

Chairman Gregg Seabury called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. on Wednesday, April 22, 2009, in the Caucus Room, 3rd Floor, Danbury City Hall, 155 Deer Hill Avenue. Present was Committee members Robert Arconti, Joseph Cavo and Thomas Saadi. Duane Perkins was unable to attend.

Also present were Jean Natale, City Clerk; Lori Kaback, Town Clerk; David St. Hilare, Finance Director; Dan Garrick, Assistant Finance Director; Paul Estefan, Airport Administrator; Robert Yamin, Corporation Counsel; Sean Hearty, Director of Permits; Mark Hasskarl, Library Director; Dennis Elpern, Planning & Zoning Director; Wayne Shepperd, Economic Development Director.

Ex Officio Members: Colleen Stanley, Mary Teicholz, Paul Rotello, Benjamin Chianese. Also present were members of the public.

Chairman Seabury introduced everyone present at the meeting.

Chairman Seabury explained that the meeting would be conducted slightly different than the other budget hearings noting that it is understood that the departments have cut their budgets as much as they could. He opened the meeting up to Mr. St. Hilare.

Mr. St. Hilare reviewed the line items as follows:

Common Council & Ordinances:

There is a sizable reduction from last year's budget. Most notably in part-time salaries from \$18,000 down to \$12,000. Ms. Natale noted that while there is a need for part-time help, she has been fortunate to have had the use of senior volunteers to fill the need. Councilman Cavo pointed out that there has been a concerted effort to reduce the publications and legal notices trying to combine more meetings and hearings and finding other ways to publish. Mayor Boughton pointed out that one notice for the budget costs \$1,800. Mr. St. Hilare pointed out that a citywide savings of approximately \$90,000 for publications is being attained and not just for items relating to the Common Council. Councilman Saadi asked for clarification as to the difference between overtime salaries and part-time salaries for the Common Council's budget. Mr. St. Hilare pointed out the need for overtime being paid when full-time staff is utilized for nighttime meetings, etc. Part-time salaries are staff members that work for the City in various departments and who do not receive benefits.

Mayor's Office:

The budget is flat, not much of a change. There is a decrease of approximately \$1,000 overall. There is no salary increase for the Mayor proposed for next year at the Mayor's request. There is a drop in postage. Approximately \$7,200 is being absorbed for the community access TV. Mayor Boughton explained that John Neumuller volunteers and is augmented by high school and college students. The expense for rewiring the City Hall's sound system has been deferred but will need to be addressed at some point in time. For the time being, funds are being allocated to address immediate needs such as service and support of the audio and visual equipment and some part-time salaries.

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Annual Report:

There is a slight decrease from \$11,000 to \$10,000. We are on par with the 6/30/08 actuals.

Mayor's Discretionary Fund:

There is a fair amount of decrease from last year. The actuals of 6/30/08 was approximately \$18,000 which reduced to \$12,500.

City Memberships:

Most of the organizations have remained flat. This year's budget, there is a budget for a 3 ½% increase but it was held at the 6/30/08 amount.

City Clerk's Office:

Lower than last year due to the City Clerk's efforts. The salary increase will be 1.75%, 1.75% for 2009 and then 1 ½%, 1 ½% for 2010. Mayor Boughton clarified by explaining that the calculation should occur on the first day of the new term (December 1st) and then four months later (May 1st), and so on. A motion will be required for year two. There is a significant reduction in office supplies.

Probate Court:

Slight drop as a result of printing and binding costs.

Registrars & Elections:

Dropped a fair amount in large part due to part-time salaries for last year's election being eliminated in this year's budget. Communication services has changed in that trac phones were purchased in lieu of cell phones which carry monthly contracts. The department has been selective with printing and binding costs. Outside services was incurred due to storing the voting machines. Now, the machines are much smaller and are stored in the City Hall's basement. There is a notation that there should be no increase until January 1, 2010. Mayor Boughton pointed out that it was a typo and should read July 1, 2009.

Corporation Counsel:

While the comparison shows a large increase from last year's budget to this year's budget, Mr. St. Hilare reminded everyone that there was a request from Corporation Counsel relating to M&E and the transfer station which increased the litigation account. The current year's request is more reflective of a normal year's budget which is lower than a typical year's budget. Attorney Yamin pointed out that in-house counsel has been utilized more often. Cell tower litigation was handled in-house which saved approximately \$50,000-\$75,000. Tax appeals are being handled in-house. Whenever outside counsel is used, costs are increased dramatically. Diane Rosemark has been a tremendous asset in the HR area which supplements the use of Suran Murray. Diane's salary is 15% of Suran's hourly rate not including benefits.

Town Clerk:

There was a significant drop from the amended budget of \$386,000 to the proposed budget of \$341,000 due in part because of a reduction in staffing. There is a typo which should read 6 and not 7 (Assistant Town Clerk should read 1 and not 2). Part-time needs has been reduced. Regular salaries shows the largest reduction.

Permit Coordination:

Sean has kept the budget flat from year to year.

Mr. St. Hilare pointed out that every department is absorbing increases that we are contractually obligated to give the union.

Planning Department:

Legal and public notices which is of concern for this department. Councilman Saadi asked why there is an expenditure of approximately \$4,000 for professional services. Mr. Elpern explained that approximately \$2,000 will be used towards the contract with Suel which is the company that updates the zoning maps which is done once a year. The remaining funds will be used for public hearings and a transcriptionist for a return of record which includes verbatim transcripts of all the public hearings and various documentations. Most document preparation is handled in-house, however, there are times when multiple lawsuits occur at the same time and outside assistance is needed. Councilwoman Stanley questioned the need for moving forward with the White Street streetscape improvements. She asked that the project be placed on hold in light of the economy. Mr. Elpern explained that he has to submit his budget earlier than when it is presented. Mayor Boughton pointed out that the item has not been funded this year. Mr. St. Hilare will correct the book to read "if funding available".

Office of Economic Development:

A significant change was to a full-time position, Wayne Shepperd, which has been changed to a part-time position. Also of note, with regard to office equipment, there was a planned kiosk which has been put on the backburner. Travel and mileage has been cut back. The Nutmeg Games will still go forward.

Danbury Conservation Commission:

No significant changes.

Fair Rent Commission:

The only change are lines that have not been used in years have been eliminated which reduced this item from \$1,400 to \$1,200.

Lake Authority:

There has been a 10% reduction. Mayor Boughton pointed out that the reduction is consistent with New Milford and Brookfield. Three of the five towns agreed to either holding the dues or reducing them.

Danbury Public Library:

There is a reduction of approximately \$125,000 which is as a result of eliminating staff and reallocation of funds throughout several line items. Councilman Saadi asked what the plan was with regard to the days of operation. Mr. Hasskarl explained that the new agreement provides a choice between a 4-day or a 5-day work week which goes through Labor Day. The Library will re-open on Fridays the Friday after Memorial Day. During the summer, the Library will be open six days a week. The plan is that after Labor Day, the Library will be open seven days a week.

Long Ridge Library:

There is a reduction of 10% from \$6,000 to \$5,400.

Airport:

There is a \$44,000 reduction which is due in large part to road construction maintenance. Mr. Seabury asked who takes care of snow plowing and lawn cutting. Mr. Estefan said there are two employees in the budget that handled those items. Mr. Cavo pointed out that a crack filling machine was recently purchased wherein the past the work was contracted out. Mr. Estefan pointed out that the service had cost approximately \$40,000. This year, Mr. Estefan was able to keep approximately \$30,000 out of his budget as he is applying for federal grant money for painting new stripes which is required under federal regulations.

HART:

There was an increase. Mr. St. Hilare pointed out the valuable service they provide to the Danbury community. There is a growing need and this is one way that the need is addressed. This funding maintains the current level of service to the community. Mr. Estefan acts as the City's Director of Civil Preparedness and pointed out that HART buses provide free services whenever there is a need, whether there is an accident or a fire. They provide a place for the victims, transportation, a place where triage can be provided, air conditioned vehicles for high heat days, etc.

A motion was made by Councilman Cavo and seconded by Councilman Arconti that the Committee recommends to the Common Council that they accept the Mayor's proposed budget for General Government 1 which includes a raise for the City Clerk and the Town Clerk of 3% to be split into 1 ½% increments. The first increment to be applied July 1, 2010 of 1 ½% and the second increment of 1 ½% to be applied January 1, 2011. In addition, the raise that was approved last year for the City Clerk and the Town Clerk is to be split into two increments of 1.75% each to be effective December 1, 2009 and May 1, 2010. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Cavo and seconded by Councilman Arconti. The motion carried unanimously at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregg Seabury, Chairman

Robert Arconti

Joseph Cavo

Thomas Saadi