

A **SPECIAL JOINT BUDGET MEETING** of the City Council and the Board of Finance was held on Monday, May 22, 2023. Attendance was in-person and by Zoom. Present at the City Hall Auditorium were Mayor Carbone, City Clerk Carol Anderson, City Comptroller Robin Stanziale, Deputy Comptroller Kim Aviles, Fire Chief Eric Borden, Deputy Fire Chief David Tripp, Deputy Police Chief Bart Barown, Treasurer Dan Farley, Councilors Keri Hoehne, David Oliver, Armand Maniccia, Paul Cavagnero, and Board of Finance Members Christopher Beyus, James Wright, Deborah Iannacito, and Laurene Pesce. Corporation Counsel Victor Muschell, Public Works Director Ray Drew, Board of Finance Members Mark Bushka, Christopher Anderson, and Councilor Drake Waldron joined via Zoom. City Councilor Anne Ruwet was absent.

Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 6:46 p.m.

Tax Collector

On a motion by Councilor Maniccia, seconded by Councilor Hoehne, the Council voted unanimously to authorize the Mayor to execute an Agreement, "Tax Collector Services Agreement", and to act on behalf of the City regarding its execution and administration.

On a motion by Mr. Beyus, seconded by Mr. Anderson, the Board voted unanimously to authorize the Mayor to execute an Agreement, "Tax Collector Services Agreement", and to act on behalf of the City regarding its execution and administration. Mr. Beyus asked if this was the same agreement as years prior, Atty. Muschell told him that there were some changes regarding the Assessor's Office, however, the compensation that the City pays to TTC, LLC remains the same.

On a motion by Councilor Oliver, seconded by Councilor Hoehne, the Council voted unanimously to reappoint Launa Goslee as Tax Collector, obliged to fulfill the contractual obligations of the "Tax Collector Services Agreement".

On a motion by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mrs. Pesce, the Board voted unanimously to reappoint Launa Goslee as Tax Collector, obliged to fulfill the contractual obligations of the "Tax Collector Services Agreement".

Additional Audit Expense

On a motion by Councilor Waldron, seconded by Councilor Oliver, the Council voted unanimously to approve an additional FY22 audit expense in the amount of \$20,000, due to Clifton Larson Allen, LLP (CLA) of West Hartford, CT to be paid from Contingency, as further explained in the letter from CLA dated March 29, 2023.

On a motion by Mr. Wright, seconded by Mr. Anderson, the Board voted unanimously to authorize the use of \$20,000 to cover additional auditors' fees due to CLA, LLP of West Hartford, CT for the FY22 audit to be paid from Contingency, as further explained in the letter from CLA dated March 29, 2023. Mr. Beyus asked if any of the Contingency has been used this year, Mayor Carbone told him other than a small amount to a nonprofit, nothing had been used by Contingency. Mr. Bushka asked what the auditors considered additional services, and he was told that part of these services is the training of the new faces in the City.

Clifton Larson Allen, LLP

On a motion by Councilor Oliver, seconded by Councilor Hoehne, the Council voted unanimously to reappoint Clifton Larson Allen, LLP (CLA) of West Hartford, CT as our City auditor for FY23.

On a motion by Mrs. Pesce, seconded by Mr. Bushka, the Board voted unanimously to reappoint CLA, LLP, of West Hartford, CT as our City auditor for FY23. Mr. Bushka asked if the renewal of the contract will include an additional \$20,000 like this year, Ms. Stanziale told him that it did not.

City Budget

City Comptroller Robin Stanziale provided the City Council and Board of Finance with the Budget Increases for Fiscal Year 2023-2024. She told them that for FY 22/23 the total Budget was \$61,815,350, and for FY 23/24 the request is \$68,161,588 a \$6,346,238 increase over the prior year. Ms. Stanziale detailed the specific departments which are contributing to the increases. Overall, the total Payroll increase is \$1,984,608, the total Capital Outlay increase is \$1,352,180, and the total Operating increase is \$3,009,450. Mr. Beyus asked about the \$350,000 increase in LCD, Mayor Carbone explained that it was from price increases and the Police Department's implementation of NexGen. Mr. Beyus also asked why they were increasing the Contingency, Mayor Carbone said that in 2018 when the State didn't pass its Budget until November the City stripped the Contingency, and had a plan for over 5 years to reimburse those funds. She went on to say that with the current state of the City Budget and the Board of Education's Budget, there is not enough revenue to offset the increases, and this will severely impact the Taxpayers. Mayor Carbone said as of right now the City would be looking at an excess of a 6 Mill increase. Mrs. Pesce said that the Budget Subcommittee recommended going no higher than a 1 Mill increase. Councilor Hoehne said that it was hard to recommend cuts because none of

the Departments were asking for more than they needed; however, she said that a 6 Mill increase is not acceptable, and some families can't even afford a 1 Mill increase. Councilor Maniccia reiterated that even a 1 Mill increase is a lot for some families. Councilor Cavagnero stated that a 6 Mill increase is not acceptable and that the Budgets will have to be cut. He said he believes that the Public Safety Budget should not be cut. Mayor Carbone said that at this time, she is looking for the Council to make a recommendation to the Board of Finance as to where they would like the Budget to end up. Ms. Stanziale went over the estimated revenues for the City, and right now they are looking at an estimated \$3.1 million in revenue. Councilor Hoehne shared that she is comfortable with a 1 Mill increase. Mr. Anderson asked if the Board of Education had a chance to come back with an example of what a no-increase would look like, Mayor Carbone said that the Board of Education did send an email stating that they had met and there were no cuts that they could offer.

On an amended motion by Councilor Oliver, seconded by Councilor Cavagnero, the Council voted unanimously to table the approval of the proposed City Department budgets, as amended, for the fiscal period from July 1, 2023, to June 30, 2024, until they can see what a 1 Mill Rate increase, 1.5 Mill Rate increase, and a 2 Mill Rate increase would look like. Mayor Carbone asked the Council for direction on where they would like to see the Budget land, Councilor Oliver stated that he would like to see what the Budget would look like at \$2 million above Debt Service. He went on to say that he agrees with Councilor Cavagnero, that the Public Safety Budget should not be cut. Mayor Carbone took a moment to remind the Council that the Public Safety Budget does not reflect the wage increases for both the Fire and Police Departments as they are in negotiations now, however, the increase of an estimated \$1.4 million is budgeted, just not in those departments yet. Mr. Beyus shared his concerns with a 2 Mill Rate increase.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Beyus, seconded by Councilor Oliver, the Boards voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:59 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by
Heather Abraham, Asst. City Clerk*

ATTEST:


CAROL L. ANDERSON, CITY CLERK