

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDP9JbuggsM>

\*\*\*\*\*FINAL MINUTES\*\*\*\*\*  
**BOARD OF FINANCE BUDGET HEARING**  
**April 23, 2020**

A Virtual Board of Finance Budget Hearing was held at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 23, 2020.

**MEMBERS PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE:** Edward Bateson, Jim Brown-Chair, Lori Charlton, Christopher DeWitt-Vice Chair, Mary LeClerc-Secretary, Sheila Marmion, John Mitola, Jack Testani, James Walsh

**ALSO PRESENT VIA TELECONFERENCE:** Town Attorney James Baldwin, Interim CFO Caitlin Bosse, Budget Director Linda Gardiner, CAO Thomas Bremer, First Selectwoman Brenda Kupchick, Fire Chief Denis McCarthy, Deputy Fire Chief Kyran Dunn, Police Chief Christopher Lyddy, Deputy Police Chief Donald Smith, Animal Control Officer Paul Miller, Mark Antonini-Center for Family Justice CFO, Pilot House President Doreen Caruso, Jeanette Munoz Allam-Director of Grants and Special Project at The Kenney Center, Lynn Shavinsky-Mill River Wetland Committee President, Ruthann Greco, Administrator, Sullivan-McKinley Elder Housing, FairTV

1. Call to Order – Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance – Mr. Brown led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Brown reminded everyone that there will be no live public comment. He said the public is encouraged to email comments including their name and home address before or after the meeting to [bof@fairfieldct.org](mailto:bof@fairfieldct.org).

3. Discussion on the Following Budgets:

**Miscellaneous**

**2370 Sullivan-McKinney Elder Housing**

Ms. Greco said the request for funding will to be to continue the concrete brick repair work to prevent apartment leaks on the visitor side parking and general upkeep of the building. She thanked everyone from the Health and Fire Departments and Senior Center for their continued support.

**2430 The Kennedy Center**

Ms. Allam said The Kennedy Center requested \$7,000 to support ongoing services as well as create employment opportunities for people with disabilities. She said the COVID-19 crisis has significantly transformed how the Center delivery services. Ms. Allam said the Center had to close down many programs while others are conducted virtually. She said the Center is seeking revenue in others ways to create jobs in their agency businesses. Ms. Allam said the Center initially requested \$15,000 and the BOS cut it to \$7,000. She said the Center serves New Haven, Fairfield and Litchfield Counties and the Greater Bridgeport area and has delivery mobility services statewide. She said Shelton and Fairfield are the major contributors. She said the Center has explored the CARES Act funding and COVID-19 funding pools, but hasn't received final decisions as of yet.

**2450 Mill River Wetland Committee**

Ms. Shavinsky noted the various programs for schools and students. She said the Committee is a volunteer-based organization. She said the Committee has requested \$5,000 from the Town and the rest of the budget consists of privately raised funds; the Committee does not have an endowment.

**2470 The Pilot House**

Ms. Caruso said The Pilot House originally asked for \$10,000 and the BOS cut it to \$8,000. She said since The Pilot House began it has continued to grow, providing after school camps, job training and employment. Ms. Caruso said pro bono events and fundraisers have been cancelled. She said The Pilot House does not have an endowment and it has applied for loans and grants, but hasn't heard back about that.

**2480 Center for Family Justice**

Mr. Antonini said the Center requested \$12,000 which is an increase from last year specifically because the Center services 12% more residents. He said all services are free and confidential to clients. He said the hotline is open 24/7. Ms. Marmion asked if domestic violence incidents have increased since the pandemic started and when looking to next year if the Center sees gaps meeting the needs. Mr. Antonini said he is very concerned about next year; there has been a 20% increase in domestic violence. He said the Center has applied for the CARES Act, but hasn't seen any money yet. He said he will get specific numbers for domestic violence cases in Fairfield.

**Public Safety**

**4030 Police**

Chief Lyddy said the police budget represents a 2.74% increase in the operating budget. He said the two drivers are the contractual raises which are already set at 2% and the remainder is predominately in the new ECC consolidation budget due to certain things being moved over and some requests for newer technology. The Board reviewed the backup of lines increased by 5%. Mr. Mitola asked if the department is fully staffed. Chief Lyddy said there are three openings. He said the hiring process requires a lot of face to face meetings and there is no academy space nor dates projected. He said the department usually carries two vacancies and is still in pretty good shape. Mr. Mitola asked if the openings will create additional overtime. Chief Lyddy said it depends what happens in July. He said he anticipates some retirements. Mr. Testani asked about staff who contracted COVID-19. Chief Lyddy said one officer was hospitalized and is on the rebound and expects to return in May and one civilian experienced mild symptoms and is working remotely. He said they are in good shape with PPE. Ms. Bosse explained the outside services fund. Ms. Charlton said she would like to review the rates in the future to ensure the Town is breaking even. The Board discussed outside jobs. Chief Lyddy explained hiring outside for the software system. Deputy Chief Smith discussed the ECC move and how it's shared with Westport with costs broken out between the line items. Mr. Walsh asked Deputy Chief Smith to show the BOF what the differential was for the year.

Capital – Chief Lyddy said there were nine vehicle requests and mobile data terminals. He said he traditionally requests 10 vehicles each year.

Mr. Bateson requested the savings in SRO since schools are closed. The fleet replacement program was discussed. Mr. Bateson requested an inventory of police vehicles with mileage and use.

Types of calls and yearly comparisons were examined. Mr. Bateson said he wants an accounts receivable aging report for outstanding monies owed for outside services.

Revenue - Chief Lyddy said parking revenue will be affected since no tickets are being issued at the railroad station because no one is there. He said home alarms are down because people are home and added the police are not performing funeral escorts.

#### **4050 Animal Control**

Officer Miller reported the operating budget dropped in regular payroll due to the line removal of a full time officer. Mr. Mitola asked why it was eliminated. Ms. Gardiner said the funding for that position was part of the restructuring of the First Selectwoman's Office. She said Animal Control has three part-time animal control officers.

#### **4150 Emergency Communications**

Deputy Chief Smith remarked that it is a completely new budget based on the combined Fairfield and Westport ECCs. He said there will be 22 dispatchers when the new ECC opens which is the minimum staffing to run a center as confirmed by an independent consultant firm. He said some dispatchers will come from Westport and become Fairfield employees since Westport is closing its center. Deputy Chief Smith said Fairfield expects a savings of \$41,000 a year in total operating costs. He said there are currently 13 dispatchers so there is overtime now. He said the New Canaan Fire Department will get dispatched from this new combined Center as well since Westport contracts with that town currently. Deputy Chief Smith said New Canaan contributes an annual fee for the service. He said the target date to open the ECC is July 1<sup>st</sup>, but with COVID-19, it may be between July and September. Mr. Bremer informed the Board that under the agreement, seven Westport dispatchers will be hired to operate the Westport side of the ECC. Deputy Chief Smith said printing costs will increase because printers will be needed at the new facility since dispatchers will no longer be able to use the department printers. Deputy Chief said he will present revenue at the BOF April 28<sup>th</sup> meeting.

#### **4010 Fire**

Chief McCarthy reported a 3.19% increase. He said the majority is contractual plus one new Fire Inspector position and two ECC adjustments. He reviewed line items in the operating budget and explained communications, repair and maintenance of equipment and other line items. Ms. Gardiner said the Fire Marshal Inspector position is under Fire Lieutenant in the budget book. The Chief said there has been a lot of construction in town that require annual inspections. Mr. Mitola asked if the Marshals have to be State Certified. The Chief replied yes and said the department has several qualified members who are fully certified to make a lateral transfer. He said they won't have to go to training and the internal interview process can begin right away. Chief McCarthy added the department has four vacant positions, 23 personnel on duty per shift/24 hours a day, 22 full-time personnel and one vacancy per shift. He said he anticipates retirements this coming year and will send candidates to the academy. Mr. Mitola stated that there is a slight benefit to the Town in keeping these positions vacant.

Capital Outlay – Chief McCarthy reviewed the four capital items: SCBA upgrade, 10-year hose and water replacement, turnout gear replacement and a staff vehicle. Mr. Brown said the BOS suggested reducing the vehicle. The Chief said the department can get another year out of the current vehicle.

Revenue – Chief McCarthy said Fire Marshal fees were adjusted because of COVID-19. He noted the revenue is earmarked for the new Fire Marshal position. He identified Fairfield as the lowest staffed Fire Marshal’s Office compared to other towns with similar populations. Ms. Charlton said she is concerned with adding a position when revenue is expected to go down. There was further Board discussion on new construction, small projects in process and projected projects. Ms. LeClerc asked if the Fire Marshal work could be done with overtime. Mr. Walsh said he would like to get the number of units that are supposed to be inspected which the Chief said he will furnish. Mr. Walsh asked if the department will be able to catch up with all the requirements if the position is filled. Chief McCarthy said no and noted he originally requested two positions. Mr. Walsh asked what the penalties were. The Chief said there are no penalties, but there are liabilities because of not meeting the statutory requirements. He said that even notwithstanding the statute, the Fire Department has the responsibility to ensure public safety by inspecting buildings.

**4090 Hydrant and Water**

Deputy Chief Dunn said this budget is based on the amount of inch feet of hydrant mains, the number of hydrants in Town and whatever surcharges that have been approved by PURA.

**4110 Emergency Management**

Chief McCarthy reported changes in the EOC and the UASI radio system in Communications. He said the EOC has been open virtually since March 13, 2020 when the First Selectwoman declared an emergency. The Chief said command staff has operated out of Independence Hall and operations, planning, logistics and supplies are run out of the fire school. He said the finance department manages the opportunity of a 75% grant reimbursement for COVID-19 related expenses. Chief McCarthy said funding covers only States that have received a Presidential Disaster Declaration. Mr. Bateson said he wants a list of EOC expenses and equipment.

**126 Regional Fire School**

Chief McCarthy noted the budget is flat. He said fees and State grants cover 100% of the services and the Town pays \$25,000 to offset the Fire Department’s use of the facility. The Chief said the School has been an extraordinary resource during this crisis for many departments. Mr. Bateson asked if there should be a concern about revenue. The Chief said the School is closed and every program offered by the School is 100% supported by tuition and user fees so if a class is cancelled there are no expenses.

**Finance**

Mr. Bremer said the refunding of the bonds took place today. He said it was a very successful sale with the largest group of bidders. Mr. Bremer said the Town achieved \$1.7 million savings, far exceeding expectations. He said that Bond Counsel said that any town below has AAA had a difficult time. Mr. Bremer said savings is being spread out through the bond life of about 12 years. He said the Town will put \$125,000 in next year’s budget creating a savings in the debt structure.

The Governor’s tax collections, deferment and what kind of hole it would leave was discussed. Mr. Bremer said there as of today, the tax collections are outpacing what the Finance Department had anticipated and from that department’s perspective, things are looking up. He said there will be more information on tax collections by May 1<sup>st</sup>.

### 10030 Debt Service

Ms. Bosse analyzed the charts on the debt service and waterfall, use of premiums, interest, reserves and principal. She said the total debt expense is \$24,894,303. Mr. Brown said Mr. Carey should attend the April 28, 2020 special meeting to give an update on fill pile expenses. Mr. Bremer said there is a question on whether the Town will be able to spend the funding put aside for the fill pile expenses in this fiscal year. He said the Town needs DEEP approval before it remediates and the Federal government and State are slow in responding because of COVID-19. Mr. Bremer said the Finance Department can vote to transfer \$1.4 million from Debt Service to the Capital non-recurring account for fill pile expenses at its April 29, 2020 7:00 pm Special meeting. First Selectwoman Kupchick asked the Board to schedule a private executive session with her administration and Human Resources. Mr. Brown said he has it scheduled.

### 2020 Fund Balance

This item will be moved to the April 28, 2020, meeting because it keeps changing. The Board will receive new data from Mr. Calabrese.

First Selectwoman Kupchick briefed the board on her press conference. She said she asked the Emergency Management Team to consider opening some public spaces in a safe manner such as golf courses, beaches, the marina and some opens spaces. First Selectwoman Kupchick said she will have more information the beginning of next week on how this opening will work. She said it is contingent on the trend numbers staying where they are or decreasing and is hoping openings can occur mid-May to help the Town generate income.

Mr. Brown suggested Mr. Conley, Mr. Calabrese, some department heads and BOE attend the April 29, 2020 meeting. He said the Board will receive a health insurance update. Mr. Bremer said the Finance Department will draft revenue scenarios and should have AON numbers. Mr. Brown said the Board's budget vote will be on May 11, 2020. He said the Board can meet again on May 5, 2020 if more information comes in. The Board agreed to move the April 28, 2020 meeting to Wednesday, April 29, 2020 to give more time to get the most up-to-date data.

#### 4. Adjourn

**There being no further business to come before the Board, Ms. Marmion moved to adjourn the meeting at 11:33 p.m. Ms. Charlton seconded the motion which carried unanimously, 9-0.**

Respectfully submitted,

Sheila Tesei  
Recording Secretary