

**BOARD OF FINANCE
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS - PROPOSED BUDGET FY2012-2013
FEBRUARY 23, 2012**

The Milford Board of Finance held a budget deliberations session on Thursday, February 23, 2012 in Conference Room B of the Parsons Complex. Chairman Lema reconvened the budget deliberations session at 6:33 p.m.

Board Members Present

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

Also Present

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake
Peter Erodici, Finance Director

(4215) Management Information Systems (MIS) – Jean Lasczak, MIS Coordinator was present. Ms. Lasczak stated her department runs the data systems for the City and that they also have someone who supports the system at the police and fire departments. She stated they also support the school nurses at each of the schools. She stated she has kept their budget flat.

Mr. Agro asked if the upcoming changes in the Building and Planning and Zoning Departments would have any impact.

Ms. Lasczak explained they had to work it out so that the GIS were compatible. She went on to explain the day-to-day operation of her office and how they service each of the City departments. She stated they have been having issues with the network with regard to View Permit. She stated after they work out all of the bugs with the systems they should not have any further interaction.

Mr. Agro asked about the person assigned to the police and fire departments.

Ms. Lasczak explained there is one person who splits time 50/50 with each department.

Mr. Fitzpatrick noted software maintenance is up 9,300 over last year and asked why.

Ms. Lasczak stated the increase is from the vendor. She also stated the amount is for maintenance for View Permit. She stated the annual increase in financial system is up just over \$4,000.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if there is an annual contract.

Ms. Lasczak replied yes, stating all software applications have to be maintained.

Mr. Marlow asked about the elimination of the PC Wan/Lan Coordinator.

Ms. Lasczak stated it is a request she had made the last two years.

Chairman Lema asked about putting the land records on-line.

Ms. Lasczak stated they only consulted with them in the acquisition of that service. She stated it is completely outsourced.

(4121) Mayor's Office – Mayor Blake stated his budget is essentially flat from last year, with just a few changes. He stated there is a reduction in gas and postage; otherwise everything else is the same. He also noted the bid prices from the State regarding computers are up.

Mr. Agro asked about travel & conferences line item. He stated there is a lot of good information out there. He stated he wanted to make sure we were taking advantage of what is out there. He stated with this line item so low, he wanted to make sure the City was being shortchanged.

(4122) General Expenses

Mr. Agro asked about line item 4773 0003 Burnt Plains Open Space and how far along the City is in the process.

Mr. Erodicti stated he had just discussed this. He stated he did not have the figures in front of him, but would get them.

Mr. Marlow asked about line item 4875 0000 Planning Agency.

Mayor Blake stated this is through the COG and that the figure is based on population.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if everyone pays the same \$33,000.

Mayor Blake stated he believed there are two towns that do not. He explained it is for regional planning. He stated it is a development tool for Milford and the area. Mayor Blake stated it also acts as a clearinghouse for State grants.

(4121) Golf Commission – Dick Austin, Chairman was present for questions.

Mr. Marlow asked about any plans for upgrading.

Mr. Austin stated they have a new management. He stated they have been very active while the course has been closed. He stated the course has averaged over 30,000 rounds the past year. Mr. Austin also stated there would not be an increase in fees this year. He stated they do receive half the fees from carts and \$.75 on every pull cart. He stated they have a very good agreement in place and that they are a very good management company.

Mr. Marlow asked the length of the contract.

Mr. Austin replied 5 years.

Mr. Agro asked how long the course has been open and asked about the infrastructure.

Mr. Austin replied 14 years. He stated they have done repairs to the aprons this year and also sodded.

Mr. Agro asked about the clubhouse.

Mr. Austin stated the rug was replaced last year and that the walls were painted recently as well. He stated they have a good rotating schedule.

Mr. Agro asked who the name of the new management company.

Mr. Austin responded Tournament Turf Care, LLC, with Jud Smith and Joe Fabrizio. He stated they have the same manager at the clubhouse as previously.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked the amount in the open space account.

Mr. Erodici stated it is a Fund 76 and that he would get the actual number.

(4811) Borough of Woodmont – Mr. Bonessi, Borough Warden and Christopher Schmeisser, Chairman of the Borough of Woodmont were present.

Mr. Bonessi explained the history of the Borough and how they arrive at their operating budget.

Mayor Blake stated he mentioned at the last regular meeting of the Finance Board that there would be a bonding package before this Board next month.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the \$500,000 upcoming project for the damage from Storm Irene.

Mayor Blake stated the cost is approximately \$414,000, plus financing.

Mr. Schmeisser added that FEMA is very involved with the project.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the project would complete the work.

Mr. Schmeisser stated the next major capital improvement plan would be the storm water run-offs/groin area. He stated they are setting aside money over the next few years for this project as well as the seawalls.

(4320) Fire Department – Chief L. LaVecchia and Battalion Chief William D. Healey were present for questions/comments. Chief LaVecchia stated his budget has been reduced \$98,000 from the previous years with significant cuts. He stated they are looking for alternative sources so that there will not be any loss of services.

Mr. Agro asked about the combining of operations and expanding units with the two units he had mentioned last year.

Chief LaVecchia stated they were still in contract negotiations with the union.

Mr. Agro asked Chief LaVecchia if he was still looking to expand EMS coverage. He also asked about the coordination of dispatchers of police and fire.

Chief LaVecchia referred to the Kimball report which was a study for Milford and who also did a full study for the State of Connecticut and came back with three recommendations. He went on to explain the recommendations, adding it was likely the State would change the statute to encourage regionalization.

Mr. Agro asked if there was funding out there and if it could be increased.

Chief LaVecchia responded yes.

Mr. Agro asked about manpower would be changed if this goes through.

Chief LaVecchia responded it would not change.

Mayor Blake stated any change would be done in a thoughtful and deliberate manor. He stated the regionalization was likely with municipalities under 40,000, over that, he stated he did not believe the State could regionalize.

(4331) Civil Preparedness – Chief LaVecchia was present. He stated this is a bare bones budget. He stated when there are storms like this past year, these account are used extensively.

Chairman Lema asked about the cold weather shelter.

Chief LaVecchia explained with the loss of the Red Cross in Milford, when there is a structure fire; the fire department makes the arrangements to put up families.

Battalion Chief Healey added, with the cold weather they also provide cots, blankets, etc.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about line item 4944 0216 Early Warning System asking about the cost, which he stated seems to change often.

Chief LaVecchia stated the department has had several different systems in place over the years. He stated they now use Everbridge. He stated cost depends on the year and what is needed. He also stated this account takes into account the sirens on the shore line.

Mr. Agro commented the system certainly was tested with Storm Irene this past year.

Battalion Chief Healey stated the system worked well. He stated it has the ability to send texts, as well as calls. He stated there are some flaws that are being worked out, but that the new technology is needed.

Mayor Blake pointed out the State pays a portion of the calls for Everbridge.

Battalion Chief added they can do selective warnings.

Mr. Marlow asked how they get the phone numbers and how they are imputed.

Chief LaVecchia explained there are handouts; they conduct open houses, etc to get these numbers. He stated those numbers are then imputed into the system by the dispatchers.

(4360) Lighting, Hydrants, Water – Chief LaVecchia was present for questions/comments.

Mr. Agro commented on the cost of hydrants and asked if there is a voice on the Board to let them know the costs are excessively high.

Chief LaVecchia agreed, but stated the service is great, which is important. He stated it is a near perfect water system. He also pointed out that they service all hydrants in the City twice a year.

(4805) C-MED – Chief LaVecchia was present for questions/comments. He stated what the City is charged stays nearly flat with a 2% increase.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if this is AMR.

Chief LaVecchia stated this is the communications with the paramedic and the sponsor hospital.

(4420) Public Works Office – Bruce Kolwicz, Public Works Director was present.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the new computer.

Mayor Blake interjected stating they had asked for two and received one.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how many they have in the office.

Mr. Kolwicz replied 5.

(4421) Highway/Parks – Bruce Kolwicz, Public Works Director was present. Mr. Kolwicz addressed the snow removal account (4113 0000). He stated those monies would go into a reserve account. He explained there is always some expense whether it is for removal, salt or sand.

Mr. Fitzpatrick commented the Town of Orange does not use sand, but instead they use a mixture on their roads.

Mr. Kolwicz stated he was not sure what they use, but pointed out they have more State roads. He went on to explain LOSCIP monies.

(4423) Building Maintenance – Bruce Kolwicz, Public Works Director

Mr. Agro asked about line item 4444 0000 Heating Fuel. He asked if the City was still locked in with last year's prices.

Mayor Blake spoke of the measures that have been put in place, including new systems in the Parsons Building and City Hall. He stated they were hopeful these measures would bring the costs down.

Mr. Agro asked if the schools are gas fired.

Mr. Kolwicz stated they are still on heating oil.

Mr. Agro asked if there are any considerations to change.

Mr. Kolwicz responded yes, but it needed to be cost effective before doing so.

Mr. Marlow commented the Board of Education contracted with a company to look for additional savings. He asked if this is something the City could do.

Mr. Kolwicz stated they have had savings with NEXGEN and that they see that savings on the bill. He also pointed out the cost to retrofit the buildings is costly.

Mayor Blake added that UI recently did a free energy audit and that the City would wait to see what they say.

Mr. Kolwicz stated it would have to work for all and it can't be costly to the City.

(4424) Engineering – Bruce Kolwicz, Public Works Director was present.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if they now have a full time engineer.

Mr. Kolwicz responded yes, adding the new engineer has a PD and LS license which is very helpful in the long run with surveys.

Mr. Agro stated last year he director indicated he was in favor of a private consultant. He asked if they are still hiring consultants.

Mr. Kolwicz responded they do so very rarely now. He stated he works with the State and DEP.

Mr. Marlow asked about GPS.

Mr. Kolwicz stated it was ordered.

(4429) General Garage – Bruce Kolwicz, Public Works Director was present.

Chairman Lema stated it was his recollection this Board approved bonding for a new roof.

Mr. Kolwicz replied yes, the work would begin shortly. He also spoke of the lifts that were due to arrive in another week or so.

Mr. Agro asked if the lifts are floor mounted.

Mr. Kolwicz replied yes, with safety mounts.

(4431) Solid Waste Operations – Bruce Kolwicz, Public Works Director was present.

Mr. Agro asked about the recycling program.

Mr. Kolwicz stated they are 51% ahead of where they were last year for tonnage.

Mr. Agro asked if that is recycling.

Mr. Kolwicz replied yes. He stated they are 6 months into the program, but would need a full year to see how much, if any savings. He also stated in the past the schools were not recycling, but that they are getting new bins.

Mr. Agro asked about the tipping fee.

Mr. Kolwicz replied 67+.

Mr. Agro asked if they deliver to Stratford.

Mr. Kolwicz replied yes, that they just dump. He also explained the fixed price and the credit for recycling tons. Mr. Kolwicz also commented about the need to get the condominiums to buy in as well so it is all productive.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked where the landfill trash goes.

Mr. Kolwicz explained the garbage goes to Bridgeport (trash to energy), nothing goes to the landfill. He stated his budget has already been cut over \$500,000 and that they could not take any more cuts. He stated in his 20 years of budget presentations he has had 19 people cut. He stated they are really being squeezed. He also reported he would be coming to the Board shortly for equipment.

(4154) Sewer Commission (Fund 12) - Robin Lynch, Administrative Assistant was present for questions.

Mr. Agro asked about the one position and if anyone was in that position.

Ms. Lynch stated the position is vacant, but that she is paid from those funds for doing the work. She went on to explain those responsibilities.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the Clean Water Fund grant from the State to facility work.

Mr. Erodici explained it is a low interest rate from the State for sewer repair. He explained the loans.

Mr. Kolwicz added that Milford has the lowest sewer user fees around.

Mr. Agro asked what percentage of Milford has sewers.

Mr. Kolwicz replied almost all of Milford except, North of the Boston Post Road.

(4426) Wastewater –Bruce Kolwicz, Director, Public Works and Jim Cooper, Superintendent were present.

Mr. Agro asked about the plants and their operation.

Mr. Cooper spoke of the nitrogen credits explaining a lot had to do with the flow.

Mr. Agro asked about high water levels.

Mr. Cooper stated they are down from past years.

Mayor Blake added they had expected to receive more for nitrogen credits, but unfortunately the calculations changed so the City is not receiving as much as had been thought.

Mr. Cooper referred the Board to p. 105 of the budget book. He stated there were several vehicles the department had put in for that were cut from the budget. He stated their vehicles are very old and tired.

(4210) Finance Department – Peter Erodici, Finance Director, Daniel Thomas, Assessor and Judy Haley, Tax Office were present. Mr. Erodici stated his budget is lean and has been stable over past few years. He stated they continue to work hard to do more with less and continue to work with new mandates. He stated they also have several new individuals in the department. Mr. Erodici also reported the purchasing agent just retired. He recognized two key department heads present tonight, Dan Thomas, City Assessor and Judy Haley, Tax Collector. He stated he appreciated their hard work and presence tonight.

Mr. Agro asked the percentage of collections.

Mrs. Haley replied they are better than 98%. She stated the remaining percentage is people who have fallen on hard times.

Mr. Agro asked if the last tax lien was sold.

Mrs. Haley replied yes.

Mr. Agro commented the collection rate is a great sign.

Mrs. Haley stated notices go out all the time for unpaid taxes.

Mr. Agro asked if the grand list had been finalized.

Mr. Thomas stated they are close.

Mr. Agro expressed his hope the Board would have it by the time they vote.

Mr. Erodici stated he would have some preliminary calculations as soon as he receives the numbers from Mr. Thomas.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked why there was a drop in the seasonal/temporary account.

Mr. Erodici explained his predecessor came back for a short time after her retirement.

(4502) Equipment Reserve Allocation

Mayor Blake this was the account used prior to switching to the Vehicle Acquisition Plan.

Chairman Lema asked if this could be removed from the budget books.

Mr. Erodici stated since this is a zero account; it could be removed for the next budget year.

(4503) Public Debit Service

Mayor Blake stated the finance director would have a technical correction. He explained they refinanced some bonds that had already been financed and saved \$1,000,000 over 10% savings for refinancing.

Mr. Agro asked if the term was extended.

Mr. Erodici replied no. He added it was an extraordinary savings.

Mayor Blake reiterated it was a savings of over 10%, which he stated is unheard of. He commented it is quite a process.

(4994) School Debt Service – no questions.

(4995) Employee benefits, Non-teaching – no questions.

(4710) Employee Benefits, General – Mayor Blake stated they were currently looking at the RFP.

(4720) Insurance and Bonds

Mr. Erodici stated this account is normally kept level and if there is an excess a transfer is made.

Mr. Fitzpatrick commented on the massive workers' compensation amount.

Mr. Erodici stated the contribution has been lowered over the last five years. He stated the claims level has been consistent.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if workers' compensation is self insured.

Mr. Erodici replied yes.

(4740) Claims & Refunds - No questions asked.

(4790) Benefit & Salary Reserve

Mr. Agro asked about line item 4199 0000 Other Wage Adjustments. He commented it appears nothing has been expended to date and asked if this is something that is done at the end of the year.

Mr. Erodict explained as contracts are executed and signed they release the retro increases.

(4799) Unallocated Contingency

Mr. Agro commented he could not believe nothing was put into this account, adding he understands the system can allow this Board to move monies into the account.

Mayor Blake reminded the Board the moving of any monies would require a legislative transfer in order to use the money.

(4993) Education Audit – No questions.

(4997) Education Health Insurance Contribution

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how this number is calculated.

Mr. Erodict explained it is from the data from claims experience and reviewed by the City's insurance consultants and carrier. He stated he then reviews the numbers.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if there are any comparison numbers vs. the City.

Mr. Erodict replied yes. He stated they keep an eye on it, although it has been steady about a 40/60 split.

Mayor Blake pointed out the Board of Education has more employees.

Chairman Lema asked if this included retired employees.

Mr. Erodict replied yes, those who are under age 65. He stated those over age 65 are on Medicare.

Being no further budget business, the Board recessed at 9:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen K. Huber
Recording Secretary