



BOARD OF ALDERMEN
CITY OF SHELTON
PUBLIC HEARING ON THE BUDGET
TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2025, 7 P.M.
SHELTON CITY HALL AUDITORIUM, 54 HILL STREET, SHELTON CT
Live-Streamed at www.cityofshelton.org

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Alderman Anglace called the Special Board of Aldermen Public Hearing Meeting on to order at 7 p.m. in the auditorium at Shelton City Hall. All those present stood and pledged allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Roll Call

Alderman John F. Anglace, Jr., President – Present
Alderman Eric McPherson, Vice President – Present
Alderman Lorenzo Durante – Absent
Alderman Porter McKinnon – Present
Alderman Anthony Simonetti – Present
Alderman Bernie Simons – Present
Alderman Cris Balamaci – Present
Alderman Benjamin Perry – Present

Kellie Vazzano, Administrative Assistant to the Mayor – Present via Zoom

Alderman Anglace: Just a few housekeeping items. The notice of the Public Hearing was published in the *Connecticut Post* on May 4, 2025. We welcome you all to the Public Hearing on the Budget. We have a few guidelines.

- Any person wishing to speak shall sign up with the clerk who is seated at the table.
- The names will be called in the order received.
- The Superintendent of Schools is given the courtesy of being the first speaker and then elected officials who are in the audience who wish to speak.
- The public will be called in the order of sign in.
- Please limit your comments to five (5) minutes per speaker. Alderman Simonetti is our timekeeper.
- We are here to listen and we do not respond and we do not take questions.
- After being recognized by the clerk, please come to the podium and state your name address for the record and then let us hear what you have to say.
- Comments should be directed to the Fiscal year 2025-2026 budget.
- Please direct your comments to the Chair and refrain from inter-audience dialogue and applauding after each speaker.

- Please show respect for the process and each speaker’s views.
- Members of the public are expected to practice appropriate etiquette by being quiet, observant and respectful. Disruptive attendees may be removed from verbally participating. Disrespectful comments will be stricken from the record.
- If the auditorium fills up and there is standing room only, any person who wants to watch and listen can do so in the hall or Room 104 where it is broadcast on the television.
- Breaks are at the discretion of the Chair.

1. BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026

CITY OF SHELTON

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING PURSUANT TO

SECTION 7.6 OF THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF SHELTON, NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN WILL CONDUCT A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE PROPOSED BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 ON TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2025 AT 7:00 PM IN THE AUDITORIUM AT SHELTON CITY HALL, 54 HILL STREET, SHELTON, CT 06484.

ALL PERSONS WHO HAVE AN INTEREST THEREIN MAY APPEAR AND BE HEARD IN RELATION THERETO. THE PROPOSED BUDGET IS POSTED AT WWW.CITYOFSHELTON.ORG. WRITTEN COMMENTS MAY ALSO BE SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN TO BE RECEIVED PRIOR TO THE PUBLIC HEARING TO BE INCLUDED IN THE MINUTES.

ANTICIPATED REVENUES

Government Grants	9,878,805
Local Taxes	115,568,860
Other Local Revenue	14,331,882
General Fund Surplus	0

TOTAL ANTICIPATED REVENUES **139,779,547**

PROPOSED EXPENDITURES

Administrative Office	777,167
Employees Resources	9,043,564
Legislative	176,001
Board of Ethics	600

Elections	212,532
Inland/Wetlands	159,136
Economic Development Commission	65,300
Economic Development - SEDC	125,000
Planning & Zoning	722,979*
Recreation	2,156,408.
Probate Court	16,000
Elected/Appointed Officials	18,450
Conservation Commission	88,540
City/Town Clerk	545,775
Public Employees Appeals Board	200
Senior Center	561,765
Zoning Appeals Board	23,330
Corporation Counsel	267,270
Public Safety	133,816
EMS Commission	125,463
Fire Marshal	373,794
Animal Control	451,413
Fire Department	1,298,540
Police Department	8,873,108
Youth Service	245,336
Public Health	338,420
Building Department	456,178
Highways & Bridges	4,234,069
Road Repairs	100,000
Public Works Director	81,063
Engineering	461,527
Tree Warden	135,204
Recycling Program	67,302
Sanitation	3,532,087
Bus Transportation	3,948,000
Library	1,319,433
Debt Service	4,752,000
Utilities	2,928,250
Building Maintenance	1,916,644
Management Information Services	611,418
Assessor	648,146
Tax Collector	377,718
Purchasing	394,000
Public Risk Management	2,229,753
Accounting	763,965

Community Development	94,969
Miscellaneous	2,517,000
Outside Agency Contributions	426,087
Contingency	175,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURES - CITY DEPARTMENTS	<u>58,984,720</u>

**TOTAL EXPENDITURES - BOARD OF
EDUCATION** **80,809,827**

**TOTAL PROPOSED
EXPENDITURES** **139,779,547**

We would like to extend the courtesy of starting the hearing off by recognizing the Superintendent of Schools, Ken Saranich.

Ken Saranich, Superintendent of Schools, Shelton, CT

Thank you very much for this opportunity. I come tonight as the Superintendent of Schools, the proud superintendent of the Shelton Public School System. As many of you know, I wear many hats in this great City. I am a resident here for now 20 years, married a Shelton High School grad. The two of us produced three proud high school graduates from Shelton High School and most importantly I am proud to consider you all colleagues and friends as we work on this process together. The thing that I reflect on the most and what I want to say to all of you is that I think people lose sight of – although you are all elected officials – you are in essence volunteers for this position. None of you get paid for the hard work you do with putting the budget together. You don’t get paid for the long hours that it takes to work on this budget for our City and for our school system and many of you don’t get paid for the countless meetings that take place in between all the meetings as we get this work done. I want to say one important thing to all of you – Thank you! Thank you for all the work that you have done for us and you continue to do for our City. Last year you made some really powerful changes in the best interest of the taxpayers as well as the students and we have benefitted from them. I want to make sure that you are recognized for them and thank you for the work you have done. I ask you for us to continue that relationship as we go on to this next year, finding a way that we can work together in the best interest of all. When I thought about coming up here tonight, I thought about this school year and every year with the school district I think of a common theme or a motto that I use as a focal point for the year. I did this last summer, before July 1, I had the motto of what was going to happen for this year. This year’s motto was “You are not alone”. We had a very powerful convocation in August with the teachers where the kids performed for us and I sent a message to the staff that you are not alone and we do the work together. I think that message goes to you as well. I want to remind you that you are not alone and as you are meant to make those hard decisions in the best interest of the City and in the best interest of

our school system, I want you to know that I will be there to support you as well as the rest of us, knowing that you will make those decisions and we will all be best for them. Again, thank you and I am hoping for the best in all the discussions that we had and it will be fruitful when you make that decision a week from now for our school system and for our City. Thank you.

Kate Kutash, 275 Beardsley Road, Shelton, CT

As you know, I am now serving my seventh term on the Shelton Board of Education and I am retired after a 43 year teaching career in Stratford. First, I would like to apologize for missing the joint meeting last month with A&T, I was out of state for several days welcoming my first grandchild. I would like to thank you all for your cooperation last year by seriously taking the needs of the Board of Education into consideration and granting us increased funding over the Mayor's recommendations. This year, the Mayor's recommendation for the Board of Education is \$1 million more than we were granted last year. However, this still leaves us almost \$3 million short of our request if this indeed is what we are granted, the results of which can be devastating to the school system and could possibly, but not necessarily, include such things as multiple layoffs, increased class sizes and reduced resources with which to educate Shelton's children. In addition, the Mayor did not include recommendations to fund reserve accounts that we received last year that you guys set up for Special Education and insurance. As you know, we will need to draw on both of those accounts this year to keep to our budget. I implore the members of the Board of Aldermen to again increase funding to the Board of Education over the Mayor's recommendation and to again fund the reserve accounts that are so important to us this year. You demonstrated last year that you understand the importance of education in Shelton and I hope you can show the taxpayers that again. Thank you.

Fred Tagg, 68 Wheeler Street, Shelton, CT

Good evening. Last year I stood before you and spoke. I would also like to thank the Aldermen for their service to our great City. I would also like to thank them for listening to use and responding positively to our pleas for the funding the children of our community desperately needed last year. Again, thank you. I stand before you again this year for your continued cooperation. I have been a maintenance trade worker for 18 years in the school system and the father of three that have gone through the school system. From my observations, we are blessed to have an amazing staff. That includes not just teachers and administrators, bus driver's, monitors, paraprofessionals, custodians, security guards, food service personnel, counselors, librarians, maintenance workers, the City street department and all their work that helps us out, Parks & Rec that does a great job in grooming our schools and make them look great for our kids. Last but not least, the PTO, the volunteers that are multi-talented, supporting the different groups of athletes and clubs in so many different extracurricular activities. It is awe-inspiring what all these collective individuals bring to the table. They are constantly going above and beyond the call of

duty. We are blessed by all these unsung heroes that reach into their own pockets and, more importantly, they do it from the heart. Do you know what it takes to make heroes? Besides good parents, there is a great education team. If Shelton wants to continue to make heroes as they have in the past and raising good, productive Americans, it actually starts with you. You are the first step in funding our schools properly and we do appreciate it when you come through. By my observation, I personally think that the current Board of Education department directors and superintendent are doing their best to keep the costs down. Inflation and contractual obligations are what they are and need to be addressed accordingly. Hard numbers are hard numbers, not to be ignored, it does not go away. Our Special Education program may seem costly, but that is a challenge our community morally needs to address. If we don't take care of the most vulnerable, we fail as a society. Please fund our schools, keep Shelton great. Thank you.

Dave Spinetti, 26 Saranor Road, Shelton

I got the fortunate free time in my schedule. At bedtime I have a 5, 3 and 1 year old, so I was able to attend the joint meeting with A&T and a couple of other meetings and you will see me more as the years progress. We are just finishing up our first kindergarten year. It has been great. The difference in talking with parents last year to this year just needs to be echoed and a huge thank you. Last year we weren't here, we were in SIS and there was outrage, there was sadness. The end of the year for all of our students not going the way that it should. They were almost at the finish line. We are not restricting teachers and kind of doing away. Things were put in place. The reserve accounts, the budgetary needs and the Aldermen have gone above and beyond. You have succeeded in the task, kind of dissenting with the Mayor and saying no we are going to take care of it this year. I implore you again to not forget that merely a year ago we dropped the ball. The funding needs were an emergent claim. While many of the comments here are directed to the Board of Ed budget, I want to kind of call attention to the slightly larger issue of the City's healthcare budget. As someone who kind of manages a household budget, I hate my unknowns. The variable cost of the healthcare budget has seemed to bite us more than it has saved us. It has always been that thing that well it could pay off and we could save, but as a taxpayer and as a lifelong resident of Shelton, I can't help but feel a stable known, maybe slightly more expensive initially on the books costs, feels a little bit better than our variable cover ourselves in the 11th hour, set up a bunch of reserve accounts this year, maybe not next year kind of budget. Things to consider, food for thought. As someone who has had the pleasure of sitting through the A&T meeting where we went line by line by line, there didn't seem to be very much fluff in the Board of Ed budget. It was all things that Mr. Saranich was able to answer and I, as a parent, my kindergartener utilizes Wit and Wisdom, utilizes Eureka Math and was excited today to announce the buses at Booth Hill School because he has read the One School, One Book and was able to answer questions. Overall, with the budget of last year that was approved, the \$79.8 million budget and the reserve accounts that have been utilized to cover the cost, the \$3.3 million extra, it comes to an effective Board of Ed budget of last year of \$83.1 million.

Thank you. The ask for the Board of Ed this year is a mere 0.8% more than that. I don't know about you, but my costs raised a lot more than 0.8 from last year to this year. The budget is to just maintain.

Melissa Addario, 7 Hazel Court, Shelton, CT

Good evening. I am the proud mother of two children at Booth Hill Elementary. One is in 3rd grade and one in 1st grade. I am here tonight as a parent, resident and advocate for our schools. First, I want to thank you for the support in the funding our schools received this last fiscal year. I also recognize the difficult job you face in balancing the City's needs with the financial realities. Tonight, I respectfully urge you to fully fund the Board of Education's proposed \$83.7 million budget and reject the \$3 million cut proposed by Mayor Lauretti. Our school district is not asking for luxuries. This budget reflects essential needs, not wants. A \$3 million cut would result in larger class sizes as we are asking for four and a half full-time positions, fewer critical support staff in areas such as Special Education, academic intervention. With the loss of over half of our Title 1 funding means that money will need to come from the budget. Let's consider we need to retain two teachers for English as a Second Language, two Math specialists and two Interventionists. Rising transportation costs are up to \$200,000 due to contractual obligations and equipment and repairs. There are also Special Education costs, and contractual increases for certified and non-certified staff. Mayor Lauretti believes that our reserve will offset these costs, but the district is already using those funds to avoid going over budget this year and there is no money allocated for a reserve in the Mayor's proposed budget for next year, essentially eliminating the reserve account altogether. How are we expected to do more with less? We must also think long term. Quality schools raise property values, attracts families and helps build a stronger, more vibrant Shelton. Under-funding our schools might bring short-term tax relief, but it threatens our City's growth and stability. As a taxpayer, I understand the importance of fiscal responsibility, but our children should not bear the burden of that balance. Education is not an expense, it is an investment. Please support our students, our teachers and our community by fully funding the Board of Education's request. Let's give our children the tools they need to thrive. When we empower our children, we lay the foundation for the town of Shelton to forage for generations. Thank you for your time and your thoughtful consideration.

Alderman Anglace asked if there is anyone else from the public who wishes to speak.

I want to make one comment to this audience. Your comments were quality comments. I think our motto can, last year and hopefully this year, is to do what is right. That is what we did last year and I think it worked out really good for everybody. Beyond that, there are good things happening. The Mayor and the Superintendent are, not buddy-buddy, but they are talking. As long as they keep talking, good things are going to happen. There are a number of issues that they have talked about and, I know you are the inside group and probably already know, they are looking into regionalization of Special

Education. That is a big undertaking. Last year it was an example. This wasn't a good thing because we saved money – it is a good thing because the children involved came out with a better result. The effort made those children do better in school and do better with their families. I think that is the key. It isn't all about the money. You see it because you are involved every day, but some of us who are not involved every day do not see it. I think the Mayor is mentioning that it is all about the kids. They are doing good things for the kids and we are going to do our best to do our best to work with them. I am asking one last time if anyone else wishes to speak. Hearing no one, I want to thank you everyone for coming. We appreciate your efforts in working with us.

ADJOURNMENT:

Alderman Simons MOVED to adjourn.

Seconded by Alderman Simonetti.

A voice vote was taken and motion passed unanimously (7-0). The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Donna Fonda

Donna Fonda
Acting Clerk, Board of Aldermen

DATE APPROVED _____ BY: _____
Mayor Mark A. Lauretti