

**BOARD OF FINANCE
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS - PROPOSED BUDGET 2010-2011
MARCH 15, 2010**

The Milford Board of Finance held a budget deliberations session on Monday, March 15, 2010 in Conference Room B of the Parsons Complex. Chairman Lema reconvened the session at 6:30 p.m.

Board Members Present

Brian A Lema, Chairman
Joseph M. Agro, Jr.
Joseph J. Fitzpatrick, Jr.
Paul Beckwith
Scott Marlow

Also Present

Mayor James L. Richetelli, Jr.
Judy Doneiko, Finance Director

Mr. Agro stated last year this Board did the revenue side of the budget first which he stated he found to be very valuable. He asked if there was any purpose to doing it that way again, but that he would be ok with doing it the traditional way. He also commented these are slightly different economic times than last year when the Board needed to know what they would have before going onto expenditures.

Chairman Lema stated the Board would start on p. 4 General Revenue.

Mr. Agro asked about tax collection and the percentage this year.

Mr. Doneiko stated it is slightly under 98% this year.

Chairman Lema asked if they expected any big expenditure.

Mayor Richetelli stated there are some potential foreclosures the city may move on.

Mr. Agro asked about line item 3111 0001 Audits - if this account was the result of the personal property was audit reports.

Mayor Richetelli explained the report is about two months old. He explained they are doing 200 accounts the first year. He went on to explain the process and were they stood currently. He stated in this budget they expect to do another 200 accounts.

Ms. Doneiko added the audit firm would get a percentage of those collections.

Mr. Agro asked about line item 3516 0000.

Ms. Doneiko explained they receive these projects from the State and that they expect \$214,248.

Mayor Richetelli stated with regard to line item 3670 0000 Manufact. Machines/Equip and line item 3711 0001 Conveyance Tax that they would continue to watch these accounts.

Mr. Agro asked about line item 3711 0001 and if that was a comfortable number.

Mayor Richetelli stated the City Clerk is more concerned with line item 3711 0000 Recording Documents.

Mr. Agro asked about line item 3721 0000 and if an increase in fees is being considered.

Mayor Richetelli stated these recommendations are from the building inspector.

Mr. Agro asked if they are looking at higher fees.

Mayor Richetelli responded no.

Mr. Agro asked about line item 3751 0000 Planning & Zoning Fees.

Mayor Richetelli explained the increase in the State fees. He stated there will be a proposal going to the Board of Aldermen/Ordinance Committee for their approval, but that the fees are commensurate with the increase at the State.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about line item 3811 0000 Sewer Assessments.

Ms. Doneiko stated this line item is money paid back to the city. She explained this is the line outside a private home.

Mayor Richetelli noted there have not been any new installations.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about line item 3901 0000 Appropriated Fund Balance.

Ms. Doneiko stated last year it was \$3,750,000, which was about 6%. She explained how the numbers would affect the city with a bigger budget.

p. 14 – Board of Aldermen (0010 4111)

Mr. Agro asked about line item 4701 0000 Election Expenses. He stated this Board heard from the City Clerk this was under budgeted.

Mayor Richetelli explained they budget for the average election year. He stated in a presidential year the cost is up and in a municipal year the cost is lower.

p. 16 – Registrar of Voters (0010 4115)

Mayor Richetelli stated this department has not had a pay increase in two years. He recalled the Board of Aldermen last season did not raise the salary of the two registrars, city clerk and may. He stated he wished to make this Board aware the registrars have requested an increase, but that he did not recommend it.

p. 16 – Milford Gov't Access TV (0010 4116)

Mr. Agro asked if this department had worked out its difficulties.

Mayor Richetelli stated they should be fine fiscally. He stated they have applied for grants.

p. 19 – General Expenses (0010 4122)

Mr. Agro asked about line item 4189 0000 Professional Fees & Svcs. He asked if those monies are for the grant coordinator position.

Mayor Richetelli explained this line item was increased to what it was originally.

Mr. Agro stated he wanted to be clear it was not a raise.

Mayor Richetelli responded it is the same rate of pay, but more hours.

Chairman Lema asked about line item 4773 0003 Burnt Plains Open Space and asked if the city purchased the land.

Mayor Richetelli replied yes. He explained the terms of the purchase. He also spoke regarding the loan to purchase the Downs House.

Mayor Richetelli stated he wished to bring to the Board's attention line item 4875 0000. He stated there are two agencies the city belongs to RCOG which brings in transportation dollars; and RGP regional growth planning which is no defunct. He stated there is a movement to reorganize and if it were to happen he would recommend an increase.

p. 23 – City Clerk (0010 4129) Mayor Richetelli stated the City Clerk requested line item 4771 0000 be increased to \$12,500 and line item 4774 0000 be reduced to \$5,000.

p. 25 Law Department (0010 4131) Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about legal fees concerning the Assistant City Attorney.

Mayor Richetelli stated it would depend on appeals. He stated they were not asking for any more money at this time. He stated with regard to the federal complaint, the City has filed a claim with CIRMA and they will provide counsel.

p. 29 Building Inspector should read "Chief Building Inspector".

p. 28-29 Permitting and Land Use (0010 4142) – Mr. Agro asked if there has been progress in this new arrangement.

Mayor Richetelli responded it is a work in progress. He stated much of the progress has been on the building department side. He also noted that one of the Building Inspector A positions has been vacated due to

retirement. He stated the remaining Inspector A person is on light duty and doing plan reviews. Mayor Richetelli stated the Building Inspector B position is vacant at this time.

Mr. Marlow asked how long that individual would be on light duty and if it would affect overtime.

Mayor Richetelli responded it would not affect overtime. He stated overtime in that department has decreased drastically since the changeover. He noted it also has to do with the economy.

Mr. Agro asked about the zoning enforcement officer which has been vacant.

Mayor Richetelli stated the position was advertised for and tested.

p. 31 Tree Commission (0010 4147) – Mr. Beckwith asked about secretarial fees for this commission. He stated it was his recollection they had asked for an increase.

Mayor Richetelli stated that line item covers 10 meetings a year.

p. 36 – Housing Code Board of Appeals (0010 4160) Mayor Richetelli stated line item 4168 0000 may have to be adjusted if this Board were to begin meeting on a regular basis. He explained because of the new anti-blight Ordinance this Board may begin to see more and more hearings. He stated he was not asking for an increase now, but may need one in the future.

p. 37 – Public Library (0010 4193) – Mr. Fitzpatrick commented the library gave an excellent presentation when they presented their budget.

p. 42 Management Information Systems (0010 4215) Mayor Richetelli explained a position change. He emphasized there were no new hires. He stated the EDP Equipment Operator A was changed to a partime Tech Asst/Clerk A.

p. 45 Police (0010 4310)

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if there are 5 positions currently in training and if they have already been hired.

Mayor Richetelli stated there will be 1 in Hartford and 4 at the State Academy in Meriden in April, or possibly in Milford.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if that includes the additional officer.

Mayor Richetelli responded no.

Mr. Fitzpatrick commented he still has a problem with adding an additional officer when there are still other vacant positions.

Mayor Richetelli explained the training period which is over 9 months. He also spoke of the pledge he made a few years ago to add one police officer a year for 4 years.

Mr. Agro commented about when he served in 1975-1976 and the changes the department has seen since then. He stated although he is not in favor of hiring anyone in this economic climate, he felt hiring a police officer would save on overtime.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about line item 4112 0000 OT Regular and commented it is even hiring than what was projected in 2009-2010. He stated he felt it should be less.

p. 53 Fire Department (0010 4320) Mr. Agro asked about the new rescue truck and consolidation.

Mayor Richetelli responded it should not affect this budget.

Mr. Agro expressed concern with overtime for the new rescue truck.

Mayor Richetelli stated currently rescue 2 is overtime on peak hours. He explained with the consolidation they would use existing personnel to put a second company on in the new station. He stated the other rescue truck would run out of station 8.

Mr. Agro asked about line item 4772 0002 Turnout Gear Maint/Replacement. He asked if this Board was under any obligation to provide more.

Mayor Richetelli explained this account if for refurbishing the turnout gear.

Mr. Marlow stated the point is whether or not it saves in the long run on the gear.

p. 60 Civil Preparedness (0010 4331) Mr. Agro commented it was his recollection the Chief seemed to think line item 4723 0000 Uniforms and Weather gear was a typo because the Chief had stated he asked for \$5,000.

Mayor Richetelli responded this was a reduction and not a typo.

p. 62 Animal Control (0010 4340)

Chairman Lema asked about line item 4980 0601 Security System. He asked if there would be ongoing costs associated with this.

Mayor Richetelli stated he believed this was for a camera.

Mr. Fitzgerald made a general comment regarding workers compensation and noted in many departments he saw \$0.

Ms. Doneiko explained 66% of the salary is chargeable to workers compensation. She stated the City makes up the other 44%. She went on to explain the transfer that is made to make up the City's portion.

p. 66 Lighting, Hydrants, Water (0010 4360) Mayor Richetelli stated he received a request from the Fire Chief that line item 4846 0000 Hydrant rental be increased to \$150,000. He explained the increase is to cover the costs associated with inspections of the hydrants at condominiums and having the ability to know they are in working order.

Mr. Agro asked about the value of ISO.

Mayor Richetelli stated response time has increase and that it is the taxpayer that reaps the benefit of the ISO rating.

p. 69 Highway/Parks (0010 4421)

Chairman Lema asked about line item 4113 0000 Snow Removal and where the City stood at this point due to the weather we have had this winter.

Mayor Richetelli responded it was his understanding they have not received any State reimbursement.

p. 73 Building Maintenance (0010 4423) Mr. Fitzpatrick asked who is in charge of the natatorium.

Mayor Richetelli explained the 5 year contract extension.

p. 76-77 Engineering (0010 4424) Mr. Agro asked about the City Engineer position. He questioned if the position is not going to be filled, then should it be deleted from the budget. He suggested if the position were to be deleted the monies would have to be put into the appropriate accounts for professional services.

Mayor Richetelli stated there is only one open position, the city engineer. He stated he would not recommend removing this position at this time. He stated he felt a town the size of Milford should have a city engineer.

Chairman Lema commented if it is the position of the mayor to keep the position, then this Board should do so, however, if they accept the position given by Mr. Kolwicz last week, then the Board would have to consider removing the position.

Mr. Marlow stated he feels the city needs an engineer. He stated while he fully understands you won't get all the components, the city should still have one.

Mayor Richetelli also noted when the city did have an engineer, that person worked directly with the DOT. He stated right now there is no one person that does that, which is one example of why the city would benefit by filling that position.

p. 84-85 Health Department (0010 4610) Mayor Richetelli reported they have been meeting with the nurses union. He stated he wished to make the Board aware of a potential change, but that he did not expect to have it by the vote tomorrow.

p. 90 Employee Benefits (0010 4710) Mr. Agro commented this line item seems to be more of a difference of opinion.

Mayor Richetelli stated this is an issue they will have to confront.

Chairman Lema commented the number gets larger and larger each year.

Ms. Doneiko explained there is an annual required contribution and that is what the number shown represents.

Mayor Richetelli stated they have been working on a plan and have put together a blue ribbon panel to address this.

p. 91 Insurance and Bonds (0010 4720) Chairman Lema asked about line item 4825 0000 Workers Compensation.

Ms. Doneiko explained the amount in reserve represents the potential claims for the year. She stated the number reflects what they will need and still leave a bit of a reserve.

p. 92 Unallocated Contingency (0010 4799) Mr. Agro stated he is very uncomfortable with the \$25,000 figure for a city the size of Milford.

Mayor Richetelli stated this is an account that has not been used for some time. He stated even with a major contingency there would be funds available for the contingency.

Ms. Doneiko added this account is really for the unexpected little things you just can't plan for.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how much is in the account.

Ms. Doneiko stated it is around the figure shown. She stated there are some accounts that have fallen short, such as advertising, which would come from this account.

p. 94 Borough of Woodmont (0010 4811)

Mr. Agro asked if this is a figure the Board was comfortable.

Mayor Richetelli stated the representatives from the Borough made a very compelling argument this year as to what they spend those City dollars for.

Mr. Agro asked if this Board should be asking for a copy of their annual audit.

Chairman Lema stated it was his understanding the City's auditors review the report they receive from the Borough as well as other similar agencies in the City.

Mr. Agro stated he was not just picking on the Borough but we should have that report forwarded to someone, i.e. auditors.

Chairman Lema commented this Board hands out substantial grants and this would put some controls in place.

p. 94 C-MED Mr. Beckwith stated at the time the Chief spoke last week there was the possibility of some new numbers coming forward.

Mayor Richetelli stated there are no new numbers. He stated they met and that Milford had the only descending vote.

Mr. Agro commented throughout the deliberations he has asked most of the grant agencies about pay increases, with most being very conservative. He stated he only asked those types of questions because he wanted to be fair to the municipal employees who did not receive anything last year.

p. 103 0012 0000 Sewer Commission – Mr. Fitzpatrick stated he had a note this Board would be getting a new OT number.

Mayor Richetelli stated the sewer administrator position was eliminated a few years ago and that they have not filed the Clerk A position. He explained the person responsible for the Sewer Commission duties is getting paid through those monies.

Ms. Doneiko stated she believed the rate is at time and a half.

Mayor Richetelli noted they also are not paying benefits.

Mr. Agro questioned if this was the appropriate way to do it.

Ms. Doneiko stated by law these funds have to be separate.

p. 109 Wastewater (0012 4426) Mayor Richetelli stated he received a memo from Jim Cooper, Acting Wastewater Superintendent stating they would receive a \$13,000 credit. He stated line item 4741 0000 Nitrogen Credits could be reduced to \$0 for a new sub-total in Operational Expenses of \$604,000. A brief discussion ensued.

p. 114 Marina Enterprise Revenue (0036 4157) Mayor Richetelli stated the State has eliminated the State PILOT: Boats thereby making line item 3655 0000 \$0.

Mr. Agro referred to line item 3208 0000 Marina Fees and asked if that represented the fees the people would pay.

Mayor Richetelli responded these are transient fees. He explained it would be reflected on the expenditure side.

Chairman Lema asked about the office manager position.

Ms. Doneiko stated that person is responsible for processing all of the bills.

p. 118 Golf Commission (0018 4121) Mr. Fitzpatrick asked what happens if they earn more than \$70,000.

Mayor Richetelli explained they make a contribution to the open space fund from the funds received.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about an audit.

Ms. Doneiko stated they do submit one to the Finance Department.

p. 100 Educational Operations (0010 4996) Mr. Agro stated this has always been an open discussion. In the spirit of fairness he wished to point out that last year 7 of 8 unions came to this Board and made sacrifices in an effort to make concessions during some very difficult times. He stated it should not go without mention that the Board of Education received an arbitrated 5% increase during the worst financial crisis. He stated to not address it would be disingenuous to those who sacrificed. He stated he would not be comfortable at a number in excess of 2-2 ½ % over last year.

Mr. Marlow stated he would agree with Mr. Agro. He stated while it is not his position to decide on a program, this City just cannot afford a 4.9% increase. He stated the figure he had in mind would be around 2 ¼ to 2 ½ % and that they would have to look internally for the savings.

Mr. Beckwith stated he would be comfortable at a 2% increase and nothing more. He expressed concern with the revenue side and what they will or likely won't get from the State. He also recalled a comment made by State Senator Slossberg "don't expect more, expect less".

Ms. Doneiko commented the ECS grant with stimulus money will be flat for three years.

Mr. Beckwith further commented the taxpayers of Milford have made a commitment and this Board needed to respect that. He spoke regarding the additions at both the high schools. He stated coming up with additional dollars to support staff would be difficult.

Mr. Fitzpatrick stated he would have liked to see less than 2%, but that he could live with a 2% increase.

Mayor Richetelli pointed out the Board of Education would receive stimulus money around \$1,500,000 again this year, but the State reduces the amount they send correspondingly.

Mr. Fitzpatrick stated he has been looking at cities of comparable size to Milford where they are reducing budgets.

Mr. Agro stated he could be convinced of a 2% increase.

Chairman Lema stated some valid points have been raised, but that he would be hesitate to make a deep cut because we still don't have all of the numbers, i.e. ECS, etc. He also spoke regarding the stimulus money they have already built in, but that it would be the following year which will be extremely difficult. He stated he would be closer to a figure of 3%.

Mr. Agro commented regarding the arrangement made with our city employees and that there really had been no displacement. He stated it is the private sector that has suffered. He also stated whether someone is employed or unemployed we all demand services.

Mr. Beckwith spoke regarding the numerous mandates that come down from Hartford and stated it was just unfair to the local administrators, mayors, selectmen, etc., but it was the taxpayer who gets stuck with the bill.

Mr. Agro recalled at the police department open house recently, they too are dealing with unfunded mandates. He stated they are dealing with the Juvenile Detention mandates, which has increased their overtime, etc.

Chairman Lema stated the Board would stand in recess until March 16, 2010. The Board recessed at 9:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen K. Huber
Recording Secretary