

**BOARD OF FINANCE
BUDGET HEARINGS - PROPOSED BUDGET FY2013-2014
FEBRUARY 7, 2013**

The Milford Board of Finance held a budget deliberations session on Thursday, February 7, 2013 in Conference Room B of the Parsons Complex. Chairman Lema reconvened the budget deliberations in public session at 6:30 p.m. He explained the format for the meeting in accordance with the agenda.

Board Members Present

Brian Lema, Chairman
Scott Marlow, Vice Chairman
Joseph J. Fitzpatrick, Jr.
Mickel Montano
Joseph Castignoli

Also Present

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake
Peter Erodici, Finance Director

(4825) Beth El Shelter – Ms. Toni Dolan, Executive Director was present along with Mr. Richard Meisenheimer and Mr. Mike Williams. Ms. Dolan stated she was grateful for the support from the City of Milford and the ongoing partnership they have to serve the needs of Milford and recognizing that need. She stated their budget reflects a year end deficit, which she noted is the same on the State side and the national level. She stated the budget they are proposing assumes they will receive the same level funding from the State. Ms. Dolan also spoke of increased health insurance costs. She stated some of their other funding sources include the VA of West Haven, support of local civic organizations, local churches and the community. She stated the request before the Board tonight is the same as last year. Ms. Dolan stated her only request is that they don't receive a cut to their request.

Mayor Blake recognized the dedicated and hard work of Ms. Dolan.

Mr. Castignoli asked if they would break even, based on a cash basis.

Ms. Dolan replied yes, she was hopeful.

(4826) Boys & Girls' Club – Ms. Megan Altomare was present for questions/comments. She stated they are a typical afterschool program that runs until 6:00 p.m. 5 days a week; and from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. they have an enrichment program. Ms. Altomare stated overall they have over 25 programs, i.e. healthy eating, crafts, drug/alcohol free, etc. She noted their programs have grown. She also spoke of some of their fundraising initiatives and outreach activities, i.e. Oyster Festival. Ms. Altomare stated they try to get out into the community as much as possible.

Mayor Blake asked the number of members they have.

Ms. Altomare replied 208. She stated they also have a late Friday night program which includes basketball and other activities. She stated there is a karate program on Saturdays.

Mr. Marlow asked Ms. Altomare if she envisions outgrowing their current location.

Ms. Altomare replied yes. She stated they already have and are meeting with their capital improvement consultant seeking ideas.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked the full national budget.

Ms. Altomare replied \$285,700

Mr. Castignoli asked if the total amount Milford gives is \$65,000.

Ms. Altomare responded yes. She stated they are asking for additional funds this year so they can offer a summer camp. She stated there is a need for some lower income students to have somewhere to go this summer.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about additional funding.

Ms. Altomare stated they receive funds from the United Way of Milford and Connecticut State Alliance of Boys and Girls Club. She stated they also do fundraising, i.e. Pumpkins on the Pier.

(4111) Board of Aldermen – no questions/comments.

(4141) Board of Finance – No questions/no comments.

(4146) Flood & Erosion Board – no representatives were present. No questions/comments.

(4147) Tree Commission – no representatives were present. No questions/comments.

(4156) Conservation Commission – no representatives were present. No questions/comments.

(4159) Veterans, Ceremony & Parade Commission – no representatives were present. Mayor Blake stated this is the second year for this account, which was combined.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked why only \$240.00 had been expended to date.

Mayor Blake explained the bulk of their account is for the wreath laying ceremony on Memorial Day.

(4161) Housatonic River Estuary Commission – no representatives were present. Chairman Lema stated this Commission is made up of municipality's bordering the Housatonic. He asked the Mayor if this Commission is now fully funded by the other cities.

Mayor Blake stated Milford, Stratford and Shelton provide funding. He noted this is a very active Commission.

(4813) Bridges– Barry Kasden, President and CEO and Clair Phelan, Chairperson, Bridges Board were present. Ms. Phelan recognized the important relationship Bridges has with the City. She also acknowledged the Bridge's Board of Directors which she stated are very involved and are very generous in giving of their time and resources. She also spoke of the new building which she reported had its walk-through inspection today.

Mr. Kasden stated he is very grateful for the \$275,000 grant from the City. He also stated they recognize the financial constraints of the City and reiterated they are grateful for what they receive each year. Mr. Kasden stated they are seeing an increased number of individuals coming in for service. He stated State assistance has not increased and noted their budget is a reflection of some of the challenges ahead of them. He stated they still don't know the specifics as to what they will receive from the State. Mr. Kasden stated they operate very tightly and manage their finance very well, considering they see over 8,000 people per year. He noted 5,500 are Milford residents. Mr. Kasden provided a history of Bridges and explained they are a regional facility and therefore able to be partners with other agencies. He stated they get about 75+ calls a week from individuals and families seeking assistance. He reiterated they operate on a very tight budget even with the volume of calls they receive. Mr. Kasden spoke of their expanded space which allow them additional services, such as group services and make them a more efficient operation. He stated they should be open to the public in another month or two.

Mr. Marlow asked if they would be looking to increase staff.

Mr. Kasden explained with additional referrals, possibly as many as 30-40, it will give them more revenue.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how many Bridges type facilities are located in the State.

Mr. Kasden stated there are 7 non-profits and an equal number of State operated facilities, probably 16 throughout the State which are divided into regions.

(4807) Regional Mental Health – Ms. Claire Phelan was present for questions. She stated she represents the local entity of the Regional Mental Health and stated she has been pleased with the support. She explained Milford's fair share is .6 per capital. She also stated their main source of funding is a grant from the Department of Mental Health. Ms. Phelan continued reading a stated as to services provided. She commented with early intervention, mental illness can be treated.

(4815) Veterans Grave Preservation Commission – Mr. Tom Cody was present for questions/comment. He provided a background of what the Commission does. He stated basically they are responsible for maintaining historical graves and monuments and rely on the grant they receive from the City. Mr. Cody stated their work is unique.

Mayor Blake added, when there is a broken stone or they need to replace a stone the State Department of Veterans Affairs provides that service without cost.

(4816) Milford Flotilla 73 - Mr. Nick Siderick and Mr. Paul Pronovost were present for questions. Mr. Siderick stated they have a limited number of members, approximately 50, with the building being located in the jewel of Milford. He stated they also provide a vessel to the Coast Guard for this area as well as providing public education classes. Mr. Siderick stated the building is also used by the Milford Oyster Festival committee. He stated their biggest cost is building maintenance and stated they received approximately \$30,000 damage from Hurricane Irene and another \$10,000 from Storm Sandy. Mr. Siderick reported they recently updated their sonar vessel, which is used for training as well as searches. He noted they work closely with the fire department. He said their overall budget is about \$30,000. He also stated they did 32 patrols last year.

Mr. Marlow asked about other sources of income.

Mr. Siderick explained they have 73 corporate and explained how it works with public educations. He also stated they do a “cruise along”, which generates some monies. Mr. Siderick also talked about becoming a 501(c) last year which has helped a lot.

(4817) Human Services Department – Lisa Diamond Graham, Executive Director and Melisa Dubiel, Secretary/Bookkeeper were present for questions/comments.

Ms. Diamond Graham explained the Human Services Department provides services for human services, social services and youth and family services. She stated the increase in their budget reflects a request for an extra staff mentor. She also stated the fringe benefits and health benefits and cost of living. She added they are a City and grant funded agency. Ms. Diamond Graham stated their staffing has not changed since 1983, but services have increased significantly. She stated it was suggested by the Mayor that they hire someone as a contracted position and have brought that to their Board and City Attorney for input. She also addressed step raises per the City’s U2 increase and reiterated cost of living and insurance costs have gone up.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked the cost of the position.

Ms. Dubiel replied \$50,549, in addition to health and insurance as well as fringe benefits, i.e. FICA, workers compensation, life insurance and general liability. She also pointed out health insurance costs are about \$120,000 of their budget.

Mr. Marlow asked about other sources of income.

Ms. Dubiel responded they receive a State grant from the Department of Social Services and Department of Education, but have not heard from the governor how much they will be receiving at this point.

(4819) Milford Progress – Vincent Averaimo, Chairman was present for questions.

Chairman Lema stated he would be recusing himself from participating with questions of this department as he is on the Board of Directors. He turned the meeting over to Vice Chairman Marlow.

Mr. Averaimo stated they are the official economic development arm of the City, adding they are a group of business leaders who are solely volunteer. He stated they assisted with the Plan of Conservation and Development and oversee the Adopt A Spot Program and are working on completing the Wayfinding Program. He stated they have been working with the city engineer on this project. Mr. Averaimo spoke of the effects of Storm Sandy which has slowed down their progress, but that they should be up and moving shortly. He stated they are appreciative of the Mayor’s support.

Vice Chairman Marlow turned the meeting back over to Chairman Lema.

(4818) – Milford Historic District – no representatives were present. No questions or comments.

(4820) – Milford Historic District II – no representatives were present.

(4822) Cemetery Association – Mr. Steven Rogers, member of the Board of Directors was present for questions. He noted the passing of Bob Beard. He explained the history of the Cemetery Association and their location across from Saint Mary's Church and on Cherry Street and also on Buckingham Avenue by Gulf Pond. Mr. Rogers stated they have a part time secretary with an office at Gulf and Cherry Street, with a garage located across from Saint Mary's. He explained their income is derived from the sale of lots. He stated the Association appreciates all of the help from the City.

(4142) Department of Permitting & Land Use – Mr. Steven Fournier, Interim Director was present for questions/answers.

Mayor Blake stated that Mr. Fournier has been the Interim Director since January 18, 2013, filling in while the search committee, along with the Personnel Department looks for a replacement.

Mr. Fournier thanked the Board for the opportunity to come before them. He asked the Board to support the Mayor's proposed budget. He stated the department is very busy and has done an enormous amount of permitting. He stated the departments have also faced some challenges because of storms Irene and Sandy. He stated they are almost out of seasonal temporary money and are in the negative in the Planning and Zoning and Building Departments.

Mayor Blake added the budget as a whole has no increase except for the contractual 2% salary increase. He stated there is an increase in overtime and seasonal/temporary in the Building Department over last year, but that they expect double the amount of permit fees.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if fees were waived for the people affected by Storm Sandy.

Mayor Blake explained the City's portion of the permit fee was waived.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if that number was reflected in the budget.

Mayor Blake replied yes, on the City's portion of the fee.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if those people who were upgrading their project would be reflected on the tax rolls.

Mayor Blake stated it would only be for the replacement of existing.

(4144) Zoning Board of Appeals – Mr. Fournier was present for questions/comments.

Chairman Lema noted the budget is essentially secretarial fees and advertising.

(4219) Personnel Department – John O'Connell, Personnel Director was present. He stated his budget was essentially the same as previous years and that he would be happy to answer any questions.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about wages.

Mr. O'Connell stated they were contractual.

Mr. Castignoli asked if the percentage increase was 2%.

Mr. O'Connell replied yes.

(4145) Pension Board – John O'Connell, Personnel Director, was present to answer any questions. Mr. O'Connell stated the budget is for audit fees and secretarial fees.

(4151) Civil Service Commission – John O'Connell, Personnel Director was present. Mr. O'Connell stated his secretary takes the minutes for this Commission and takes comp time instead of pay.

(4620) Recreation Department – Paul Piscitelli, Director was present for questions. Mr. Piscitelli stated his department has once again reduced their budget, this year by 2.1%. He stated it is a trend they have had for the last few years and they have still been able to provide services to residents even with the declining budget. He also explained they have streamlined their office and now offer on-line registration. He expressed his appreciation to the Board for their support of his budget. He stated last year he had concerns with regard to minimum wage which he stated directly affects his seasonal temporary. He stated his seasonal temporary budget is the backbone of the department. He noted there is a proposal again on the State level to increase the minimum wage. He stated if it were to pass he would have a shortfall in this seasonal temporary account of about \$26,000.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the skate park is used.

Mr. Piscitelli replied yes. He stated they are also looking to do some renovations.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if there is a supervisor on duty.

Mr. Piscitelli responded no. He went on to explain the history dating back to when the YMCA was involved.

Mr. Castignoli asked about the computer upgrade.

Mr. Piscitelli stated they would like to do an upgrade from 2000-2010. He explained they are having some difficulties with outdated data.

(4153) Park, Beach & Recreation Commission – Paul Piscitelli, Director was present. He stated this account is basically for secretarial fees. No questions.

(4157) Harbor Management Commission (Fund 36) – Ray Swift, Operations Director was present for questions/comments. He stated they are coming off a successful year considering the loss of the PILOT funds, which he stated impacted them greatly. He reported the marina field sold out last year. He also stated the storms impacted their building, taking out most of their basement, electricity, etc.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how many kids work during the summer.

Mr. Swift stated he had 8 last year, sometimes 9.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about advanced bookings.

Mr. Swift stated they are looking good. He stated they are sold out for Memorial Day and the Oyster Festival.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked concessions.

Mr. Swift explained they collect from Scooby Doo and the Gulf Street concession stand.

(4112) Elections – Mrs. Linda Stock, City Clerk was present for questions/comment. Mrs. Stock stated the original request was \$90,300. She explained she spoke with the Mayor who asked her to drop it to \$75,000 which she did. She went on to explain that 2013 is a municipal election and that equipment alone with redistricting will cost about \$12,000.

Mr. Marlow asked about the equipment.

Mrs. Stock explained it is the programming and serving of tabulations.

Mr. Castignoli asked where in the budget the \$12,000 is added.

Mrs. Stock stated it is not.

(4115) Registrar of Voters – Antoinette Carey, Keri Rowland and Lynn McNamee, Deputy Registrar were present for questions/comments. Mrs. Carey provided the Board with a handout which explained the justifications for their budget. She pointed to the travel and conferences account and stated there are now 4 registrars who need to be trained, per statute at a cost of about \$1,456. She stated they are requesting \$1,500 remain in the budget. She continued with an explanation of the handout. She also explained the request for adding one computer.

Ms. McNamee expressed her support of the recycling program of adding a computer. She commented there are some days she doesn't even know if her computer will start up and when it does many times it will just freeze. She stated it is a sound investment and will help make the department very efficient.

(4129) City Clerk – Mrs. Linda Stock was present for questions/comments. Mrs. Stock provided a handout to the Board. She explained the accounts she felt would be short.

Chairman Lema asked if the handout showed where the shortages are.

Mrs. Stock replied yes. She spoke regarding the advertising account and explained there are a lot of documents they would like to see on-line, but the State still doesn't allow it. Mrs. Stock also stated she uses the local paper whenever possible. She also addressed professional services, which is the account they pay out to COTT.

Mr. Castignoli asked if that is a software system.

Mrs. Stock explained it is the recording system that is stored off site. She spoke of Resolution III, which is a very efficient system, which is quick. She stated she has requested a new system each year, but it has not been accepted. She noted COTT no longer supports the old system.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the addition costs for the new system.

Mrs. Stock stated they will actually be less.

Chairman Lema asked if the new system would be in place for the new budget year.

Mrs. Stock replied yes. She went on to speak regarding vital statistics. She explained how they have to pay other towns, ie. when someone dies. Also, it covers books, special paper, etc. She stated they are looking into newer systems that will save money. She reiterated her department is always looking for ways to save the taxpayers money.

Chairman Lema pointed out on the revenue side of the budget that conveyance tax is up.

Mrs. Stock noted that was an unusually large amount, but likely only a onetime event, which she stated was due to a large sale.

Chairman Lema asked if there was any trend as to a drop.

Mrs. Stock stated she expected it to remain about the same.

The Board recessed at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen K. Huber
Recording Secretary