

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION
APRIL 6, 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 6, 2022. Chairman Vetro called the meeting to order at 7:06 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*
D. German
A. Giannattasio
G. Harla
S. Marlow
H. Mulrenan
J. Moffitt
R. Pacelli
P. Vetro
R. Vitali
W. Willis

Also Present

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake
P. Erodici, Finance Director
J. Rosen, Chief of Staff
K. Fortunati, City Clerk

*Left meeting @ 7:56 p.m., returned to meeting
@ 8:52 p.m.

Excused:

M. Casey
M. Parente

Chairman Vetro welcomed everyone to the 2022-2023 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 his budget is flat with a minor increase in overtime due to staffing at Walnut Beach. Ald. Marlow asked why Seasonal Temp and Fees Paid Officials were lower than department request. Mayor Blake stated additional costs were expected due to increase in minimum wage and that ARPA funds will be utilized to offset costs. Chairman Vetro asked for an explanation of the pickleball issue. Mr. Garfield stated pickleball is all the rage and the department is doing its best to keep courts open for residents through the permitting system. Ald. Vitali asked if pickleball players attended this evening Park, Beach & Recreation meeting and if the issues were adequately addressed. Mr. Garfield stated there was a presence and stated he is not sure it will be resolved to everyone's satisfaction, but they department is doing its best to work it out fairly while keeping space open for all. Ald. Vitali asked if the courts can be restricted to residents. Mr. Garfield stated its not being restricted. He explained the permit system for residents and round robin play through the pickleball association. Mr. Garfield stated approximately half the courts are open for other players. Ald. Broesder asked for a summary of upcoming projects. Mr. Garfield discussed lighting on basketball courts and discussion concerning new gym space. Ald. Arciuolo asked if a 5/3 court usage would be favorable. Mr. Garfield stated usage changes day to day and racquet sports are difficult. Ald. Moffitt asked if there is an enforcement mechanism should someone refuse to give up the court to a permitted player. Mr. Garfield stated permits are emailed to applicants and everyone seems to cooperate.

Community Development (p. 20)

Julie Nash, Community Development Director, stated her budget is flat. She discussed her request for changing the parttime Clerk A position to fulltime. Ms. Nash stated the position is currently vacant and this would be good time for such change. She stated that the position would fill in when Ms. Nash was not able to attend meetings and many other departmental tasks. Ms. Nash explained she has used seasonal temporary and interns to fill the gap and upgrading to full time would have no financial impact. Ald. Harla thanked Ms. Nash for her dedication and hard work. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the position is upgraded to full time would the duties remain the same. Ms. Nash stated they would be the same with additional responsibilities such as attending meetings, marketing, and such. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the request to upgrade was denied although no financial impact. Ms. Nash stated that was correct. Ald. Broesder asked for a summary of department initiatives. Ms. Nash reviewed the Commercial Real Estate Audit and Post Covid Economic Strategic Plan. Discuss ensued concerning various vacant commercial sites.

Human Resources Department (p. 41)

Tania Barnes, Human Resources Director, stated the budget is flat with the exception of increases in Other Medical, Professional Fees and Testing. She stated each is increased by \$500 due to increases by the vendor. Ms. Barnes stated the software company providing employment testing provided an added benefit by offering a training program for employees.

Fire Department (p. 51)

Doug Edo, Fire Chief, stated the budget is close to flat. He discussed an error he found in Gas & Propellant and Tires & Chains. Ald. Arciuolo asked about morale and turn-over within the department. Chief Edo stated he believe morale is good with little turn-over. He stated Milford is one of the sought-after departments. Ald. Marlow asked for an explanation of Fire Trainees under wages. Chief Edo explained the account is to pay recruits while they are attending the academy. Ald. Marlow asked for an explanation of Education Supplement. Chief Edo explained this is a contractual stipend for EMT certifications and degrees. Ald. Marlow asked for an explanation of Training Expenses. Chief Edo stated this account covers staff training. He stated the department spends a considerable amount of time training. Chief Edo also explained that should firefighter choose to attend specific training this account covers the cost. Ald. Marlow asked what is planned for Fire Station Improvements. Chief Edo explained the entry door a headquarters needs to be repaired and upgrades to various facilities in the stations such a kitchens, bathrooms, and showers. Ald. Willis asked for an explanation of Vacation & Relief. Chief Edo explained when there is a vacancy this account allows for the hiring back of staff to fill the vacancy. Ald. German asked how many vacancies currently. Chief Edo stated there are 18 vacancies, 8 recruits are in training which will leave 10 open positions. He further explained a test will be given in May with recruits attending the academy in August. Ald. Beatty asked if funding was sufficient for recruitment. Chief Edo stated recruitment is handled by the Personnel Committee of the Board of Fire Commissioners. Ald. Giannattasio asked for a status on equipment and if any new equipment is planned. Chief Edo stated Quint 3 is the oldest and will be looking to request next bonding cycle.

Lights, Hydrants, Water (p. 62)

Ald. German asked if all lights are now LED and if that cost is reflected in the budget. Mayor Blake stated he believes all have been changed to LED and that the amount is the best estimate of cost.

Emergency Management (p. 58)

Chief Edo stated the budget is flat with a slight increase under general maintenance.

C-Med (p. 88)

Chief Edo stated this is account provides for coordinated medical emergency dispatch. He stated this is a state requirement that provides for communication with between transport and hospitals.

Boys and Girls Club (p. 92)

Megan Altomare, Executive Director, stated the center served 575 youth with 90 currently on the waiting list. She provided brief summary of activities, including after school programming and enrichment clubs. Ms. Altomare stated the center is currently preparing for summer camp. Ald. German asked about fund raising. Ms. Altomare discussed the gala scheduled for April 28th, the Montano golf tournament and the Walnut Beach ice cream run. She stated the center is always

looking for new way to fund raise. Ald. Vitali asked how much funding is received by other grants. Ms. Altomare stated \$235,00 with a budget of \$1,100,000.

Conservation Commission (p. 32)

Jeremy Grant, Natural Resource and Open Space Agent, stated the budget is flat. He stated the Commission is very active and provided a brief summary.

Open Space (p. 34)

Jeremy Grant, Natural Resource and Open Space Agent, stated more people are getting out and enjoying the outdoors. He discussed a new website where individuals can find passive recreation within the City. Mr. Grant discussed the annual Earth Day tree giveaway. Ald. Marlow asked if new open space is being identified for possible acquisition. Mr. Grant stated this is an ongoing activity. He discussed the 5 parcels recently acquired off Northmoor. Ald. Marlow asked how many acres of open space are currently within the City. Mr. Grant stated there are 3,200 acres. Ald. Giannattasio asked if there were plans for the recently acquired open space near Morningside. Mr. Grant stated it was his recommendation that this remain in its natural state, and it is mostly wetlands.

Public Library (p. 35)

Chris Angeli, Public Library Director, stated the library is back to pre-pandemic numbers and that in-person programming is increasing. She stated the budget request is flat with an increase in electronic media due to more content going digital and seasonal temporary. She stated season temporary staff have not received a raise in over 10 years and would like to be more competitive with the wage. Ald. Vitali asked if microfilm is still be used. Ms. Angeli stated an adjustment was made in the budget for microfilm for digitization of older publications such as the Milford Citizen. She stated the Mayor suggested using ARPA funding and accordingly an adjustment was made to the budget. Ald. Marlow asked if the computer account covers what is needed by the library. Ms. Angeli discussed computers that are handled through the Library Consortia and that the computers covered by the City are sufficient. Ald. Beatty asked if programming pulls staff from other services. Ms. Angeli stated it does and that is where seasonal temporary staff is utilized. Ald. Arciuolo asked if volunteers still record books on tape. Ms. Angeli stated this is a state service that utilizes a booth for the blind and disabled. She commented on the great service it provides to the community.

Borough of Woodmont (p. 88)

Ed Bonessi, Borough Warden, provided a brief summary of the Borough. He sated the budget request is the same as the prior year. He discussed Covid relief funds being utilized for the Belmont Street groin and providing low hydraulic movement material from Clinton Street to Bonsiliene Street. Ald. German asked about Crescent Beach. Mr. Bonessi stated the design looked good, but there was no consultation with the Army Corp of Engineers. He also discussed deeded beach rights would need be acquired. Mayor Blake stated this was a CDBG-DR grant that was designed. He further stated DEEP informed the design team what work could be done and recommendation by the Army Corp of Engineers was not taken into consideration. Mayor Blake stated that was permitted will not provide a lot of result.

Law Department (p. 24)

Jonathan Berchem, City Attorney, stated the budget is flat with the exception of a wage increase for the City Attorney position which was part of the U-2 ordinance previously approved by the Board. He stated the other positions are all part of the City Hall union and is currently in negotiations. Ald. Vitali asked if the Risk Manager position is to be filled. Attorney Berchem explained the duties of Risk Manager had been assumed by the Paralegal and position remains in the budget as a placeholder for when the position needs to be filled. Mayor Blake stated a weekly stipend is provided for the Risk Manager wages for the extra responsibilities. Ald. Vitali inquired as the amount of the stipend. Peter Erolici, Finance Director, stated the stipend is \$250 per week and paid from the Risk Manager wage. Ald. Giannattasio asked if the salary reflected is realistic or based on prior Risk Manager. Attorney Berchem stated he not certain what step the wage is at, but believes it is in the ballpark of first step.

Department of Permitting and Land Use (p. 27)

Joseph Griffith, Director DPLU, provided a brief summary of the department. He stated the budget represents an \$18,000 increase due to wages. Mr. Griffith stated currently there are vacancies for a building inspector and clerk position. He discussed working with the Planning and Zoning subcommittee and the POCD. Mr. Griffith commented on the new software program providing online submission of applications. Ald. Marlow asked how inspections work the one building inspector vacancy. Mr. Griffith stated the Chief Building Inspector assists with inspections and Mr. Griffith backfills on administrative tasks. Ald. Broesder asked if efficiencies are realized from the new software. Mr. Griffith provide an explanation on how permits are received and processed. Ald. Giannattasio asked why building inspector position is hard to fill. Mr. Griffith stated he does not believe the salary is adequate. He commented that he receives a newsletter showing vacancies in other communities where the wage is much higher. Ald. Giannattasio asked how long the position has been vacant. Mr. Griffith stated a little over a year. Chairman Vetro commented on the efficiency of the department and on how it is now a pleasure to work in Milford.

Mayor's Office (p. 17)

Mayor Blake state the budget request is status quo. Ald. Vitali stated most salary increases are \$2,000 to \$3,000, but there is a position with over a \$10,000 increase. He commented that this increase will bring the position to \$2,000 less than Mayor's wage. Ald. Vitali further commented that the increase within the last 2 cycles equate to approximately \$20,000. Mayor Blake stated that when the Chief of Staff position was created, they looked at comparable communities and found mayor's offices had several staff member all making similar or more. He further stated the wage is the same as the Assistant Public Works Director and Human Resources Director. Mayor Blake stated the increase appears significant because there is a step increase, together with retroactive wage adjustment. He stated the wages adjustment resulted from the supervisor's contract being settled which resulted in wage increases for non-represented employees pursuant to the wage ordinance approved in December. Ald. Giannattasio stated when the position was adopted, he was not in favor. He doesn't feel this is right when other department are struggling because wages are not enough. Ald. Giannattasio stated he agrees the Mayor should be paid more.

General Expenses (p. 19)

None

Public Debt Service (p. 78)

None

Employee Benefits (p. 84)

Ald. German ask for an explanation of increase in self-insurance contributions and pension. Mayor Blake explained a large increase to health insurance contribution. He stated the figure is provided by the City's health care consultant. Mayor Blake explained one of the drivers is the pandemic placed many elective surgeries on hold which resulted in recent utilization increasing. Ald. German asked for pharmacy benefit amount. Mr. Erodici stated it is \$7 million and a main contributing factor. He further stated the premium cost share paid by employees offsets this amount. Ald. German asked what wellness initiatives are in place to mitigate costs. Mayor Blake stated the Wellness Committee and wellness program provided by Anthem. He stated due to the pandemic the Wellness Committee has not meet but will be starting up again. Ald. Vitali asked if the pension is funded 100%. Mayor Blake stated it is funded based on the A.D.E.C. Mr. Erodici stated the last valuation was 82% but with new report expects that number to increase.

Insurance and Bonds (p. 85)

None.

Claims and Refunds (p. 85)

Ald. German stated last year Heart & Hypertension claims were \$385,000. Mayor Blake stated the budgeted amount is an estimate. He stated this applies to police and fire hired prior to 1986. Mayor Blake explained the City liable for these expenses and there could be a claim. He further explained this is not an insured expense. Ald. German asked if the number should decrease annually. Mayor Blake stated there are many unknown factors and it will take time before it factors out.

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.

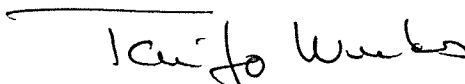
Education – Health Insurance Contribution (p. 94)

None.

Ald. Giannattasio and Ald. Harla made and seconded a motion to recess. Motion carried unanimously. The Board recessed at 9:56 p.m.

Chairman Vetro announced the Board would stand in recess until Monday, April 25, 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Toni Jo Weeks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Toni Jo Weeks
Recording Secretary