

A **SPECIAL MEETING** of the Board of Finance was held on Tuesday, June 2, 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, Mark Bushka, Christopher Beyus and Christopher Anderson. City Comptroller Alice Proulx, City Treasurer Daniel Farley and Corporation Counsel Victor Muschell also joined the meeting.

Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

PRESENTATION OF WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Assistant City Clerk Jonathan Draper read aloud comments from the public regarding the proposed budgets for the fiscal period from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. (Public input was solicited prior to the meeting and all written comments were distributed to the Board of Finance prior to the start of the meeting).

Michael McGillicuddy expressed his support for the Board of Education's proposed budget for the 2020/2021 fiscal year.

Glenn Royals expressed his frustration regarding the 2020/2021 fiscal year budgets, stated his opposition to the THS Building Project and demanded lean spending.

Shannon Perreault expressed her support for the Board of Education's proposed budget for the 2020/2021 fiscal year.

Tony Wilusz expressed his opposition to any increase in the Board of Education's budget.

Stephen Jensen urged the Board not to raise taxes and suggested that the City halt salary increases or eliminate positions.

DISCUSSION

Mayor Carbone presented an overview of the budget process to date and outlined the proposed spending plans, including adjustments for the City and Board of Education budgets for the 2020/2021 fiscal year. She stated that in order to bring the budgets to a 2.5% increase over the 2019/2020 fiscal year, the Board of Education's total spending plan, including operating and capital budgets, needed to be reduced by \$2,838,499, whereas the City's budget needed to be reduced by an additional \$520,849. The Mayor also presented an overview of the projected revenues for the 2020/2021 fiscal year, including state grants, tax revenues, a \$3,600,000 allocation from the Fund Balance and a \$2,000,000 transfer from the Internal Service Fund. She further clarified that the proposed allocation from the Fund Balance was increased from the Board of Finance's previous review of the budgets because the Board of Education, after moving their COVID-related expenses to the newly established Fund #0282, projected a year-end surplus of approximately \$700,000. Mayor Carbone explained that an additional \$280,000 in cuts would still be needed to achieve no mill rate increase and if split evenly between the Board of Education and the City, would result in a total City budget of \$56,379,133 (2.24% increase over FY 19/20) and a total spending plan of \$76,837,593 for the Board of Education (2.31% increase over FY 19/20).

Mrs. Pesce requested clarification regarding the amount of cuts needed to achieve no mill rate increase and the Mayor explained that a \$520,849 reduction to the City's budget would bring it down to a 2.5% increase over the 2019/2020 fiscal year. However, an additional \$280,000 of cuts would be necessary to achieve no mill rate increase.

Mr. Anderson requested clarification regarding the distribution of funds from the Fund Balance and Internal Service Fund between the City and Board of Education budgets. Mayor Carbone explained that it was uncertain what impact COVID-19 would have on education during the 2020/2021 school year and clarified that year-end surplus projections drove the decision to propose a \$3,600,000 allocation from the Fund Balance. Mr. Anderson also expressed his concerns regarding the use of money from the Fund Balance to support operating expenses and questioned how the fund might be replenished. Mayor Carbone clarified that the City's policy was to fund the Fund Balance at 7% to 10% and stated that any expenditures from the Fund Balance allocations would be tied directly to one-time expenses.

Mr. Beyus expressed his concerns about any further cuts to the Police Department's budget.

Mrs. Pesce stated that she was uncomfortable adopting budgets and setting the mill rate without knowing how the additional cuts would impact the City and Board of Education. She requested that future budget processes be conducted in a way that would allow the Board of Finance to see the final budgets before voting on them.

Mr. Bushka commented on the progress that the Board of Education made in the area of special education and expressed his concern that additional cuts might impede their ability to continue that progress.

Mr. Boynton expressed his concern that contractual obligations for salaries and benefits take a large portion if not all of the budget increases and he urged the City and Board of Education to handle contracts differently.

Mr. Beyus recommended that the Board of Education cut the \$100,000 budgeted for the turf field replacement in their Capital budget.

APPROVAL OF BOE APPROPRIATION

On a motion by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mr. Beyus, the Board voted unanimously by way of roll call vote, with all six votes in favor, to approve the appropriation for the FY 2020/2021 Board of Education Operating and Capital budgets in the total amount of \$76,837,593, representing a 2.31% increase over FY 2019/2020, and grant the Board of Education 30 days to report on how the funds will be appropriated between Operating and Capital budgets.

Mr. Boynton expressed his concerns about the uncertainty of education in the wake of COVID-19 and cautioned that the City and Board of Education must be flexible. Mr. Beyus reassured him that Torrington does not face the uncertainty alone and stated that municipalities throughout the country face the same concerns. Mr. Boynton requested that the Board of Education develop a plan B in case the virus spikes again and the Mayor assured him that the Torrington Public Schools administrators and the Board of Education were putting plans in place.

ADOPTION OF CITY BUDGET

On a motion by Mr. Boynton, seconded by Mr. Beyus, the Board voted unanimously by way of roll call vote, with all six votes in favor, to adopt the 2020/2021 City budget in the total amount of \$56,379,133, representing a 2.24% increase over FY 2019/2020.

Mr. Bushka questioned whether any expenses or FEMA reimbursements related to COVID-19 were included in the budget and Mayor Carbone clarified that they were not. She provided an update on the expenses to-date and the City's plan to advocate for reimbursement from FEMA. The Mayor also discussed the potential impact on the City's Fund Balance and stated that the Fund #0282 would be reviewed regularly. Mr. Boynton, Mrs. Pesce and Mr. Beyus agreed that the budget process was difficult and it brought none of them joy to require more cuts. Mayor Carbone expressed her concerns regarding the FY 2021/2022 budget cycle and cautioned that the Board may not be able to use as much reserve funds to help offset those budgets. She emphasized the importance of eliminating items from the operating budgets and finding additional revenue sources. The Mayor identified pay-as-you-go trash service as one option to help with future budgets.

SETTING OF MILL RATE

On a motion by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mrs. Pesce, the Board voted unanimously by way of roll call vote, with all six votes in favor, to set the FY 2020 - 2021 Mill Rate at 46.1709 mills.

SETTING OF MV MILL RATE


On a motion by Mr. Bushka, seconded by Mr. Wright, the Board voted unanimously by way of roll call vote, with all six votes in favor, to set the FY 2020 - 2021 Motor Vehicle Mill Rate at 45 mills.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mr. Boynton, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 6:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jonathan Draper, Asst. City Clerk

ATTEST:


CAROL L. ANDERSON, MMC
CITY CLERK