Call to Order

Aldermanic President John Anglace called the budget workshop of the Board of Aldermen to order at 7:40 p.m. All those present rose and pledged allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Roll Call

Alderman John F. Anglace, Jr., President – present
Alderman Lynne Farrell - present
Alderman John “Jack” Finn – present
Alderman Stanley Kudej – present
Alderman Noreen McGorty - present
Alderman John P. Papa – excused
Alderman Eric McPherson – present
Alderman Anthony Simonetti - present

Bundle Billing

Alderman Anglace called on Mike Chaffee and Joe Laucella from Echo Hose to answer questions regarding bundle billing.

Mike Chaffee stated, that up to this point when we have an ambulance call we have a medic that goes with us, Valley EMS sends us their portion of what we need to send to the insurance companies and we bundle bill it. That’s what bundle billing is. And then the insurance company, usually it’s Medicare/Medicaid, they send us back what they allow to be billed and VEMS gets (inaudible). The city subsidizes the program because it’s a reduced amount that goes to VEMS and they pay them a portion so they can reduce it.

Alderman McGorty stated, we started this about four or five years ago. The city was receiving a lot of complaints from folks, mainly seniors, because they were receiving two bills. We did a lot of homework and worked together and we came up with bundle billing so in essence the seniors would be billed once and would be covered and to supplement that, since the ALS portion or VEMS is significantly reduced, we created bundle billing so the City of Shelton would participate monetarily whatever the number is each year. This year we have a shortfall. Echo Hose has been working with us each year to supplement because we at the EMS Commission have asked for an amount at the tune of $80,000 for the last two years, might be three, but around that amount and the mayor has cut that amount to $45,000 and we have used all of that and Echo Hose was financially able
to do that for us. In preparing for the budget next year Echo Hose has made it clear that they can not continue to do so. VEMS is here to ask for the full amount of money, $80,000, the same amount as last year. This is definitely a program we want to continue and I can share with you why; because this directly impacts seniors and the dollar amount could be $500, $600. Prior to bundle billing, many of the sentiments were, “I’m not going to call the ambulance. I need to pay for my groceries. I’m just not going to call the ambulance. I’ll drive myself.” This is why we instituted the bundle billing. It’s a great program. I fully support it and Echo Hose has fully supported it.

Alderman Anglace stated, so the problem remains, Echo Hose funded part of this program and you are not willing to do that this year or you are unable to do it this year, correct?

Joe Laucella stated, by regulation, and counsel is looking into this, we can’t do it by law. It violates the federal anti-kick back statute, for the ambulance corp. to pay VEMS.

Alderman Anglace stated, there’s three parties involved. You are still going to provide the ambulance service, VEMS is going to provide the paramedic service. You want bundle billing to continue. The city wants it to continue and VEMS wants it to continue. What we have to do is get all three of us in the same room and work this thing out and see how it’s going to go. It appears at this point that we can’t talk money. We have to talk about how it’s going to be done and what it’s going to cost. We have to get the mayor involved as well. And then we can work it out and then we can fund it. So we won’t fund it in the budget but we’ll work it out and make an arrangement as soon as possible.

**SIX YEAR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

Alderman Anglace stated, during the budget process we received some comments regarding the six-year capital outlay. One letter we received stated, “We’d like to see the Board of Aldermen approve a capital improvement plan and spend the money as approved in each of the six years.”

Alderman Anglace explained that the Board of Aldermen historically accepts the six-year capital improvement requests submitted by the departments and forwarded by the mayor. They accept it in principal without making a firm commitment on what they are going to spend it on because things change as the year goes on. He believed $42 million dollars was involved with the Perry Hill School, $25 million for the renovations of the high school. He explained that these things never even came under the six year capital year improvement outlay. They were requested by the Board of Education and through cooperation they went through referendum on it and the voters approved it. He pointed out that nobody picked up on the fact that the Board of Education requested the same exact capital improvement wish list this year that they requested last year.

**INLAND WETLANDS**

Alderman Anglace stated, Inland Wetlands is asking for $6,000 in each year for the next six years. This is regarding a vehicle and they said it’s in good shape but at the end of six
years the vehicle will have completed 16 years of service. Doesn’t look like it’s anything of immediate concern.

**SHELTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**
Alderman Anglace stated, they are requesting $3,210,000 in the first year of six years but they noted on here that there is going to be an 80 percent federal match available.

**PARKS & RECREATION**
Alderman Anglace stated, $154,000 in the first year. Totaling $819,000 over six years. One important thing there is $80,000 for the Wiacek property. What’s their plan for the Wiacek property? It says that it’s to develop athletic fields for the City and the Board of Education including soccer, lacrosse and baseball.

Alderman Kudej added, everyone is looking for more ballfields. It’s part of the Parks and Recreation wish list.

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION**
Alderman Anglace stated, they want $50,000 a year to use toward the recreation path. That seems like a doable and reasonable request. I’m sure that the mayor is going to have other thoughts on that, such as use city equipment, etc. They get money from developments, subdivision monies in lieu of donating land to the city and that may offset some of the costs.

**SENIOR CENTER**
Alderman Anglace stated, they need a new van. That’s all they are asking for. The current van gets heavy-duty service. That’s reasonable.

**ANIMAL CONTROL**
Alderman Anglace stated, the new animal shelter is looking for $2.5 million. That’s pretty heavy for the six-year capital improvement. That amount would be approved by the voters I’m sure.

**FIRE DEPARTMENT**
Alderman Anglace stated, they want $7,500,000 in the first year; $19,700,000 the second year; $3 million in the third year; $635,000 in the fourth; and so on, totaling $38 million total. There are things they point out that they want to do, but it will take time. They will have to do it in stages.

**POLICE DEPARTMENT**
Alderman Anglace stated, new telephone system $65,000; new digital voice recorder $28,000; vehicle replacements $250,000; polygraph machine $14,000; mobile computer $50,000; radio system upgrade $450,000; replacing of stove and refrigerator $2,000. I don’t see anything about cameras here. In the past they have used grant funding.
HIGHWAYS AND BRIDGES
Alderman Anglace stated, they are looking for $180,000 for the first year. Total of $1,280,000. The first year they want to buy a dump truck for snow plowing and sanding for $130,000 and a mason dump with plow and sander for $50,000.

BOARD OF EDUCATION
Alderman Anglace stated, a very modest request for the Board of Education - $3,739,100 for boiler replacement major overhaul. That’s been done correct?

Mr. Bill Banfe responded, four at the elementary schools, Booth Hill, Long Hill, Sunnyside and Mohegan. This is no boiler request for next year.

Alderman Anglace stated, looks like your two major requests are heating ventilating and air conditioning, update and replacements, and roof replacements.

Mr. Banfe replied, we just did Long Hill and Elizabeth Shelton. Mohegan and Sunnyside would be the next two roofs that require replacement. The six-year plan originally had four major items on it: boilers, window replacement, HVAC equipment and roofs. The progression would have been boilers, windows, HVAC equipment and roofs in that order. The nature of Long Hill and Elizabeth Shelton’s roofs required us to abort that plan and tackle those two roofs right now. Mohegan and Sunnyside are right behind them in terms of need.

Alderman Anglace interjected, that is an excellent example of why we accept this in principle and don’t make (inaudible), because things change.

Bill Banfe continued, the next thing for us to tackle would be those other two roofs and then start the window replacement and then the last thing to work on would be the HVAC equipment. You need new windows before you go in any direction of the HVAC equipment obviously.

BUILDING MAINTENANCE
Alderman Anglace stated, a very modest $85,000 request. Replacement of light bulbs at the Riverwalk, new maintenance vehicle, $45,000. We’ll have to check that one over.

Alderman Anglace stated, so ends the Six Year Capital Improvement requests.

BOARD OF EDUCATION
Alderman Anglace asked all the aldermen to share with the Board of Education any thoughts they had regarding the budget process.

Alderman McPherson asked about nonresident students and what the Board of Education was going to do to get some of the money back? He also stated that many people have asked him why the Board of Education and the City has their own human resource directors and that in many towns that position is combined and why can’t
Shelton do that? He also wanted to know if the money saved from the early retirement incentive program was going towards saving jobs?

Lorraine Rossner stated that last year they pursued 14 individual cases. Four of those cases were from one family. She explained that the families who are often pursued for restitution are often in an economic range that the restitution is probably not going to occur unless the Board of Education incurs other legal fees to garner their wages. The students can appeal at the state level. She added that the word is out there that if you are going to try and defraud the public school system, you are going to get caught.

Superintendent Burr stated, regarding the human resource director position, if the city really wants to engage in collaborative services, we’d be happy to sit down. It’s important to understand that most of the criteria is going to come from us, because every person that is employed that’s certified has to have an appropriate certification. So the individual that would do this job has to be very clear on education law, the responsibilities to certification, the services, etc. The person on the city side would have to have expertise in that area.

Alderman McPherson asked, is there any plan in the next year to do any new hirings for any positions?

Mr. Walsh stated, what would happen at this point is replacements, not new positions. We haven’t discussed new positions at all.

Mr. Burr went on to clarify his reorganization plan. He stated, the early retirement for 24 don’t even match up the original 28 positions that were cut as part of the $4 million dollar cost savings on the certified side. So it’s not a one to one match and obviously we want that to generate some cost savings. Obviously what we end up with in the budget is going to predicate how deep those cuts are actually going to be. So we can’t necessarily say we’re hiring. However, we are also totally reorganizing Central Office. That’s a significant reorganization and obviously all administrative positions in that department are being eliminated and new positions are being created and some people under contractual rights will have rights to either bump into certified positions either under the new reorganization or at the school site or ultimately into teaching positions but there will be a couple of those positions that will require expertise that we probably do not have right now.

Alderman Kudej asked, Alderman McPherson was asking about legal costs. Do you have a law firm that you use at the Board of Education or do you use our counsel?

Mr. Burr responded that they are currently in the process of hiring a new law firm, Cheeny and Muesser, former attorneys from Shipman and Goodwin that are now on their own. He added that this move will save them in between 33 and 40 percent of their legal costs.

Alderman Kudej stated, I am getting calls nonstop, emails nonstop, people are saying, “fund the budget,” or “don’t fund the budget.” No matter which way we go we are going
to be wrong. We are in a no-win situation. How many people do you have that are retired that are still on your payroll and are double dipping, like they say?

Mr. Burr explained that there were misconceptions about this. He stated that out of retirees right now that he thought there were four, maybe five people that fell in that category. He stated, I do want to clarify, because I think there is a gross misconception on the part of certified staff. Certified staff, the Board of Education, nor the city fund their retirement. Retirement for certified administrators and teachers is funded by the contributions that those individuals make over the years that they are in education. And it’s 7 percent that is automatically deducted out of their salaries. So it’s 7 percent of whatever their salaries are. They don’t have a choice not to have that money deducted. That match is at the state level and when the state is done, because Connecticut’s rules are very very strict in terms of who they hire. So, essentially, Connecticut has created exceptions for retirees to come back. If it’s in a hard to fill area, they can come back for up to two years. They can still receive their retirement but technically they are drawing off the state retirement. It’s not a cost to the city. Right now we don’t have anyone that’s costing us money that’s a retiree working. If anything right now, they are saving us money.

Alderman Farrell asked how many expulsion hearings the Board of Education had a year and at what cost with attorney’s fees?

Ms. Rossner responded, maybe five or six. The cost depended on the amount of time.

Mr. Burr added, if it’s Shipman and Goodwin and it’s going to be a long expulsion hearing, and that would be an hour or two, then we could end up paying a $1,000 which doesn’t involve going to due process. The other thing we have been working on is stipulated agreements and if we can get stipulated agreements which the parent and the student sign off on, ahead of time, unless they have an attorney present, then the only attorney we will need going forward is Tom.

Alderman Farrell asked, do you have supervisors who are in charge of certain subject areas for the entire school system?

Mr. Burr responded, we have two special education supervisors, I think elementary and then secondary, and we have two supervisors on the curriculum side. One in language arts and one in math and technology.

Alderman Farrell asked, so in the past have you looked at combining supervisors?

Mr. Burr responded, that’s part of what my reorganization calls for. For instance, one of the positions that will be created in the reorganization is a STEM position, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math. That’s a position that currently doesn’t exist in the district but is designed for not just what we are doing now but designed for what we are doing now and into the future as we create career pathways in our high school.
Alderman Farrell stated, the children need the teachers very badly, and if you can look at combining supervisors that certainly would do justice to the children.

Alderman Kudej asked, is our enrollment going down?

Ms. Rossner responded, we’ve flatlined. Currently we have a large bubble of kids on the five and six grade level. I also believe there is a big bubble of kids in third and fourth grade.

Mr. Burr stated, I think the overall numbers are slightly down, maybe a percent or something like that. But district wide, I believe, we are a little over 5,600 hundred.

Alderman Finn stated that he had prepared a statement and didn’t really have any questions. He stated, that the Board of Education when their budget was submitted on January 15, 2010, they already reduced their budget request by some $4 million dollars prior to submitting their budget request to the mayor’s office. It’s important to note the Board of Education’s efforts and hard work submitted a request of some $3.5 million over the year which resulted in a 5.6 percent increase over the current year’s budget. Prior to the mayor submitting his budget to the Board of Aldermen and Board of A&T on February 22, 2010 it was (inaudible) the average of the Board of Education employees. But we have to remember that it was this administration that asked those pay increases towards the end of their contract. The first year of the contract was a reevaluation and the second was an election for us. Mayor Lauretti, when he gave his budget address, is quoted as saying ‘this budget proposal will not cause layoffs or reduce programs or ask for furloughs.’ If there was to be no layoffs or reduced programs then what happened to bring this year’s Board of Education to it’s (inaudible) point. Only $95,000 more to the current year would mean the Board of Education would have to lay off teachers, cut spending on sports and curricular activities. We saw that certain members of the Board of A&T felt that only an additional $50,000 was warranted following the slogan ‘do more with less’. When we had a joint meeting with the Board of Education I raised some concerns. With the proposed budget presented by the mayor, we could face up to 162 positions, administrators, 44 teachers, 71 other positions, custodians, tutors, secretaries, etc. This will result in the Board of Education paying up to 26 weeks in unemployment benefits for any part time position depending on the number of hours worked per pay period. How will they pay for that? With a reduction in staff what effect will this have on class sizes and test scores? Many programs will be reduced or eliminated with reduced staff. To achieve the necessary savings the Board of Education will be adding unemployment expenses with expenses exceeding $1.7 million according to Mr. Al Cameron at our public hearing. We all know that the majority of the K-6 classrooms would have 28-38 students, no elementary counselors, no media specialists. We all know the schools are in a very difficult position and meeting the needs of the students will be difficult. We all heard first hand from the parents the effect this would have on their children. We also heard first hand from the students will have an effect on them as well. The Board of Education went out to bid on their insurance and that resulted in a $700,000 savings. Early retirement has offered additional savings of $300,000. An additional $1,000,000 off their original request bringing it down to $2.5 million. When we opened our budget workshop both Alderman Anglace and Alderman
Farrell talked about how well both parties work well together and how the Board of Education is not our enemy. We are here to reach an agreement on funding for the Board of Education to a level of importance that we are not here to reinvent the wheel with that in mind I would like to offer that the Board of Aldermen increase the Board of Education budget by $2,000,000. These funds will come from the unreserved reported in the General Fund which shows $4,658,287 on hand according to our financial report. This will result in an increase in the mayor’s recommended budget of (inaudible)...a budget to a level of importance for education and no tax increase to our taxpayers.

Alderman McGorty stated, some of the things I want to gain a better understanding of what your plan is for sports should you not get the full budget, should you just get some of the budget? What is the plan regarding sports, AP classes, things are addressed by many of these kids that came and spoke to us?

Mr. Burr responded, in our proposed budget, I believe our line item for athletics is about $840,000 or $850,000. I just want to clarify, I am not a person who likes the idea of cutting sports or extracurricular activities and contrary to what the belief may be out there, I believe wholeheartedly in sports and extracurricular activities. The reality of a zero budget or a $90,000 or whatever puts us into a world where we are going to pay $2 million in unemployment compensation. So that will come off the $63,000,000 and this year we’ve had to mitigate all year a $2,000,000 budget deficit that is primarily caused as President Anglace said due to our special education cost overruns which at this point we are looking at $2.6 million. My point about athletics is simple, if we don’t have enough money to run an adequate education program for our students, we have to look at what our core business really is and the reality is that our number one responsibility is to provide for the education of our students. That $850,000 would save positions and help alleviate some of the impact. How would we address sports, this Board of Education has always supported extracurricular and athletics and it is not something that we want to do, all over in Fairfield County, in much richer districts than ours, people are going to pay for play. The sad part about that is that the 1,000 kids who currently participate at the high school, if it were equitably distributed, that would be a price tag of $850 per student. Bottom line is this, we can not charge parents of regular ed students or students with disability money to get educated. We can charge parents, unfortunately, to pay for sports and extracurricular. It is not a place that we want to be in but at the end of the day we have to be real. Until we as a district have reorganized ourselves in a way that we can start to get a handle on our special education costs, we can’t risk going into another budget year and facing a $2 million deficit. I believe that would be irresponsible for me to do that as superintendent. And while we have said that we would cut sports, I think the perception is that we would cut sports and cut all extracurricular activities. We would cut the budget that currently funds those activities. We would be putting kids who don’t have the resources in a very difficult situation.

Alderman McGorty asked, what about the AP classes?

Mr. Walsh stated, we currently have 14 AP classes, six UCONN classes at the high school which students have to pay for but then they get UCONN credit if they successfully pass the class. We are in relatively good shape with AP and advanced college programs.
Mr. Burr stated, it depends on the budget whether they are cut or not. The plan in our proposed budget, the STEM position is designed to take us into the future. That position will also be responsible to explore project opening doors which is really creating more AP courses in the areas of science, technology and math. So we are not looking to eliminate that. Also the State Board of Education has passed a position paper of which there will be action taken that states that every student at the high school will have to be in a college ready curriculum. Otherwise we are going to be mandated to report to any parent why their child is not. And with that we have already cut back one of the level courses at the high school and we have to look at that in the future. So we aren’t looking to lower our standards. If anything we are looking to raise our standards moving forward. Obviously we are going to need an adequately funded budget to make that a reality.

Alderman Simonetti asked for clarification regarding the high school not being accredited if the Board of Education doesn’t get their full request?

Mr. Burr responded, first of all, I think the Shelton High Website has been updated with information about that to really wipe that perception out. I think that was a hypothesis. We do not believe it is supported. There are two aspects of accreditation and one of them certainly the renovation committee dealt with and that is bringing the facility up to standard based on the recommendation by NEASC. The other part of it has to do with curriculum program support, etc. We are staffed at the high school, under Dr. Smith’s leadership, and spent many hours preparing the self study. The self study is prepared based on what is currently happening at Shelton High School and how that meets the accreditation standards. The issue becomes, if we are cutting positions, because those cuts would go across the district, and we are eliminating certain things that those committees would also be compromised because some of the staff that’s worked on them might not be there. They would have to revise those reports, revise the accreditation report, to reflect the services that are actually in place for the coming year. That would have to be done between September and the site visit which is just before Thanksgiving next year or just after. The question becomes, could we be cited in that accreditation visit for not meeting the standards in a way that NEASC thinks we should. And the answer to that is conceivable that’s a yes. Shelton High will not lose its accreditation. I believe Dr. Smith’s message on the website explicitly states that. However, it could put us in a situation where we would be doing progress reports annually, could be semi-annually. It could generate a site visit in five years instead of 10 years that would basically put us under continual scrutiny until they feel that the standards are being addressed. Some of those issues might not be addressed again until we have sufficient funding. We will definitely not lose accreditation. Could the result of the site visit put us in a challenging situation.

Alderman Simonetti asked, the other question I had is that you’ve talked about a new reorganization or a new program could you explain to those of us who don’t have a teaching degree what that means?

Mr. Burr responded, well, science, engineering and technology are getting a lot of attention nationwide. Primarily because we are falling behind internationally in those
areas. It could conceivably poise us or put us in a position to receive additional grant support and resource support in the future. The goal is to reinvigorate some of the work that’s been done at the high school five to seven years ago and that’s when career pathways were developed at the high school. They never got implemented. One of the goals would be to develop a science, technology, engineering and math pathways. Now obviously that would happen in grades 9-12. In order for us to do that effectively we need to create partnerships with community colleges and universities that can allow our students to continue those interests in studies going forward. But, it is also important for us to get our students prepared before we get to high school to see if those areas are areas of interest to them. To that end, for example, at Perry Hill next year, we are taking one of the central office positions that is currently on the special education side and we aren’t talking about people here, we are talking about positions, the enrichment specialist. The enrichment specialist will be moved into Perry Hill under our budget proposal. The responsibility of that enrichment specialist will be to create science, technology, engineering and math enrichment units for fifth and sixth grade, all fifth and sixth graders. That is students with disabilities as well as regular students to explore science, technology, engineering and math at the fifth and sixth grade level. We would continue to build that model in grades 7 and 8 so that by the they are prepared to reach the ninth grade, so if they have an interest in that, they can enter career pathways in that area of science, technology, engineering and math. That is kind of going to be the forerunner but the goal is also to look at some of the other services we currently use, such as journalism, media, visual, performing, and fine arts. To create that same kind of enrichment pathway at Perry Hill hopefully in year two and continue to allow students to explore that through the intermediate school where we already have a t.v. station, through the high school where we already have an award winning newspaper as well as media capabilities there. Eventually we will have a format that high school will be developed around what our kids are interested in. Hopefully in their junior and senior year they can intern with businesses and community partners.

Alderman Kudej engaged in discussion with Board of Education members regarding the revenue generated from sporting events and student parking and where the money generated is being spent. Discussion also ensued regarding Lafayette School and its possible future use.

Alderman Anglace stated, people talk about transparency and this is an opportunity to share with you some information, not only for the Board of Education but for the entire city. These comments don’t apply just to the board of Education. They are misconceptions about the way we do business and people should know. The city maintains a five percent general fund balance throughout the fiscal year to achieve the best possible interest rate on borrowing when we bond and we do it every year and we save big money by bonding and getting interest rates at 2 and 2.5 percent. That’s good business. Since bonding is an integral part of the city finances this suggestion if met saves us considerable money.

He added, when the auditors came to us several years ago they said to us look, we want you to maintain in that general budget at all times five percent extra of your budget. How do you do that? You go out an levy a tax? So, we’ve built it in over the years. We built it in
to various accounts. These are accounts that people refer to as ‘not spent’. The money was sent back to the city. What I am talking about doing here is a generally accepted accounting practice that has been audited without any advisory comment over many years. Of course there are other ways to achieve the same result and one of them is to designate a specific reserve account but had that been done initially there would have been as much as a 1 percent mill rate impact. We chose not to do it that way. So what you see in there is monies on the city side of the budget, not your side of the budget, under our control, under the mayor’s control.

Alderman Anglace continued, two new Board of A&T members suggested that we use this money that’s returned to the General Fund from the city side accounts to fund the Board of Education request for more money for the fiscal year 2010-2011. As just discussed these monies are already included in the revenue side of the budget. When the mayor takes these he’s got four million dollars on the revenue side of the budget. That money came from monies that were returned in the last fiscal year. If the Board of A&T would have adopted that suggestion the mill rate would have increased by at least .5 or 1 percent, yet the authors of this suggestion referred to it as a way of funding education without increasing taxes. Totally wrong. You can’t use this money twice. It’s just not there. It’s already in the budget. Tough concept to understand if you aren’t dealing with this every day. The finance director gave us all a copy of the city audit. The general fund surplus in the last fiscal year was $89,361. That’s the operating budget service. What does that mean? It means that the general fund total fund revenue, which was unfavorable, because we didn’t receive the revenues that we anticipated. They were unfavorable by $1,166,668. The general fund total expenditures was favorable by $4,135,129. Of course the finance director works for the mayor, so he makes this comment, “this is directly related to the administrative efforts to control costs in advance of expected future losses of revenue due to lower economic activity. As a result of this favorable total expenditure budget variance of $4,135,000 was large enough to offset the revenue side losses of $1,166,000, eliminate the need for $2,880,000 of general fund surplus used to balance the annual budget and (inaudible).” So you have an operating surplus of $89,000 that you are going to work with. The general fund and the operating budget are two different things. Most people can’t get that straight. And most people think that’s it’s okay to say, “Hey, take that money and use it for the Board of Education.” I’d love to do that. You guys know me well enough. I’d love to do that and if it were there, don’t worry, I’d be honest with you and say it right up front. Like Freeman said, “our job is to adequately fund your budget” and that’s a very nebulous number, difficult to predict, difficult to figure, difficult to arrive at. And all I can tell you guys is that we will make a good faith effort. I have to tell you some more things.

Alderman Anglace stated, last year your operating budget was $63,400,637. The mayor this year gave you $63,100,000. Is that a net reduction in your budget?

Mr. Cameron stated, no, it’s an increase of about $95,000.

Alderman Anglace stated, all I’ve heard is that you magnificently came into town Mr. Burr and shaved off $4,000,000 deficits because it was cuts. You made cuts. I’m hearing you made a lot of cuts in this budget. You made cuts to what the Board of Education
proposed and what you thought you needed to run the schools next year. You didn’t make any cuts to the budget. Your budget isn’t reduced from the previous year. There is more money in it. Roughly $95,000 more. That’s a basic fact that people have to understand. It’s not reduced, it’s not cut. People refer to the mayor’s budget as a cut, it’s not. He didn’t cut your budget. He gave you more than you got last year. You guys aren’t satisfied with it. That’s fair game. But the fact is he did give you more.

Alderman Anglace continued, you listed your contract obligation increases at $4,018,904. That represents a 6.3 percent increase in spending when the cost of living was zero. Mayor’s salary from last year to this year went up .015% which was nothing. Nobody talked about. You guys are asking for 6.3 percent more. Pretty tough money to find in these economic times. There are those out there who say the Board of Aldermen participated in the teachers’ negotiations and the Board of Aldermen approved the teachers’ contract, therefore the Board of Aldermen should fund the contractual increases. That’s wrong. Now the Board of Aldermen had two observers present during negotiations. Observers, by law, “observers.” We are there, and I was one of them, and we did not negotiate the contract, we observed.

Mr. Walsh stated, right.

Alderman Anglace stated, now the Board of Education adopted this contract and then sent it to the Board of Aldermen who by law can accept it, reject it or take no action and if that happens it becomes law within thirty days. We didn’t take an action. So the contract that you accepted became law. If you use the logic that has been put forth so far, that we approved, and we should fund it. Wrong! You approved it. You should fund it. That’s your responsibility to fund it. Now with the money that we give you, and what you are saying here is “hey look, we need more money to fund it,” and you outlined what that cost was to fund that contractual increase. We, as the Board of Aldermen, appealed to the state for relief under the law asking the state to give us the right to reject an arbitration decision. If we reject your contract it goes to binding arbitration and some third party arbitrator who has no stake in this city, in this town, in this municipality, makes a decision what the parties are going to settle for. End of story. Wait a minute. The state of Connecticut gets their contracts, it goes to the legislature, and the legislature says, we reject them. Then they go back to the bargaining table and they start over. But they don’t give municipalities that same opportunity. The rest of the people in this community just sit there and say, “That’s okay. Fund the Board of Education.” Well, it isn’t okay. We are in this thing. We are trying to affect change. They can do it up there. We can’t do it here! Those arbitrators in the past, and every time we’ve assessed it, you don’t know where they are going to go and where they are going to come from. And when economic times are good, the teachers receive increases in the past, and I remember this guy, I’ve been sitting here for 18 years from 10 to 15 and sometimes 17 percent when you figure in (inaudible) and the step increase. And that’s big money. If the state gives the Board of Aldermen the right to reject an arbitration decision and send the parties back to the table we probably would have rejected that contract. But we didn’t have that choice. So we didn’t do anything. But under the collective bargaining law the Board of Education has to assume the responsibility for it. So that’s what you are talking
to us about and we do understand, but finding the money is going to be difficult and arriving at an adequately funding budget is going to be difficult.

Alderman Anglace continued, here’s a comment from someone that says, “The Board of Education has eliminated $4 million in extras.” There’s an asterisk here under the superintendents 2010-2011 foundation budget. It says it presumes all existing 2009-2010 services and I presume that means 2009-2010 costs. So your foundation budget is based on the activity of the previous year. Now if you believe that that budget was the right budget to start with, then that’s fine. You build on that. But if you believe that it should be zero based budgeting in order to arrive at a foundation and then add your other costs it may be a different number. So that’s where I am at a loss. That’s where I have some reservations, not disagreements, but reservations about the numbers. That’s why I find the numbers hard to arrive at and I don’t think that’s an unfair comment. The budget process has evolved over many years of which I’ve been part of, of which Al’s been part of, Arlene and Tim have been part of, and you guys have taken some of these comments and you change your style and way of doing it. How do we reach a starting point that we can all believe in? That’s what I am saying. How do we reach a starting point that we can all believe in? I kid you not. The mayor is adamant. We are going to have our hands full with him. Anything we want to do, he’s vowed to veto and I don’t doubt that he would. But nevertheless that’s our responsibility, we are going to have to do it. Seven of us up here are going to decide this budget. And the other one has given his opinion and we heard it.

Alderman Finn responded, otherwise you are saying my vote doesn’t count. You just said ‘seven to one?’

Alderman Anglace responded, unfortunately Jack, seven to one, your vote doesn’t count.

Alderman Anglace stated, I want to tell you what an educator has to say. We got a lot of comments from educators. He says, “The reality is that people are drawn to communities that support education and offer all these programs that soon may be on the chopping block in Shelton.” Well, the reality is that the recession affects all towns in Connecticut, not just Shelton. Every community across the entire state and nation is impacted by this. My relatives down in Georgia, who are teachers are telling me that they are laying off in the Cobb County district which is one of the best school systems in Georgia with 760 teachers. I’ve got numerous articles from the paper and I think we all agree, this is a comment that people aren’t going to leave Shelton and I’m not going to get scared because they say that. I’m not going to get scared at all. I’m going to do the best I can for you, I’m going to do the best I can for everyone in the community by keeping an even keel and a balance. If things don’t come out the way you want, we will continue to talk and we’ll continue to work.

Alderman Anglace continued, here’s what a hockey mom had to say. Here’s a suggestion that she has for the Board of Education. She suggests elimination of freshman sports. She suggests $100 activity fee per student per sport being capped at $300. She suggests to reduce the athletic director to a part time position. Require parents to provide some of the equipment for various sports. Require more fundraising on the part
of the families. Corporate Sponsorship of teams. Eliminate some of the paid coaching positions and utilize more volunteer coaches. The athletic budget is $800,000 which she says, “Am I the only one who this sounds ridiculous to?” Those are all her comments and suggestions.

Alderman Anglace continued, this is another guy who said he’d like to touch upon a few issues. The Board of Education has got to start to say no to some new activities, sports, etc., possibly implement student cost sharing and get back to the basics. The educators are sending the wrong message to our children by promoting tax and spend mentality which means living outside your means and your own checkbook. Unfunded mandates by the federal and state government that are allowed to exist or be implemented in the first place, we need more extensive lobbying.

Alderman Anglace stated, here’s another letter from someone who says, “Clearly the situation we face today in Shelton is not about a lack of support of education. Each of the constituent groups involved understand that children are our future and that their access to teachers and programs that promote success are imperative. This isn’t about a lack of funding either. This is about a fundamental lack of trust. The answer to the 2010-2011 budget must be a funding compromise. There is no choice given the circumstances and the timetable. With that being said, this issue can’t be resolved by throwing money at it. The future depends on establishing dialogue that reestablishes trust.” I think that’s what we’ve been saying all along.

Alderman Anglace continued, another letter says, “fully fund the Board of Education budget!” If we fully funded the education budget you requested then we would have given you a million dollars more than you asked for. True?

Mr. Burr responded, where we are at now, yes.

ADJOURNMENT
The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret Weber & Theresa Adcox, Clerks
Board of Aldermen

DATE APPROVED: ______________BY: ______________________________
Mark A. Lauretti
Mayor, City of Shelton