

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION
APRIL 27, 2022**

The Board of Aldermen resumed its budget deliberation session regarding the Board of Finance's recommended budget for fiscal year 2022-2023, on Wednesday, April 27, 2022 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

M. Arciuolo
M. Casey
D. German
A. Giannattasio
G. Harla
S. Marlow
H. Mulrenan
J. Moffitt
R. Pacelli
M. Parente
P. Vetro
R. Vitali
W. Willis

Also Present

K. Fortunati, City Clerk

Excused:

E. Beatty
B. Broesder

Chairman Vetro welcomed everyone to the 2022-2023 budget deliberations. He stated tonight's meeting was the education operations portion of the budget process. Chairman Vetro stated the Council on Aging would also present this evening.

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

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Council on Aging (p. 87)

Leonora Rodriguez, Director, shared a brief summary of activities of the Senior Center during the year. She discussed food services, programs, scholarships and other activities offered in-house and virtually. Ms. Rodriguez discussed programming survey conducted with the membership. She discussed community engagement and fundraising efforts. Ms. Rodriguez discussed support of the food bank and relationships with local food rescue organizations. She discussed the replacement of vans used by the center and noted increase in social services. Ms. Rodriguez discussed growth of Meals on Wheels program. She discussed anticipated needs of the center. Ald. Vitali asked the total membership. Ms. Rodriguez respond 1,756 with a hope that membership will continue to grow. Ald. Vitali asked the fee. Ms. Rodriguez state \$15 for Milford citizens. Ald. Willis asked the overall budget of the center. Mr. Rodriguez stated she will provide exact numbers. Ald. Willis asked if there is a waiting list for out-of-town members. Ms. Rodriguez stated there is a list. Ald. Marlow asked how many families are taking advantage of the food bank. Ms. Rodriguez stated currently 100 families utilize the family bank. Ald. Marlow asked about repairs and maintenance and if it is through public works. Mr. Rodriguez stated public works have provided great support and she discussed recent damage to the building and ongoing repairs. Ald. Casey asked how someone becomes a member. Ms. Rodriguez stated if 55 years or older, fill out membership application and pay fee. Ald. German asked percentage of out-of-town members. Ms. Rodriguez stated less than 10%. She discussed the budget and how it allows for a successful center. Ald. Arciuolo asked the level of donation to food bank during the pandemic. Ms. Rodriguez stated donations were up and unfortunately post-pandemic they have lowered. Ald. Giannattasio asked about improvements to the exterior of the building. Ms. Rodriguez summarized exterior improvements the center would like to accomplish. Ald. Willis asked for an explanation of staffing and volunteers. Ms. Rodriguez stated there have been retirements and other postings are for outside contractors. She discussed the demand for drivers. Ms. Rodriguez provided a summary of volunteers pre and post-covid. Ald. Parente asked about potential homelessness. Ms. Rodriguez discussed seniors experiencing losing long-time rental homes due to current real estate trends. Ald. Marlow asked what other agencies the center works with for referral services. Mr. Rodriguez discussed services offered at the center and guidance through the 211 system.

Education Operations (p. 94)

Susan Glennon, Chairman Board of Education, read from a prepared statement. Ms. Glennon stated the budget continues to blend the needs disrupted by covid together with recovery efforts. She stated they Board is aware of financial challenges. Ms. Glennon stated 90% of the budget is contractual and non-negotiable costs. Ms. Glennon asked for the Board's support of the education budget. Ana Cutaia, Superintendent of Milford Public Schools, shared a PowerPoint presentation. Dr. Cutaia discussed the 3 key pieces, common vision of learner, relationship framework and model of high quality of instruction. Dr. Cutaia discussed commitments adopted by the Board of Education to plan for improvement. She discussed priorities adopted for the 22-23 school year. Dr. Cutaia discussed forecasting of financial climate for budgeting. She discussed potential use of other funding sources and the impact of home sales in Milford to enrollment. Dr. Cutaia stated discussed the rising cost of utilities having a significant impact on the budget and anticipated increase in cost. She discussed accomplishments and progress made during a pandemic. Dr. Cutaia stated 461 students graduated last year with approximately 1/3 graduating with honors. She reviewed post-secondary plans of

students. Dr. Cutaia stated 167 students were named AP scholars for the 20-21 school year. She discussed science labs in elementary schools and the accomplishment of the addition to elementary schools. Dr. Cutaia discussed high quality instruction learning for teachers. She discussed the role of play returning to the classroom for young students. Dr. Cutaia discussed projects completed during summer 2021. She stated the proposed budget represents a 2.28% increase. Dr. Cutaia stated there are 7 impact drivers. Dr. Cutaia discussed the drivers. Salaries make up 70% of budget. Dr. Cutaia discussed the addition of counselor positions using ESSR and ARP funds bring 4 of the 11 positions to the budget each year. She discussed enrollment and bump up at elementary level. Dr. Cutaia stated the salary driver is \$700,000 before anything is added. She discussed salaries related to covid, benefits, utilities, contracted maintenance, transportation and cyber insurance and impact to budget. Dr. Cutaia stated the drivers are all fixed costs and represents 85% of the 2.28% increase. She discussed going back to the drawing board due to the pandemic and reviewed system improvements for the 22-23 school year. Dr. Cutaia discussed adding school counselors at the elementary school level. She discussed the Surgeon General's December 2021 advisory and addressing mental health needs. Dr. Cutaia provided a curriculum review for 22-23 school year. Ald. Moffitt asked what programs are available to involve parents in the education. Dr. Cutaia discussed engagement of families to better support young people. She stated there was a pause during the pandemic. Work with PTO and PTA also engage parents and families. Ald. German asked for an explanation of increase in mental health issues. Chris Brown, Director Pupil Personnel and Special Education Services, stated the pandemic and distance from peers, also social media plays an active role and families being extended. Ald. Marlow asked what will be required over the next 5 to 10 years. Dr. Cutaia stated this will require going outside of classrooms as this is also a family issue. Support and education is important for families with connections to community based resources. Mr. Brown stated the access to support children need is readily available in school and children coming to school every day is a key factor in providing support. Ald. Arciuolo asked what effect parents working from home had on extra-curricular activities. Dr. Cutaia stated space was provided to Boys & Girls Club during the pandemic and continues. She stated there are extended learning opportunities at the elementary schools and sports clinics at the middle schools that were put on hold due to the pandemic are planned. Ald. Harla discussed areas of savings and what measures were used to determine the savings. Dr. Cutaia discussed reviewing of students aging out of programs, students enrolling and students leaving the school system. Jim Richetelli, Operation Manager, discussed additional funding that supplemented the budget. Ald. Vitali asked if the walking distance guidelines changed. Mr. Richetelli stated the guidelines changed approximately 7 years ago and any increase in the budget is due to contractual services and increase in fuel costs. Ald. Vitali asked is there a movement to hybrid and electric buses. Mr. Richetelli stated Durham is currently working on a long-term energy policy and in time will be required to move to electric buses. Ald. Vitali asked about moving from counselors to social workers in the schools. Dr. Cutaia stated there are currently social workers in the schools and discussed legislative requirement for school counselor availability to students. Ald. Vitali asked about adding health centers in the schools. Dr. Cutaia discussed partnering with the Health Department and other resources such as Bridges. Ald. Vitali asked about tuition for special education and establishing instruction within our schools. Mr. Brown stated the tuition is approximately \$80,000 and the expansion of offerings in Milford schools. He stated the addition of counselors will allow keeping more students in district. Ald. Vitali stated he did an analysis of cost per building and it seems the Academy number is much larger than all others. Dr. Cutaia stated programming for Academy students out of district would be significantly higher. Ald. Vitali asked about enrollment and contractual class sizes. Dr. Cutaia provided contractual class sizes. Ald.

Marlow asked why special education teacher number went down. Mr. Richetelli suggested looking at the total number rather than numbers at each school as those numbers can vary based on student needs. Mr. Brown stated the number of students with special needs is a small subset and as students move up the teacher numbers shift. Ald. Marlow asked if more children will be identified as special needs given the increase in mental health issues. Mr. Brown discussed increase in students being identified with needs. He discussed learning disabilities as being the most common category. Ald. Marlow asked if there is a grant from the State for special needs. Mr. Brown discussed grants available. Ald. Marlow asked about 50% reimbursement for SRO's. Mr. Richetelli stated the cost is 50/50 although the City has not increased the cost in several years. Ald. Marlow asked what is being done to save on energy costs. Mr. Richetelli stated all buildings have latest mechanical controls and is monitored centrally. He stated there is an energy conservation program that has resulted in large savings. Mr. Richetelli stated Foran is air conditioned and has an indoor pool which results in higher energy costs at that school. He discussed roof replacement at Foran and increasing number of solar panels to reduce costs. Mr. Richetelli discussed usage of facilities increasing resulting in increase of consumption. Ald. Marlow asked if there are benchmarks to determine if goals are being met. Dr. Cutaia discussed pre-pandemic plans with the past two years goal being to keep children and families safe. She discussed Milford Measures and AP Scholars being a benchmark. Ald. German asked what is anticipated with enrollment. Dr. Cutaia stated they are unsure due to impact on housing. There has been an increase in elementary enrollment. Mr. Richetelli the 10-year decline is leveling off with this being the first year to see an increase. Ald. German asked if there are vacancies. Mr. Richetelli stated there are very few vacancies. Dr. Cutaia stated there are more non-certified than certified vacancies. Ald. Parente asked vision without budget restrictions. Dr. Cutaia discussed technology, student voice and more choice, small class elective in 6th grade, offering more programs and increasing staffing. Ald. German asked about health, wellness and keeping costs down. Mr. Richetelli stated all unions have HSA and HDP or are transitioning which provides the same benefits while cost less. He stated Wellness Works did slow down during the pandemic however programs continue to be provided by the committee. Ald. German asked what premium cost share is for employees. Mr. Richetelli stated each bargaining unit is different ranging between 12% and 22%. Ald. Moffitt commented on the chart reflecting percentage of students planning to attend college. He asked if there are programs to encourage students to go into the trades. Dr. Cutaia discussed development of programming for certification for various careers and pathways. Ald. Giannattasio discussed the need to address mental health issues before that too becomes another pandemic. He asked is school counselor requirement is a funded mandate. Dr. Cutaia stated there is no funding available for school counselors. Ald. Giannattasio asked what other communities are doing. Dr. Cutaia stated it depends on the needs of each district. Mr. Brown discussed the multi-level approach that will assist students and provide support to students. Discussion ensued concerning use of counselors. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the energy position will continue. Mr. Richetelli stated it is in the budget but will be part time.

Ald. Giannattasio and Ald. Arciuolo made and seconded a motion to recess. Motion carried unanimously. The Board recessed at 9:20 p.m.

Chairman Vetro announced the Board would stand in recess and next meeting will be announced.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Toni Jo Weeks
Recording Secretary