

**TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FY 2023-2024 BUDGET DELIBERATIONS
April 26, 2023**

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<https://hamden.zoom.us/rec/share/9wxEtuuW98MHKduHGAAh99Fo4bx8TbQfTtRBSZlBMcP-Hiw7SDVUkMJlLQFIJp1Qn.A-GXjlMoHExrcyw>

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Legislative Council budget deliberations were held on Wednesday, April 26, 2023. This was a hybrid meeting held both in person and electronically via Zoom. The meeting was called out of recess at 6:24 P.M. by Council President Dominique Baez.

Z = Zoom P = in Person

<u>MEMBERS PRESENT:</u>	Dominique Baez (P)	Cory O'Brien (Z)
	Katie Kiely (P)	Jeron Alston (Z) (approx. 7:00pm)
	Sarah Gallagher (Z)	Abdul Osmanu (Z)
	Ted Stevens (P)	Laurie Sweet (Z)
	Bob Anthony (P)	Adrian Webber (Z)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lesley DeNardis; Mr. Farmer; Paula Irvin; Ms. Wetmore; Kristen Zaehring

PRESIDING: Dominique Baez, President

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Mayor Lauren Garrett; Sean Grace, Chief of Staff; Curtis Eatman, Finance Director; Tony Esposito, Registrar of Voters; Lushonda Howard, Registrar of Voters; Sue Gruen, Town Attorney

PUBLIC INPUT: None

Registrar of Voters:

Positions:

Ms. Baez moved a motion to open up positions, seconded by Ms. Kiely.

Mr. Esposito explained that there will be 3 election cycles in this fiscal year. He said the top half (10401) covers the regular election requests up to the November elections, and the next series of (10488) are expense items that have to do with primaries and the last line that goes from \$80,000 to \$140,000 is due to primaries.

Mr. Anthony asked if the Prof./Tech. account will be enough to get people to come in and work. Mr. Esposito said we're always on the low end and they're trying to see if they can get people in. He said it may need to be bumped up to \$16.00 an hour. Mr. Anthony stated he knows we've had trouble in the past trying to get the polls staffed.

There was a lengthy discussion on pay and upcoming State changes to do with the hourly rate.

Ms. Baez asked how much would these lines total if they were bumped up? Ms. Howard said they have not done the math and that the meeting of the State was just yesterday.

Ms. Gallagher asked if they work with the high school or youth center for staff. Ms. Howard said the high school already has a plan in place to have help at the polls. She said they could try youth services as well.

There was discussion on equipment for the Keefe Center and on early voting.

Ms. Kiely moved a motion to change both Professional/Technical lines (10401-0590 and 10488-0590) to \$16.00 an hour for the people included in these lines making \$15.00 an hour. The motion was seconded by Ms. Baez.

Mr. Stevens said he would rather wait until they have that number in case it's too high and they may change their number. Ms. Baez stated the motion is to approve whatever number that is. Ms. Gallagher stated she doesn't think it will be an absorbent increase, maybe a couple thousand.

After some discussion on the rate the Clerk reminded them that this was an expenditures motion and they were inside positions.

The motion was held and Ms. Baez took the vote on positions as proposed and they passed with 1 abstention (Webber)

Expenditures:

Ms. Baez requested a motion to open up expenditures. Moved by Mr. Anthony, seconded by Ms. Kiely.

Ms. Kiely moved a motion to change both Professional/Technical lines (10401-0590 and 10488-0590) to \$16.00 an hour for the people included in these lines making \$15.00 an hour. The motion was seconded by Ms. Baez and approved with 1 opposed (Stevens) and 1 abstention (Webber)

Ms. Baez took the vote on expenditures as amended and they passed with 1 opposed (Stevens)

Town Attorney:

Positions:

Ms. Baez requested a motion to open up positions. Moved by Mr. Anthony, seconded by Ms. Kiely.

Ms. Gruen went over her lines explaining each one. Mr. Anthony asked about the union increase and Ms. Gruen said it was a step increase.

Ms. Gallagher moved a motion to add an Assistant Town Attorney for \$40,000 to help with the work of the Fair Rent Commission. The motion was seconded by Mr. Osmanu and Ms. Sweet.

Ms. Gruen stated she thinks this is a reasonable way to proceed.

Ms. Sweet stated she strongly supports this.

Mr. Stevens said he supposes a lot of this is backlog due to Covid and wonders if when we get through the current backlog if there would be consistent workflow through the year or will it dry up and maybe be better served by the Prof./Tech. line. Ms. Gruen said she regardless of the backlog or no backlog we now have a bunch of appeals in court and those will not be over with through the commission so she would say at least for this fiscal year she would do it like that. She said she had a conversation with Mr. Farmer and they figured they would see how it works out this fiscal year and reevaluate for the next, but she can say without a doubt that this person will be busy this fiscal year. Mr. Stevens asked if this is not a union position. Ms. Gruen said it's a non-union part time position. Mr. Stevens said so if we decide next year it's not worth it....Ms. Gruen jumped in and said yes, you could change it.

There was some discussion on the position and Ms. Gruen explained it's a Hamden Town Employee who would be paid just like the other two assistants for whatever the work is you do. Mr. Alston said so we're not 1099'ing them? Ms. Gruen said that is correct. Mr. Alston asked if this includes benefits. Ms. Gruen said yes and explained years ago how the other assistants were bumped up an hour to fulfill those benefits.

Ms. Gruen said she prefers the assistant (over a contracted person) and Mr. Alston stated he prefers to 1099 them and cap them.

There was then discussion on a Town position vs. a 1099 position. There was also discussion on if this was a 1099 it would be for specific work, but if a Town employee they could also be handed additional duties if needed.

Ms. Baez stated she thinks this is a bargain for the amount of work they would do. Ms. Kiely said she wouldn't want someone to have to stop in the middle of work if they reached the \$40,000 mark.

Mr. Alston asked Ms. Gruen how she was going to handle this before this was brought up. Ms. Gruen said with her current staff, they do what they have to do.

Mr. Stevens said it sounds like there's a need for this. He then asked about moving \$40,000 from Prof./Tech. and asked if that would handicap that. Ms. Gruen said she wouldn't do that, there are contracts and things that that line is for.

A vote was taken to add \$40,000 for an Assistant Town Attorney and approved with 2 abstentions (Alston) (Webber)

Ms. Baez took the vote on positions as amended and they passed unanimously.

Expenditures:

Ms. Baez requested a motion to open expenditures. Moved by Mr. Anthony, seconded by Mr. Stevens.

Ms. Gruen explained the increase in Professional/Technical and then said most expenses are in labor and defense of tax appeal work.

Ms. Baez took the vote on expenditures as proposed and they passed unanimously.

Board of Ethics:

Expenditures:

Ms. Baez moved a motion to open the Board of Ethics expenditure line. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kiely and expenditures were accepted unanimously as proposed.

At 7:55pm Ms. Baez called for a 15-minute break. At 8:12pm they returned from break.

Probate Court:

Expenditures:

Ms. Baez moved a motion to open the expenditures, seconded by Ms. Kiely. Mr. Grace explained their budget is the same as last years. Mr. Stevens asked who pays the judge. Mr. Grace said the State does.

Ms. Baez took the vote on the expenditures as proposed and they passed unanimously.

Mayor's Office:

Expenditures:

Ms. Baez moved a motion to open up expenditures, seconded by Mr. Stevens and Ms. Sweet.

Mayor Garrett said the only line in here that she thinks is worth looking at is Municipal Service Fees which pays for our membership with the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and the South Central Regional Council of Government. She then listed some of the things it pays for which provides a lot of benefits. Mr. Stevens said it looks like the fees are down this year. Mayor Garrett said we use to belong to the National League of Cities the past few years but we didn't take advantage of it because their big conference for the year is in March which is impossible for them and they never sent anybody so it's something they didn't want to continue paying for when they weren't utilizing it and there was really no benefit to it. Mr. Stevens asked about the Fireworks. Mayor Garrett said it's paid out of Arts & Culture.

Ms. Baez took the vote on expenditures as proposed and they passed unanimously.

Positions:

Ms. Baez moved a motion to open positions, seconded by Mr. Anthony.

Ms. Gallagher moved a motion to reduce the Deputy Chief of Staff to \$72,000, seconded by Mr. Stevens.

Mr. Grace said this person is worth more than they're paid and that's why it's there.

Ms. Kiely stated she wants to make sure these are revisited and put on the agenda. Ms. Baez said this will be revisited with other salaries later. Ms. Sweet said she will support this to be consistent but also wants to make sure it's revisited.

A vote was taken and the motion passed with 1 abstention (Webber)

Ms. Baez then took the vote on positions as amended and they were approved with 1 abstention (Webber)

There being no further business, Ms. Baez recessed the meeting at 8:32 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Renta
Clerk of the Council