

A **REGULAR MEETING** of the Board of Finance was held on Tuesday, April 21, 2020. In response to the Governor's Executive Orders regarding COVID-19, this meeting was held remotely using the ZOOM online meeting platform. Participants included Mayor Elinor Carbone and Board of Finance Members James Wright, Laurene Pesce, Lance Boynton, Christopher Beyus, Mark Bushka and Christopher Anderson. City Comptroller Alice Proulx, Corporation Counsel Victor Muschell and Torrington Public Schools Superintendent Susan Lubomski also joined the meeting.

Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

MINUTES

On a motion by Mr. Boynton, seconded by Mr. Beyus, the Board voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the regular meeting held February 18, 2020. Mr. Bushka and Mr. Anderson abstained.

FY 2020/2021 BUDGETS & DEADLINES

On a motion by Mrs. Pesce, seconded by Mr. Bushka, the Board voted unanimously to have a discussion and update from the Mayor regarding fiscal year 2020/2021 budgets and deadlines. Mayor Carbone discussed the impact of the Governor's executive orders on the City's budget adoption process. She reported that the City Council voted to allow the Board of Finance to adopt the budgets and set the mill rate without holding a public hearing and proposed a process that would allow the City to follow the timeline for budget adoption set forth by the City Charter. She explained that the new schedule would involve having a joint meeting with the Board of Education in two weeks and setting the mill rate at the regular Board of Finance meeting on May 19, 2020. The Mayor's proposal also included publication of the budgets on the City's website and active solicitation of public comments on the budget by way of promotion through the newspaper, City and school websites and social media.

Mr. Wright asked when the joint meeting with the Board of Education would occur and Mayor Carbone answered that she expects the meeting to be held during the first week of May, 2020. Mr. Beyus expressed his support for the Mayor's proposal and emphasized the importance of transparency with the public.

Mayor Carbone also updated the Board on the City budgets and Mr. Beyus requested to see what a 2.5% increase would look like for each department. Mrs. Pesce expressed her desire not to have any increase to the mill rate and requested to also see how a 0% budget increase would impact each department. Mr. Beyus agreed and stated that a 2.5% increase is where he would like each department to start.

Mr. Bushka requested an update on Grand List growth and Mayor Carbone reported that the Grand List went up 2.42% but reported that the Board of Assessment Appeals has not started their appellant hearings.

Mr. Wright questioned whether any savings have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic and if any departments could roll those savings into their FY 2020/2021 budgets. Mayor Carbone explained that any surplus funds would be put in the City's General Fund. Mr. Beyus requested an impact analysis from each department and the Board of Education to show how their budgets have been impacted by the pandemic. Mr. Boynton stated that he expects overtime to be down.

Mayor Carbone stated that she would ask the Board of Education to report on the current fiscal year budget at the next joint meeting and she expressed her satisfaction with the school administrators' response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

BOE FINANCIAL REPORTS

On a motion by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mrs. Pesce, the Board voted unanimously to accept the Board of Education's financial reports for February and March, 2020.

BUSINESS BY DEPARTMENT HEADS

On a motion by Mr. Beyus, seconded by Mr. Bushka, the Board voted unanimously to consider business by Department Heads. No business was reported.

BUSINESS BY THE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF FINANCE

On a motion by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Beyus, the Board voted unanimously to consider business by the Mayor and members of the Board of Finance.

Mr. Wright commended the Mayor and City staff for their work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Boynton expressed his concerns regarding the long-term impacts of the pandemic, including a potential loss of businesses, and stated his apprehension to raise the mill rate.

Mr. Beyus commended the Mayor for her work during the pandemic and expressed his appreciation for the Torrington community. He also stated his intention not to support any mill rate increase.

Mr. Anderson expressed his concerns regarding the perception of limiting public comment and requested that any departments proposing budget increases for FY 2020/2021 also submit alternative budget proposals with incremental decreases.

Mr. Bushka requested a summary of savings and costs incurred due to the pandemic. Mayor Carbone reported that the Deputy Comptroller has been tracking all COVID-19 related costs and stated that she would send the report to the Board, as requested.

Mrs. Pesce asked whether the City or Board of Education had to lay off or reduce the hours of any employees as a result of the pandemic. Mayor Carbone reported that with the exception of some furloughed TEEN Center and Parks & Recreation employees, no employees were laid off or lost hours. She further explained that City offices transitioned to a staggered schedule with opportunities to work from home multiple days of the week.

Mr. Boynton asked whether the City is under contract to pay the bus company. Mayor Carbone stated that she would reach out to Supt. Lubomski for a report but acknowledged that the Governor issued an executive order requesting that school boards continue to pay transportation providers.

Mrs. Pesce requested that the City and Board of Education reach out to their respective unions and request a deferral of increases for the next fiscal year so that no staff would have to lose their positions. She also questioned whether the Mayor has the power to put off negotiated wage increases. Atty. Muschell informed her that the Mayor does not have that power.


Mayor Carbone reported that she charged the Economic Development Director with developing a recovery plan to help small businesses mitigate losses and overcome challenges caused by the pandemic. She stated that the City is strategizing how to utilize the Building Healthy Communities grant funds to best serve struggling businesses. The Mayor also announced that the City Council adopted a 90-day Tax Deferral Program for eligible taxpayers and approved an agreement with the Tax Collector to credit TTC \$40,000 for loss of interest attributable to the deferment program.

Mrs. Pesce asked whether the City is still required to pay sales tax on parking meters and the Mayor affirmed that the state has not lifted the requirement.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Beyus, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 6:00 p.m.

ATTEST:


CAROL L. ANDERSON, MMC
CITY CLERK