the last 20 years and 7 employees alone last year.

Ald. Stanford asked about the clerk position eliminated by the Mayor and Board of Finance.

Mayor Blake explained that last year the Board of Aldermen eliminated one of the clerk positions. He stated there had been a request to put it back, but the Mayor and Board of Finance did not. Mayor Blake also explained the Kronis timecard system which he stated is being implemented and will help the office get some time back to do the things they need to do.

Ald. Shaw asked if it was just his office and if they would make it to the end of the year.

Mr. Kolwicz replied it was not likely.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about line item 4977 0190 stated it looks as though the department was looking for two and got one.

Mr. Kolwicz stated the computer is 6 years old, and is the worst of the two. He stated they were happy just to get one.

Ald. German asked Mr. Kolwicz if there was a figure he had in mind to get the department where they should be.

Mr. Kolwicz stated they overall budget is about \$400,000- \$500,000 less. He stated they will likely be coming back to this Board for transfers during the year.

Ald. P. Smith commented this is one of the largest offices in the city and certainly the busiest. She stated she was one who voted for some of the cuts and realizes this department does need two clerks and that it was a mistake eliminating the clerk position.

4421 Highway/Parks – Bruce Kolwicz, Public Works Director was present for questions.

Ald. Stanford asked Mr. Kolwicz to explain the job of a maintainer.

Mr. Kolwicz explained that is the person(s) who does everything and anything that pertains to public works. He stated they shovel, mow, weed, window cleaning, etc. He stated it is basically all physical labor.

Ald. Stanford stated according to the budget he was requesting two maintainers.

Mr. Kolwicz replied yes.

Ald. Anderson spoke of the resources utilized by the department and asked what kind of understanding they have with surrounding towns and resources.

Mr. Kolwicz stated they do not share with other towns. He explained the mutual aid agreement with Stratford.

Ald. P. Smith asked about line item 4533 0000 and 4534 0000. She stated it was her understanding if monies were not spent they went to a reserve account.

Mr. Erodici replied it is a Fund 40.

Ald. P. Smith asked if any of those funds were used because of the early Spring.

Mr. Kolwicz stated even with the mild winter they still expended monies because of ice, but they were able to put some monies in the reserve.

Chairman Vetro asked about line item 4189 0000.

Mr. Kolwicz explained that is for storm water testing, which is mandated by the State.

Ald. Shaw asked about overtime and if he would be covered.

Mr. Kolwicz commented they have less people, so they are doing what they can.

Ald. Shaw asked if it was for maintainers.

Mr. Kolwicz stated it is for all positions.

Ald. Shaw asked about line item 4515/

Mr. Kolwicz explained it is a catch basin cleaner. He stated they are looking to repair it, but noted he will be coming to the Board with the equipment replacement plan.

Ald. German asked about the street sweeper, adding he thought it was fairly new.

Mr. Kolwicz explained it has a broken piston. He stated it is a small piece of equipment, but very important.

Ald. Vitali asked about workers compensation.

Mr. Kolwicz explained that traditionally is not a budgeted item because they do it as someone goes out.

Mayor Blake explained it is a contractual fee they pay. He stated the cost has gone down with the new bins.

Mr. Kolwicz added it is a labor savings because the lift does the work now and they have seen less accidents, but feel they need at least a full year with the new equipment.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about line item 4432 0000. He stated there is a history of \$11,000, but both the Mayor and Board of Finance recommended \$5,000.

Mayor Blake explained those were the numbers given to them.

Ald. P. Smith expressed concern they were sacrificing in the long run and may be short changing themselves.

Mayor Blake pointed out account 4432 also contemplates the amounts that were transferred to other accounts. He stated the Mayor's recommended budget is a truer view of the account. A lengthy discussion ensued.

Ald. F. Smith commented that the Public Works Department is the face of the City to most, except possibly police and fire. He stated they have always done a fabulous job and commended their efforts, especially for such events as the Oyster Festival.

Ald. P. Smith commented she appreciated the explanations of the Mayor and Mr. Kolwicz, but the bottom line is if equipment is breaking and the department is having trouble getting things fixed, that is a problem. She added it is likely if they are out of money now, they will likely fall short again next year. She stated this needs to get taken care of and get the equipment on the road and more accurately fund the budget.

4423 Building Maintenance - Bruce Kolwicz, Public Works Director was present for questions.

Ald. Bier stated it was his understanding they were seeing a savings with regard to electricity, but also asked about fuel.

Mayor Blake explained the negotiations with Trans Canada which he stated it reflected in line item 4444 0000. He went on to explain some of the initiatives, the retro fit at Parsons and new thermostats in city buildings.

Ald. P. Smith asked about the 5-year agreement with electric rate.

Mayor Blake stated they received a 36 month extension, so yes it is about 5 years.

4424 Engineering - Bruce Kolwicz, Public Works Director was present for questions.

Ald. P. Smith asked if this department is at full staff.

Mr. Kolwicz replied yes.

Ald. P. Smith asked about line item 4977 0192.

Mr. Kolwicz explained there was equipment that came in at a lower price.

4429 General Garage - Bruce Kolwicz, Public Works Director was present for questions. No questions.

Ald. P. Smith asked the estimate to cover charges for repairs.

Mr. Kolwicz stated he did not have them, but would get them to the Board.

Ald. Shaw asked if it is parts and not manpower.

Mr. Kolwicz replied yes, adding they have a full staff in the garage.

Ald. P. Smith asked if public works still does the maintenance for all department vehicles.

Mr. Kolwicz stated they don't do the Board of Education or the Fire Department.

4431 Solid Waste - Bruce Kolwicz, Public Works Director was present for questions.

Ald. P. Smith asked if the number is realistic.

Mr. Kolwicz stated the single stream recycling is going very well and that they are recycling at about 51%. He stated they will need a full year of the program to get a real handle on it.

Ald. P. Smith asked if they are seeing any revenue coming back.

Mr. Kolwicz stated they never receive revenue for recycling and went on to explain the history.

Ald. Bier asked how the transfer station works and if they staff it.

Mr. Kolwicz explained CRRA built the building on city land and later gave the city the building. He continued with the history.

Ald. Bier asked if they pay Envior a fee.

Mr. Kolwicz stated it is part of the contract.

Ald. P. Smith asked about the two bulk trash pickups this year and estimated cost.

Mr. Kolwicz responded he is asked this every year. He stated it is approximately \$80,000-\$90,000.

Ald. German stated he would like to see the numbers for recycling. He also commented about Goodwill wanting to put a tractor at the transfer station.

Mr. Kolwicz stated he is waiting for a permit, but doesn't feel it is something that will go forward at this point.

Ald. Anderson asked about line item 4709 0000 and the details of that account.

Mr. Kolwicz explained this account has moved around over the year. He went on to explain the formula base.

Ald. Anderson asked if it is a set formula.

Mr. Kolwicz replied yes, adding it is established by Ordinance.

4426 Wastewater – Jim Cooper joined Mr. Kolwicz.

Ald. Shaw asked about line item 4741 0001 and if they had received nitrogen credits.

Mr. Cooper explained last year was a bad year.

Ald. Bier asked about upgrades to the facilities.

Mr. Cooper explained each of the upgrades at the faculties.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about updates with regard to fuel cells.

Mr. Cooper stated they have an engineer working on that, but nothing much is happening right now.

Mayor Blake noted a company is working with Milford and there may be a partnership in the future.

4503 Public Debt Service

Ald. P. Smith asked for an updated schedule of bonding.

Mr. Erodict explained the \$500,000 savings to FY2013.

4710 Employee Benefits

Mayor Blake explained several years ago GABY put out a new fee as to how communities fund their post employment benefits. He continued with a lengthy history.

Ald. P. Smith asked about the \$14,000 estimated.

Mayor Blake explained that is the arc. He explained they are not mandated to fund the arc, but they look favorably when the city is making contributions.

4720 Insurance and Bonds

Ald. P. Smith asked about line item 4825 0000 noting workers compensation is up.

Mayor Blake explained the number of claims and the fact that the reserve account has been drawn down.

4790 Benefit & Salary Reserve

Ald. P. Smith asked if this is the total of what the wage increase will be.

Mayor Blake explained they have not finalized all of the collective bargaining groups, but that this figure represents a best estimate.

4799 Unallocated Contingency

Ald. P. Smith stated some years monies have been put into this account.

Mayor Blake explained there are other accounts the city could draw from.

Ald. Veccharelli expressed concern they could lose the account without some dollar number.

Mr. Erodici stated that was a good point, and suggested the Board could put \$1.

4993 Education Audit Fees – no questions.

4994 School Debt – no questions.

4995 Employee Benefits, Non-Teaching – no questions.

4997 Education Health Insurance Contribution

Ald. P. Smith asked how the numbers were arrived at.

Mayor Blake explained the Finance Boar includes the latest numbers. He referred to p. 85 of the budget book.

Ald. P. Smith stated it was her understanding there would be a premium cost share which should reflect another reduction.

Mr. Erodici explained the numbers for the most part had been finalized, but they would make sure they were reflected prior to the budget vote.

Ald. P. Smith asked if the premium cost share is included.

Mr. Erodici stated it was built in because it was anticipated.

Ald. Veccharelli and Ald. Golden made and seconded a motion to recess at 10:19 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen K. Huber
Recording Secretary