

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION
APRIL 29, 2020**

The Board of Aldermen resumed virtual budget deliberation session regarding the Board of Finance's recommended budget for fiscal year 2020-2021, on Thursday, April 29, 2020 via ZOOM. Chairman Vetro called the meeting to order at 7:00 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
J. Golden
J. Grant
M. Hardiman
G. Harla
M. Parente
F. Smith
W. Smith
A. Sutton
J. Tranquilli
P. Vetro
R. Vitali
W. Willis

Also Present:

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

Chairman Vetro welcomed everyone to the 2020-2021 budget deliberations. He stated tonight's meeting was the education portion of the budget process. Chairman Vetro reviewed the virtual meeting format.

Ald. Giannattasio and Ald. Golden made and seconded a motion for the Board to come out of recess. Motion carried unanimously.

Police Department (p. 43)

Keith Mello, Chief of Police, stated he is responsible for preparing and maintaining a responsible budget to run the department. He stated the budget is less than last year and that all departments were asked to review their budget and give back where possible. Chief Mello stated he had identified \$300,000, but the Board of Finance cut the budget by \$337,000. He discussed how the cuts will impact the department and that the additional \$37,000 was from wages where there are vacancies. Chief Mello discussed how the surplus in wages is used for overtime when necessary to hire back. He stated that are a number of things that the department will not be able to purchase. Ald. Gaynor asked how SRO's are being repurposed since schools are closed. Chief Mello stated one SRO is

posted at Parsons screening visitors that all permitted to enter by appointment. He stated the remainder are being used in the Patrol Division. Ald. Giannattasio note that many line items were at 0. He stated his biggest concern was with police cars. Ald. Giannattasio stated that not investing in the fleet puts the department at a disadvantage. Chief Mello stated new cars cost approximately \$40,000 plus another \$20,00 for equipment. He reviewed the car program and how it has changed over the years due to rising costs. Ald. Giannattasio stated he is not comfortable not investing in police cars, even in a smaller quantity. He asked if the Board of Finance provided any justification for their reductions. Chief Mello stated it was not discussed. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the most vulnerable accounts are overtime and cars. Chief Mello explained how surplus in wages goes to overtime and how it will be impacted. He stated due to the pandemic not a lot of overtime is being used but a surplus is needed or when the account is spent down will have to go outside the budget and request funds. Chief Mello stated cars are most vulnerable and he hopes this is not a starting point for next year. He further stated that when an account is not funded at some point it needs to be made up. Ald. Giannattasio stated he would be more comfortable purchasing a few cars this year. Ald. W. Smith asked Chief Mello to review the amount he cut from the department's budget and the amount cut by the BOA. Chief Mello reviewed the amounts cut and provide a brief summary of past budgets. Ald. Smith asked from the items cut from the budget, what line items will require the department asking for more next year. Chief Mello stated the car budget has been pushed to the limit. Ald. Smith asked if there have been discussion and a timeline concerning a new police station. Chief Mello stated he has not had further discussions concerning a new police station, but has discussed with the building committee what improvements should be made to the current station. Ald. Harla asked how durable are new police cars. Chief Mello stated durability seems to have improved. He further stated that public works is responsible for maintenance of the vehicles. Ald. Harla he understands the importance of keeping up a fleet. Ald. Gaynor asked if training funds are sufficient as they appear to be lower than other municipalities. Chief Mello stated training is crucial foundation and our officers are well trained. He stated he is comfortable with the budgeted amount for training. Ald. Parente asked if there was a rationale for the cuts made by the Board of Finance. Mayor Blake stated all department had been asked to look for ways to reduce their budgets as a significant increase on the expenditure sides was expected. Mayor Blake stated police cars were discussed with Chief Mello and presented to the Board of Finance. Ald. Parente asked why the crossing guard account was reduced. Chief Mello stated it was based on prior year expenditures. Ald. Giannattasio asked for an explanation of reserve accounts and how they are funded. Chief Mello stated the federal seized property account can only be used to purchase certain items. He also discussed the private duty account where vendors pay an administration fee that the department retains and uses to purchase equipment.

Animal Control (p. 59)

No comments.

Milford Arts Council (p. 87)

Paige Miglio, Director, stated budget is the same as prior years. She commented that due to the pandemic the MAC will lose approximately \$40,000 in revenue from shows and events. Ms. Miglio provided a brief summary on how the MAC is operating during the pandemic. She discussed the park bench project and provided an update on the project schedule. Ald. F. Smith asked for a status on

the Firehouse Gallery. Ms. Miglio stated the current tenant is vacating this weekend and they are in the process of searching for a new tenant. She provided a summary of the events offered and discussed how the MAC is looking for different ways to expand.

Transit District (p. 89)

Henry Jadach, Director, stated that fixed route buses are operating on full service with riders entering and sitting at the rear of the bus away from the driver. He further stated that fees are waived at this time and van services is on a limited basis. Mr. Jadach stated that buses are being sanitized each day. He provided a brief summary of the new bus shelter project. Mr. Jadach stated the increase in the grant is due to increase in salaries and healthcare. He stated the grant is important as it shows the City's support for public transportation. Ald. F. Smith asked for an explanation of current staffing. Mr. Jadach stated in order to get hours drivers are being rotated and are working sanitizing vehicles.

Borough of Woodmont (p. 88)

Ed Bonessi, Warden, provided a brief summary of road paving over the past 5 years.

Law Department (p. 24)

Jonathan Berchem, City Attorney, stated the budget is flat. He further stated the Board of Finance reduced other legal and professional services accounts. Attorney Berchem stated wages remain the same as the City Hall contract expires and is in negotiation.

Mayor's Office (p. 17)

Mayor Blake stated this was a difficult budget year and the effect of the pandemic on the economy is uncertain. Chairman Vetro complimented the Mayor, staff, health, fire and police departments for their work during the pandemic. Ald. Viali asked for justification of increase in Chief of Staff wage. Mayor Blake stated the Board of Aldermen approved the Chief of Staff position last year. He further stated the wages for this position are in line with the wages and step increases for Assistant Public Works Director. Discussion ensued concerning wage increases. Ald. Giannattasio asked if this is a 3 step position does the increase place at second step. Mayor Blake stated that is correct. He further stated some positions have 3 steps and others 5 steps. Ald. Giannattasio asked when the next increase will take place. Mayor Blake stated it is pursuant to the U-2 wage ordinance that follows the collective bargaining agreements.

General Expenses (p. 19)

No comments.

Ald. Giannattasio and Ald. Golden made and seconded a motion to recess. Motion carried unanimously. The Board recessed at 8:52 p.m.

Chairman Vetro announced the Board would stand in recess until Wednesday, May 6, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Toni Jo Weeks
Recording Secretary