

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

**October 2, 2023**

**\*To view the recording, please click the following link and observe the instructions when/if prompted:**

<https://hamden.zoom.us/rec/share/pCxFRig9LGwo8s0Oxzl2Rouzud50bMGEUY5Bd5E17RsnC0Lhxnsr3cZHCczji0o.xWdmS1Vs32hRuTP2>

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A meeting of the Legislative Council was held on Monday, October 2, 2023. This was a hybrid meeting held both in person and electronically via Zoom. After a Caucus the meeting was called to order at 7:41 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)	Bob Anthony (P)
Katie Kiely (P)	Jeron Alston (Z)
Justin Farmer (P)	Abdul Osmanu (P)
Laurie Sweet (P)	Adrian Webber (Z)
Ted Stevens (P)	Sarah Gallagher (P)
Cory O'Brien (Z)	Lesley DeNardis (Z)
Kristen Zaehringer (P)	

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Betty Wetmore; Paula Irvin

**PRESIDING:** Dominique Baez, President

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Sean Grace, Chief of Staff; Curtis Eatman, Finance Director; Sue Gruen, Town Attorney; Erik Johnson, Economic Development Director; Carol Hazen, Director of Grants & Capital Projects

**PUBLIC INPUT SESSION:** There was 1 written comment submitted which can be read here: <https://www.hamden.com/DocumentCenter/View/9047/10-02-2023>

(Written comments can be sent to [LCpublicinput@hamden.com](mailto:LCpublicinput@hamden.com))

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT:** President Pro Tempore Farmer said he wanted to acknowledge

that next Monday is Indigenous Peoples Day. He himself, Councilor Osmanu, and Councilor Sweet were at the acknowledge at Sleeping Giant where there's new placards sharing some of the history of the Quinnipiac people, and it was a great opportunity to visit the trails and honor those who land we are on.

President Baez announced the Fair Rent Commission reports will now be going on the Human Services Committee in writing going forth.

**REPORTS OF BOARDS AND DEPARTMENTS:** None

**REPORTS OF COUNCIL LIAISONS:** None

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** None

**APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES:** None ready

**CONSENT CALENDAR:** Mr. Farmer requested numbers 4 and 5 be pulled from consent. After pulling those items from consent Ms. Baez requested a motion for approval. Moved by Ms. Kiely, seconded by Ms. Baez and approved unanimously.

- 1. Refund of property and motor vehicle taxes collected prior to July 1, 2023 – (19) totaling \$6,886.47**
- 2. Refund of property taxes collected between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024 – Overpayments on current grand list - (8) totaling \$20,455.07**
- 3. Refund of motor vehicle taxes collected between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024 – Overpayments on current grand list – (67) totaling \$13,124.12**

**REGULAR AGENDA:**

**Items pulled from the Consent Calendar:**

**4. Order amending the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year Budget (Town Clerk) \$20,000**

-- Moved by Ms. Baez, seconded by Ms. Kiely. DISCUSSION: Ms. Baez explained this money comes from State revenue to order laptops for the clerks of the commissions to better communicate. She said they currently use their own devices with different capabilities and we do not compensate them. She said we need to give them technology rather than ask them to buy technology.

Mr. Farmer asked how many laptops. Mr. Murphy said 1 for each clerk so he thinks 15. Mr. Farmer asked what if you add more clerks? Mr. Murphy said they would have to reevaluate. Mr. Farmer said the only other thing he wants to say is that if they approve this, they, as the Council have to be cognizant of costs moving forward. He said they're making a commitment for this small amount but there's going to be an upkeep of devices and that's probably every 5 years.

Mr. Stevens said he'll be voting no on this, it doesn't seem like the best way to manage clerks. He said if we have 15 clerks for 30 something commissions doing a few hours a month and then each getting their own computer on top of that, he'd rather see something like a pool of computers that they check out and use, or we have fewer clerks that each

staff a few more commissions. This is not the wisest use of money to him. Mr. Murphy mentioned how there are multiple commissions and some happening at the same time.

Ms. Gallagher mentioned how commission clerks was a hot topic during Charter Revision and how they now have Town emails. She asked if this would allow them to access that email and be secure on that computer. Mr. Murphy said yes, this allows them a way to access that either remotely or on network.

A vote was taken and the item passed with 1 opposed (Stevens) and 1 abstention (Webber)

## **5. Order amending the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year Budget (Legislative Council) \$50,000**

-- Ms. Baez said this takes State revenue and using it for a person to help us transition from Ms. Renta onto a new clerk, as well as to train all the clerks for the boards and commissions, as well as helping put Civic Clerk and Civic Optimize into place.

Ms. Zaehringer said she understands the purpose but will vote against this, as she did throughout the budget season, as it creates a new position, even though temporary.

Mr. Anthony asked if Ms. Renta was the only one in the office. Ms. Baez said Ms. Renta is the only Clerk for the Council, but Ms. Lion is also in the office, but does not clerk their meetings. Mr. Anthony asked if Ms. Renta's position is a union position. Ms. Baez said yes. Mr. Anthony asked how they can approve more money up and beyond what she's making to fill the position. Ms. Baez said it's not to fill her position, it's to make sure that all the clerk's for the boards and commissions have her information, have the new Civic Clerk processes and we're able to put that new information on the clerk we eventually hire. Ms. Baez said because it's a union position we are not able to hire while she's in that position. We have to wait for her to leave and then we'll hire after that. After that there's going to be a gap in between the 2 clerks and this person is not a clerk. This person is a technology person who will understand the clerk process, and then be able to train us, as well as all the boards and commission clerks, and the next clerk that becomes our administrator.

There was a brief discussion about contracts, job description and moving up.

Ms. Gallagher asked if this is more around the implementation of Civic Clerk rather than Ms. Renta. Mr. Murphy said yes, and a collaboration of taking work she does and helping create the digital process and create a document. After some discussion on this Ms. Gallagher asked if they'd see this in the budget next year as a position. Mr. Murphy said no. Ms. Gallagher asked as a stipend? Mr. Murphy said no.

Mr. Farmer asked how long this was for and if this was enough money to train. Mr. Murphy explained how this wasn't just for replacing Ms. Renta, but is both to help the administration and I.T. in particular roll out the new software and get it trained. Mr. Farmer asked who will be the keeper of the knowledge. Mr. Murphy said the training materials will be created with himself and with Civic Optimize for those products. For everything else the current process for the Council Administrator is actually creating training materials which will be adopted and kind of translate into the new process. Mr. Farmer asked who this person will report to. Mr. Murphy said

the Administrator. Ms. Baez said they'd be a Council employee and since she doesn't work for the Town she designates Mr. Murphy. Mr. farmer asked when this person would start. Mr. Murphy said as soon as they can fill it. There was then some discussion on hardware.

Ms. Zaehringer asked if Civic Plus offered training. Mr. Murphy said yes, but it does not include our process flow and things like that.

Mr. O'Brien said this is a flexible tool and we do a lot of unique things here in Hamden so we need to make sure it's optimized. He strongly supports this, it's needed.

Mr. Farmer asked if there is a need why don't we have a full-time person. Mr. Murphy said he has the expertise to do a lot of this and he's been very flexible in terms of getting a lot of this work done and getting a lot of this implemented and he can do it but it's not his only function. Mr. Farmer asked isn't it I.T.'s job. Mr. Murphy said yes and no. He said I.T. is continuing to work on rolling out hardware, etc. on top of every day to day desktop support they provide.

A vote was taken and the item passed with 3 opposed (Zaehringer) (DeNardis) (Anthony)

### **Original Regular Agenda Items**

1. Appointment of Amber Patrice Woodward to the Library Board for a term to expire January 31, 2029 - **Amend to expiration date of January 31, 2024**

-- Ms. Baez said this item needed to be amended to reflect a correct expiration date. She then moved a motion to amend this to an expiration date of 2024. The motion was seconded by Mr. Osmanu. After a brief discussion on staggered terms a vote was taken and the amendment was approved with 3 abstentions (Farmer) (Osmanu) (Anthony)

Ms. Baez called for a break at 8:45pm. Out of break and back in session at 9:00pm

2. Amendment to order authorizing the expenditure of Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (aka American Rescue Plan Act Funds)

-- Moved by Ms. Kiely, seconded by Mr. O'Brien. DISCUSSION: Ms. Baez explained these are for dollars not yet encumbered in their last amendment. Mr. Johnson then explained how after many conversations this is the recommendation to spend down the balance.

List of recommendations can be viewed here:

<https://www.hamden.com/DocumentCenter/View/9088/Order-Amending-expenditure-of-coronavirus-ARPA-funds>

Ms. Baez mentioned this item was going to be tabled after discussion.

Mr. Osmanu said in looking at this he sees \$20,000 for community participatory budgeting program and it says it's tough funding to evaluate the development of a participatory budgeting process within Town. He knows participatory budgeting to be

something that could take place in a myriad of ways so what exactly are we talking about when we say funding to evaluate? Mr. Johnson said he understands this is an initiative that came from Council so they've identified resources to explore what that would mean and bring somebody on board to go through that process with them, and this only would be used to establish a process that would be recommended to Council and the administration for adoption.

Mr. Farmer asked about the Dolly Parton Imagination Library. Mr. Stevens explained how they mail a book to every child in Hamden under the age of 5 every month to all participating communities.

Mr. Johnson went over the timeline of ARPA dollars saying they have to be out to contract by 2024 and by 2026 they have to spend all the dollars.

There was some discussion on participatory budgeting. There was also discussion on the process of how things get done.

Mr. Anthony stated he thought they approved the last of ARPA a few months ago. Mr. Johnson said there's 2 million left. Ms. Zaehring asked if they moved forward with any of the previously approved items like the fire apparatus. Mr. Johnson said they've moved forward with that but nothing else.

There was some discussion on compliance and a project manager, as well as discussion on capital. Ms. Gallagher asked for a list of PW purchases. There was then discussion on community engaging funding. Ms. Gallagher asked if the Newhall Structural Repair was in addition to what they approved. Mr. Johnson said yes.

Mr. Johnson explained the 10% factor that will apply to all currently approved projects. Ms. Gallagher asked if all previous allocations were being reduced by 10%. Mr. Johnson said yes, he believes so. Ms. Gallagher said she wasn't aware of that and doesn't agree with it and wants them to rethink where the 10% comes from so it doesn't hurt what was already approved. Ms. Gallagher then asked what the Youth Mentorship Program means. Mr. Johnson said he believes Council implemented that. Ms. Gallagher stated she's concerned with the number of consultants in there and she's also concerned with how long it's taking to implement what's already been approved. Ms. Baez stated how the top 6 items were Council suggestions and the titles and amounts were given to the administration.

Ms. Sweet said she'd like PB funded through ARPA because it would be wildly unpopular if they roll out a program that they don't have the financial backing on. She said she has some suggestions but doesn't know if they want to slice and dice it tonight or table it. Ms. Sweet then asked if there was a timeline for the crumbling foundations. Mr. Johnson said they're in discussion with an entity and once negotiated a contract will come before the Council. Mr. Stevens asked where the money for a consultant is coming from. Mr. Johnson said from the 10%. Mr. Stevens said he'd rather see it as an item rather than part of the 10%.

Ms. Kiely asked if there was a way to identify if there are costs embedded and where. Mr. Johnson said in their original resolution that they approved a line that said project related administration costs were included but at the time those costs were never quantified so you approved the Town to act and spend money to implement those things and that includes everything from brand of procurement, negotiating with the

fire department, finding the right vendors, and somebody's doing that.

He said what they've tried to do is put a number to that because then you could actually create a transparent budget that says this is what's going to procurement, this is what's going to finance, this is going to Economic Development and Engineering, etc. What we've tried to do is make sure that we're transparent in terms of how those costs are being delivered by putting a factor to it, but you've already said we should do it so those dollars have to come from somewhere.

There was a lengthy discussion ARPA discussion and more discussion on the 10% and discussion on administrative costs.

Mr. O'Brien said if there are reasonable administrative costs he understands that and is on board with it but his question is what those administrative costs are going for. He said he wants to make sure that they're not reimbursing the Town for any administrative costs. Mr. Johnson said he doesn't believe they're envisioning reimbursing costs to themselves for already existing fixed costs that the work they're proposing is all specifically related to administration and compliance associated with the ARPA activities being proposed. Mr. O'Brien said he wants to be clear that it is the intent of the administration and if they have to go back and modify the resolution he'd be happy to talk with the Town Attorney to make sure that's done because this is a large number and he understands the hesitancy and the concern of the administration to make sure you have the appropriate budget to implement these large projects, but what he doesn't want to see is any of that money go to offset any fixed costs. He'd like to see a detailed cost of what they're envisioning. Mr. Johnson said he fully respects Mr. O'Brien's comment but he also wants them to be mindful that this is a lot of work and that this isn't a cost that occurs over one year, but costs that are occurring over a period of 3 years and they're endeavoring to be as transparent as possible about how those costs will be applied. Lastly, if you're asking people to do a lot of work that is complicated and is being done in addition to the responsibilities that they currently have they should be fairly compensated for doing that work.

Ms. Baez moved a motion to table this item. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kiely and approved with 1 opposed (Farmer) and 1 abstention (Osmanu)

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:27 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Renta  
Clerk of the Council