

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION
APRIL 20, 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 20, 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. Grant
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. Erodict, Finance Director
K. Fortunati, City Clerk

Excused:

M. Hardiman
J. Golden

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

Harbor Commission (pg. 109) – Ray Swift, Director of Operations was present for questions/comments. He stated that this will be his last couple of weeks and anticipates leaving around the 2nd week of May. Mr. Swift commented on his 14 years as director and that he enjoyed serving as director. He further commented on the uncertainty of the upcoming season but feels the marina will be in good hands with his successor, Jim Donegan. Mayor Blake congratulated Mr. Swift on his retirement. He provided a brief summary of the search for a new director and background of Mr. Donegan.

Ald. Vitali thanked Mr. Swift for his years of service to the City and asked if the Governor has opened marinas for the season. Mayor Blake stated that this past weekend 3 governors allowed marinas to open because it is part of the transportation infrastructure. He further stated that restaurants connected to marina cannot open except for takeout.

Community Development (pg. 20) – Julie Nash, Community Development Director, stated that last year's budget had a bump for marketing expenses for Discover Milford and there was return on the

investment. She reviewed the various partnerships for marketing purposes. Ms. Nash commented that in February/March things change with Covid-19. She stated that events were put on hold and creative and supportive marketing techniques were used. Ms. Nash stated it is her hope to get back utilizing Discover Milford as quickly as possible. She commented that the budget request remains the same. Ald. Vitali stated he noticed a \$500 cut. Mr. Nash stated that was cut by the Board of Finance.

Economic Development Commission (pg. 31) – Julie Nash, Community Development Director, stated the request remains the same at \$1. She stated they have great partnerships and are working to strengthen the partnership with Milford Progress.

Boys and Girls Club (pg. 92) – Megan Altomare, Director, stated they were excited to kick off 2020 and expand services, then everything with Covid-19 happened. She stated 3 major fundraising events had to be cancelled, but they will work through this. Ms. Altomare stated they are looking to the future. Ald. W. Smith commended Ms. Altomare for all her hard work and dedication. Mr. Altomare stated that the center closed on March 13th and that by the following Monday staff had worked to virtually work with members.

Recreation Department (pg. 82) – Bill Garfield, Interim Recreation Director, introduced himself. He stated that Recreation is doing their best to keep fields and playgrounds closed although it has been challenging. He commented that former Director Paul Piscitelli put the budget request together. He stated the only concern with the budget is seasonal temporary which is the fund for running camps and activities. Ald. Giannattasio asked about the cut to the seasonal temporary account. Mr. Garfield stated the increased request was due to impact of minimum wage going up. He stated that this is an annual issue and it will be difficult. Ald. Vitali stated the cut is \$20,000. He asked with the increase of parking spaces at Walnut Beach due to restriping if those revenues can be used to cover the cost of seasonal temporary. Mayor Blake stated parking revenue does not go to the department but goes to the general fund. He further stated that he understands minimum wage is going up and it will be a challenge. Ald. Vitali asked if the Board of Finance provided a reason for the cut. Mr. Garfield stated none that he was aware. Mayor Blake stated the cut was based on discussions with Mr. Piscitelli. Ald. Vitali asked if the needs of seasonal temporary could be met. Mayor Blake stated a Board of Finance transfer will be requested if necessary.

Public Library (pg. 35) – Chris Angeli, Library Director, provided a brief summary on the activities of the library during Covid-19. She stated that the library went from providing in-person service to online service. Mr. Angeli stated that the budget request remains flat with the exception of contractual wage increases. She further stated the book budget has not increased in 10 years and the computer and computer peripheral accounts were cut. Ms. Angeli stated they are working to see how best to manage especially with adding new online services. Ald. F. Smith stated he is a liaison to the library board and commended Ms. Angeli, library staff, library board and Friends of the Library on their hard work and dedication. Ms. Angeli stated that all programming is paid through fundraising by Friends of the Library. Ald. Grant echoed the sentiments of Ald. F. Smith. He asked about how the computers are used and how frequently. Ms. Angeli stated the public computers are used in a variety of way by patrons and how they are used is not regulated. She further stated they had hoped to expand usage with laptops that patrons could move about the library and have privacy. Mayor Blake stated that as they go through the budget computers lines will be eliminated from departments as they were moved to MIS to be centralized. He further stated that with the roll out of new computers, there will be many

computers that will be refurbished and available for use by the public. Ald. Willis asked for an explanation of computer and other line item. Ms. Angeli stated it is for peripherals such as keyboard, monitors, mice and other equipment and computer supplies. Ald. Smith asked why a library assistant job had been cut by \$5,600. Ms. Angeli stated it is a vacant position that was placed back to the minimum wage. Ald. W. Smith asked if public comment received on the library was to maintain or increase the budget. Ms. Angeli stated all are supporters of the library and want to see it maintained. Ald. Gaynor asked if there were any concerns with providing services with staffing. Ms. Angeli stated it is always an issue and with more staffing could provide more services. Ald. Giannattasio asked when the library open to the public how will books be sanitized. Ms. Angeli discussed how book returns are currently being handled and the phases the library has implemented during Covid-19.

Golf Course (pg. 112) – Dan Worroll, Financial Advisor, commended Bill Garfield on his work as Interim Recreation Director. (Mr. Worroll's connection failed). Ald. Vitali asked why the golf course is closed when others are open Mayor Blake stated that no municipal golf course are currently open although private courses may have opened. He further stated there an ongoing discussions with the commission on how and when to open the course.

Council on Aging (pg. 87) – No speakers present.

Beth El Center (pg. 87) – Jennifer Paradis, Director, provided a brief explanation on how the Beth El Center is functioning during Covid-19. She stated capacity has increased 25% resulting in length of stay decreasing and food services has increased with community partnerships. Mr. Paradis stated the center continues to provide essential services. She stated food has increased 46% with meals to go and the center is open for bathroom and shower needs. Ald. Gaynor asked how many unsheltered are in Milford. Ms. Paradis that information is hard to address, and the center is working on identifying the number but needs to be accurate with its data collection.

Health Department (pg. 79) – Deepa Joseph, Health Director, stated the department has been very busy the past few months. She stated the budget remains the same other than contractual obligations and cellphone. Ald. Vitali asked for an update on Covid-19 data. Ms. Joseph stated they look at the date and evaluate it several times a day. She stated the most recent information is Milford has 370 positive cases and 32 Covid-19 related deaths. She stated this date included long-term care facilities. Ald. W. Smith asked if Golden Hill had been deemed a Covid-19 facility and if any others were in Milford. Ms. Joseph stated there are 3 long-term care facilities in Milford and none have been designated as Covid-19 recovery facility. She stated all long-term care facilities are following DPH guidelines for infection control. Ald. F. Smith asked if there is anything in the budget that affects the department needs such as staffing. Ms. Joseph stated the budget request was submitted prior the pandemic. She commented that areas of stress are medical supplies. Ms. Joseph stated that medical supplies had been stockpiled over the years, but with Covid-19 the need will continue. She also discussed the possibility of a vaccine in recovery and that the department will be tasked with mass vaccination. Ms. Joseph also stated that staffing is always a concern. She commented on the former Deputy Director position being eliminated and that consideration should be given to restoring it at some point. Ms. Joseph stated the work as a result of Covid-19 will be going on for a long time and there is still much work to be done. Ald. F. Smith asked if shortages will be handled through transfers. Mayor Blake stated every dollar is being tracked in response to Covid-19. He further stated that if necessary, transfers will be requested Ald. Giannattasio asked if an unfunded mandate is

foreseen with a second wave. Ms. Joseph stated if the virus functions similar to other pandemic viruses it is expected that there will be a second and third wave. She further stated that hopefully the work in the first wave minimizes impact of future waves.

Education Health Services / School Nurses (pg. 95) – No comments.

Human Services Department (pg. 90) – No comments.

Management Information Systems (MIS) (pg. 39) – Adam Heller, Interim MIS Coordinator, provided an update on the roll out of new computers and projects supported by MIS. He stated the change in the budget is bringing computer line items from departments into the MIS budget. Ald. Grant asked why the computer budget was consolidated. Mr. Heller explained it standardizes the equipment, every computer is on the same platform and when a computer is in need of repair is repaired and/or replaced without delay.

Department of Permitting and Land Use (pg. 27) – Joseph Griffith, DPLU Director, provided an explanation on how operation have changed during Covid-19. He further stated that the budget increase is due to consolidating a portion of Zoning Board of Appeals budget into DPLU. Mr. Griffith stated that over the past 3 years operational expenses have continued to be consolidated into one unit under DPLU. He stated that the MUNICIPALITY permitting software implementation continues with a go-live date of July 1st. Mr. Joseph stated that MUNICIPALITY will help to increase productivity and efficiency with a greater online presence. He also discussed the upcoming Plan of Conservation and Development and the necessity of hiring a consultant.

Finance Department (pg. 37) – Peter Erodici, Finance Director, provided a brief update on all Finance Department projects. He further stated that the Assessor's office is gearing up for he 2021 revaluation. Mr. Erodici provided on update on how department employees are working during Covid-19. He stated the budget remains flat with the exception of salary increases. Ald. Tranquilli asked for the mil rate based on the Board of Finance recommended budget and assuming a \$1,000,000 reduction. Mr. Erodici stated based on the recommended budget it would be 28.46 and if reduced by \$1,000,000 the mil rate would be \$28.30. Ald. Giannattasio asked how many have applied for the tax deferment program. Mr. Erodici stated it is too early to say, but it is anticipated application will begin to come in as we get closer to the July 1. Ald. W. Smith asked if there is a projection of the economic impact. Mr. Erodici stated that is the unknown but based on feedback from other towns may see 25% impact. Mayor Blake stated the tax deferment does not apply to certain groups such as escrowed taxes. He further stated it is not anticipated that there will be cash flow issues.

Registrar of Voters (pg. 15) – Kerri Rowland, Registrar, stated a lot has changed over the past couple of months and the focus is how to keep poll workers and staff safe. She further stated that timelines are shifting and currently primaries are scheduled for August 11th which is concerning as that goes into a new budget year. Debra Fellenbaum, Registrar, stated they are taking every precaution, and someone is present in the office each day.

City Clerk (pg. 22) – Karen Fortunati, City Clerk, stated this is her first term and has been very gratifying. She stated the City Clerk's Office has an amazing team. Ms. Fortunati discussed how the office is operating due to Covid-19 and that 99% of services are continuing. She stated that land

records are online only to 1962 and that she is hoping to use grant monies to add more years. Ms. Fortunati also commented that with the MUNICIPALITY going live in dog licensing would be available online.

Elections (pg. 14) – No comments.

Open Space (pg. 34) – Ald. Giannattasio asked if a replacement had been hired. Mayor Blake stated Human Resources is in the process of scheduling final interviews.

Public Works Office (pg. 63) – Chris Saley, Public Works Director, provided an update on adjustments made due to Covid-19. He further stated that public works is preparing for paving and beach parking projects.

Highway/Parks (pg. 65) – No comments.

Building Maintenance (pg. 69) – No comments.

Engineering Department (p. 72) – Ald. Grant asked why the Engineering Technician position was placed at 0. Mr. Saley stated the position was vacant for a number of years and it was determined that it could be eliminated.

General Garage (pg. 74) – Ald. W. Smith asked if an auto mechanic position was eliminated. Mr. Saley stated the garage foreman looked at opportunities within the budget. He further stated that two position had been filled and are productive.

Solid Waste (pg. 76) – Mr. Saley stated the recycling costs continue to go up and are challenging the budget. Ald. Gaynor asked if they plan to do more with composting as discussed in past years. Mr. Saley state that is a goal but is not possible at the current time. He further stated it is something that he would like to look into further. Ald. W. Smith mentioned a truck drive position being eliminated. He asked if there were other areas that were evaluated. Mr. Saley stated that garbage is now an automated system and that where there were there people on a truck there is no one. He further stated that due to the automated system, through attrition they have been able to reduce the positions. Ald. Giannattasio asked that with schools being closed have they cut back on garbage pickups. Mr. Saley stated that although schools are closed, the dumpster continue to be utilized. Ald. Tranquili asked if there was a savings since the transfer station contract was not renewed. Mr. Saley stated this is something that will need to be discussed with the Mayor. He further stated that on July 1st the City took over the transfer station and it has been working well.

Wastewater (pg. 101) – Mr. Saley stated they recently went out to bid for sludge removal which is challenging due to the State restrictive rules. He further stated that the company that currently takes the sludge did not bid as the it contains too much water. Mr. Saley noted the contract ends May 31st and there are concerns on where to bring the sludge.

Sewer Commission (pg. 98) – No comments.

Ald. Vitali asked why he did not see Flotilla 73 on the agenda. Mayor Blake stated that due to the nature of the remote meetings all departments and agencies under \$50,000 were removed.

Ald. Sutton and Ald. W. Smith made and seconded a motion to recess. Motion carried unanimously. The Board recessed at 9:53 p.m.

Chairman Vetro announced the Board would stand in recess until Wednesday, April 22, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Toni Jo Weeks".

Toni Jo Weeks
Recording Secretary