

**BOARD OF FINANCE
BUDGET HEARINGS - PROPOSED BUDGET 2012-2013
FEBRUARY 9, 2012**

The Milford Board of Finance held a budget deliberations session on Thursday, February 9, 2012 in Conference Room B of the Parsons Complex. Chairman Lema reconvened the budget deliberations in public session at 6:32 p.m.

Board Members Present

Brian A Lema, Chairman
Joseph M. Agro, Jr.
Joseph J. Fitzpatrick, Jr.
Scott Marlow, Vice Chairman
Mickel Montano

Also Present

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake
Peter Erodici, Finance Director

(4825) Beth El Shelter – Toni Dolan, Executive Director was present. She also acknowledged the presence of one of the Board members. Ms. Dolan stated Beth El Shelter is a 34 bed, 90 day shelter and that they assist in rehabilitating lives. She stated they also run the soup kitchen and served over 24,000 meals last year. Ms. Dolan stated last year they introduced “meals to go”. She stated these numbers have increased over last year. She stated they receive many donations from local stores, but it isn’t always enough. She also stated they are a no-freeze shelter, which means on the nights it is 32° or less, they are open. She stated her budget is based on actual numbers. She also pointed out healthcare rose 12%. She stated the City’s grant is 9.73% of their current budget and any cuts to the budget would result in cuts in services.

Mr. Agro noted the full \$70,000 was paid out. He asked if it is paid out at once.

Mr. Erodici stated it is typical of these type grants to be paid all at once.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about insurance.

Ms. Dolan stated they are with CBIA group. She explained they only offer health benefits to their full time staff. She stated they contribute 90%, although that number could change.

Mr. Marlow asked if they serve only Milford residents.

Ms. Dolan responded no. She stated 15% is Milford, but that it is hard to determine. She stated the soup kitchen is 50% Milford residents or more and pointed out the numbers are up this year.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if any other towns contribute.

Ms. Dolan explained the plan is to go to Orange and West Haven for some funding. She stated they also get folks from Stratford.

(4826) Boys & Girls' Club – Megan Altomare was present for questions/comments. She stated they are an after school program that runs 2 p.m. through 8 p.m. and on days off from school they run from 8 a.m. through 10 p.m. She stated the cost is \$35.00 per year to attend, but that they do offer scholarships for those who cannot afford it. Megan stated they are up about 50 kids this year from last year and that they had to close enrollment. She also stated they are currently over budget for the year. She stated there are 7 individuals on a waiting list for the program. She went on to explain what the program offers and their recent partnership with Pumpkin Delight School.

Mr. Agro asked the total annual budget.

Ms. Altomare responded \$245,000.

Mr. Agro asked about their annual audit.

Ms. Altomare explained September 7, 2011 they were officially Boys & Girls of America. She stated affiliation requires them to conduct a yearly audit.

Mr. Marlow asked if that relationship allows them to apply for additional funding and/or grants.

Ms. Altomare stated they receive \$25,000 from the Office of Juvenile Protection. She stated there are also other mentoring programs.

Ms. Montano asked if all of the participants were from Milford.

Ms. Altomare responded yes, but that she would not turn a child away from another town.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if they received any monies from the United Way.

Ms. Altomare replied yes. She stated they receive \$15,000. She stated they also fundraise and spoke of the Pumpkins on the Pier event this past fall.

(4111) Board of Aldermen – no questions/comments.

(4141) Board of Finance – No questions/no comments.

(4146) Flood & Erosion Board – no representatives were present. Chairman Lema stated this Board has met once over the last 10 years. Mr. O'Connell interjected and noted they actually met 3 or 4 times.

(4147) Tree Commission – no representatives were present. No questions/comments.

(4156) Conservation Commission – no representatives were present. No questions/comments.

(4159) Veterans, Ceremony & Parade Commission – no representatives were present. No questions/comments.

(4161) Housatonic River Estuary Commission – no representatives were present. Chairman Lema stated this Commission is made up of municipality's bordering the Housatonic. He asked the Mayor if all municipalities pay in.

Mayor Blake stated he did not believe Stratford did.

Mr. Agro asked if they are productive.

Mayor Blake responded yes, very much so.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked where the money goes.

Mayor Blake stated they conduct various studies and stated he would have more information at the Board's next meeting.

(4813) Bridges– Barry Kasden, President & CEO and Clair Phelan, Chairperson, Bridges Board were present. Ms. Phelan thanked the Board for the opportunity to be here tonight. She stated these are critical times for them but appreciate all the help they have received from the City and feel they have a partnership with the City. She provided some facts for the Board. She stated they have a \$12 million dollar budget with \$7 million dedicated to Milford residents. She stated they serve 7,166 and many others that use more than one service. She also spoke of their emergency mobile services. She stated they are a Board of 22 made up of members from Milford, Orange and West Haven.

Mr. Kasden stated there have been some bright spots, but that it has been a difficult year. He stated they received the needed bonding to expand the facility next door. He stated they experienced a \$200,000 deficit last year and that they were predicting another deficit this year. He stated their goal is to have a balanced budget, but with sever State cuts it has been a challenge. He stated they are grateful of the Mayor's level of funding this year. Mr. Kasden continued with an explanation regarding the scope of services at Bridges. He pointed out they are the only full service psychiatric agency in the area. He stated they serve around 5,000 Milford based residents. He also stated they do receive funding from other towns, i.e. Orange Family Counseling. He stated they also receive a small amount from West Haven, but explained they a small mental health program. Mr. Kasden stated they are proud to be here in Milford, adding they provide a safety net for the residents here in Milford.

Mr. Marlow asked how the expansion project would work into the budget.

Mr. Kasden stated they are looking into billing private insurance companies and explained the plan to move in that direction.

Mr. Marlow asked what the emergency mobile was.

Mr. Kasden explained it is run through DCF and that they are on call any time of the day. He stated if someone calls that number and after they identify themselves, they are linked to the center. He stated it is a very effective program. He also stated they do a lot of home based services.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about Husky and Medicare and if they receive reimbursement.

Mr. Kasden stated the Husky program has been a blessing for them. He stated they have a number of individuals that come in that have Husky insurance, so it has helped.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about receiving reimbursement on a timely basis.

Mr. Kasden stated he was pleased to say the State turns around reimbursement quickly. He went on to explain their billing system, which he stated is extensive as well as expensive.

Mr. Agro asked if the new facility was a renovation or addition.

Mr. Kasden stated they would be going out the back of the building and then completing a first floor renovation.

Mr. Agro asked if the new building would result in expanded services.

Mr. Kasden explained they are moving over the waiting rooms, which are currently serviced by one central administration. He stated the additional space would allow them to provide more group services.

Chairman Lema noted the request is actually less than what they received two years ago.

(4815) Veterans Grave Preservation Commission – Tom Cody, Chairman was present for questions/comments. Mr. Cody gave a background of what they do, which he stated is unique. He explained they repair and maintain Milford's historic graves. He stated the City grant is their only source of revenue. He also stated they work closely with Milford cemetery. He stated they are working toward completing work on the Revolutionary War monument.

(4816) Milford Flotilla 73 – Mike Gabriel was present for questions/comments. He thanked the Board for all they do for Milford Flotilla. He explained they asked for an increase this year due to the repairs and substantial damage from Hurricane Irene this past year.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if they had any insurance coverage for the damage.

Mr. Gabriel responded no, explaining it was just cost prohibitive. He also noted they are unable to receive grants. He stated they are a 501(c) 3 corporation.

(4817) Human Services Department – Lisa Diamond-Graham, Director was present along with Melissa Dubiel, Administrative Assistant.

Ms. Dubiel stated part of the reason for the huge increase is that three employees are due for step increases. She also stated they follow the City unions, so they had to factor in a 2% increase. She stated they also increased their seasonal temporary.

Ms. Diamond-Graham stated they have seen a huge jump in clients. She stated they have a full time staff that provides for 21,000 clients, adding it is during these economic times when social services are swamped. She stated the real issue is that they are mandated to provide full health benefits to their employees. Ms. Diamond-

Graham stated the City provides for 94% of their budget. She also pointed out they are not a 501(c) 3 corporation. She stated even with the Mayor's recommendation they will be short about \$13,000.

Mr. Erodici explained the City is self-insured. He stated because they are an agency that buys into the fund, the City has to charge them, basically what the insured would pay.

Mayor Blake stated the contribution is \$1.2 million in total insurance.

Ms. Diamond-Graham also stated she has three single employees, whoever if they were to marry or have children the fund would then be short.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked what the agency receives from the State.

Ms. Dubiel responded \$57,159.

Mayor Blake commented the Governor has stated there may be increases to ECS, State Pension and Safety Net, i.e. Social Service Agencies.

Ms. Diamond-Graham also spoke about the emergency fuel assistance program which was recently extended.

(4819) Milford Progress – Buddy Prete, Treasurer and Kathy Alagno were present for questions.

Chairman Lema stated he would be recusing himself from participating with questions of this department as he is on their board. He turned the meeting over to Vice Chairman Marlow.

Mr. Prete stated they are charged to be the economic development agency for the downtown area. He spoke of the Adopt-A-Sport program as well as the on-going signage project that will direct people throughout the downtown area. He stated they are also working on the Plan of Conservation and Development and that the total cost of that project is \$15,000, which is why they requested the additional money.

Vice Chairman Marlow turned the meeting back over to Chairman Lema.

(4818) – Milford Historic District – no representatives were present. No questions or comments.

(4820) – Milford Historic District II – no representatives were present.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the funds are given directly to each of these Commissions.

Mr. Erodici responded yes. He stated they usually send a request to the Finance Department.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked what they do with the money.

Mayor Blake replied yes. He explained the funds are used for mailings, secretarial fees etc. He stated as an example the Downs House, he has requested a Certificate of Appropriateness, a mailing is required as well as meetings, etc.

(4822) Cemetery Association – Jim Beard was present for questions. Mr. Beard spoke of some of the work they do. He stated they are working on enhancing the grounds area of the Revolutionary War Monument. He also talked about opening up the canopy and the dedication ceremony. He also stated the Veterans circle on Kings Highway had a flooding issue and monies were spent to do repairs.

(4142) Department of Permitting & Land Use – Jocelyn Mathiasen, was present for questions/answers.

Ms. Mathiasen stated this is her second time coming before the Board as the Director of the Department of Permitting and Land Use. She stated the department is comprised of the Planning & Zoning, Inland Wetlands and Building Departments and explained the function of each. She also stated this department is the gatekeeper for plan reviews for the fire and health departments and basically as a filter. She stated they are a very busy office with a great staff.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the seasonal/temporary account.

Ms. Mathiasen stated that account is used when someone is out, specifically the building department where they were short-handed for a time. She stated the funds are used to pay for a building inspector (who is retired from the department) per diem.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked the rate of pay for a building inspector.

Mr. Mathiasen stated they are paid at the same rate of pay as when they left.

Mr. Agro asked about any professional services.

Ms. Mathiasen stated they have not had to outsource since the completion of the mall expansion and Milford Marketplace.

Mr. Agro asked about the time frame for building permits going through.

Ms. Mathiasen stated it can be months for a permit to go through Planning & Zoning, but that is usually a very complex project. She stated in the building department it is usually 2-3 weeks. She also noted they do a lot of permits right at the counter.

Mr. Agro asked if everything that goes through Planning & Zoning necessary or could the department work with them for approval. He asked the method for approval.

Ms. Mathiasen stated they are looking into it, but that she makes every effort to make sure the process through Planning & Zoning is streamlined.

Mayor Blake stated he is trying to get sign-offs for traffic down administratively, so they don't have to wait for the monthly meeting.

Mr. Agro noted in past years if someone were on vacation you would have to wait for that person to return.

(4144) Zoning Board of Appeals – Ms. Mathiasen was present for questions/comments. She stated they are already out of advertising money for this year, adding the requirements to advertise for variances are huge. She stated she has made every effort to keep language short and the type small.

Mr. Agro commented about the recent legal action between the two Boards.

Mayor Blake explained it goes through the City Attorney's Office. He stated he has reached out to both Board Chairs in the hopes of mediating a resolution.

Mr. Agro stated his concern was with the process that took place.

Mayor Blake commented the Charter states the City Attorney will represent all Boards. He stated the Board of Finance is part of that process. He stated if it comes to it they would obtain a legal opinion. He stated the funds certainly could have been better spent and he hopes to never be in this position again.

(4143) Board of Assessment Appeals –

Mr. Agro recalled this account increased last year because of revaluation. He noted it is back to the original request. He asked if the amount was appropriately funded, given commercial owners did not see the decreases residential owners saw.

Mayor Blake stated it was his understanding the amount of appeals was light.

Chairman Lema asked if the appeal period extended into March.

Mayor Blake responded yes, but that it was partially due to Hurricane Irene.

(4219) Personnel Department – John O'Connell, Personnel Director was present. He stated part of his budget is for advertising and that they advertise for the hiring, i.e. clerical, truck drivers, etc. He also spoke of the Employee Assistance Program, which he stated was not used to its full potential. He stated they still have the DOT Program for substance abuse, which he stated is mandated. He stated another large expense in their budget is for independent medical exams. He explained if someone wished to go out with a non-service connected disability, they are required to be seen by two independent medical examiners. With regard to advertising for positions, Mr. O'Connell stated they recently hired two building inspectors, a position he stated that is difficult to fill.

(4145) Pension Board – John O'Connell, Personnel Director, was present to answer any questions. Mr. O'Connell stated the budget is for audit fees and secretarial fees.

(4151) Civil Service Commission – John O'Connell, Personnel Director was present. No questions/comments.

(4620) Recreation Department – Paul Piscitelli, Director was present for questions. Mr. Piscitelli stated his budget is less than the previous year. He stated after meeting with the Mayor he along with his staff was able to look at other areas and they were able to reduce 2% from last year. Mr. Piscitelli stated he has one area of concern regarding minimum wage. He stated the legislature is looking to raise the minimum wage amount, which would result in an 8 ½ increase. He stated the Seasonal/Temporary account make the Recreation Department run. He stated that account is used for counselors for the playground program, lifeguards, etc. and that he normally has 194 seasonal employees. He stated if the minimum wage goes up there would be a deficient in that account of \$13,500. He added another increase is proposed for January 2013, with an increase in minimum wage to \$9.75.

Mr. Agro thanked Mr. Piscitelli for the great service the Recreation Department provides and expressed his appreciation to Mr. Piscitelli for coming in with such a tight budget.

(4153) Park, Beach & Recreation Commission – Paul Piscitelli, Director was present. He stated this account is basically for secretarial fees. No questions.

(4157) Harbor Management Commission (Fund 36) – Ray Swift, Operations Director was present for questions/comments. He stated they have had to make a lot of changes recently. He referenced line item 3655 0000 State PILOT: Boat and explained they had expected to receive State funds and they received \$0. He stated they had to make some difficult decisions to find those monies in their budget and made the very difficult decision of eliminating the position of office manager. He stated he expected he could get by with Seasonal/temporary for the remainder of this year. He stated they made some other changes as well. He explained the mooring renewals, approximately 2000, are usually October, but he moved that to February. He also stated a new Harbor Master will be appointed by the Commission. Mr. Swift stated they would still do the administrative work, but that a new harbor master may wish to do things differently. He stated he also agreed to freeze his pay for 5 years. He stated he would like to raise the seasonal/temporary account by \$7,000, which he stated should get him through the year.

Mayor Blake commented Mr. Swift does a great job and that he basically does everything himself. He also stated the PILOT issue was one of his priorities when he met with State legislatures, but he was advised by the Lt. Governor that it was not likely something that would turn around.

Chairman Lema asked about mooring fees.

Mr. Swift stated reservations are good.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked about the vacancy of mooring fees.

Mr. Swift stated there are 10. He stated they are steady, but that it just wasn't the time to raise rates.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked the general condition of the marina.

Mr. Swift stated he has put off the dredging until Spring, but noted they have the bonding and permits for the work.

(4115) Registrar of Voters – Antoinette Carey and Debra Fellenbaum, Deputy Registrar were present for questions/comments. Mrs. Carey distributed a handout to the Board as to the activities of the department. She also addressed her overtime account, which she stated is used for seasonal/temporary.

Mayor Blake pointed out this year is a presidential election year and that primaries were anticipated.

Mrs. Carey stated the presidential primary would be sometime in March and then a legislative primary later in the year. She also stated they have been working on legislative re-districting.

Mrs. Fellenbaum added the office is busy maintaining files and also an influx of people coming in and out.

Mrs. Carey stated they really rely on the seasonal/temporary monies.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked the cost for a presidential primary.

Mrs. Carey explained the three polling places there were split. She stated it is the preparation that creates the work, which is labor intensive.

Chairman Lema stated the next budget deliberation session will be February 14, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Marlow and Mr. Agro made and seconded a motion to recess. Motion carried unanimously.

The Board recessed at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen K. Huber
Recording Secretary