

**BOARD OF FINANCE  
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS – TECHNICAL DISCUSSION  
PROPOSED BUDGET 2020-2021  
MARCH 4, 2020**

The Board of Finance held a budget deliberations session on Wednesday, March 4, 2020 in Conference Room B of the Parsons Complex. Chairman Lema announced the Board was out of recess and reconvened the budget deliberations meeting in public session at 5:32 p.m.

Board Members Present

Brian Lema, Chairman  
Joseph J. Fitzpatrick, Jr.  
Scott Moulton  
Ray Arnold

Also Present

Mayor Benjamin G. Blake  
Peter Erodici, Finance Director

Excused:

Lauren Ranges

Chairman Lema stated the Board would have their technical discussion on the Mayor's proposed budget and the Board of Education's recommended budget for fiscal year 2020-2021. Chairman Lema stated that both the Board of Education and City budgets face fiscal challenges which require looking to the budgets for opportunities to make savings. Mayor Blake stated that he and Peter Erodici, Finance Director provided a handout to the Board. Mayor Blake stated he met with department heads and found efficiencies totaling approximately 1.3 million in savings as reflected in the handout. He further stated that he is confident that the Board of Education will also find efficiencies that will result in savings. Chairman Lema stated since members from the Board of Education were present this evening, he would start with the education budget.

**(p. 94) 4796 Education Operations**

Chairman Lema asked if Mayor Blake would elaborate more on the increase to health care costs as it affects both the Board of Education and City budgets. Mayor Blake stated the increase is due to experience. He further explained that health insurance covers the first \$100,000 then is covered by excess. Mayor Blake stated that experience has been high which is main factor. Mr. Erodici stated that cost is also based on claims and that stop loss goes up each year. He further stated this year stop loss increased approximately 25%. Mayor Blake stated the City hired a new insurance consultant and that the stop loss will be going out to bid. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if health insurance would be going out to bid. Mayor Blake stated it had been put out to bid a couple of years ago. Discussion ensued concerning stop loss and health care costs.

Chairman Lema stated the pension contribution increased approximately 1.1 million. He asked if that trend will continue. Mayor Blake stated that is possible unless the City is able to limit liabilities or the rate of return increases. He further stated that figure is not inclusive of employee contributions that makes up a considerable amount. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the City provides a 401K. Mayor Blake stated it does not, but employees may voluntarily participate in a 457H

Chairman Lema stated the Board would now move through the City budget and asked for input as they go through each of the departments.

Mayor Blake stated he provided a handout with recommended adjustments. He further stated he reviewed the adjustments with the Department Heads and it totals approximately 1.3 million. Mayor Blake further stated the Assessor has finalized the grand list and it is \$82,000,000 more than last year.

**(p. 14) 054111 Board of Aldermen**

No comments.

**(p. 14) 05998112 Elections**

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the budget takes into consideration the presidential election and possible primaries. Mayor Blake state it is in the budget but will depend on the primaries. Chairman Leman stated a transfer can be requested if necessary.

**(p. 15) 054115 Registrar of Voters**

No comments.

**(p. 16) 054116 Milford Gov't Access TV (MGAT)**

Mr. Fitzpatrick stated he is not happy with channel 79 not working. He asked if the City is paying for its broadcast. Mayor Blake stated the City pays for production not broadcasting on the channel. Mr. Moulton asked if there is an expense associated with the YouTube channel. Mayor Blake stated there is an associated expense.

Mr. Arnold asked for an explanation of 1/5<sup>th</sup> fiscal week. Mayor Blake stated that every 5 years there is a 53 week pay year and this provides for build up to that 53<sup>rd</sup> week. Mr. Arnold asked who qualifies for the \$300 payment. Mayor Blake stated it is per collective bargaining agreements. He further stated that went to effect over 20 years ago when bargaining groups agreed to 0% increases and instead received the \$300 stipend. Mr. Erodici stated this is also know as productivity bonus.

**(p. 17) 054121 Mayor**

No Comments.

**(p. 19) 05998122 General Expenses**

Mr. Arnold asked why telephone system costs increased to \$93,000. Mayor Blake stated the bills for this account can be front loaded and back loaded. Chairman Lema asked why duplicating costs were at \$42,000 with a projection of \$35,000. Mayor Blake stated this is due to the larger copiers at City Hall and Parsons. Chairman Lema asked if the Beaverbrook Property Maintenance account is actual amounts or depleting fund. Mayor Blake discussed how Beaverbrook funds were used to make recent repairs.

**(p. 20) 054123 Community Development**

Mr. Arnold asked for an explanation of Office Equipment Upkeep. Mr. Erodici explained that provides for any equipment that may need repair or replacement. Mr. Moulton asked for an explanation of Promotional Expenses. Mayor Blake stated that account is unique to Community Development and is used to advertising promoting the City of Milford.

**(p. 22) 054129 City Clerk**

Mr. Arnold asked why some departments have computer line items with MIS has all other computers. Mayor Blake stated that just this year computers have migrated to MIS but some departments still have a line item as they require computers specific to the department and beyond the computers provided through MIS. Mr. Moulton asked why an Assistant City Clerk and Clerk A position were reduced. Mayor Blake stated they are vacant positions put back to step 1.

**(p. 25) 054131 Law Dept**

Mr. Arnold asked why the City Attorney salary is lower than the Assistant City Attorney. Mayor Blake stated the City Attorney is a part time position. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked legal fees are lower than last year. Mayor Blake stated all department were asked to give back.

**(p. 25) 054132 Ethics Commission**

**(p. 26) 054133 Probate Court**

**(p. 26) 054141 Board of Finance**

No comments

**(p. 27) 054142 Permitting and Land Use**

Chairman Lema asked why Seasonal/Temporary and Misc. Professional Fees are being reduced. Mayor Blake stated one position was filled last week requiring less need for seasonal temporaries. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked what the salaries are for the vacant positions. Mr. Erodici stated they are placed at the minimum steps.

**(p. 29) 054143 Board of Assessment Appeals**

**(p. 29) 054144 Zoning Board of Appeals**

**(p. 30) 054145 Pension Board**

**(p. 30) 054146 Flood and Erosion Board**

**(p. 30) 054147 Tree Commission**

**(p. 31) 054151 Civil Service Commission**

**(p. 31) 054153 Park, Beach and Recreation Commission**

**(p. 31) 054155 Economic Development Commission**

**(p. 32) 054156 Conservation Commission**

**(p. 33) 054459 Veterans, Ceremony & Parade Commission**

**(p. 34) 054160 Housing Code Board of Appeals**

**(p. 34) 054161 Housatonic River Estuary Commission**

No comments.

**(p. 34) 054162 Open Space**

Chairman Lema inquired about the status of hiring for the open space agent position. Mayor Blake stated the responses are being reviewed and interviews scheduled. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the position had to remain at \$68,000. Mayor Blake stated it was most likely advertised at the top step. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked for an explanation of the job functions. Mayor Blake provided an explanation. Mr. Arnold asked why this position was not part of a department. Mayor Blake stated that when the position first originated it was looked at as to what department it should be part of and it was determined it should be alone.

**(p. 35) 054593 Public Library**

Mr. Arnold asked when the library reduces its hours in the summer. Mayor Blake stated between Oyster Festival and Labor Day.

**(p. 37) 054110 Finance Department**

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if all positions are filled. Mr. Erodici reviewed vacancies within the department.

**(p. 39) 054170 Management Information Systems (MIS)**

Mr. Arnold asked why professional fees are higher than last year. Mayor Blake stated it was because of reductions in other department and consolidating outside consultants.

**(p. 41) 054119 Human Resources**

No comments.

**(p. 43) 054210 Police Department**

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the Police Commission does an evaluation of how many police officers are needed. Mayor Blake stated it has been the same number of officers for years and only SRO's had been added in recent years. Chairman Lema asked about police cruisers. Mayor Blake stated the cruisers have been replaced at a slower rate than prior years. He further stated they are looking at other way of acquiring new cruisers. Mayor Blake commented that Chief Mello stated he could forgo cruisers this year, but they will require replacement next year.

**(p. 51) 054220 Fire Department**

Mr. Arnold asked if the City has looked at the number of firefighters that are needed. Mayor Blake stated the number is dictated by minimum manning in the collective bargaining agreements. Mr. Moulton asked if the number has remained static from year to year. Mayor Blake stated it has, but there can be open positions from time to time. He further stated that one position had been eliminated last year.

**(p. 58) 054231 Emergency Management**

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the early warning system was for flood sirens. Mayor Blake stated it provides for the sirens and gauges that send a signal to headquarters and the reverse 911 system.

**(p. 59) 054240 Animal Control**

**(p. 62) 05998160 Lighting, Hydrants, Water**

No comments.

**(p. 63) 054320 Public Works Office**

Chairman Lema asked if the Office Manager position is new. Mayor Blake stated the position is vacant and it has been advertised, tested and is in the process of putting together interviews. Chairman Lema asked why the department requested 0. Mayor Blake stated they were looking to shift responsibilities to another position, but it was decided not to do so as this is one of the most critical positions in the City.

**(p. 65) 054321 Highway Parks**

Mr. Arnold asked if snow removal will carry over to next year. Mayor Blake stated it will and the state also provides through town road aid and municipal project grants that can be utilized for paving, plowing and maintenance of streets.

**(p. 69) 054323 Building Maintenance**

Mr. Moulton asked if electricity includes schools. Mayor Blake stated it does not include schools. He also stated some departments, such as wastewater, have electricity in their budgets.

**(p. 72) 054324 Engineering**

Mr. Arnold asked why the department total was significantly lower than the 18/19 expensed total. Mayor Blake stated it was due to the reduction of the engineering technician position.

**(p. 74) 054329 General Garage**

Chairman Lema asked if another position was being eliminated from the garage. Mayor Blake stated that is correct.

**(p. 76) 054431 Solid Waste**

Mayor Blake stated we have slowly reduced the number of truck driver laborers as the City has been using the hydraulic arm trucks for approximately 5 years and now there is just one driver where previously there were three employees to each truck.

**(p. 78) 05998104 Public Debt Service**

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if there is a benefit from the debt service going down. Mr. Erodici stated there is a benefit. Mr. Moulton asked if it could be refinanced. Mayor Blake stated the new tax code has made it prohibitive to refinance or refund.

**(p. 79) 054410 Health Dept**

Chairman Lema asked if there are any suggested revisions to the Health Department budget. Mayor Blake stated they are provided under Health Services page 91.

**(p. 82) 054520 Recreation Department**

Mr. Moulton asked with the reduction to seasonal temporary will it require more hours and overtime. Mayor Blake stated it will not and that with the minimum wage increasing it will be tight, but he believes they will be able to manage. He further stated that the majority of season temporary work over the summer months.

**(p. 84) 05998310 Employee Benefits**

**(p. 85) 05998320 Insurance and Bonds**

No comments.

**(p. 85) 05998340 Claims and Refunds**

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how many employees are covered under heart & hypertension. Mayor Blake stated one claim could be significant. He further explained this only covers police and fire hired prior to 1996.

**(p. 86) 05998390 Benefit and Salary Reserve**

**(p. 86) 05998999 Unallocated Contingency**

No comments.

**(p. 87) 054401 Council on Aging**

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how the grant is determined. Mayor Blake stated it is the Board's discretion based on presentation.

**(p. 87) 05998103 Milford Arts Council**

No comments.

**(p. 88) 05998105 C-MED**

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the cost is based on population. Mayor Blake stated that is correct.

**(P. 88) 05998107 Regional Mental Health Board**

**(p. 88) 05998411 Borough of Woodmont**

**(p. 89) 05998412 Transit Authority**

**(p. 89) 05998113 Bridges Healthcare, Inc.**

No comment.

**(p. 89) 05998115 Veterans Graves**

Mayor Blake stated Mr. Tom Cody sends his apologies to the Board for missing his presentation.

**(p. 90) 05998416 Milford Flotilla 73**

**(p. 90) 054417 Human Services Department**

**(p. 90) 05998118 Historic District**

**(p. 91) 05998419 Milford Progress, Inc.**

**(p. 91) 05998120 Historic District II**

No comments.

**(p. 91) 05998121 Health Services**

Mr. Arnold asked if this is pay salaries. Mayor Blake stated this was previously Visiting Nurses. He further stated this provides the same services to those who cannot afford healthcare.

**(p. 91) 05998422 Cemetery Association**

**(p. 92) 05998425 Beth El Center**

**(p. 92) 05998426 Boys & Girls Club**

**(p. 92) 05998427 Literacy Volunteers of So. CT.**

**(p. 92) 05998428 Milford Preservation Commission**

**(p. 93) 05998292 Private School Textbook.**

**(p. 93) 05998293 Education Audit Fees**

**(p. 93) 05998294 School Debt**

No comments.

**(p. 93) 05998395 Education Employee Benefits**

Chairman Lema if the reduction in this account is due to reduction in staff. Mr. Erodici stated it was due to historical data. He further stated there is usually a surplus in the account, but it is dependent on wages.

**(p. 94) 05998397 Education Health Insurance Contribution**

Mr. Moulton asked employee contributions are outside the budget. Mr. Erodici stated this is the City's contribution to education employee healthcare costs.

**(p. 95) 054798 Education Health Services: School Nurses**

No comments.

**(p. 97) 12124000 Sewer Fund**

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked why there is a drop of Investment of Idle Funds. Mr. Erodici stated they were being conservative in the budget amount. Discussion ensued concerning usage of fund balances.

**(p. 98) 12124154 Sewer Commission**

**(p. 101) 12128226 Wastewater**

No comment.

**(p. 106) 1212998390 Benefit and Salary Reserves**

**(p. 106) 1212998999 Unallocated Contingency**

No Comment.

**(p. 109) 36364157 Harbor Management Commission**

Chairman Lema asked if the Operations position has been advertised. Mayor Blake stated it has been posted and members of the Commission will participate on the interview panel.

**(p. 112) 18184121 Golf Course**

No comment.

**(p. 4) 050540000 General Fund Revenue**

Chairman Lema asked if the City still utilizes a company to collect personal property tax.. Mayor Blake stated they have not recently but are again looking at hiring a company. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked why Prior Year Taxes dropped from 2.9 million to 2.5 million. Mayor Blake stated it is due to tax lien sales which have been done every other year. He stated the City will not realize the same if done every year as outstanding taxes will be lower. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if there is an idea on ECS. Mayor Blake stated the projections are not good and this why tightening up on budget. Chairman Lema asked if ECS is independent of the Board of Education. Mayor Blake stated Title 1 goes directly to the program. ECS goes to the general fund. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Fitzpatrick asked if the City has involvement in the shellfish beds. Mayor Blake stated the City is not involved. He further stated that back in the 1950's the City leased the beds to the State and the City receives a small amount. Chairman Lema commented that beach parking looked good from last year and asked if we anticipate the same for this season. Mayor Blake state last summer's weather was exceptional, and the parking numbers were up. Mr. Fitzpatrick asked how OTB funds are determined. Mayor Blake stated that by statute a small percentage of the revenue goes to the municipality that houses the OTB.



Chairman Lema stated the Board appreciates all the hard work that has gone into preparing this budget and suggested changes. Chairman Lema congratulated Ms. Ranges on the new addition to her family, Quinn Theresa Rangess.

Chairman Lema stated the Board would stand in recess until March 10, 2020. The Board recessed at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Toni Jo Weeks  
Recording Secretary