

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION
APRIL 9, 2018**

The Board of Aldermen resumed their budget deliberation session on Monday, April 9, 2018 in the aldermanic chambers of City Hall. He asked those present to join in saluting our flag and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Roll Call

Board Members Present

B. Anderson
E. Beatty
K. Fortunati
C. Gaynor
D. German
A. Giannattasio
J. Grant
A. Sutton
J. Tranquilli
N. Veccharelli
P. Vetro
R. Vitali

Also Present

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake
P. Erodici, Finance Director
S. Fournier, Mayor's Admin Asst.
J. Rohrig, City Clerk

Excused

J. Golden
M. Hardiman
F. Smith

Chairman Vetro reconvened the budget proceedings in public session at 7:02 p.m.

4133 Probate Court – Judge Beverly Streit Kefalas was present for questions/comments. She stated the only change in her budget is in the film account. She explained the number is based on historical expenses and needs for the upcoming fiscal year. She stated they serve the communities of Milford and Orange, which is divided Milford, 75% and Orange, 25%. Judge Streit Kefalas noted the State budget is impacting the local probate court budgets, throughout the State. She went on to provide the Board with an overview of the work of the Probate Court.

4825 Beth El Center – Toni Dolan, Executive Director, Shaileen Landsberg, Ed Davies, President, and Jennifer Paradis, next Executive Director. Mrs. Dolan stated tonight would be her last appearance before this Board as she will be retiring on June 1. She read a brief statement thanking the Board for their support over the years.

Mr. Davies spoke of Toni's tenure with Beth El and how she would be missed and welcomed Jen Paradis, who will continue to move the agency forward.

Ms. Landsberg spoke of the passion they all share for the Beth El Center. She shared some vital statistics of homelessness throughout our community and state. She also spoke of the progress in Connecticut, especially at the Beth El Center and the positive success stories which could be found in the packet distributed to the Board.

Ms. Paradis highlighted some of the work, i.e. restructuring of their programs, also made headway in serving Milford folks as quickly as possible with the no-freeze program and their 90-day transitional program which has been very successful.

Chairman Vetro expressed his gratitude for the work of Toni and the Beth El shelter and their work.

Ald. Vitali spoke of Toni's work in the community and having worked with her through various community efforts.

Ald. Veccharelli expressed his appreciation of the work of Beth El and how proud he is to be from Milford.

4123 Community Development – Julie Nash, Community Development Director was present for questions/comments. She stated her budget is status quo. She stated the only change is \$100 for new computer equipment. Ms. Nash commented she is proud of the work she and her staff have done. She reported there are over 440 new business registrations in Milford which is the largest number in over a decade.

Ald. German asked the vacancy rate in Milford.

Ms. Nash stated the last analysis was done by UI, which showed 97%. She stated she contacted various real estate agencies to confirm the percentage was correct. She explained it is primarily office space that is vacant as more and more business work from home.

4155 Economic Development Commission – Julie Nash, Community Development Director was present for questions/comments. She stated there is just \$1, which has not been spent.

4193 Public Library – Christine Angeli, Director was present for questions/comments. She stated it is fitting to be here tonight as it is the start of National Public Library Week. She shared some facts regarding services the library has provided over the last year. She stated the only increase in her budget is for seasonal/temporary which is the crux of the programs they are able to provide. Having seasonal staff frees up their full time staff to be able to work with public.

Ald. Beatty asked about their computer needs and if it is satisfactory.

Ms Angeli stated they have 18 computers for the public's use and that they are able to manage the needs of the public well. She stated they also implemented iPad use for the children's division.

Ald. Anderson asked about the physical plant and the repurposed space within the space and challenges with the physical plant.

Ms. Angeli stated they have approximately 39,000 square feet. She stated with the small State grant they received last year, they intend to add some work station type space as well as expanding the children's department. She stated they do have some challenges with the lack of mobility, i.e. furniture, etc.

Ald. German asked about the trends over the last few years.

Ms. Angeli stated resident card holders is increasing. She explained the consortium program they went to a few years ago. She stated they are making a push to have a library card in the hands of every child.

Ald. German asked if they work with Milford Literacy.

Ms. Angeli stated they do have work station.

Chairman Vetro asked about the passport office.

Ms. Angeli stated they do and that it is self sustaining.

Ald. Vitali asked about the STEM program and if they would be able to address the new program STEAM.

Ms. Angeli stated she was aware and that hope is that the seasonal temporary staff would assist with that programming.

Ald. Beatty asked if more staff is needed at the library for support the numerous programs.

Ms. Angeli stated she requested the additional funds in seasonal temporary so that they could assist with the programs.

Ald. Gaynor asked about safety for both staff and patrons.

Ms. Angeli stated they take security very seriously and make sure there is enough staff to cover the 39,000 square feet. She stated there is also training.

Ald. Grant encouraged the public to go to the library as often as possible, noting its vibrant atmosphere.

4153 Park, Beach and Recreation Commission Paul Piscitelli, Recreation Director and Dan Worroll, Chairman of the Parks, Beach & Recreation Commission were present for questions/comments.

Mr. Worroll stated the account is secretarial for the Commission's monthly meetings.

Ald. Anderson asked about MGAT and why meetings were no longer filmed.

Director Piscitelli stated it was due to lack of funding.

4620 Recreation Department – Paul Piscitelli, Director and Dan Worroll, Chairman of the Parks, Beach and Recreation Commission were present.

Ald. Anderson asked about splash pad and pickleball court under construction and asked how the department would be impacted by those services.

Director Piscitelli stated it would have a positive impact. He stated it is a great source of entertainment for all generations. He stated operationally, it will have an impact with supervision and seasonal temporary staff, also water, electricity costs. Director Piscitelli stated together with the Public Works Department they will come up with a plan. He stated the first year will be a learning curve, but overall a positive impact.

Ald. Vitali asked for elaboration regarding the splash pad.

Director Piscitelli stated it is zero depth water features. It has water features such as spray fountain, interactive features,

Ald. Vitali asked about keeping the water clean, mold, cleaning, and maintenance.

Director Piscitelli explained there are two types of water parks, recirculation – water is captured, runs through a filter, chlorination, etc, essentially treated like a pool. The system we have chosen is a flow through where it comes through and flows out, so it is continuous clean water. He stated there will be some type of cleaning necessary.

Ald. Vitali asked if it is some type of a membrane.

Director Piscitelli stated it is a smooth concrete surface. He stated it will be set on an operational timer.

Ald. Vitali asked for statistics regarding water usage.

Ald. Fortunati asked about the recycling of the water.

Director Piscitelli stated they would like to repurpose it, possibly for the community gardens, which is just one of the options.

Ald. Grant asked about the \$25,000 increase in seasonal temporary which was reduced and potential loses.

Director Piscitelli explained they used seasonal temporary to the tune of approximately 250 employees. The number originally submitted was based on the thought that the state would be raising the minimum wage again, so the number recommended would be sufficient to operate this summer, however, there are rumblings of a \$15 minimum wage in other States, if you were to project that onto this budget, it would be a half million dollar increase in this account.

Ald. German asked about some of the work that has been done throughout town and asked about upcoming projects.

Director Piscitelli stated he was thankful they have been able to do the projects, enhancements for the community. He stated going forward there is the replacement of playgrounds. He stated there are over 19 playgrounds throughout town that are approaching 30 plus years old.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about the playground near Lou Gehrig field which recently had the slide removed due to safety concerns. He asked if that playground was slated to have repairs/replacements.

Director Piscitelli stated that playground will be one of the first done.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about the work at Walnut Beach. He asked about the charcoal grills that have been removed and asked if they will be replaced.

Director Piscitelli stated he was not aware of any charcoal grills in the last 5-10 years. Per Ordinance charcoal grills are prohibited in Milford.

Ald. Beatty asked about the dog park at Eisenhower Park. – stated it is significant to that area and expressed appreciation of the work to upgrade that area.

Ald. Anderson followed up about the grills around the perimeter of the pavilion, and the eastern most section of the beach, which were permanently affixed.

4121 Golf Course – Dan Worroll was present for questions/comments. He stated Mr. Austin could not make it and that he would be happy to answer any questions. Mr. Worroll stated the budget is the same as it has been over the years.

Chairman Vetro asked about the HVAC installation at the clubhouse.

Mr. Worroll stated the work has been completed.

Chairman Vetro asked if the ductwork was replaced as well.

Mr. Worroll explained there are two handlers, but also water heaters needed to be replaced as well, adding the equipment was more than 20 years old.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about the idea of the former storage area being used to serve food.

Mr. Worroll explained the back room was redone and storage was moved into the building.

Ald. German asked about revenues.

Mr. Worroll explained there are three ways revenues are generated.

Ald. Veccharelli asked the number of golf carts.

Mr. Worroll stated there are 6 carts.

Ald. Anderson asked the cost of the rental.

Mr. Worroll stated he believed the cost was \$150.00 for three (3) hours.

4142 Department of Permitting and Land Use – Joseph Griffith, Director= was present for questions/comments. He provided the Board with a handout highlighting the work of the department over the past year.

Chairman Vetro complimented the staff on their service, noting it is a pleasure to work with them.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about revenues (p. 6) and asked if the figures that have been brought in by the building department. He stated it was nice to see.

Mr. Griffith explained the minimum cost figures for various projects that come into the building department.

Ald. Anderson spoke of the efficiencies the department has achieved.

Ald. Veccharelli 4797 0000 Junk Car Removal Service – he noted the account has zero dollars. He commented there is no ability to remove a vehicle when the account has no dollars and this presents a problem. He also referenced the towing list on file with the police department.

4144 Zoning Board of Appeals– No questions

4116 Milford Government Access Television – Kara Flannery, Chair. The goal is to make local government accessible to the community. Reading from a prepared statement she spoke of the accomplishments of MGAT due to the support of this Board and the local cable advisory. New Board of Education studio, at city hall, they are no able to live stream meetings to uTube. Budget represents a \$3,000 increase over last year's budget which gets them closer to meeting there operations needs to bring programming to Milford.

Ald. Fortunati – asked the amount of last year's grant

Ms Flannery stated \$32,000 last year \$23,000 (2016). She stated they were able to invest in new equipment.

Chairman Vetro asked who is paid in addition to the secretary.

Ms. Flannery stated the line director and new assistant are paid.

Ald. Vitali asked the cost for a meeting, hourly.

Ms. Flannery stated they are paid an hourly rate per production. She stated city hall is approximately \$200 per meeting.

Ald. Vitali asked how many productions per year.

Ms. Flannery stated BOA, P&Z, BOF Budget, BOE to name a few. She stated they also have other operational fees.

Ald. Veccharelli asked what Boards are filmed at this point.

Ms. Flannery BOA, BOE, ZBA, BOF budget, BOA budget. She stated they are to fit in other events or meeting if they can. She stated they have had requests for other department such as Park, Beach & Recreation, Police Commission, and Fire Commission. She stated they are also in the process of updating their Policies and Procedures manual. She also stated there are costs associated with updating.

Ald. Grant asked what additional funding would be required to be fully operational.

Ms. Flannery stated it would be so difficult to come up with a figure because of the upgrades, which have changed the dynamics so much. She mentioned they are working with the Milford Public Schools. She stated they also work with DNR productions.

4146 Flood and Erosion Control Board – no questions.

4147 Tree Commission

Ald. German asked if this Commission still meets.

Mayor Blake stated they are very active. He stated they are currently working on a tree initiative and hope to plant over 200 trees.

Ald. German asked if it is to offset the trees being cut down. He also asked if the trees are still being evaluated.

Mayor Blake explained the program in place by the UI to protect the power grid system, which has suffered through a number of storms over the years. He also spoke of the program the city has to replace a tree and provided the details. He stated they work with and advocate for Milford to be proactive with the removal of trees whenever possible.

Ald. German asked about the stump removal process.

Mayor Blake explained PURA oversees that work. He stated utility companies do not have to grind the stumps unless there is an issue with public safety.

Ald. Beatty pointed out the tree warden is a part of the Tree Commission. She also pointed out theoretically UI gets approximately 90% approval.

Ald. Vitali spoke of Milford Trees and working with the Tree Commission.

Mayor Blake stated he would look into.

4156 Conservation Commission Steve Johnson, liaison to the Commission.

No questions.

4162 Open Space - Steve Johnson, Open Space and Natural Resource Agent was present for questions/comments. He provided some of the various aspects of this department and being able to be involved with numerous volunteer groups. He spoke of the upcoming clean up of Gulf Pond. He stated he also has had the opportunity to participate in a number of programs at the Milford Library and has had the pleasure of working with the Milford Public Schools.

Ald. Veccharelli stated he has received complaints from constituents regarding access to parks, beach access, etc. He stated many are covered and/or blocked. He asked if those areas have been identified.

Mr. Johnson stated he has looked into some and has documentation on some of the parcels. He stated they handle concerns regarding open space on a case by case basis.

Ald. Veccharelli stated in the past he has actively participated in purchasing open space in Milford. He stated he is particularly interested in knowing where those access points are.

Ald. Beatty spoke in favor of the open space position. She also asked about a compromise in sitting in another position, temporarily.

Mr. Johnson stated he has been assisting in the public works position as Assistant Public Works Director. He stated the two positions work well together and that he strives to reach a balance each day.

Ald. Vitali asked if both positions were full time positions, open space and assistant public works director. He asked how the two jobs mesh.

Mayor Blake intervened because of the need to assist with the CDBG grants, which the assistant public works director was the primary contact prior to his leaving. Milford had numerous spending controls in place due to the unknown of the State budget. He works on a host of other public works projects, which has been an asset.

Ald. Vitali asked the savings by meshing the two positions.

Mayor Blake stated the hiring freeze just ended a few months ago and the Human Resources Department is working to hire for many of those vacant positions.

Ald. Vitali asked the current salary of Mr. Johnson and where the savings is shown in the budget.

Mayor Blake stated those vacant positions are in the process of being filed.

Ald. Beatty stated for clarification that she was not questioning the two positions currently filled by Mr. Johnson and that she was in favor of his double-dipping in the two positions. She reiterated a full time open space position is needed and should be properly budgeted.

Ald. Anderson asked the nature of the projects funded by CDBGR and also the eastern coyote program that was offered at the library.

Mr. Johnson explained the CDBGR grants are recovery grants. He explained the background and current timeline. He also provided an overview of the program presented at the Milford Library concerning the coyote wildlife.

4310 Police Department Chief Keith Mello and Deputy Chief Ken Rahn were present for questions/comments. Chief Mello stated the budget is an increase of approximately \$1M, which represents the settlement of the three (3) police department unions. He stated there are some slight increases in the overtime accounts, which reflect the wage increases. He also pointed to those accounts where he anticipates deficits. He stated there is no request for funding for additional programs.

Chairman Vetro noted the request for an additional SRO officer and that would allow for an SRO at each middle school.

Chief Mello explained the shift to having the additional SRO and the balance of the funding would allow them to hire an additional dispatcher, which he stated is sorely needed. He also pointed out the BOE pays half towards the SRO position. He stated it is a good exchange, which shows their commitment to the SRO program and provides them with that additional dispatcher.

Ald. Veccharelli asked if those changes had been made.

Chief Mello stated pending approval of this budget, then those changes would occur

Ald. Veccharelli asked how it is shown in the budgets as far as costs.

Mr. Erodici explained the budgeted item is in the BOE and also the PD and we charge the BOE and half is credited back to the police department.

Ald. Veccharelli pointed out the \$40,000 for the SRO does not include benefits, which then increases that amount.

Mr. Erodici explained he sends a bill to the BOE for each SRO in the amount of \$40,000 each.

Ald. Veccharelli asked who pays for the benefits.

Mr. Erodici stated the city pays those benefits.

Ald. Veccharelli asked about the body camera program.

Chief Mello stated Milford has had the body camera for approximately 7 years, which was prior to the grant program. He continued with an explanation of the program and its effectiveness.

Ald. Vitali asked about the impact to the labor force.

Chief Mello explained in theory it is a one for one and that it could be a decrease or an increase at various times.

Ald. Vitali asked about seized assets and how much they received this past year.

Chief Mello stated there are two types of seized assets, state and national but that there is a specific criterion for what those funds can be used for.

Mr. Erodici stated the balance in that account is \$235,000 in the seized asset account.

Chief Mello stated they do a lot with those funds, but once the money is gone it is gone. He cited some of the items that have been purchased with seized asset funds.

Ald. Anderson asked if the department is still in a position to receive equipment in that manner and also he asked about the police officer funding and how Milford benefits.

Chief Mello stated there is funding available, but they are not likely to get any of it because of the department's strong financial health. He stated it goes to those with the greatest need. As to the Region II monies, Milford is the custodian owner of that funding in the form of the shoot house.

Ald. German asked how Milford compares to towns similar in size.

Chief Mello stated structurally they compare, but in terms of budgets they are quite different. He stated his concerns are with overtime and training. He invited the Board to look at those overtime accounts. He also spoke of the purchase of police vehicles, which is significantly lower. He stated Milford is one of the most regarded departments in the Connecticut.

Ald. Giannattasio and Ald. Golden made and seconded a motion to recess until April 23, 2018. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board recessed at 10:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen A. Kennedy
Recording Secretary