

A **SPECIAL JOINT MEETING** of the Board of Finance and the City Council was held on Monday, May 18, 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, Board of Finance Members James Wright, Laurene Pesce, Lance Boynton, Christopher Beyus, Mark Bushka and Christopher Anderson, and City Councilors Drake Waldron, Sharon Waagner, Frank Rubino and Anne Ruwet. City Councilor Paul Cavagnero joined the meeting at 5:26 p.m. and City Councilor David Oliver was absent

Corporation Counsel Victor Muschell, City Treasurer Daniel Farley, City Comptroller Alice Proulx, Fire Chief Peter Towey, Deputy Fire Chief David Tripp, Drakeville VFD Chief David Maccalous, Public Works Director Raymond Drew, City Clerk Carol Anderson and Torrington Public Schools Superintendent Susan Lubomski also joined the meeting.

Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

PRESENTATION OF COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

City Clerk Carol Anderson and 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 and the City Council prior to the start of the meeting). A total of 20 written comments were submitted to the City Clerk's office and read aloud at the meeting.

John Spiegelhalter expressed his opposition to the Board of Education's proposed budget and stated his concerns regarding the City's mill rate.

Victor Grossetti expressed his opposition to the Board of Education's proposed budget and urged the City to cut the budgets and salaries for all City employees.

Dennis Andrews expressed his concerns regarding taxes, raises for City employees and the sewer user fee.

Dianne Dvorak stated her concerns about the economy and urged the City not to increase the mill rate.

Tim O'Donnell, Thomas and Emily Reller, Elliot Bickford, Karen and Ed DeLisle, Virginia Wolford, Kelli DeLisle, Stuart Gero, Jeremy Minard, Nicole Minard and Nadine Spring expressed their support for the proposed Fire Department budget.

Mary Svetz-Juliano and Jason Lafreniere expressed their support for the Board of Education's proposed budget.

Rachel L. Harrel expressed her support for the THS Building Project.

Jeff Putnam and Michele Hass expressed their support for the Board of Education's proposed budget and the THS Building Project.

Drakeville VFD Chief David Maccalous expressed his frustration regarding the budget process and requested that the funding for Drakeville and Torrington Volunteer Fire Departments be restored to \$81,000 total for both departments.

PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION ON THE PROPOSED FY 2020/2021 CITY BUDGET & REVENUE PROJECTIONS

Mayor Carbone presented an overview of the City's budget process and discussed the impact of COVID-19. She reported that the initial budget proposals totaled \$60,574,292 and at Level 2 that amount was reduced to \$57,800,519. The Mayor explained that the Level 3 budget proposal failed to include the Police Department's 53rd pay week and a portable traffic sign. She presented the Level 4 budget proposal at a total of \$56,639,982. Mayor Carbone described some of the reductions in her Level 4 budget proposal, including the elimination of positions, decisions not to fill certain vacancies and reductions to the budgeted amount for capital projects and heart and hypertension claims. She further clarified that in order to get down to a combined 2.5% budget increase over the current fiscal year, the City would need to face additional reductions of \$520,848.89, even with 2.6 million dollars reallocated from the Fund Balance and 1.4 million dollars from the Internal Service Fund.

Mr. Anderson expressed his support for restoring funding to the Volunteer Fire Departments.

Mr. Bushka requested clarification regarding the salary line item reductions in the Mayor's Level 4 budget proposal and Mayor Carbone explained that the cuts included several existing vacancies that would not be filled, as well as the elimination of a facilities manager position which she was trying to create.

Mr. Boynton asked whether the City and/or Board of Education identified any areas where positions or services could be consolidated and Mayor Carbone reported that they had not.

Councilor Ruwet expressed support for the consolidation of services and stated her opposition to any mill rate increase.

Mr. Beyus requested a formal recommendation from the City Council regarding the 2020/2021 fiscal year budgets and mill rate. Mayor Carbone proposed delaying budget adoption and mill rate setting until June 2, 2020 in order to give the City Council another opportunity to discuss the budgets and more time for the public to share their input.

Mr. Anderson expressed his support for the consolidation of services with the City and Board of Education and requested an update on the money appropriated from the Fund Balance for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Mayor Carbone reported that the City was on track not to use any of the appropriated funds. She also noted that the most that the City could use from Fund Balance for the 2020-2021 fiscal year would be 2.9 million dollars. However, the use of those funds would be limited to one-time expenses only.

Mrs. Pesce expressed her concerns regarding the impact of COVID-19 on revenues from the State and asked if any of the anticipated revenues for the 2019-2020 fiscal year had not yet been received. Ms. Proulx stated that she was not aware of any funds being withheld and informed the Boards that the City anticipates getting a full reimbursement for all eligible expenses incurred as a result of the pandemic.

Mr. Bushka expressed his concerns over the 1.4 million dollars proposed to be reallocated from the Internal Service Fund. Mayor Carbone offered some reassurance and described recent changes to the funding levels from the City and the Board of Education.

Councilor Rubino recommended reallocating 1.5 million dollars from the Fund Balance to offset some of the expenses in the 2020-2021 fiscal year budgets.

Mrs. Pesce suggested that the City and Board of Education approach the unions to request a deferral of wage and salary increases. Councilors Waagner and Cavagnero, Mr. Boynton, Mr. Beyus and Mr. Bushka agreed. Councilors Ruwet and Rubino reiterated that they would not support a tax increase and Councilor Cavagnero expressed his opposition to the THS Building Project.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Beyus, seconded by Mr. Anderson, the Boards voted unanimously to adjourn at 6:59 p.m.

ATTEST:

Carol L. Anderson

CAROL L. ANDERSON, MMC
CITY CLERK