

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION  
APRIL 19, 2023**

The Board of Aldermen resumed its budget deliberation session regarding the Board of Finance's recommended budget for fiscal year 2023-2024, on Wednesday, April 19, 2023. 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**

M. Arciuolo  
E. Beatty  
B. Broesder  
M. Casey  
D. German  
A. Giannattasio  
S. Marlow (arrived at 8:45 p.m.)  
H. Mulrenan  
J. Moffitt  
R. Pacelli  
M. Parente  
P. Vetro  
R. Vitali  
W. Willis

**Also Present**

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake  
P. Erodici, Finance Director  
J. Rosen, Chief of Staff

**Excused:**

G. Harla

Chairman Vetro welcomed everyone to the 2023-2024 budget deliberations. He stated tonight's meeting was the departmental portion of the budget process.

Ald. Vitali and Ald. Giannattasio made and seconded a motion to come out of recess. Motion carried unanimously.

**Recreation Department (p. 82)**

Bill Garfield, Recreation Director, stated the request is modest with increase requests in paid officials and electricity accounts. Ald. Giannattasio asked about current hiring freeze impact on the recreation department given it is springtime with many activities. Mr. Garfield stated the hiring freeze did discuss consideration of seasonal temps and that seasonal temps are used by the recreation department mostly in spring. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the need for seasonal temps has been requested. Mr. Garfield stated a request has not yet been made and interviews are beginning. Ald.

Giannattasio asked how many positions will be requested. Mr. Garfield stated 70 positions will be needed. Ald. Casey asked for an explanation of electricity costs. Mr. Garfield stated costs have increased and seasons are getting longer, which impacts the electricity budget. Discussion ensued on how electricity usage is managed. Ald. Parente asked for a summary of ARPA funding participation. Mr. Garfield stated it has primarily been used toward summer playground program payroll. Ald. Vitali asked if seasonal temps are used only during the summer months. Mr. Garfield stated 70 positions are needed during the summer, however there are other seasonal temp positions during other times of the year. Ald. Vitali asked what happens when the electricity account runs out of funds. Mr. Garfield discussed other accounts that are used to supplement. Chairman Vetro asked about filling lifeguard positions. Mr. Garfield stated there is a shortage of lifeguards. Ald. German asked that Mr. Garfield touch on a few of the most popular programs. Mr. Garfield discussed pickleball, softball, Camp Happiness, Milford adaptive programs and adult exercise classes. He stated tennis and pickleball are always sold out. Discussion ensued concerning lifeguards. Ald. Arciuolo discussed splash pad at Eisenhower Park and the surface. He asked if water shoes should be required. Mr. Garfield discussed signage and staffing at the splash pad.

### **Police Department (P. 43)**

Keith Mello, Police Chief, discussed increased due to contractual increases and fixed costs based on agreements. He stated overtime, holiday pay and shift differential are underfunded. Chief Mello stated historically shortages in those accounts are funded with wages due to vacancies. He stated there are no new additions or projects with the exception of one new police officer. Ald. Giannattasio asked for an explanation of one new hire and commitment to hire one new officer for next 4 years. Chief Mello discussed the goal of adding 4 new officers over the next 4 years. He discussed increased calls and changes to policing. Chief Mello discussed impacts of physical and mental health of police officers. He stated that one additional officer per shift allows for officers to not be held over and maintenance of response time. Ald. Giannattasio discussed being in favor of adding 4 additional officers. Ald. Willis asked if the legalization of marijuana has impacted availability of officers. Chief Mello stated there was very little enforcement required due to marijuana in the past. Ald. Pacelli discussed prior conversations concerning adding additional officers when there are vacancies that should first be filled. Chief Mello stated it takes 11 months before an individual becomes a police officer. He discussed filling vacancies on a rolling testing process and hiring back of officers. Ald. Pacelli asked how many positions are currently unfilled. Chief Mello stated there will always be vacancies due to attrition. Ald. Moffitt asked for an explanation of private service duties and how they fit within the department in case of emergency. Chief Mello stated private duty is selected by the officer on his own time. He stated if officers are needed, they will be called in, held over or pulled from a private duty job. Ald. German asked how many retirements are anticipated this year. Chief Mello stated there are 2 recent retirements with 4 more expected. He discussed the unknown of an officer leaving for another career. Ald. Vitali asked for a summary of crime within the community. Chief Mello discussed crime trends. Ald. Vitali asked if mental health clinicians are brought to certain types of calls. Chief Mello stated there are 2 licensed social workers on staff and are a great resource. He stated the majority of the calls happen at night. Chief Mello discussed the approach for responding to critical incidents. Ald. Arciuolo asked for differences in holiday and vacation relief accounts. Chief Mello stated it is well known to be underfunded and money has always been found in other accounts and transfers from other accounts fill the void. He discussed contractual holiday pay and vacation relief account for backfilling when an officer is on vacation. Ald. Broesder asked about

the expiration of federal funds for body worn cameras and data storage. Chief Mello discussed requirements for body worn and dash cameras. He discussed the increase in costs and ARPA funding. Ald. Parente asked if the police department had representation on the ARPA committee. Chief Mello stated there was no police department representative on the committee, but opportunities were available for subject project requests. Ald. Parente asked about locker rooms for female officers. Chief Mello discussed recruiting diverse applicants. He stated the gym at the police department was removed and female locker room created.

### **Boys and Girls Club (p. 92)**

Megan Altomare, Director, provided a brief summary of activities. She discussed enrollment and programs. Ms. Altomare stated the cost is \$75 a month and financial aid is provided for those that cannot afford the monthly fee. She discussed other funding sources. Ms. Altomare stated there is small increase request to allow for more opportunities. Ald. German asked the total budget. Ms. Altomare stated 1.3 million. Discussion ensued concerning other fundraising events. Ald. Vitali asked for information on outside grants. Ms. Altomare stated outside grants are approximately \$140,000, not including government grants.

### **Fire Department (p. 51)**

Douglas Edo, Fire Chief, stated 90% of the budget is contractual wages. He discussed other expenses of the department. Chief Edo discussed new construction within the City and its impact on the department. He stated the department is EMS based with 70% of calls being medical emergencies. Chief Edo discussed budget deficiencies and how he does believe the department can make it work this year. He discussed vacancies, the loss of years of experience and training needs. Ald. Vetro discussed his disappointment in miscommunication concerning equipment being out of service. Ald. Vitali asked what is needed in order for the department to function. Mayor Blake stated the budget does not tell the entire story. He discussed items that are paid from other sources and not reflected in the department's budget. Ald. Vitali discussed ancillary accounts that may not be shown in operating budgets. He asked what it will take beyond the 3% increase to provide the fire department with a level of comfortability. Kevin McGrath, Chairman Police Commission, stated everyone wants the best for service. He stated the Chiefs and Fire Commission have done their best to make it work and he feels an additional \$250,000, although lean, would work. Mayor Blake discussed equipment purchases for the department. Ald. Parente asked for an explanation of Class 1 status. Anthony Fabrizi, Deputy Chief, stated the insurance services organizations grades the departments. He stated Class 1 has been maintained for approximately 20 years and it is based on training, response time, documents and such. Deputy Chief Fabrizi discussed well-trained firefighters making a great department. He discussed continued training for all firefighters and funding needed. Ald. Beatty asked if the original budget ask was thoughtful and honest. Stephen Rabel, Battalion Chief, stated the ask was the bare minimum. Ald. Giannattasio stated he appreciates the Fire Department proposal and understands it with the growth of the City resulting in more calls. He discussed EMS revenue and the Fire Department retaining 25% and whether or not the rate can be increased. Mayor Blake stated the Board of Aldermen adopted the rate. He stated the amount has increased with the City receiving over \$1 million per year. He stated the amount the department received has increased expediently. Ald. Giannattasio stated his belief the percentage should be increased. He asked how ambulance purchases are funded. Chief Edo stated they are

paid from EMS funds. Mayor Blake stated they have also been bonded or paid for through other mechanisms. Ald. Giannattasio reiterated the increase in calls, expansion of the City impacting the department and the need for additional funding. He asked if firehouses are repaired out of the department budgets. Chief Edo stated repairs come from the department budget. He stated headquarters will be 100 years old. Chief Edo discussed future plans for the department and the need for a 4<sup>th</sup> ambulance. He also discussed the need for a new firehouse in the future near the Orange town line. Ald. Giannattasio stated the percentage change for EMS billing should be an action item for the Board to consider. Mr. McGrath stated the status quo has been maintained, but those days are ending. Mayor Blake stated capital expenses are funded through the City. Ald. Giannattasio asked the Finance Director how much the City has realized from EMS funding. Ald. Casey asked which line item(s) would be most important to increase. Chief Edo stated EMS accounts would be the ones in most need. He discussed how the relationships changed with the takeover of Milford Hospital. Ald. German stated he agrees with increasing EMS percentage retained by the Fire Department. He asked if increasing the percentage retained by the department would help. Chief Edo confirmed an increase in the percentage would be helpful. Deputy Chief Fabrizi stressed the importance of training firefighters, especially given how young the department is currently. Ald. Mulrenan asked for a summary of training and asked about EMT/Paramedics on the ambulances. Deputy Chief Fabrizi discussed Paramedics and their assignments among the 4 working shifts. He discussed contractual obligations to maintain Paramedics on each shift. Deputy Chief Fabrizi stated all Milford firefighters are EMT certified. Ald. Vitali asked Mayor Blake if the firehouse roofs will be bonded. Mayor Blake stated they are being funded through other sources. Discussion ensued. Ald. Pacelli stated the amount requested and recommended by the Mayor and Board of Finance was 17% more than allocated in prior year. Ald. Parente asked if requests have been met in the ARPA plan or if there are other needs of the department in order to provide safety to the community. Chief Edo stated the Fire Department was not asked to participate in the ARPA committee, but the department was able to obtain some equipment using ARPA funding. He stated the department received less than \$500,000. Mayor Blake stated the Fire Department received all ARPA funding it requested. He discussed other types of funding that benefited all City departments. Deputy Chief Fabrizi discussed fears of Covid and drafting of operational plans. Mr. McGrath stated he understands the difficulty with creating a budget and the Board should understand that there is no fluff in the department's request.

### **Lights, Hydrants, Water (p. 62)**

Ald. German asked if all the lighting is now LED in all departments. Mayor Blake stated this represents streetlights and they have been switched to LED.

### **Emergency Management (p. 58)**

None

### **C-Med (p. 88)**

None

### **Public Library (P. 35)**

Chris Angeli, Director, stated the budget request is frugal and fiscally responsible while increasing services. She discussed library operations and its evolution. Ms. Angeli stated the library is a vibrant hub of the community. She provided statistics on circulations and programs. Ms. Angeli discussed per capita services in neighboring communities. Mr. Angeli stated an increase is requested in electronic services account. She stated the request is still not enough as demand for digital services has increased. Ald. Broesder asked about licensing involved with digital services. Ms. Angeli discussed restrictive terms of licensing. She stated although expensive it is an important and necessary service. Ms. Angeli discussed number of items checked out and on hold. Ald. Broesder asked for information on staff time spent with start-up business. Ms. Angeli discussed staffing and training. Ald. Vitali asked if microfilm is still in use. Ms. Angeli stated newspapers are still received on microfilm, but with ARPA funding local newspapers will be digitized. Ald. Vitali asked for an explanation of other computer. Ms. Angeli stated this covers other peripherals. Ald. Marlow asked about staffing. Ms. Angeli discussed staffing requests and needs in order to grow. Ald. Marlow stated he agrees the role of the library is changing and a closer look is needed to see how to meet the needs of the community. Ald. Giannattasio asked what the salary for the position not included would represent. Ms. Angeli stated it would be approximately \$50,000. Ald. Giannattasio asked if other libraries have a similar position. Ms. Angeli stated it is one of the most advertised positions. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the elevator is being replaced. Ms. Angeli stated the contract has just been signed and the elevator is being replaced. Ald. German asked how to find out about activities at the library. Ms. Angeli stated the City's website, newsletter and social media. Ald. German asked if the marketing position could be done part-time. Ms. Angeli stated it might be possible, but it requires knowledge of the library building and services. She stated it would be best served by a full-time position.

#### **Mayor's Office (p. 17)**

Mayor Blake stated the budget is status quo except for contractual wage adjustments. Ald. Vitali asked where the account for printing budget books. Mayor Blake stated it is under General Expenses. Ald. Giannattasio asked if maintenance of Mayor's office vehicles comes out of the Mayor's budget. Mayor Blake stated repairs come from the Public Works budget. Ald. Arciuolo asked about the computer budget. Mayor Blake discussed computers being centralized in the MIS department. Ald. Parente asked for information on the CCM Levy. Mayor Blake stated the amount is based on the size of the community. Ald. Parente asked what service CCM provides. Mayor Blake stated all towns and cities are members and are provided with professional development and provide lobbying on behalf of municipalities. He discussed other services provided. Ald. Beatty asked if the Board of Aldermen has a budget. Discussion ensued.

### **General Expenses (p. 19)**

Ald. Vitali asked what department is responsible for general expenses and why the professional services was increased by Board of Finance. Mayor Blake stated it relates to the annual budget and it was increased between the time of budget request and when the Board of Finance met and deliberated.

### **Open Space (p. 34)**

Jeremy Grant, Open Space and Natural Resource Manager, discussed open spaces and use by residents. He discussed the Earth Day and Tree Give Away event. Mr. Grant discussed trees planted around the City by Public Works. He announced the Arbor Day Foundation recognizing the City as a tree City. Ald. Marlow asked if the City is looking to acquire additional open space properties. Mr. Grant stated the City is always interested in reviewing and accepting open spaces. Ald. German asked if Open Space is involved in trees that are being removed. Mr. Grant stated he is not involved, but unfortunately trees do become diseased and require removal. Ald. German asked about ground cleanup and if City approval is needed. Mr. Grant discussed various groups that participate in ground cleanup. Mayor Blake announced the MacKenzie Beach Cleanup.

### **Borough of Woodmont (p. )**

Edward Bonessi, Warden, discussed Woodmont as a municipality having 6 miles of roadway. He discussed the Borough police vehicle and East Shore communication tower. Mr. Bonessi discussed public works contracts being fiscally responsible. Ald. German discussed work provided by the public works company to the Borough.

### **Human Resources Department (p. 41)**

Tania Barnes, Director, provided a brief summary of departmental functions. She discussed software training and wellness initiatives. Ms. Barnes discussed labor relations and working closely with the City Attorney's Office. She stated the budget is flat except for a seasonal temporary request for a summer intern and training. Ms. Barnes discussed centralizing technical training. Ald. Vitale asked for an explanation of the increase by Board of Finance. Peter Erodici stated the HR Assistant was moved from MEA to Milford City Hall to be consistent with other employees in the HR Department. Ald. Vitale asked if the training at \$5,000 is sufficient. Ms. Barnes stated it is an increase from the prior budget. Discussion ensued concerning training opportunities. Ald. German asked how many vacant positions are currently. Ms. Barnes stated there are approximately 54 vacancies, 30 on the City government and the balance being police and fire who are responsible for their own recruitment. Ald. German asked for cost of health insurance for both City and Board of Education. Peter stated the total claims and administration are approximately \$47 million. Ald. German asked what wellness initiatives are offered. Ms. Barnes discussed newsletters, lunch and learns, employee wellness center, exercise programs and other opportunities. Ald. Giannattasio asked how the hiring freeze memo has affected applications in process. Ms. Barnes stated there were 2 positions where offers had been extended and the hiring process continued for those positions. She stated the other positions are on hold until otherwise advised. Ald. Giannattasio asked when the hiring freeze will be lifted. Mayor Blake stated this happens regularly when financial controls need to be in put I place.

He expects it will remain in place for the remainder of the fiscal year. Mayor Blake stated there are exceptions where the position is critical. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the overages are due to the contractual wage adjustments based on the settlement of the collective bargaining agreements. Mayor Blake confirmed that 7 contracts settled resulting in retroactive wages.

### **Department of Permitting and Land Use (p. 27)**

Joseph Griffith, Director, provided a brief summary of department responsibilities. He stated the increase to the budget is due to contractual wage increases. Mr. Griffith discussed a vacancy in the Building Inspection Division and electronic permitting software. Discussion ensued regarding the building inspection vacancy. Ald. Giannattasio stated in the past the department was looking for an additional building inspector. Mr. Griffith stated an additional inspector was requested several years ago and was not approved. He stated the vacancy has been for quite some time due to very few qualified applicants. Mr. Griffith stated with the contract settlement the wages have increased to make the position more attractive. Ald. Giannattasio asked if outside vendors have been used for building inspection. Mr. Griffith stated the workload is being managed. Ald. Giannattasio asked how the vacancy is impacted by the hiring freeze. Mr. Griffith stated applications will be accepted and if a qualified person is found it will be reviewed and a determination made. Ald. Broesder asked if revenue would increase with an additional inspector. Mr. Griffith stated it would not the revenue is based on number of permit applications. Discussion ensued concerning managing workloads. Ald. Arciuolo asked how positions. Ald. Marlow reviewed how many building inspectors are currently in the department. Mr. Griffith stated there are 4 inspectors which include him as Chief Building Official. Ald. Pacelli stated the budget has a placeholder for the position but due to difficulties in finding qualified candidates the vacancy remains. He confirmed a search for a qualified candidate is underway. Mr. Griffith confirmed that is correct. Ald. Vitali asked if the position is posted through Human Resources. Mr. Griffith stated Human Resources is responsible for the search and when applications are received they are referred for review.

### **Community Development (p. 20)**

Julie Nash, Director, stated the budget flat and business growth continues to expand. Ms. Nash discussed the economic development strategic plan post Covid. Ald. German asked for an explanation for business climate and vacancy rates in the community. Ms. Nash stated industrial spaces are filled. She stated office spaces have significant vacancies due to the way people work changing. Ms. Nash discussed the real estate audit that was recently completed. She discussed business growth. Ms. Nash discussed the housing industry and flattening of multi-housing. Ald. Vitali asked what happens with commercial vacancies. Ms. Nash discussed how she communicates with businesses and sells the City as the place to locate. Ald. Vitali asked for an update on the TOD project and the former Howard Johnson's parcel on the Boston Post Road. Ms. Nash invited everyone to attend ECD meetings. She stated the Post Road property is just a Genesis dealership and that the TOD project is progressing. Ald. Arciuolo asked if there is specific legislation that prevents large businesses from locating in the downtown area. Ms. Nash discussed how major corporations view radius areas and the impact Long Island Sound has on the radius. Ald. Broesder asked about the Devon Transfer Station becoming another line. Ms. Nash stated she is not aware of plans for another train station.

**Public Debt Service (p. 78)**

Ald. German requested the balance for sewer and clean water funds. Mr. Erodici stated the total bond amount per the last audit is \$183,000,000 which includes clean water fund loans of \$20,000,000 that were converted to bonds. He stated it also includes schools.

**Employee Benefits (p. 84)**

None

**Insurance and Bonds (p. 85)**

None

**Claims and Refunds (p. 85)**

None

**Benefit and Salary Reserve (p. 106)**

None

**Private School Textbook (p. 93)**

None

**Education Audit Fees (p. 93)**

None

**School Debt (p. 93)**

None

**Employee Benefits – Non-Teaching (p. 93)**

None

**Education – Health Insurance Contribution (p. 94)**

None



Ald. Parente and Ald. Beatty made and seconded a motion to recess. Motion carried unanimously.  
The Board recessed at 11:55 p.m.

Chairman Vetro announced the Board would stand in recess until Tuesday, April 25, 2023.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Toni Jo Weeks", written over a horizontal line.

Toni Jo Weeks  
Recording Secretary