

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
BUDGET DELIBERATIONS SESSION
APRIL 22, 2024**

The Board of Aldermen resumed its budget deliberation session regarding the Board of Finance's recommended budget for fiscal year 2024-2025, on Wednesday, April 22, 2024. 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, II
E. Beatty
B. Bevan
M. Casey
J. Federico
P. Healy
A. Fowler
J. Jenkins
S. Marlow
H. Mulrenan
R. Pacelli, Jr. (8:00 p.m.)
W. Smith
P. Vetro
R. Vitali
W. Willis

Also Present

Mayor Anthony S. Giannattasio
P. Erodici, Finance Director
J. Rosen, Chief of Staff

Excused:

Chairman Vetro welcomed everyone to the 2024-2025 budget deliberations. He stated tonight's meeting was the departmental portion of the budget process.

Ald. Arciuolo and Ald. Willis made and seconded a motion to come out of recess. Motion carried unanimously.

Boys and Girls Club (p. 92)

Megan Altomare, Chief Executive Officer, provided statistics on the children served in the various programs offered. She stated the budget request remains the same. Ald. Marlow asked the overall budget amount. Ms. Altomare stated it the overall budget is 1.7 million. Ald. Marlow asked other funding sources. Ms. Altomare reviewed various fundraising programs and grants.

Police Department (p. 43)

Keith Mello, Police Chief, reviewed new items not previously in the budget. He discussed patrol cars being added back to the department budget. Chief Mello discussed salaries for social workers being added to the budget. He discussed the legislation requiring a feasibility study for social workers. Chief Mello stated ARPA funds allowed for the hiring of social workers in 2022. Those funds are being exhausted, and the social workers are now reflected in the budget. Ald. Vitali asked if the social workers are full-time and for a description of their day. Chief Mello stated they are full-time and work through referrals. He stated they go into the field when necessary. Chief Mello stated they social workers have a tremendous caseload. Ald. Vitali asked if the social workers ride along with police officers. Chief Mello stated they arrive in their own vehicles. He discussed how the social workers receive referrals and how they respond. Ald. Vitali asked how many referrals are received in a year. Chief Mello stated over 300 a year. He provided a handout and discussed the data provided. Chief Mello discussed homelessness and involvement with police officers and social workers. Chairman Vetro asked how many police cars are requested. Chief Mello stated 8 cars are requested. He discussed how cars rotate through the department. Ald. Beatty discussed social workers being embedded in a police department. Ald. Marlow asked if the 8 cruisers are reflected in the Board of Finance recommendation. Chief Mello confirmed it is reflected. Ald. Marlow asked if there is an additional cost to outfit the cruisers. Chief Mello stated there is an additional cost. He discussed reuse of equipment where possible and the cost per car is approximately \$30,000. Ald. Marlow asked what the next trend in the police department is and what that will look like in the budget. Chief Mello discussed license plate readers. He stated most municipalities have readers positioned around the community. Chief Mello discussed how the readers function and the information they will provide. He discussed speed cameras and areas where they would be best utilized. Chief Mello reviewed how the cameras operate. He stated they will be self-sustaining. Chief Mello discussed the timetable for the license plate reader and speed cameras. He discussed drones and how drones assist with law enforcement responses. Ald. Arciuolo asked for an explanation of the difference between the Board of Finance recommendation and department request. Chief Mello discussed obtaining drones through another funding source. Ald. Arciuolo asked how the SRO program has grown over the past 5 years and what is foreseen for the future. Chief Mello discussed developing the program to prevent a traditional law enforcement response. Captain DelMonte discussed the SRO program. He discussed how the social workers work with the SRO program. Ald. Arciuolo asked for an explanation of the reduction in fuel and other propellants. Chief Mello stated the City provides the estimate and it's a placeholder. Ald. Beatty asked how the drones will be utilized. Chief Mello stated they will not be used for surveillance. He stated they will be used to enhance what can already be seen and would be used for events and qualifying events. Chief Mello stated recordings would be held the same as body worn camera video. Ald. Bevan discussed wages increasing lesser than inflation rate. He suggested with negotiations the percentage increase be based on the inflation rate. Ald. Vitali asked how many drones are requested in the budget. Chief Mello stated it will allow for one drone to be purchased. He explained the difference between the drone and retail drones. Ald. Federico asked if one police officer is being added. Chief Mello discussed the agreement with prior administration to add 4 additional police officers over a 3-year period. Ald. Federico asked what is driving the increase in the overtime account. Chief Mello discussed the equation he utilized in preparing the budget request. Ald. Federico asked for an explanation for overtime, park. Chief Mello discussed challenges with beaches and the need for police presence. Ald. Federico asked how many cruisers can be purchased with the Board of Finance recommended amount. Chief Mello stated it is

7 cars plus the changeover. Ald. Federico asked if the department request would allow for 8 cruisers. Chief Mello confirmed the department request allows for 8 cruisers plus the changeover. Ald. Healy asked if there are any other openings in the department. Chief Mello discussed vacancies and academy. Ald. Healy asked if the vast majority of employees are collective bargaining employees. Chief Mello stated sworn personnel are in the union except for the Chief and Deputy Chief positions. Ald. Healy asked for an explanation of overtime accounts. Chief Mello discussed the various overtime accounts and when they are utilized. He stated the majority of the overtime funds openings, vacations, and such. He discussed obligations to hire. Chief Mello discussed various types of vacancies and hiring back. He discussed hiring for the needs of the agency. Ald. Healy asked for an explanation of the software maintenance account. Chief Mello stated they are fixed maintenance costs and provided an overview of the types of software and costs associated with each. Ald. Healy asked if there are opportunities for federal grants. Chief Mello discussed past grants. He stated most grants are going to larger, challenged communities. He discussed smaller grant programs that have been available to the department. He stated they look for all funding opportunities. Ald. Beatty asked for an explanation of the depletion of the seized asset fund. Chief Mello discussed how the fund is used to replace and repair equipment. He stated a lot of the funds have been utilized because the department needed to purchase a lot of new equipment. Chief Mello discussed no longer participating in the DEA task force and since not participating no longer receiving funds.

Animal Control (p. 59)

Scott Ellingson, Animal Control Officer, stated there is an increase in secretarial fees due to new rules, electricity due to state mandated climate control, heating fuel due to increased costs.

Bridges Community Healthcare, Inc. (p. 89)

Allison Csonka, Director of Fund Development & Communications, provided a handout. Ms. Csonka provided a brief summary of the services provided by Bridges. She discussed the importance of the funding received from the City and stated the request is level. Ms. Csonka discussed programs that are underfunded. She discussed rising costs and the challenges it presents. Ms. Csonka reviewed the services and data contained in the hanout. Ald. Arciuolo discussed the Bridges grant with the Board of Education for 3 therapists. He asked if there are opportunities to hire more therapists. Ms. Csonka discussed grants received from federal and state levels. She stated the grants are specific as to what will be provided. Ald. Marlow asked the total budget amount. Carlos Rodriguez, CFO, stated it is \$18 million. Discussion ensued concerning various grants received by Bridges. Ald. Federico asked how long the grant has been \$380,000 and how often it is reviewed. Peter Erodici, Finance Director, stated the grant is reviewed each year through the budget process with Bridges and has been relatively flat.

Economic and Community Development (p. 20)

Julie Nash, Economic and Community Development Director, stated the budget is flat. She provided a brief summary of the department's work over the year. Ms. Nash discussed the importance of economic development and work force development. She discussed work force development and integration with public schools. Ald. Casey asked what current trends are in new businesses. Ms. Nash stated retail, health and manufacturing are the top 3. She discussed mixed-use developments

are malls. Ms. Nash discussed the largest vacancies being office space with more working from home. Ald. Casey asked if there are too many commercial spaces. Ms. Nash stated office space has the largest vacancies. She discussed redefining commercial developments and preparing for future retirements, creating many vacancies. Ald. Vitali discussed lower population and school enrollment. He asked if there has been a study as to why this has happened. Ms. Nash discussed the cost of living in Connecticut and the need for competitive salaries. She discussed opportunities that need to be provided for future successes. Ald. Federico asked the median age nationwide. Ms. Nash stated it is mid to high 30's. She stated that Connecticut is an older state. Ald. Federico asked what is key to lowering the median age and retaining population. Ms. Nash discussed attracting younger families and the importance of a strong public school system and investing in programs. Ald. Jenkins discussed education test scores, crime and taxes being a deterrent for younger families. Ms. Nash discussed focusing on the positives and educating families on the true numbers and what families receive for their tax dollars. Ald. Vitali discussed median age and incomes. He asked how younger families can be attracted due to affordability. Ms. Nash discussed affordability plans and ensuring housing is available by creating housing opportunities. Ald. Healy discussed partnering with Dr. Cutaia and staff to create a marketing video highlighting Milford. Ms. Nash discussed videos previously created.

Open Space (p. 34)

Jeremy Grant, Open Space and Sustainability Manager, provided a brief explanation of Earth Day held this past Saturday. He discussed the tree giveaway program. Mr. Grant stated the open spaces are well used. Ald. Casey asked the condition of Mondo Ponds. Mr. Grant discussed public works support with open spaces. He stated the ground is very saturated resulting in extremely wet trails. Ald. Arciuolo discussed shallow root system on trees on the Milford Green and asked what could be done to prevent the trees from falling down. Mr. Grant stated there are not many ways to prevent something happening because trees generally have shallow root systems. Ald. Bevan asked if Mr. Grant has City vehicle. Mr. Grant stated he uses his personal vehicle. Ald. Beatty discussed the sustainability grant and the need to include Earth Day and the tree giveaway program in the budget. She asked why only his salary is reflected in the budget. Mr. Grant stated Earth Day is funded using donations from various businesses and volunteer work.

Mayor's Office (p. 17)

Mayor, Anthony S. Giannattasio, stated he would be happy to take any questions. Ald. Federico asked for information on pending salary increases. Mayor Giannattasio reviewed wage adjustments within the Mayor's office. Ms. Federico asked why the secretarial position is lowered. Mayor Giannattasio stated that position is vacant, and a new hire would be start at the first step. Ald. Federico asked what the anticipated increase for Chief of Staff position. Mayor Giannattasio stated that is in the budget that is anticipated to be 2.5%. Ald. Federico asked where the retroactive wages adjustment would come from. Mr. Erodici stated it is reflected in the benefit reserve account. Ald. Pacelli asked if wages subject to the ordinance are reflected in the budget. Mr. Erodici stated the salaries following the ordinance are not reflected.

General Expenses (p. 19)

Ald. Federico asked for an explanation of duplicating costs. Mr. Erodici stated there are costs for photocopier leases in City Hall and Parsons and other printing, binding and photocopying expenses. Ald. Federico asked the actual cost of the leases. Mr. Erodici stated he will provide the information. Ald. Healy asked if waste collection is contractual. Mr. Erodici stated it is waste central with the Regional Water Authority. Ald. Vitali asked if the duplicating costs include the cost of budget books. Mr. Erodici stated it is under budget reports.

Recreation Department (p. 82)

Bill Garfield, Recreation Director, stated programs are being added and current programs are full. He stated the Summer program is sold out. Mr. Garfield stated the department is at full staff. Ald. Beatty asked if lifeguard staffing continues to be an issue. Mr. Garfield stated it is going very well and 3 beaches will be staffed. Ald. Bevan asked for an explanation of Camp Happiness. Mr. Garfield stated it is one of the oldest special needs camps in the area and it continues to grow. Ald. Federico asked if program fees are reflected in the budget and how fees are determined. Mr. Garfield stated some fees are determined by the program instructor and other fees are determined based on cost to the City. Ald. Federico asked if the costs shown in the budget are more than what is reflected in the budget. Mr. Garfield discussed how fees are reviewed and determined. Ald. Healy noted the seasonal temporary account being a significant amount. He asked for an explanation of the work performed by seasonals. Mr. Garfield provided a summary of the seasonal staff needed during certain times of the year with summer being the biggest time for seasonal employees. Ald. Healy asked if there are opportunities for volunteer services. Mr. Garfield stated the majority of the summer staff are high school students for the playground programs. He discussed other seasonal staff requirements. Ald. Jenkins asked about travel teams utilizing various fields. Mr. Garfield discussed utilization by travel teams and plans to review usage. Ald. Jenkins discussed charging for use of fields by travel teams to offset costs. Ald. Fowler asked the revenue realized from fees. Mr. Garfield stated it varies depending on programming. Ald. Mulrenan asked why the revenue is not reflected in the budget. Mr. Erodici stated the fees are placed in a special revenue fund. Ald. Healy asked if the special revenue account is an account that allows for purchase of equipment and such. Mr. Erodici confirmed that is correct and that they are accounted for on a department and project level basis. Ald. Healy asked if departments report to Finance. Mr. Erodici stated the departments report to Finance and the funds are tracked through the MUNIS program. He further stated that the revenue and expenses are managed through the Finance Department. Discussion ensued concerning utilization of the special revenue funds. Ald. Healy asked if special revenue funds are carried over to next fiscal year. Mr. Erodici stated they do carry over.

Law Department (p. 24)

Jonathan Berchem, City Attorney, stated the budget is flat subject to contractual wage adjustments. He stated the paralegal position is currently vacant and has been posted. Ald. Arciuolo asked for an explanation of the software requested. Attorney Berchem stated the department was requesting a docket management system. He discussed the purchase of a document system several years ago and the attempt to centralize department files. Ald. Vitali asked if the risk manager position is being filled. Attorney Berchem stated the risk manager had been open and Toni Weeks was named risk

manager, and the paralegal position is currently open. Discussion ensued concerning the risk manager and paralegal positions. Ald. Beatty asked if there is a time frame for how long a vacant position may remain unfilled. Attorney Berchem stated he is not aware of any time frame. Ald. Healy asked if the City Attorney is contracted. Attorney Berchem stated the position serves at the pleasure of the Mayor. He discussed the City Attorney wages being pro-rated for 25 hours. Ald. Healy asked how the day-to-day operations are managed. Attorney Berchem stated he is responsible for the day-to-day operations. Ald. Healy asked if the Assistant City Attorney is eligible for overtime. Attorney Berchem stated the Assistant City Attorney is not eligible for overtime.

Public Debt Service (p. 78)

Ald. Casey asked about current interest rates. Mr. Erodici interest rates are closed to 4% on general obligation bonds. Ald. Casey asked rates are rising. Mr. Erodici stated he has not seen a trend decreasing. It has held at the same amount. Ald. Casey asked what the bond rating is. Mr. Erodici stated the current bond rating is AA+.

Employee Benefits (p. 84)

Ald. Federico asked for an explanation of the \$3 million decrease. Mr. Erodici stated the healthcare consultant and actuary provide a report that projects healthcare claims and stop loss premiums. He stated the report is used to determine the health insurance budget amount. Ald. Federico asked if there is discretion. Mr. Erodici stated there isn't much discretion because it's based on numbers. The total cost must be looked at for the fiscal year. Mr. Erodici discussed the fund balance and reserve fund balance. Ald. Federico asked if a 10% reserve is anticipated in the current budget. Mr. Erodici stated it anticipates a 5% reserve. Ald. Federico asked why the 10% reserve was not made for this year. Mr. Erodici stated it was to help mitigate the mil rate increase. Ald. Federico asked if there is a similar process for the pension fund. Mr. Erodici stated it is a similar process. He discussed the annual actuary valuation. Ald. Federico discussed the .7% increase to the City budget and contributions from the Board of Education.

Insurance and Bonds (p. 85)

None.

Claims and Refunds (p. 85)

None.

Benefit and Salary Reserve (p. 86)

Ald. Federico asked the impact if the salary increases pass. Mr. Erodici stated that the net impact for the non-rep ordinance is an increase of approximately \$156,000 and a portion is related to fiscal year 23. Ald. Federico asked if the \$156,000 includes retroactive pay. Mr. Erodici provided an explanation of how expired collective bargaining contracts and wage ordinances are calculated and accrue in the account to fund wage increases once approved. Discussion ensued concerning calculating the budgeted amount. Ald. Pacelli asked for an explanation as to how this applies to the

non-rep ordinance currently under consideration. Mr. Erodici stated the customary increase was included, but the positions with restricting were not included. Ald. Pacelli asked how the increases would be funded if approved. Mr. Erodici stated technical changes would be presented the night of the budget vote to reflect the increased amount. Ald. Pacelli asked if a technical change requires a super-majority. Mr. Erodici confirmed a super-majority would be required. Ald. Beatty asked what effect increases would have on pensions. Mr. Erodici stated the actuaries will estimate contracts to be settled and will factor those in. He stated the increases would not move the needle significantly.

Private School Textbook (p. 93)

None.

Education Audit Fees (p. 93)

None.

School Debt (p. 93)

None.

Employee Benefits – Non-Teaching (p. 93)

None.

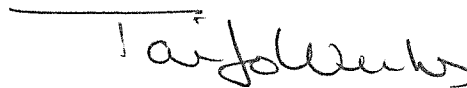
Education – Health Insurance Contribution (p. 94)

None.

Ald. Pacelli and Ald. Casey made and seconded a motion to recess. Motion carried unanimously. The Board recessed at 10:42 p.m.

Chairman Vetro announced the Board would stand in recess until Wednesday, April 24, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,



Toni Jo Weeks
Recording Secretary