

**TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FY 2023-2024 BUDGET DELIBERATIONS
May 4, 2023**

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Legislative Council budget deliberations were held on Thursday, May 4, 2023. This was a hybrid meeting held both in person and electronically via Zoom. The meeting was called out of recess at 6:17 P.M. by Council President Dominique Baez.

Z = Zoom P = in Person

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dominique Baez (P)	Paula Irvin (Z)
Cory O'Brien (P)	Betty Wetmore (Z) (approx. 7:53pm)
Sarah Gallagher (P)	Abdul Osmanu (Z)
Ted Stevens (P)	Laurie Sweet (Z)
Adrian Webber (P)	Kristen Zaehring (Z)
Justin Farmer (Z)	Bob Anthony (P)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jeron Alston; Lesley DeNardis; Katie Kiely

PRESIDING: Dominique Baez, President

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Sean Grace, Chief of Staff; Curtis Eatman, Finance Director; Fire Chief Jeffrey Naples; Gary Tinny, Fire Commissioner; Acting Police Chief Tim Wydra

PUBLIC INPUT: None

Fire Dept.: (Chief Naples gave a tour of the firehouse)

Revenues:

Ms. Baez requested a motion to open revenues. Moved by Mr. Webber, seconded by Ms. Zaehring.

Ms. Zaehring asked if the revenues have changed. Ms. Baez said no, they are the same as submitted by the Mayor.

Mr. Farmer asked if line 2507 – permits and licenses was realistic revenue. Chief Naples said yes and explained EMT coverage and then stated there is no longer a need for Quinnipiac to use us, they have their own.

There was discussion over an excel version sent to them by Finance and Chief Naples explained the variances between the years.

Ms. Gallagher asked if \$100,000 for fire marshal fees was conservative. Chief Naples explained how this is a difficult line to budget for.

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

Positions:

Ms. Baez requested a motion to open positions. Moved by Mr. Webber, seconded by Mr. O'Brien.

Chief Naples explained the amendment he's requesting in positions (highlighted in red) which includes five (5) Firefighter 1 positions, a Fire Lieutenant position, and the Assistant Fire Chief position. He stated the 5 firefighter salaries can be reduced from \$78,187.72 to starting salaries of \$66,661.50 due to retirements.

Mr. O'Brien stated this will reduce the line by \$46,512.51 and then **moved a motion** to accept the updated list of staff and salaries. The motion was seconded by Mr. Farmer and approved unanimously.

Ms. Zaehring asked the administration to get stuff to them earlier and not the day of with ample time to view it.

Mr. Farmer **moved a motion** to remove the raises for the Fire Chief and the Assistant Fire Chief. The motion was seconded by Ms. Baez and approved with 1 abstention (Webber)

There was discussion on paramedics and minimum staffing, as well as discussion on incentives for EMT's to keep their certifications. There was also discussion on partnership, a feeder system, and the hiring process.

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. Webber, seconded by Mr. Farmer.

Ms. Zaehring asked if there were any changes to these lines different than the book. Chief Naples said the line for Holiday Pay and the change is a reduction of \$91,170.00.

Ms. Baez **moved a motion** to reduce line 12501-0150 to \$945,000. The motion was seconded by Mr. Stevens and approved unanimously.

Mr. O'Brien asked why no correction in the Overtime lines after salary adjustments. Chief Naples explained how the younger generation doesn't have the drive to work beyond their 42 hours a week saying it's a generational issue.

There was discussion on overtime and shift covering and Mr. Webber asked the Chief to keep track.

Mr. O'Brien stated this budget follows the trends of the previous Chief running a tight ship. It's less than 2% increase compared to other departments and he appreciates that and thanks him.

Ms. Baez asked if there was an updated ytd for 12501-0612T DEI Recruitment. Chief Naples said he doesn't have that but knows the number is higher. He then explained the line, recruitments at the Keefe Center and the Jones Scholarship.

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

Police Dept.: (Chief Wydra gave a tour of the department)

Positions:

Ms. Baez requested motion to open positions. Moved by Mr. Webber, seconded by Ms. Wetmore. Mr. Farmer stated they usually begin with revenues. Motions were withdrawn.

Revenues:

Ms. Baez requested a motion to open revenues. Moved by Mr. O'Brien, seconded by Mr. Farmer.

Mr. Farmer asked if for Police Extra Duty have we started to add fringes. Chief Wydra said he believes it's included in this. Mr. Farmer asked if these numbers were reasonable and achievable. Chief Wydra said yes, the only item tough to guess is extra duty. He then explained moving violations. Mr. O'Brien stated he has an issue with the way Extra Duty is recorded and explained more about it. He said there will be follow up conversations on this for better record keeping because there's insufficient record keeping right now.

Ms. Baez asked about the bingo and raffle line ytd's difference. The Chief explained and said there have been a few bazaars that required permits. Ms. Baez asked when the fees were last visited. Mr. O'Brien said the ordinance is only about 4 years old.

Ms. Gallagher asked if we set the weapon permit fee. Chief Wydra said he believes the State sets it. Ms. Gallagher asked if they have the ability to increase it. The Chief said he doesn't think so. Ms. Gallagher asked him to look into it. There was then ytd discussion on moving violations.

Chief Wydra explained the Traffic Ordinance Violations saying they are fire lane violations, handicap parking violations, no parking violations, it's a parking ticket. Mr. Stevens asked where the cannabis revenue was. Chief Wydra said he doesn't know of any.

Mr. Eatman confirmed here that the fringe benefits were included in Extra Duty.

Ms. Baez took the vote on revenues as proposed and they passed with 1 opposed (Farmer)

Positions:

Ms. Baez requested a motion to open positions. Moved by Ms. Gallagher, seconded by Mr. Webber.

Mr. Farmer asked how many positions were in the book. Chief Wydra said 152. Mr. Farmer asked how many active minimum staffing, excluding vacancies. The Chief answered 91 staffed – 12 vacancies, the minimum staffing number is 102.

Chief Wydra explained how he emailed changes. (*Clerk notes these changes were not given to the office for the record). He said the bottom 25 officers need to be adjusted. 12 need to be funded at \$91,978.66 and the 13 below can be reduced to \$88,119.43

Mr. Farmer according to the Chief's statement, seconded by Ms. Baez. Mr. O'Brien asked what the exact number of the difference is. Chief Wydra said \$4,595.24. A vote was taken and the motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Gallagher asked about the CIT Outreach Coordinator line and the Chief explained. Mr. Farmer asked are there a certain number of sergeants we need to have. Chief Wydra said no. There was then some discussion on the vacant ones.

Mr. Farmer **moved a motion** to leave the police officers at 102 and remove the 2 vacant Sgt. Positions. The motion was seconded by Mr. Osmanu. Chief Wydra stated that would drop them below manning and that there are current grievances on those positions not being filled. After some discussion on minimum manning and promotions Ms. Baez asked if his motion was to move the 2 sergeant positions to police officers. Mr. Farmer said yes.

There was discussion on requirements. Chief Wydra stated he doesn't think decreasing supervisor's is a good idea. Mr. O'Brien stated he's concerned that we currently have grievances for a lack of promotions saying that's open litigation and could cost us more than the savings. He said normally he'd support this but he is on the fence with this.

Ms. Zaehring said she thinks they need to be mindful of the potential liability the Town could face, as well as the other contractual issues, and for those reasons she won't be voting for this.

A vote was taken and the item failed with 5 in favor (Farmer) (Osmanu) (Irvin) (Sweet) (Baez) – 6 opposed (Anthony) (O'Brien) (Wetmore) (Zaehring) (Gallagher) (Stevens) and 1 abstention (Webber)

Ms. Zaehring asked the Chief if ARPA money could be used for the social worker. Chief Wydra said he will look into it and get back to her.

Mr. O'Brien thanked the Chief for researching the Social Worker and said he would be in strong support for one and then **moved a motion** to fund the Social Worker at \$73,034.31 as recommended by the Chief rather than the Outreach Worker. The motion was seconded by Ms. Zaehring.

Mr. Farmer stated he doesn't support this motion. He thinks they should start with piloting at the

Library and then go from there.

Ms. Gallagher said her thought is adding this on top of the other. She sees this good for officers as well and thinks they're both needed. She said she appreciates his putting this in here and his research on it.

Mr. Stevens stated he's undecided on this, he sees the value in the position, he's just not sure which one is the better one to go with. He then asked the administration why they chose the CIT position instead of the Social Worker. Mr. Grace said they wanted the Coordinated position because it'd be contracting with Clifford Beers. Mr. Stevens asked Mr. Farmer if he'd want any of these positions. Mr. Farmer stated he doesn't want to add a Social Worker.

There was then a lengthy discussion about programs all over.

Mr. Webber said he appreciates the need for this and that the title Social Worker is very broad and he thinks the pay scale of \$73,000 compared to the \$100,000 in the Library is very important to delineate the job. He said he would love to support this tonight and thinks it's 100% needed, but he can't support it as is without more description.

There was then a lengthy discussion on types of degrees.

Mr. O'Brien said although this number may not be the final one, and although there is no job description, the reason he made his motion is for the commitment to provide people in crisis with the care. He said the Police Department get the calls for crisis and if they are truly going to invest in Social Workers this is where they need to invest and he feels strong about this.

Chief Wydra said although there is no job description how they wrote it up based on information from other agencies that have done this is that the qualifications would require: a Masters Degree, 3 years of Social Work or Social Services of community mental health experience, must have a valid drivers license and a Connecticut LCSW license, and mediation experience preferred, crisis intervention experience required.

Mr. Webber said he'd like to **offer a friendly motion** to combine the 2 positions (CIT and Social Worker) to create 1 position and add \$20,000 making it \$93,034.31.

After some discussion on a job description Mr. O'Brien said his only concern is he thinks it should be someone that is actually responding to people and not just internal coordinating. Ms. Zaehring said as the seconder to his motion as long as that caveat that Mr. O'Brien said is there that this position is responding to folks in crisis then she seconds the friendly amendment.

Mr. O'Brien and Ms. Zaehring both accepted the friendly.

Ms. Baez asked if they could make it a round number of \$90,000. After a pause of no answer she said forget it and then said the motion on the floor is to combine the 2 positions and create a job description so that they have response duties as well as planning duties and to also create this job description with the Mayor's office.

After more discussion about crisis response and coordination Ms. Gallagher and Mr. Stevens both shared concern with not being sure one worker can do all the work for the Town.

Mr. Anthony said he doesn't have a problem with a Social Worker, but their job is to approve the position after the Mayor and Personnel put together a description that works. He then said he's

not in favor of combining the two positions but is in favor of a Social Worker because he thinks that would work a lot better than everything else they're discussing.

A vote was taken and the amended motion to combine the two positions into one at \$93,034.31 for crisis response and coordination passed with 4 opposed (Farmer) (Wetmore) (Osmanu) (Anthony)

There was discussion on School Crossing Guards.

Mr. Farmer stated as they create this position, he thinks community input is very important and that they should be giving input on how it should work.

Ms. Baez took the vote on positions as amended and they passed with 4 opposed (Farmer) (Sweet) (Wetmore) (Osmanu) and 1 abstention (Anthony)

Ms. Baez called for a break at 9:50pm. Back from break at 9:57pm.

Expenditures:

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

Mr. Farmer asked about line 0741 Vehicle Rental. Chief Wydra said it went up slightly. He explained how Acme stayed even with their number for over 10 years and last July they had to go out to bid and the number went up, but still lower than others. Mr. farmer asked how much gas we are using. The Chief responded he doesn't know, that's kept in the purchasing budget. Mr. Farmer stated he notices the Police explorer number was down. Chief Wydra answered it was shut down for Covid. Mr. Farmer asked if overtime for communication is being paid with State money. Chief Wydra said it's marked for the dispatch center and is backup in case they go through the State money. Mr. Farmer mentioned radio equipment going up. The Chief said it's getting antiquated and is over 20 years old and as they break down they need to be replaced.

There was then some discussion on the profession/technical line which Mr. farmer stated is up \$60,000. The Chief said he'd have to do a comparison; some things may have gone up. They then went over some lines (page 28 in the book). Ms. Baez asked if next year they could show a column of new expenses. Mr. O'Brien suggested they could get back to this before closing budget.

Mr. Stevens asked about the Bike Unit overtime \$20,000 request. Chief Wydra said they haven't been able to put officers out much otherwise. There was then some bike deployment talk.

After some discussion on this coming out of regular overtime Mr. O'Brien **moved a motion** to zero out the bike overtime line and delete it. The motion was seconded by Mr. Osmanu. Ms. Zaehring asked Finance to speak on this. Finance Director Eatman explained again how finance prefers to keep lines that are zeroed out for 3 consecutive years for accounting purposes. Ms. Zaehring said she thinks they kept other accounts for this reason and should remain consistent. She also thinks the \$20,000 should stay.

Mr. O'Brien said he will take out the delete part to his motion but would still keep the zeroing out. Mr. Osmanu said okay to this.

Ms. Gallagher stated she is not in favor of zeroing this out. She understands the thought that it should come out of regular overtime and that it should be included there but she thinks calling this out in the budget ensures that there's funding for it and that it's a priority and she thinks it's important that they follow priorities.

A vote was taken and the motion passed with 4 opposed (Zaehringer) (Anthony) (Wetmore) (Gallagher)

There was some discussion on the contractual holiday pay.

Mr. O'Brien asked why a 62% jump in Uniform Purchase Allowance for the amount of vacancies they have. He said this is estimated for 10-15 officers and requested that the line is calculated before budget is finished. Mr. O'Brien the said 12459-0611 General Supplies is listed twice for different amounts. Chief Wydra said they shouldn't be the same numbers, they are for different things. One is for central communications and one is for the crime scene unit. Mr. O'Brien asked if they could get an answer from finance on what the correct one should be. Mr. O'Brien asked about the 54% increase in 12461-0611 General Supplies. Chief Wydra explained how he had to transfer \$30,000 so far this year into that line.

Mr. O'Brien asked for info on the duplicate accounts and info on the prof./tech. account.

Ms. Gallagher said she doesn't see the police commission budget anywhere. Ms. Baez said they don't have a budget. Ms. Gallagher pointed out that the new Charter allocates money to the Police Commission and that it should be \$74,302. Mr. O'Brien asked the administration to look into that. Mr. Garce said he would.

There was discussion on last year's number of officers. Chief Wydra said last year they hired 19 and have 12 vacancies, soon 13. There was then discussion on the overtime line based on more officers.

A vote was taken on expenditures as amended and approved with 2 opposed (Sweet) (Osmanu) and 1 abstention (Gallagher)

Ms. Baez announced they would do Animal Control another night.

There being no further business Ms. Baez recessed the meeting at 10:38 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Renta
Clerk of the Council