

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION  
APRIL 26, 2020**

The Board of Aldermen resumed virtual budget deliberation session regarding the Board of Finance's recommended budget for fiscal year 2021-2022, on Thursday, April 26, 2020 via ZOOM. Chairman Vetro called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. asking those present to join in saluting our flag and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**1. Roll Call**

**Board Members Present**

E. Beatty  
C. Gaynor  
A. Giannattasio  
M. Hardiman  
G. Harla  
S. Marlow  
M. Parente  
F. Smith  
W. Smith  
A. Sutton  
J. Tranquilli  
P. Vetro  
R. Vitali  
W. Willis

**Also Present**

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake  
P. Erodicti, Finance Director  
K. Fortunati, City Clerk  
J. Rosen, Chief of Staff

**Excused**

J. Golden

Chairman Vetro welcomed everyone to the 2021-2022 budget deliberations. He stated tonight's meeting was the departmental portion of the budget process. Chairman Vetro reviewed the virtual meeting format.

Ald. Sutton and Ald. Giannattasio made and seconded a motion to come out of recess. Motion carried 13 in favor (Beatty, Gaynor, Giannattasio, Hardiman, Harla, Marlow, Parente, W. Smith, Sutton, Tranquilli, Vetro, Vitali, Willis) 1 unable to vote due to technical difficulties (F. Smith).

**Borough of Woodmont (p. 88)**

Ed Bonessi, Warden, stated the budget is for all public works in the 6 miles of roadway in the Borough limits. He stated an increase was requested due to being in a deficit due to Tropical Storm Isais and snow budget. Mr. Bonessi stated he hope the Board will support the small increase request.

Ald. Giannattasio asked for a clarification on extra funding requested. Mr. Bonessi stated it was for sidewalk projects that are overdue. He provided a summary of the sidewalk areas. Mr. Bonessi stated the Borough was attempting to use a state grant but was delayed due to lack of engineering drawings. He stated he is working with the Mayor's Office and Chris Saley, but the snow budget and tropical storm have caused the deficit. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the budget is passed as presented what are the implications. Mr. Bonessi stated that other funding from the Borough tax to cover additional expenses and will put off sidewalks and may take away from paving that was anticipated for the Fall. Ald. Giannattasio asked Mayor Blake if he had any comments. Mayor Blake stated the City and the Borough have worked well together. He stated more miles of Borough streets have been paved with City assistance. He commented on paving that will be completed by the gas company due to gas line construction. Mayor Blake stated the increase is \$5,000. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the \$5,000 is sufficient and will meet the needs. Mayor Blake stated the Borough and City came to a meeting of the minds and believes all were comfortable with increased amount. Ald. Vitali asked if the project was to be sidewalk or roadway. Mr. Bonessi stated originally it was sidewalk, but some funding will be recouped where the gas company will pave curb to curb paved. Ald. Vitali asked Mayor Blake if the City could make the sidewalk work given the walkable city initiative. Mayor Blake stated it is conceivable and the area in question is a state road. Ald. W. Smith stated he would support the Borough's original request. He discussed a department with a salary increase and how that can be so when the Borough request is being reduced. Mayor Blake stated this is an amount that was agreed to with the Borough and that the budget is remaining fairly neutral. Mayor Blake stated the Board can recommend and vote on amendments to the proposed budget. Ald. Harla asked if the paving projects is being put off or if the gas company dollars will fund the project. Mr. Bonessi stated it is being put off until the Fall and will be supplemented with funding from the gas company. He stated they Borough has taken advantage of the state bidding process which allows paving at a lower cost.

### **Transit District (p. 89)**

Henry Jadach, Executive Director, provided a summary of services provided by the Transit District. He stated the City's grant is important and the funds are matched by the State. Ald. Beatty asked the District's wish list from federal covid relief funding. Mr. Jadach provided summary of bus routes and how they could be enhanced. He also discussed a microservice, contactless fare system and joining the state with a common communication system throughout the state. Mr. Jadach stated some covid relief funding has been received as fares were not charged for a period. Ald. Beatty asked if an electric fleet is anticipated. Mr. Jadach stated that is a goal of the Governor. Ald. Vitali asked if there are plans to go to a hybrid before transitioning to electric. Mr. Jadach stated clean vehicles is the goal. Ald. Marlow asked the average ridership per day. Mr. Jadach stated it was approximately 500 on fixed route buses and pre-covid it was approximately 700 to 800. He stated those numbers will come back but it will be a slow process. Ald. Marlow asked the approximate age of buses and if there is a program for replacement. Mr. Jadach provided a brief description of the state replacement program.

### **Milford Arts Council (p. 87)**

Paige Miglio, Executive Director, provided a brief summary of the MAC operations. She discussed popup events and fundraisers. Ms. Miglio stated PPE was received by the MAC and sponsorships also provided additional funding. She shared her screen and discussed the "New Season!" and "In the Park" flyers. Ms. Miglio stated the MAC is excited to present these programs. She provided a report on the MAC and return in the Fall. Ms. Miglio discussed capacity at the MAC and how the programs will be presented. Mayor Blake commented on the creativity of the MAC and they adjusted and offered socially distant programs. Ald. W. Smith commented on the hard work of the MAC during the pandemic.

### **Human Resources Department (p. 41)**

Tania Barnes, Human Resources Director, stated overall the operating budget is flat. She discussed the minor increases requested. Mayor Blake stated there is a salary adjustment as this department was changed from personnel to human resources that took the lead on contract negotiations, information services, and pension and post retirement benefits. He stated the department has changed a lot and he received feedback that the salary for the department head was significantly lower than other department heads and surrounding communities. Mayor Blake stated this position grade was moved to the same level as Assistant Public Works Director. Ald. W. Smith asked if similar increases should be expected in future years. Ms. Barnes stated additional increases should not be expected. Ald. W. Smith asked if other increases can be expected in many other departments. Mayor Blake stated this is the only position that had a salary adjustment. Ald. W. Smith asked if other department salaries are being compared to other municipalities. Mayor Blake stated it is considered. Ald. Vitali asked why there is not dollar amount under capital outlays. Ms. Barnes stated capital outlay was not requested and computers are consolidated under MIS. Mayor Blake stated the capital outlay is a placeholder should a need and in such event an allocation transfer would require the Board to review and act. Ald. Beatty stated she disagrees with Ald. W. Smith and comparisons are made with similar communities. She stated salary increases should be anticipated from time to time. Ald. Marlow asked how many positions are unfilled at the current time and response to those positions. Ms. Barnes stated without counting police and fire there are currently 39 vacancies. She stated it varies based on position and skill sets required if it requires reposting. Ald. Marlow asked if people are looking to work for the City of Milford. Ms. Barnes stated she believes the City is an attractive employer. Ald. Vitali asked if the number provided with each position includes benefits. Ms. Barnes stated the amount is salary only. Ald. Vitali asked for a dollar amount salary and benefits that equates to the 39 vacant positions. Ms. Barnes stated she does not have the number available but will provide. Ald. W. Smith asked if there is a way to provide an approximation. Ms. Barnes stated it would be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars but cannot provide an exact number at the moment. Ald. W. Smith asked if the budgeted funds can be used for other items. Mayor Blake stated funds can be transferred within the personnel services and does happen to cover overtime, seasonal temporary staff and other personnel service expenses. He stated that vacancies are being filled from time to time and the number of vacancies fluctuates based on retirements and such. Mr. Erodici provided an estimate of upward of \$2,000,000 not including police and fire. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the majority of the 39 vacancies are in public works. Ms. Barnes stated the bulk of vacancies are public works. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the positions are being recruited or are stagnant. Ms.

Barnes stated they are actively recruiting. Mayor Blake stated that job requisitions have been submitted.

#### **Bridges Community Healthcare, Inc. (p. 89)**

Jennifer Fiorillo provided a brief summary of operation over the past year. She discussed operations during the Covid pandemic. Ms. Fiorillo stated on-site is beginning in limited instances. She discussed expansion of services and prevention efforts for underage drinking and drug use. Ms. Fiorillo stated Bridges serves over 1,300 Milford residents. Ald. Vitali asked if the money to be returned shown on the summary must be returned. Ms. Fiorillo confirmed it must be returned because there was not a significant loss. Carlos Rodriguez provided a summary on how covid relief funds were to be expended.

#### **Police Department (p. 43)**

Keith Mello, Chief of Police, stated this year approximately \$1,000,000 is expected to be returned due to effect from Covid. He stated during lockdown phase costs were lower. He discussed overtime expenses and how they were lower during Covid. Chief Mello stated the deficit will be approximately \$110,000. He stated the department is a full capacity with 9 recruits currently in the academy. Chief Mello discussed the police accountability bill and mandated costs. He stated \$21, 000 is in the budget for psychological evaluation and mandated drug testing for officers. Chief Mello discussed dashboard cameras and body cams. Mayor Blake stated the cruiser line item shows \$0 because it has been moved to vehicle acquisition program. He stated vehicles previously were in the departmental budgets and have all now been moved to the vehicle acquisition program. Ald. W. Smith discussed new police headquarters. He asked if there has been new discussion concerning headquarters. Chief Mello stated he has not had any discussions recently but there has been discussion concerning modifications to the existing facility. Ald. Marlow asked for an explanation of the body worn camera storage account. Chief Mello stated the account is for cloud storage for body worn camera data. Ald. Marlow asked if the department discovered different ways of operating during covid that will result in reduced costs. Chief Mello provided a brief explanation of why the covid operations are different from current day.

#### **Animal Control (p. 59)**

Scott Ellingson, Animal Control Officer, stated the budget is flat with no increases requested.

#### **Public Library (p. 35)**

Chris Angeli, Library Director, stated the year was challenging and the library adapted to provided services during the pandemic. She stated some services will continue to be offered. Ms. Angeli stated the budget request is flat. She provided a brief summary of services offered and utilization. Mayor Blake complimented the library on their work during the pandemic. Ald. Marlow and Ald. F. Smith commended the library staff on their work.

### **Probate Court (p. 26)**

Beverly Streit-Kefalas, Probate Judge, stated the budget reflects a minor increase for postage.

### **Council on Aging (p. 87)**

Lenora Rodriguez, Executive Director, provided brief summary of the Milford Senior Center. She stated the budget is flat. Ms. Rodrigues discussed partnership with public works to complete work needed at the center. She discussed covid related operations. Ms. Rodrigues stated the foodbank has operated curbside for those in need. She discussed supporting social service needs for members. Ald. Sutton, Ald. W. Smith, Ald. Marlow and Ald. Tranquilli complimented the Milford Senior Center on the projects that have taken place at the center to transform the facility and the work of the staff and volunteers. Ald. Marlow asked if meals are being served out of the facility at this time. Ms. Rodriguez stated the center is working with the Health Department to resume in-facility meals. Ald. Parente asked if homebound have received services. Mr. Rodriguez discussed difficulties homebound may have to obtain services and how the community can assist.

### **Beth El Center (p. 92)**

Jennifer Paradis, Director, discussed operations of the Beth El Center and increased needs due to the pandemic. She stated the budget request remains flat.

### **Health Department (p. 79)**

Deepa Joseph, Health Director, shared her screen with covid related information and work performed by the department. She stated the in addition to covid response all routine work also continued. Ms. Joseph discussed contact tracing work. She provided information concerning vaccination clinics offered by the department. Ms. Joseph discussed partnership with Yale to offer clinics on days the department is not utilizing the space. She stated an increase in overtime and seasonal is requested and as covid work will continue for the foreseeable future. Ms. Joseph discussed the request for reinstatement of Deputy Director. She stated that this year showed the need for a Deputy Director. Mayor Blake commended Ms. Joseph and the department staff on their work. He discussed the request for Deputy Director and its importance. Ald. Tranquilli asked for an explanation of the 6-foot rule for the Board of Education when the CDC recommends 3 feet. Ms. Joseph stated the CDC and state health department guidelines are being followed. She stated the definition of close contact was not changed by the CDC or state and because the school has been successful in implementing distancing controls.

### **Health Services (VNA) (p. 91)**

None.

### **Education Health Services/School Nurses (p. 95)**

None.

### **Human Services Department (p. 90)**

Ms. Joseph stated Human Services has seen an increase in the number of clients impacted by the pandemic. She stated it is anticipated request for services will increase as restrictions are lifted. Ms. Joseph stated the largest increase is in request for food vouchers.

### **Management Information Systems (MIS) (p.39)**

Adam Heller, IT Coordinator, stated there are a number of project ongoing to improve technology within the City. He stated there was a seamless transition to remote work. Mr. Heller stated the vacant position has been filled. He stated there is an increase in the cellphone account to allow for work out in the field. Mayor Blake commended the MIS department for their work during the pandemic.

### **Finance Department (p. 37)**

Peter Erodici, Finance Director, stated this has been a challenging year. He stated the divisions seamlessly transitioned and provided services. Mr. Erodici stated there are modest increases in seasonal temporary to cover vacancies in the Assessor's office and revaluation work. He stated an increase of \$10,000 in revaluation operations. Mr. Erodici discussed professional service and the hiring of a consultant to assist with the revaluation.

### **Registrar of Voters (p. 15)**

Kerri Rowland, Registrar, stated a small increase in postage account has been requested. She stated an acknowledgment letter is required when a vote registers or changes information. Ms. Rowland discussed training required in order to obtain federal grant funding. Ald. F. Smith commended the registrars and City Clerk for work and preparation for the election.

### **City Clerk (p.22)**

Karen Fortunati, City Clerk, thanked the Registrars for the dedicated and professional work,

### **Elections (p. 14)**

None.

**Public Works Office (p. 63)**  
**Highway/Parks (65-68)**  
**Building Maintenance (p. 69-71)**  
**Engineering Department (p. 72)**  
**General Garage (p. 74)**  
**Solid Waste (p. 76)**  
**Wastewater (p. 101-105)**

Chris Saley, Public Works Director, thanked public works staff and supervisor for their work and dedication. Mr. Saley stated discussed City projects and public works stepping up to resolve issues. He discussed fuel cell and savings to the City. Mayor Blake stated public works always steps up when necessary and provides aid to other department and agencies. Ald. Marlow asked status of unfilled positions. Mr. Saley stated through retirements 26 positions were reduced and 27 positions are unfilled. He stated it is a struggle and one of the biggest frustrations. Mr. Saley discussed open positions and challenges in filling those positions. Ald. Marlow asked who is responsible for the work of the unfilled positions and the impact on the budget once filled. Mr. Saley stated the open positions are budgeted although funds are used from those positions to pay for overtime for other staff to perform the work. He discussed salaries for skilled positions. Ald. Marlow asked if the purchase of St. Gabriel's will require additional staffing to maintain. Mr. Saley stated he is not certain the plans for the facility. Ald. Vitali discussed increase of salaries and being competitive with surrounding communities. Mayor Blake stated there are challenges in hiring throughout division and departments. He stated Mr. Saley is meeting with Human Resources Director to fill all the positions. Mayor Blake discussed difficulties in hiring for certain positions. He stated the department has grown over the past few years. Mr. Saley stated that 2 positions were added, but 26 positions have been given back. He stated wastewater is not competitive. Ald. Giannattasio recognized the work provided by the department. He stated he agrees with Mr. Saley that best practice is to be competitive with wages for specific skill sets. Ald. Giannattasio asked the possibility of outsourcing trash collection. Mr. Saley discussed contractual obligations for solid waste and changes to allow for automation. He discussed the City taking over the transfer station and utilization of staff. Ald. Beatty discussed the work of public works and how it was mentioned by many department heads during their budget presentations.

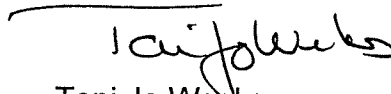
**Sewer Commission (p. 98)**

None.

Ald. Beatty and Ald. Giannattasio made and seconded a motion to recess. Motion carried 13 in favor (Beatty, Gaynor, Giannattasio, Hardiman, Harla, Marlow, Parente, F. Smith, W. Smith, Tranquilli, Vetro, Vitali, Willis), 1 unable to vote due to technical difficulties (Sutton). The Board recessed at 10:24 p.m.

Chairman Vetro announced the Board would stand in recess. Chairman Vetro stated the Board will be notified of the date for deliberation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Toni Jo Weeks", written over a horizontal line.

Toni Jo Weeks  
Recording Secretary