

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION
APRIL 25, 2022**

The Board of Aldermen resumed its budget deliberation session regarding the Board of Finance's recommended budget for fiscal year 2022-2023, on Monday, April 25, 2022. 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 arrived @ 7:05 p.m.
M. Casey
D. German
A. Giannattasio
G. Harla
S. Marlow
H. Mulrenan
J. Moffitt
M. Parente
P. Vetro
R. Vitali
W. Willis

Also Present

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake
P. Erodici, Finance Director
K. Fortunati, City Clerk

Excused:

R. Pacelli

Chairman Vetro welcomed everyone to the 2022-2023 budget deliberations. He stated tonight's meeting was the continuation of the departmental portion of the budget process.

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

Transit District (p. 89)

Henry Jadach, Director, discussed transit services provided and the challenges presented by Covid. Mr. Jadach discussed the various public funds available to the district. Ald. Giannattasio asked if

other grants are realized by the district. Mr. Jadach stated they rely heavily on State funding. Ald. Giannattasio asked if grants have increased. Mr. Jadach stated they have increased in small increments. He discussed how funds are allocated to districts. Ald. Giannattasio asked given the current cost of fuel if there was any aid provided. Mr. Jadach discussed cares funds and recovery act funds received. Ald. Giannattasio asked if increases have been requested to the Mayor. Mr. Jadach stated approximately 3 years ago the district received a 5,000 increase. Ald. Vitali asked total operating budget. Mr. Jadach stated the operating budget is 25 million and capital budget approximately 3 million. He further commented that the numbers vary depending on vehicle need. Ald. German asked the number of total users. Mr. Jadach stated ridership is still below the number pre-covid. He stated van services are coming back slowly, while other services are at approximately 75%. He provided a summary of those served by the district. Ald. Marlow asked if fares are increasing. Mr. Jadach stated there are no fares until June 30. Ald. Marlow asked if routes will be increased. Mr. Jadach stated he does not anticipate increase in routes, but frequency in service. Ald. Parente asked what is on the district's wish list. Mr. Jadach stated new buses and getting the word out about services. Ald. Beatty asked if the region has a wish list. Mr. Jadach discussed initiatives of the region. Ald. Harla asked if new vehicles will be fossil fuel or electric. Mr. Jadach stated the coaches will most likely be the last diesel vehicles. He discussed the future trend for vehicle purchase.

Registrar of Voters (p. 15)

Kerri Rowland, Registrar, stated they are the only department with co-department heads. She explained that the Registrar of Voters budget is separate for the elections account which is joint with City Clerk. Debra Fellenbaum, Registrar, discussed staffing and the team that is the Registrar's office. Ms. Rowland discussed canvassing and making certain list of registered voters is as up to date as possible. She further discussed absentee ballot canvassing. Ms. Rowland discussed update practices and how the voter rolls are kept current. Ms. Fellenbaum discussed certification requirements for registrars. Ms. Rowland discussed elections and how they are critical to our democracy. She discussed risk mitigation efforts. Ms. Rowland stated Connecticut is a leader in elections in the nation. She discussed polling place security for both technology and personnel. Ald. Marlow asked from a budgeting standpoint how it is projected for a primary and large amount of absentee ballot. Ms. Rowland stated if not enough funds are budgeted and request would be made for a transfer. She discussed how funds were reallocated for the 2020 election to account for the number of absentee ballots and counting. Ald. German asked for an explanation of the voting process for 2022. Mr. Rowland stated it is the same as the past couple of years. She discussed the changes to requests for absentee ballot. Ald. Vitali asked what percentage of fraud in the past elections. Ms. Rowland stated she has no statistics but 4 were suspected with 2 being clerical errors. Ald. Parente asked if there were any adjustments to budget that would be requested. Ms. Rowland stated that they believe the budget request is workable and if they find more funding is necessary a transfer request will be made. Ms. Rowland stated the wish list would be high-speed tabulators and they have requested to be part of a pilot program. Ms. Fellenbaum discussed concerns for redistricting next year and its impact on the budget. Ald. Vitali asked how many were affected by the state redistricting. Ms. Rowland stated less than 500 and none had to change polling places. Ald. Giannattasio asked for a brief overview of chain of custody of an absentee ballot. Ms. Rowland discussed how ballots are received, scanned, stored and verified. Ald. Giannattasio asked who is responsible for bringing ballots from the drop box. Ms. Rowland stated solely City Clerk. Ald. Beatty asked about high-speed tabulator costs. Ms. Rowland stated between \$4,000 to \$5,000. Ald.

Arciuolo asked if selling existing tabulators would be an option to offset costs. Ms. Rowland stated they are obsolete.

City Clerk (p.22)

Karen Fortunati, City Clerk, provided handout summarizing increase in budget. She stated it is for the new land records management software. Ms. Fortunati stated is a superior product to what is currently being used. She discussed what will be shown on the City Clerk website for fraud alert concerning land records. Ald. Parente asked if there is anything on the wish list that is not reflected in the budget. Ms. Fortunati stated it was the new software that has been approved.

Elections (p. 14)

Ald. Marlow asked if the elections account reflects all expenses for the election process and covers all expenses from Registrar and City Clerk. Ms. Fortunati stated that is correct.

Harbor Management and Marina (p. 110)

Jim Donegan, Operation Manager, stated last year was very strong with revenue being up approximately 37%. He stated the gains were from transient marina business. Mr. Donegan stated since last year an online booking system has been implemented and streamlined operations. He discussed expansion of the system to include dinghy, kayak and mooring fields. Mr. Donegan provided statistics of boats and people visiting the marina last year. He discussed grounds and upkeep. Mr. Donegan discussed events hosted at the marina and opportunities for the community. He discussed improvements to the patio and walkway and replacement of timber steps. Ald. Harla thanked Mr. Donegan for the job he is doing at the marina. Ald. Vitali asked about the process and revenue from the paddleboat. Mr. Donegan stated this is new this season and two-hour tours to Charles Island and back. He stated the slip space is leased to the paddleboat at the same rate of commercial dockage. Ald. Vitali asked about other services that will be required such as trash. Mr. Donegan discussed the commercial mooring agreement and its provisions for trash, storage space and such. He stated the paddleboat will follow the contract. Ald. Vitali asked if additional security will be necessary due to traffic the paddleboat may create. Mr. Donegan stated the paddleboat will pick up and drop off passengers at the boat ramp side of the marina. He discussed spreading out of traffic by doing so. Ald. German asked how reservations are made for the paddleboat. Mr. Donegan stated booking is done on the company's website.

Golf Course (p. 112)

Dan Worroll, Golf Commissioner, stated there have been major projects completed over past several months. He discussed sand trap replenishment and tree trimming that was accomplished. Mr. Worroll discussed online reservation system. Ald. Marlow asked how the fee structure works with the management company. Mr. Worroll discussed how the City received revenues from the contractor and rounds. He further discussed percentage of fees received from electric and pull carts. Ald. Marlow asked if rounds were up. Mr. Worroll stated the rounds and carts were up from prior year. Ald. Marlow asked who is responsible for upkeep. Mr. Worroll provided a brief explanation of repair and maintenance.

Milford Arts Council (p. 87)

Paige Miglio, Director, provided a handout. She reviewed statistics from last year and the current year. Ms. Miglio discussed outdoor space utilization during the pandemic and the return to indoor events. She discussed the decrease in public donations. Ms. Miglio discussed highlights from the year. She provided an update on the park bench grant. She stated two benches have been placed with more planned soon. Ald. German asked for an explanation of members. Ms. Miglio stated membership has been static and loss of membership during Covid. She stated membership is increasing. Ald. Marlow thanked Ms. Miglio for service to the City and the printout. Ald. German asked if grant funding is down due to Covid. Ms. Miglio stated it is lower and that before Covid it would fluctuate. She provided a brief explanation of grant funding over the years.

Bridges Community Healthcare, Inc. (p. 89)

Jennifer Fiorello, Director, she stated its been a difficult two years for the agency and clients. She stated increase of motel services is skyrocketing. Ms. Fiorello discussed federal funding for capital projects and inability to pay clinical staff upon licensing. She discussed the difficulties in encouraging legislature to provide sustainable funding. Ms. Fiorello discussed costs of clinical services and shortfalls that occur. She discussed workforce shortages and without increases the struggle for providing services. Ms. Fiorello discussed the significant need for services. Ald. Vitali asked for a comparison of staffing pre-covid and post-covid and clients being served. Ms. Fiorello stated the numbers are consistent, but the demand for services has increased. Ald. Vitali asked how many have been served in the past years in Milford. Ms. Fiorello stated 1,300 were served in Milford. Ald. Marlow asked if Bridges works with other agencies and what happens to those on the waiting list. Ms. Fiorello stated the do refer to other agencies and this is not specific to Milford. Ald. Marlow asked how long a client will receive services. Ms. Fiorello stated it depends on diagnosis. Ald. Casey asked how clients without transportation are serviced. Ms. Fiorello discussed various ways for provide services such as telehealth visits and the transportation offered by the center. Ald. Parente asked what other funding streams are available. Ms. Fiorello provided an explanation of funding received to support the center. Ald. Arciuolo asked what as a Board what can be offered to help alleviate stress. Ms. Fiorello stated the one thing she would ask is that State legislature provide ample funding to support staffing. Ald. German asked funding raising goals. Mr. Fiorello discussed Folks on Spokes and other fundraising activities.

Police Department (p. 43)

Keith Mello, Chief of Police, discussed key indicators concerning crime trends using statistics from 2018 and 2019. He stated the trends are illustration of demands on policing today. Chief Mello stated this is not just Milford its happening in surrounding communities. He discussed the types of crimes, how they are being committed and by whom. Chief Mello discussed reasons for not car chasing except for violent crimes. He discussed the demands on policing and difficulties associated with policing. Chief Mello discussed changes to beaches and usage. He discussed impact on quality of life for those visiting the beach. Chief Mello provided information on the demands on police staff

with the upticks in violent crimes. He discussed seasonal temporary budget increase to allow for hiring of parking enforcement at beaches. Chief Mello discussed tickets issued for parking violations. He discussed beach patrols and offsetting costs in the budget. Chief Mello reviewed dashcam requirements and costs over the next 4 years and expected increases due to data storage requirements. Chief Mello discussed deficits to the overtime accounts. He discussed holiday pay being underfunded and how it impacts other categories. Chief Mello discussed issues with retention and recruitment. He discussed issues with scheduling and staffing and impacts on overtime. Ald. German asked how many positions are currently vacant. Chief Mello stated there are currently 11 vacancies with 3 more anticipated. He stated there are currently 10 in the academy. Ald. German asked what is anticipated for the coming year for vacancies. Chief Mello stated he anticipates 5 more vacancies. Ald. Arciuolo asked for an explanation of professional services 4150. Chief Mello stated that line item is for computer services. He discussed services provided by outside contractor. Ald. Vitali asked for an explanation of police leaving to go to other departments. Chief Mello discussed lateral transfers to other cities. Ald. Vitali asked what can be done in today's policing to prevent crime. Chief Mello discussed restructuring at agency and car assignments in the City. He discussed the importance of leadership and supporting staff. Chief Mello discussed the social worker team within the police department and how it impacts individuals with mental health. Ald. Parente asked about gender and diversity within the police department. Chief Mello discussed the addition of women to the police department. He stated currently there are 23 female officers. He further stated 40% of classes are women. Chief Mello discussed numbers of transient population and importance of attracting diversity. Ald. Broesder asked for an explanation of the bodycam line item for not only this budget but future budget. Chief Mello discussed the mandate for bodycam and the equipment and backend storage requirements. He discussed cataloging and retention schedules. Chief Mello stated the contract is a 5-year plan and the costs have gone up. Ald. Broesder asked if other technology investments will be needed in coming years. Chief Mello stated the technology is adequate and the building has been retrofitted for technology. He discussed rearranging of workspaces to provide for technology. Ald. Moffitt discussed what citizens can do to assist and discourage such as neighborhood watch, Ring doorbells and such. Chief Mello discussed how public education helps with preventing and solving crime. Ald. Beatty discussed ARPA funding going to the police department and what would happen were the funding not available. Chief Mello discussed submitting budget requests and mandated requirements. Ald. Marlow asked for an explanation of the two additional public safety dispatchers. Chief Mello stated it is difficult to retain in Milford due to pay gap. Ald. German asked what towns Milford is compared to. Chief Mello stated Fairfield, East Harford, Hamden and Manchester. He stated they are similar size departments and complexities. Ald. Giannattasio stated 4 new police officers were requested but were not approved. He discussed the importance of additional staffing due to upticks in crime and morale discussed. Chief Mello stated the additional positions equate to 1 additional officer per shift. He discussed the additional officers as a long term solution due to recruiting and academy training. Ald. Giannattasio stated he supports the addition of officers and it should not be overlooked due to rising trends.

Animal Control (p. 59)

Scott Ellingson, Animal Control Warden, stated everything is the same with the exception of electricity account. Chairman Vetro asked what is the reason for increase. Mr. Ellingson stated costs have increased and air conditioning was down requiring use of wall units. He stated there is a state requirement for what temperature the kennels must be kept at. Ald. Giannattasio asked if there is a

cost share with the Town of Orange still and if fueling at Orange is still in place. Mr. Ellingson stated that is correct. Ald. Giannattasio asked how the dog park is working. Mr. Ellingson stated it is working okay and they try to be present everyday.

Probate Court (p. 26)

Benjamin Gettinger, Probate Judge, stated the majority of the budget is paid for by state with the balance by the City on a 75/25 proportionate share.

Council on Aging (p. 87)

Mayor Blake stated he does not see a representative this evening, but will be happy to follow up if there are any questions. Ald. Arciuolo asked about elderly foot nutrition and the purpose. Peter Erodicti stated it is \$1.00 and is a placeholder should it be needed in future years. He stated it is an account that was not needed in several years. Ald. German asked why they are not here tonight. Mayor Blake stated that his office did notify everyone of the meeting nights.

Beth El Center (p. 92)

Jennifer Paradis, Director, provided a summary of responses to Covid and post-Covid. She stated the center has been dedicated to maintaining shelter and food programs. Ms. Paradis provided an explanation of various programs offered and numbers serviced at the center. She discussed difficulties in placing clients in housing. Ms. Paradis discussed increase of services at the soup kitchen. She stated the largest increase is the no-freeze shelter program. Ms. Paradis discussed the homeless prevention program that started in 2020. She stated the budget request is flat with no requested increase. Ald. Vitali asked total operating budget. Ms. Paradis stated is approximately 1.2 million. She discussed responses from the State for certain services and most being one-time funding opportunities. Ald. Marlow asked how staffing and if volunteer or paid. Ms. Paradis stated 25 staff members with 80 to 100 volunteers. Ald. Marlow asked if any renovations are planned to the center and if services are provided to people outside of Milford. Ms. Paradis provided statistics on services provided in and outside of Milford. She discussed the ongoing needs assessment as the center is small for the services provided. Ald. German asked for an explanation for fundraising events. Ms. Paradis provided a breakdown of operating budget and discussed fundraising efforts. Ald. Parente asked about programming offered by the State and seniors on the verge of homelessness. Ms. Paradis discussed the challenges of one-time funding and stated there have been no significant commitments from the State to continue the work of the programs. She discussed housing issues and referral services.

Health Department (p. 79)

Deepa Joseph, Director of Health, provided and discussed handout concerning services provided the Health Department over the past two years. Ms. Joseph stated the budget is flat this year. Ald. Willis asked concerning Covid for homebound were all served that requested vaccine. Ms. Joseph stated all that reached out were vaccinated and they are still in the process of administering booster doses. Ald. German asked are all positions are filled. Ms. Joseph stated the Deputy Director position is

vacant but they are in the final round of interviews. She stated there is also one nurse that will be starting soon.

Health Services (VNA) (p. 91)

Ms. Joseph stated this account covers well-child exams for families that cannot provide one.

Education Health Services/School Nurses (p. 95)

None

Human Services Department (p. 90)

Ms. Joseph provided and discussed a handout illustrating services provided. She stated they are seeing new group requesting housing, utilities and food assistance. Ms. Joseph stated additional grant funding was obtained for rent, mortgage, utilities and emergency food vouchers. She stated the goal of the agency to lead people to self-sufficiency. Ms. Joseph stated the budget request is flat.

Milford Government Access Television (p. 16)

Kara Flannery, Chairman, provided a brief summary of staffing and ramping up again following Covid. She discussed agencies covered by MGAT and additions to the MGAT channel on YouTube.

Management Information Systems (MIS) (p.39)

Adam Heller, IT Manager, provided a brief summary of technology upgrades over the past 3 years. Mr. Heller discussed workforce flexibility with new technology.

Finance Department (p. 37)

Peter Erodici, Finance Director, explained the division that make up the Finance Department. He stated the Finance Department works closely with the MIS department. Mr. Erodici stated the Finance Department was required to provide additional federal and state reporting requirements. He discussed the MUNIS and KRONOS timekeeping upgrades. Mr. Erodici stated the budget is flat with an increase in Miscellaneous Professional Fees and Services due to banking fees increasing and needing to be paid upfront. He stated that the Accounting Department has launched an AP credit payment and the revenue share will help to offset banking fees. Ald. German asked if all the positions are currently filled. Mr. Erodici stated there are a couple vacancies, one being the Payroll Supervisor and Purchasing Senior Clerk. He stated the HR Department is working to fill both positions.

Public Works Office (p. 63)
Highway/Parks (p. 65)
Building Maintenance (p. 69)
Engineering Department (p. 72)
General Garage (p. 74)
Solid Waste (p. 76)
Wastewater (p. 101)

Chris Saley, Public Works Director, stated the budget is flat. He reviewed the various divisions of the department. Mr. Saley discussed current projects. Ald. Vitali asked the status of personnel and the stresses on staff. Mr. Saley stated approximately 26 vacancies. He stated the department does it best but cannot be as responsive as once were. Ald. Vitali asked if the job is getting done. Mr. Saley stated it is getting done, but not as quickly or efficiently as he would like. Ald. Arciuolo asked if an increase in budget would assist with filling positions. Mr. Saley stated the positions are budgeted and Covid has been a challenge to staffing. Ald. Arciuolo asked what efforts have been taken to fill positions. Mr. Saley discussed positions that are in the process of being filled. Ald. German stated the 26 unfilled positions have been in the budget for some time so why have the positions in the budget if the work is getting done. Mr. Saley discussed the struggles with getting work completed and how filling positions will assist in getting work completed sooner. Ald. Beatty discussed increased capacity and her assessment of the unfilled positions, the impact to the work and issue with salaries not being competitive. Mr. Saley discussed challenges and frustrations within the department due to staffing shortages. He stated they do want to fill the positions and the City's package is competitive. Ald. Vetro asked if the Court system community service requirements could be used for small chores. Mr. Saley explained how it has worked in the past and that it does not make much of an impact. Ald. Marlow asked if contractors are being utilized due to staffing issues. Mr. Saley discussed the role of the project manager and work that is given to outside contractors. Ald. Parente asked where the money for open positions resides. Mr. Erodici stated the savings goes to the rainy-day fund at the close of the fiscal year. Ald. German asked where the contractor work is in the budget. Mr. Saley stated the sidewalk is from state bonding. The others would be from contractual services. Mayor Blake provided examples of work done through grant funding. Ald. Arciuolo asked about the overall condition of the department's equipment. Mr. Saley stated he worries about having enough plow trucks. He discussed trucks that he would like to add to the department fleet. Ald. Arciuolo asked for an itemization of wish list. Ald. German asked for an explanation of recycling services. Mr. Saley stated recycling is lower this year, but contaminated loads are costing more. He stated MSW will eventually be an issue for the City. Ald. Giannattasio asked if an effort will be made to fill positions. Mr. Saley stated the goal is to fill positions. Ald. Giannattasio stated the public works department is the core of the City and needs to be adequately staffed. Ald. Giannattasio asked if a contractor is being used to vacuum the catch basins. Mr. Saley stated the department has a vac machine that is manned by City employees.

Ald. Giannattasio and Ald. Harla made and seconded a motion to recess. Motion carried unanimously. The Board recessed at 11:04 p.m.

Chairman Vetro announced the Board would stand in recess until Wednesday, April 27, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Toni Jo Weeks", with a horizontal line above it.

Toni Jo Weeks
Recording Secretary