

**TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING**

May 8, 2023

***To view the recording, please click the following link and observe the instructions when/if prompted:** https://hamden.zoom.us/rec/share/VBh6gAoaVijGb-qJ7jhAXbtt-sgLS4_ND36jDuuwdOGQ5rFPbPD-8erp3RZTNsL8.hmfLpkjP87_yfjPN

This recording was started late and doesn't show the first 2 hours of the meeting.

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A meeting of the Legislative Council was held on Monday, May 8, 2023. This was a hybrid meeting held both in person and electronically via Zoom. The meeting was called to order at 7:14 P.M. by Council President Dominique Baez. The Clerk took the roll followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Ms. Sweet then read the Land Acknowledgement followed by a moment of silence.

Z= On Zoom P= In Person

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dominique Baez (P)	Abdul Osmanu (P)
Katie Kiely (P)	Kristen Zaehring (P)
Justin Farmer (P)	Bob Anthony (P)
Laurie Sweet (P)	Cory O'Brien (P)
Lesley DeNardis (Z)	Jeron Alston (Z) (after roll call)
Sarah Gallagher (P)	Ted Stevens (P)
Paula Irvin (Z)	Betty Wetmore (P)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Adrian Webber

PRESIDING: Dominique Baez, President

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Sean Grace, Chief of Staff; Curtis Eatman, Finance Director; Sue Gruen, Town Attorney; Carol Hazen, Manager of Grants and Capital Projects

PUBLIC INPUT SESSION: There were 6 in person speakers and 3 speakers on Zoom.

(Written comments can be sent to LCpublicinput@hamden.com)

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT: None

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None

REGULAR AGENDA:

1. ARPA resolution adoption

-- Ms. Baez moved a motion to untable this item, seconded by Mr. Farmer and approved with 2 abstentions (Zaehring) (Wetmore) * Note from Clerk, this was not a tabled item.

Ms. Baez moved a motion to fund \$3,000,000 for foundations in Newhall with the caveat that the administration spends up to \$1,000,000 on evaluation and then come back to the Council to spend the other \$2,000,000. The motion was seconded by Mr. Anthony. DISCUSSION: Mr. Anthony said this is government at its worse, this should have been taken care of years ago. He said our #1 investments are our homes and these residents have not been taken care of. He then asked how many residents and what the cost would be because he won't vote for anything without knowing the cost to take care of these residents.

Mr. Farmer said there are 53 homes that they know of that are slowly sinking into the ground and according to the Economic development Corp. it will cost 6.1 million to do the 53 homes. He went on to say that these past issues have not been addressed but they now have the opportunity to do that. His want for the Community Center hasn't changed, but you can't have a community center without a community. Mr. Farmer said the most he could see going towards a community center is 8.3 million.

Ms. Gallagher asked what the \$1,000,000 is for, just assessment? Ms. Baez said she hopes they don't spend the \$1,000,000 on assessment but it's a safeguard, they'll create a plan with it. There was then discussion on the \$1,000,000.

Mr. O'Brien said he would like a time commitment for them coming back, maybe 6 months. Ms. Baez and Mr. Farmer accepted that as a friendly motion.

Ms. Wetmore stated she doesn't think they can put a figure on this until they know how many homes and they have to make sure no one is missed.

Mr. Anthony asked where this plan is. Who is going into the homes to evaluate? Where's the contract for someone to spend this \$1,000,000? How do we put the cart before the horse? He said they should have all this in place.

Mr. Farmer said they got the commitment from the State but does agree that there needs to be a plan. He's hoping that this Council and Administration get this project done. He said if we don't do something now there are certainly people who will be dispossessed.

Mr. O'Brien said we talk about nothing being done for decades, this needs to be done and he strongly supports putting money aside with a timeline for a plan.

Mr. Osmanu said he'd like to make a motion to have reports sent every 2 months in that 6 month timeframe. He said he'd also like to make a friendly for 3.5 million. Ms. Baez announced her and Mr. farmer will accept that friendly for 3.5 million \$1,000,000 for evaluation and 2.5 for repairs with a 6 month timeline for the plan and a report every 2 months for a total of 3 reports for 6 months.

Mr. Stevens stated he thinks the reports are too frequent and will slow things down and thinks it's an unnecessary administration burden.

Mr. Osmanu stated he'd like to make a friendly to have a monthly report. (there was no response to this)

Ms. Wetmore said she'd like to offer a friendly amendment of 5 million. Ms. Baez did not accept it.

A vote was taken on the motion of 3.5 million (with friendly amendments) and it passed with 3 opposed (Wetmore) (Anthony) (DeNardis)

Ms. Baez moved a motion to fund 11.5 into a Community Campus with the caveat of \$1,000,000 for preconstruction planning & design and within 6 months have a plan for approval and give reports regularly in that 6 month period. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kiely. DISCUSSION: Ms. Wetmore said she can't believe we'll put the money here but not the residents. Mr. Alston stated he cannot support 11. Ms. Kiely stated this should not be an either or for foundations or a Community Center. There was then a lengthy discussion.

Mr. Anthony said what they should do is take capital out of the budget and make it net neutral and still do a campus. He said he needs to see everything dollar and cents.

Mr. Farmer offered a motion of \$8,000,000. Ms. Zaehring seconded the motion. DISCUSSION: There was a lengthy discussion. Ms. Gallagher stated she is concerned with just saying "assessment" and would like to see that report include a staffing plan, site plan and design, budget and timing, operating and maintenance budget, capital improvement schedule, programming budgets and sources, and a developing and planning schedule/timeline.

Mr. O'Brien stated he's not in favor of lowering the overall amount. Mr. Osmanu said he's not sure if this is a friendly amendment but he wants to make sure we're in discussion with the D.O.T. about traffic calming initiatives along Dixwell which has been one of his major concerns for less abled bodied folks, older folks and even younger folks crossing that street.

There was a lengthy discussion. Mr. Alston stated he wants to earmark as much as possible for this project. Ms. Zaehring said she would be in favor of using funds to investigate but doesn't want to sell Town assets to fund this.

Ms. Sweet offered a friendly amendment of \$10,000,000 to Mr. Farmer's \$8,000,000. Both Mr. Farmer and Ms. Zaehring as the seconder accepted the friendly motion of \$10,000,000.

Lengthy discussion.

Ms. Baez then stated the motion on the floor is for \$10,000,000 for the community campus, subject to the following: up to \$1,000,000 to be expended for pre-construction planning and design, within 6 months of this approval an initial plan must be presented to the Council for approval and release of additional funds. It includes the 7 points made by Ms. Gallagher which Ms. Gallagher then read:

That plan would include, but not limited to, community engagement and feedback. 2.
Two, pre-developments in development staffing plan that could include the internal team, the development consultants, architect, general contractor, and others as identified. Three, site plan and design could include neighborhood impact studies, feasibility studies, impact on other town services. Four, development, budget and financing, including the costs associated with the development of the project, and planned sources, timing and status of funding. Five, multi-year operating and maintenance budgets that can include any revenue or expenses, as well as it a capital improve improvement and maintenance schedule. Six, preliminary program and services budgets that could include source and status of MOU's or other agreements in place to provide services or programming. Seven, the projected development schedule and timeline.

Mr. Anthony asked how much many is left in ARPA. Mr. Osmanu gave a rundown of everything allocated so far and then said \$2,600,000 if the \$10,000,000 passes.

A vote was taken and it passed with 5 opposed (Anthony) (Zaehringer) (Wetmore) (Alston) (Stevens)

Ms. Baez said that was an amendment to her proposal which made that new motion \$10,000,000. She took a vote on the motion as amended and it passed with 4 opposed (Zaehringer) (Alston) (Anthony) (Wetmore) and 1 abstention (Stevens)

Mr. Anthony moved a motion to apply \$2,600,000 to all capital improvements in the 2023-2024 budget. The motion was seconded by Ms. Zaehringer. DISCUSSION: Mr. Grace stated that the capital isn't included in the budget and doesn't get included in the mil rate. Mr. Anthony stated then he'll apply it to the capital plan. Mr. Alston stated he thinks there are certain restrictions on the ARPA funds and wonders what they can't be used for to offset the operating budget. Ms. Hazen said they cannot be used to offset general operating expenses. Mr. Alston said he understands what Mr. Anthony wants but didn't think they could.

Mr. Alston then asked if the original 11.5 motion was removed. He said he thought that was the initial motion and then a secondary motion was made. Ms. Baez stated there is no motion on the floor, they voted on the amendment.

Mr. Osmanu moved a motion to add \$5,000 to Hamden Alliance for Trees for the program that they sent us documentation on. The motion was seconded by Ms. Baez. DISCUSSION: Mr. O'Brien asked if we were getting a donation for this. Mr. Grace said yes, several hundred

thousand which would be difficult for them to spend over the course of many, many years of planting trees. He also made the point that HAT, he doesn't believe, is a non-profit but if the Council deems it they could certainly take the advice but can not give them the money. Mr. O'Brien said he appreciates all they do in beautifying the town but knew we were getting that significant donation dedicated to this purpose so he thinks they could find another use for the \$5,000 so he won't support this.

A vote was taken and the item passed with 5 in favor (Baez) (Sweet) (Osmanu) (Gallagher) (Farmer) – 3 opposed (Alston) (Stevens) (O'Brien) and 5 abstentions (Kiely) (Zaehring) (Anthony) (Wetmore) (Irvin)

Mr. Stevens moved a motion to add \$200,000 for feasibility study of sewers on the northern part of Whitney Avenue, north of Mount Carmel Avenue. The motion was seconded by Mr. Farmer. DISCUSSION: Mr. Steves said we can either cut expenses or raise revenues and raising revenues is the better long term tax improvement situation but we don't have a lot of building area to improve the grand list. He said the biggest untapped area is the northern end of town on Whitney Avenue, and it's a commercial corridor near Quinnipiac, but there's no sewers there and everybody is on septic which limits the density that you can build. The idea is this money would fund a study to test the feasibility. Mr. Stevens went on to say how then in the future we could better position ourselves and apply for grants and state funds. Mr. Osmanu asked how he arrived at that number. Mr. Stevens said it was the number Director White gave him. Mr. White stated it was based on similar studies. There was then a lengthy discussion with some discussion of covid funds. Ms. Gallagher stated she was concerned this was not the right bucket.

A vote was taken and it passed with 4 opposed (Osmanu) (Gallagher) (DeNardis) (Alston) and 1 abstention (Farmer)

Ms. Baez announces they aren't done and have 2.4 left and will be back on the 15th.

The meeting was recessed at 9:55 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Renta
Clerk of the Council