



BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
SHELTON, CONNECTICUT  
**Public Hearing on Ordinances**  
**September 25, 2007**

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**CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Aldermanic President John Anglace opened the Public Hearing at 7 p.m. All those present pledged allegiance to the flag.

**ROLL CALL**

Aldermanic President John F. Anglace, Jr. - present  
Alderman John "Jack" Finn - present  
Alderman Stanley Kudej - present  
Alderman Kenneth Olin - present  
Alderman Christopher Panek - present  
Alderman John P. Papa - present  
Alderman Jason Perillo - present  
Alderman Randy York - present

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Mrs. Bruder read aloud the call of the meeting, and the proposed Ordinance, as follows:

**Legal Notice**  
**City of Shelton**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN WILL CONDUCT A PUBLIC HEARING ON THE FOLLOWING:

- SENIOR TAX FREEZE

SAID PUBLIC HEARING SHALL BE CONDUCTED ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2007 AT 7:00 PM IN THE AUDITORIUM AT SHELTON CITY HALL, 54 HILL STREET, SHELTON.

ALL PERSONS WHO HAVE AN INTEREST THEREIN MAY APPEAR AND BE HEARD IN RELATION HERETO.

September 17, 2007

**1. SENIOR TAX FREEZE ORDINANCE - Proposed**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN THAT:

Senior Tax Freeze Ordinance

WHEREAS, the Connecticut State Legislature has recently adopted Public Act 06-176 which has now been codified as Connecticut General Statutes Sections 12-170v and 12-170w, which allows municipalities to provide optional tax relief to seniors of the age of 70 years or older. Said statute provides that a municipality may freeze real property taxes if a resident meets the following requirements:

- a. The homeowner is 70 years of age or older;
- b. The taxpayer occupies the residence;
- c. The taxpayer has been a resident in the municipality for one year; and
- d. Meets the qualifying income as provided for in the State guidelines.

WHEREAS, the increasing costs of education requires municipalities to increase taxes on a yearly basis which in turn effects many seniors who are on a fixed income and unable to meet their tax obligations and would be forced to sell their home of many years;

WHEREAS, the City is concerned that the City of Shelton remains the City of choice for all its residents.

NOW THEREFORE, I, John F. Anglace, Jr., President of the Board of Aldermen, and the current Third Ward Alderman for the past sixteen (16) years, hereby proposes that the Board of Aldermen of the City of Shelton adopts the following ordinance.

Be it ordained by the Board of Aldermen of the City of Shelton entitled "Property Tax Relief for Certain Elderly Homeowners".

- a. That the City of Shelton hereby adopts the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes Section 12-170v as same may be amended from time to time.
- b. That the City of Shelton hereby adopts the procedure set forth in Connecticut General Statutes Section 12-170w(a) as the application procedure for said program.
- c. Any person knowingly making a false application for the purpose of claiming property tax relief under this ordinance and Connecticut General Statute Sections 12-170v or 12-170w shall be fined not more than \$500.00.
- d. Any person who fails to disclose all matters relating thereto or with intent to defraud or makes a false statement shall refund the municipality all tax relief improperly taken.

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## 1. Senior Tax Freeze Ordinance - Proposed

Alderman Anglace explained the procedure for taking the public comments. He explained that all of the public comments will be recorded in the minutes, and then be forwarded to the Finance Committee of the Board of Aldermen for their review and consideration, and to decide if any changes are to be made to the proposed ordinance. The Finance Committee will meet at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, October 4, 2007.

*Paul Gabor, 418 Walnut Tree Hill Road*

I have been a resident for 45 years. I am over 70. It's about time you guys are doing something for the senior citizens instead of everything for the kids. I've coached baseball, football, for 13-14 years. I'm a member of the Parks and Rec for maybe 30 years. We do need relief with all the cost of everything going up, and the taxes are a burden. Instead of selling my home to a family with kids, I'd rather live in Shelton.

*Theodore Shevzov, 23 Buck Hill Road*

I've lived here for 15 years now. I've been associated with Shelton for many more years than that, and I fully support what the gentleman before me said. I think it's only fair that we have an ordinance that would allow the tax relief for senior citizens. I'm over 70 years old. You know, McDonald's is in business for profit and they allow senior citizens a cup of coffee for about half the price and unlimited refills. I think it's only fair that our government of the people for the people and by the people do something for the seniors.

It is definitely necessary. I think seniors demand much less services. We don't have any children and yet we have to pay - the lion's share of our tax dollars for property goes to the schools. I'm all for the schools, believe me, but like the gentleman before me said, let's do something for the senior citizens.

I am also aware that many other states allow this very generous relief. For example, as I understand, the State of Pennsylvania does not count Social Security as part of the income for this purpose. Washington, DC has a very generous relief for senior citizens. I have very close friends in Washington, DC whose income is well over \$75,000 a year and their property taxes have

dropped almost in half after they reached the age of 65. We are talking here, after age 70. I think it should be reduced to 65.

I understand that there is a catch here that we have to meet the State's requirements for income. For example, my total income is between \$25,000 and \$26,000 a year. Like the gentleman before me said, the cost of everything is going up. It is become a hardship. The taxes are going up every single year, or almost every year, as you know. So let us do something for senior citizens. I think we deserve it. I think we deserve it very definitely.

In closing, I would like to thank Mr. John Anglace. He has been working for senior tax relief for 14 years. Gentlemen, how long does it take to adopt something of this nature? 14 years. I think we should all give applause to Mr. Anglace.

The only thing I wish that the State requirement or the City of Shelton can do something that a person with \$26,000 or less of income could also qualify for this tax relief. And we are just talking about freezing the tax, not reducing the tax. I think we would deserve that the tax be reduced, like I mentioned about the District of Columbia.

Thank you again, Mr. John Anglace. Let us all support this and maybe it will not take another 14 years to adopt at least what it being talked about here. And maybe something can be done to even give a better tax relief so that they could actually be reduced and not just frozen.

Thank you very much.

Barbara Bartomeli, 11 Princess Terrace

I've lived in Shelton since 1954. I raised five children here, they all went to school. My husband passed away almost nine years ago. We were on this tax discount that was given to us because when he retired, we were not making a certain income. That was \$150. Then last year they raised it to \$500. I got that much of a decrease on my taxes, however, this year my taxes were raised \$500, which to me is a large amount. I have 18 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren and when my taxes are raised \$500 somebody gets a cutback on Christmas and birthday. So those of you who have grandchildren, you know the kids nowadays, they don't want \$5 worth, it comes to \$15 or \$20 worth.

If you're raising children and trying to feed your family, feed the kids when they come to your house, we all know that gasoline has gone up and the price of oil has gone up. I do believe this tax relief or tax freeze for us is a very

good thing. As this gentleman said, perhaps it would be better to give us a bigger discount rather than just put a freeze on it. Give us perhaps a 50 percent discount, or whatever. It's up to you gentlemen to decide.

I know that there should be more seniors here because certainly Shelton has a lot of seniors who are on a fixed income. We're on Social Security and retirement. It certainly doesn't make much of our income when you have your own home you're trying to keep, especially with the prices today.

Thank you very much.

Ray Widak, 59 L'Hermitage

I would just like to know what the State qualifications are, or what the State mandates are, is it just \$35,000? Is that the maximum that you use?

Alderman Anglace stated, the Tax Assessor, Gloria Kovac, is here with us this evening. Perhaps you might like to hear a little bit from her. She can answer some questions, and give some general information.

Mr. Widak stated, I'd just like to know what I'm up against.

Gloria Kovac, Tax Assessor

The State guidelines for married people including Social Security - that would be joint income including Social Security this year was \$35,300. For a single person it was \$28,800. However, every year it is raised according to the cost of living increase. Last year it was raised four percent. Some years it's raised two percent. We do not have the income restrictions from the Office of Policy and Management yet. We usually get them sometime in late October or early November for the filing period commencing in February.

Ms. Kovac entertained questions from members of the audience as follows:

Question: Is the income limit for married people the \$35,300 just based on Social Security, or is other income included?

Ms. Kovac replied, all income. It's your adjusted gross income plus Social Security. So it's all income from retirement, any bank dividends or interest statements, and Social Security. Unfortunately you have to include your IRA as your income. I wish State Legislation would change that.

Question: Who determines the increase annually to the income restrictions?

Ms. Kovac replied, the State of Connecticut, according to the cost of living increase.

Alderman Anglace stated, you will note that what is proposed is to adopt what the State has enabled us to adopt. We cannot create, we can adopt. We can't do what we want to do, we can only adopt what they allow us to do.

Question: You can't go past \$35,000?

Ms. Kovac replied, correct. And as this gentleman said before, why not lower the age limit to 65 to freeze your taxes? That's not what the law says. The law says 70 or older. All we're doing is just following this law that has to be municipally adopted by the City to make it into a local ordinance.

Question: If one spouse is 70 and the other is not yet 70, what happens?

Ms. Kovac replied, as long as one spouse is 70 years old, you are eligible to apply for the program and if you meet all the guidelines, you can get on the freeze.

She continued, I want to mention, some of you may be on your homeowners program – State and Local Homeowners Program. You still stay on those programs where you get money off of your taxes. So you can freeze your taxes and still stay on your State program and your local program, and you will be getting money off of your taxes, besides freezing your taxes.

Question: If the people on the program pass away, do you have to pay back any money to the City?

Ms. Kovac replied, I'm going to direct that question to Alderman Anglace.

Alderman Anglace replied, there is no payback. Your taxes are frozen and there is no increase, therefore there is nothing to pay back. There is no lien on the property either. This is proposed without any lien because we have learned over the years that, in Shelton anyway, our seniors feel if you're going to give us something, give it to us. Don't give it to us with one hand, and take it away with the other.

Alderman Anglace asked Ms. Kovac to explain the effect of revaluation on the tax freeze.

Ms. Kovac explained, we just went through a revaluation, and you know how much your assessments went up. Some of you went up quite a bit,

because the real estate market increased considerably since the 2001 revaluation.

At revaluation, you still stay on your frozen tax. Your frozen tax will not go up. What happens is, we recalculate and if for some reason the mill rate is lowered considerably and your tax may go down, we'll give you the lower tax, but we will not increase your frozen tax at time of revaluation. We will recalculate all of your taxes just to see – are you coming in a little lower - if you're coming in a little lower, we'll give you the lower tax, and we do not raise it.

Alderman Anglace stated, so in effect you end up with a new frozen tax rate.

Question: So the taxes are frozen until your home is sold or until you die?

Ms. Kovac replied, or if you go over your income limit. You have to file every two years on this program, just as you have to file for the homeowners program. And if you go over the income limit, then you get off the program. But that does not prohibit you from coming back the following year, because maybe the following year you can get on, according to the guidelines.

Question: Does the program still continue beyond the revaluation?

Ms. Kovac replied, yes it will, as long as you meet the eligibility requirements, and that's mainly, you meet the residency and age requirement. You have to file every two years in order to make sure you meet the income requirements. Come in with your proof of income to be sure you still meet the eligibility income requirements, you stay on your freeze, and you stay on your local and state homeowners programs.

Question: If \$35,300 is your limit, what percentage do you get off?

Ms. Kovac replied, this isn't like the homeowners program where you get a certain percentage off according to the more money you make the less you get off, the less money you have the more you get off. No. It's just, you are frozen.

Let's project, let's go to May 2008. The municipality sets the mill rate. Say it increases the mill rate by one percent. I'm just throwing out a number. Your taxes, with that one percent increase, say you're paying \$3,500. Your taxes would go up to \$3,600. Then you are frozen at that \$3,600. It stays. Then if you're on the local and state homeowners program, we take that money off of the \$3,600. But \$3,600 is your frozen tax. If in May 2009 it goes up two mills and your tax should go up, maybe \$400 because of the mill rate increase, you don't. You don't go up that \$400. You are frozen at \$3,600.



It's not a certain percentage, it's that your taxes are frozen.

Question: If your taxes are frozen does that means you don't pay taxes?

Ms. Kovac replied, no, say for instance you're taxes are frozen at \$3,600, and then your state program, say you're getting \$500 off on that program, that comes off the \$3,600 and you'd be paying a total of \$3,100.

Question: I'm getting confused, what is the mill rate, and what is the \$35,300 income?

Ms. Kovac explained, the mill rate is applied to your assessment to generate your taxes. The formula is "Assessment x Mill Rate = Taxes." The \$35,300 is your income limit for a married couple, including Social Security. In order to get on the freeze, you cannot go over that limit. Don't forget, as I said, that limit is going to change for the filing commencing February 2008 because annually the State increases it.

Question: What is the proof of income? Is that just your income tax?

Ms. Kovac replied, if you file income tax, you are required to bring in a copy of your income tax return to us, plus the statement that you get from Social Security in January. This is what you accumulated from Social Security in the previous calendar year.

If you do not file an income tax, then you are to bring us in as proof of income, your bank statements, your retirement statements - what you accumulated in retirement - any kind of paper proof of what you accumulated in income for the previous calendar year.

Question: What is the date that you have to go down and speak to someone in the Tax Department?

Ms. Kovac replied, the filing period is February 1<sup>st</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup>. So that gives you plenty of time, if you do file an IRS return you have until April 15<sup>th</sup>, and there is one month still to go so you have plenty of time to get down to file if you don't file your IRS return until April. You have until May 15<sup>th</sup>.

You come to the Assessor's Office.

Question: If you don't file an income tax return, what do you bring to the Assessor's Office as proof of income?

Ms. Kovac replied, your Social Security statement you get annually in January. In January 2008 you'll get a statement from the Social Security Administration. This is what you were paid out in the calendar year 2007. You bring that. You also bring any bank statements of interest and dividends, any statement from your retirement for the calendar year 2007. You bring in all that, you come in and file in 2008.

Question: If you don't fall into the federal guidelines you should automatically, no matter what you have in the bank, it falls under \$35,000, there is really nothing to file.

Alderman Anglace interjected. Excuse me, let me just point out. The purpose of tonight's hearing is to find out from you whether or not you want us to enact this program. The details like how you file, what you bring, you can talk about that between February and May of next year. You've got a lot of time. I don't think it's pertinent to this hearing tonight. I'd like to focus us back on the question of your interests. Do you want us to adopt the ordinance, or don't you? We'll take one more question for Gloria.

Richard Widomski, 49 Christine Drive

I was reading The Connecticut Post and they're talking about three different plans that Trumbull has. What I don't want to see is the City jump on something, for instance the State plan, and overlook the possibility of other plans that may be even better. I don't know if they are or not, because there are bits and pieces in the paper between Milford and Trumbull. I'll just take the information out of Trumbull. It caught my eye because of the caps and the time involved. I would like to see this public hearing kept open longer so that maybe people will attend the Trumbull one, which is October 1<sup>st</sup>, and gather additional information, and then bring it back to you, because there is a public hearing at 8 p.m. October 1<sup>st</sup> at the Trumbull Town Hall. It deals with the same ordinance that you are.

Alderman Anglace stated, no, it's not the same ordinance.

Mr. Widomski replied oh, okay. What Trumbull is doing though, may be something you may do as the City above and beyond what the State has. I'm not 70 years old but I'd like to jump on the bandwagon a few years earlier. I hope to make 70. [Mr. Widomski quickly read from the newspaper article]. Taxpayers must have owned their home for at least one year prior to the tax year for which they are seeking aid. Under the proposed relief, in Trumbull, the upper income limit for tax relief will climb from \$50,000 to \$58,000 annually with an annual adjustment pegged to the inflation rate.

Mr. Widomski continued reading, maximum tax benefits under the credit plan would rise from \$1,250 to \$1,350 for qualifying households. Those who currently qualify at the upper end of \$50,000 would see benefits rise from \$313 to \$325. So it looks like these people are already getting relief of \$313 on \$50,000.

Alderman Anglace stated, Mr. Widomski, let me stop you there. As soon as I make my remarks, you can finish. You are not talking about this ordinance. You are talking about the Trumbull ordinance and that is not pertinent to what we're here to do tonight.

Mr. Widomski stated, but this may be better than what you're talking about tonight John, and you need that information. This is a new category it will go from \$50,800 to \$58,000, offering a \$200 benefit unavailable now. So there's another \$200. In addition to a credit plan, qualifying seniors may choose one of two other options – a tax freeze option and a tax deferral option. The tax freeze option, which expires in 2011, allows seniors to freeze their taxes at a level below the amount that would otherwise be billed in a new tax year. Under the proposed plan the total amount forgiven, no liens it appears, would be capped at \$1,700. I don't know if it's a lifetime, or whether that is yearly. But it is certainly something that should be looked into. It may be better than this plan you're talking about, or it could be another option that can be thrown in.

Alderman Anglace stated, Mr. Widomski, what you fail to understand is that in 2004 for more than 18 months this City had formed a committee. Will the Committee members that are in the audience please stand up? There are two right there that were on the committee for more than 18 months went at this and looked at all options. What you are talking about was looked at, and what we have here tonight for hearing is a completely different ordinance.

Mr. Widomski asked, why does this appear to be better than what you're offering? Why is the appearance?

Alderman Anglace stated, I'm not here tonight to answer the question of appearances. I am here to hear what you would like us to do.

Mr. Widomski interjected, this is what I would like you to do John.

Alderman Anglace continued, adopt this or not adopt it. You should have been present when we spent the 18 months. They can talk to you and tell you what we did and why we reached the conclusion. But that is not why we're here tonight.

Mr. Widomski continued, Trumbull does have a third option.

Alderman Anglace stated, so does Fairfield, so do a number of other towns.

Mr. Widomski stated, so what you're saying is, this is the best that we can do.

Alderman Anglace stated, I'm not saying that at all. I proposed an ordinance, and I want to know if you want us to pass it or reject it.

Maura Fashjian, 4 Fawn Meadow Lane

I came a little bit late, so if these have been answered, I apologize. I just came for clarity more than anything else. How did you come to one year versus something like five years, because one year seems like anybody could just move in, and within a year they can have their taxes frozen.

Alderman Anglace replied, that is the law, we don't have an option.

Ms. Fashjian continued, why no lien, so that when people do sell their residences, the City gets the money back?

Alderman Anglace stated, I'll tell you, our experience has been in 1994 and again in 2004, that senior citizens that came and talked about our tax programs did not want the lien, would not go for them with a lien. We looked at tax deferral programs with a lien, and they said absolutely no way. When a senior passes away, they said, we want what we've got left to go to our children, not to the City. If you want to give us something, give it to us, but don't give it with one hand and take it away with another.

Ms. Fashjian stated, sometimes people go to a place in between so they end up spending their money at that place. So my point is, why shouldn't the City get what is coming back to them? That's what I don't understand.

Alderman Anglace stated, the City, in this particular ordinance the City can place a lien on the property. I have proposed this with no lien on the property because, the reason why is that we are going to get our money up front. For every senior that stays in their house, a young person with one or two children going into school at \$10,000 per student is going to cost a heck of a lot more than what we are going to freeze the taxes of a senior citizen at. So we are getting our money as we go. They owe us nothing.

Ms. Fashjian stated, I don't have children, so I don't have any buy in to that. Clearly you've already decided, the Ordinance seems to be as proposed, and it's proposed with no lien. So that's why I say you've decided. If it's put forth that way, it's decided to put it forth that way. So I just want to clarify that. Correct?

Alderman Anglace stated, that's the way I've proposed the ordinance.

Ms. Fashjian stated, there's not a choice, that's the way it is.

Alderman Anglace stated, if the Board of Aldermen, that's why it's going to Finance Committee, to discuss things like this that come out at public hearing. I'm sure at the Finance Committee that will be discussed. We will decide whether we want to put a lien on it, or if somebody thinks we should, if a member of the Board thinks we should or proposes it, then we'll discuss it. I don't think we should.

Ms. Fashjian stated, I understand. I think it should be explored, but that's just my opinion. My question is, that being the case, what is the impact on the City in terms of dollars specifically?

Alderman Anglace stated, we're not going to know the specific impact until we see the number of people that come in and apply for the program and are eligible for the program and then, when the mill rate is set, we'll know what we're talking about specifically.

Ms. Fashjian stated, well it seems that you should have some kind of due diligence done in order to put this forth and have some idea.

Alderman Anglace asked, what kind of due diligence do you suggest?

Ms. Fashjian stated, in other words, I'm assuming that you know the demographics in the City, so that would be a place to start.

Alderman Anglace asked, demographics? Did you hear or read what the,

Ms. Fashjian interjected, no, I apologized, I said I was a little bit late.

Alderman Anglace stated, the Assessor is quoted in the newspaper as saying, to get an idea you have to consult a crystal ball. The only way you're going to find out is after people apply. Now, we can guess and we can make some well thought out or maybe not too well thought out guesses at what we think it might cost. What is the point of finding out what it will cost?

Ms. Fashjian stated, what's the point? Well I guess my next question would be, how will the City plan to make up the difference? That would be the point.

Alderman Anglace stated, make up the difference?

Ms. Fashjian stated, yes, if you are going to freeze taxes, and it increases for everybody else, and it stays the same for a certain segment of the population, - first of all I want everybody to know I am not against it, I'm just asking questions. I think I'm entitled to say, no one here can say what I'm saying I'm for, only I can say that.

I asked about the impact on the City in terms of dollars, and you said you couldn't determine that without a crystal ball, and I said, demographically would be a good place to start in terms of population - you know what the ages of the people in households are - and the incomes. That would be something to look at. And the value of the properties. If you boil that down you could certainly get a round figure. I know from that you can extrapolate as to how many people you would expect will come in.

My second question was, how will the City make up the difference?

Alderman Anglace stated, I explained earlier that the City isn't going to make up the difference. What's going to happen is, if you look around and ask these seniors, because this is representative, how many children do you people have in school? They don't have any. But if they sold their house, they might have one or two at \$10,000 per student. So every year this program goes on and they stay in their houses, they're saving the City money. They are saving the City big bucks.

Ms. Fashjian stated, well you could do that by just not building houses, and just building small apartments in the future. I understand what you're saying, but I don't necessarily agree with your approach. I guess that's my point. I think it would be helpful if you were able to give real dollar value to this program. I understand it wouldn't be a firm figure, but for people it would be helpful.

Alderman Anglace stated, may I refer to the Assessor. Gloria, do you think that you could come up with real dollars for this program?

Ms. Kovac replied [from her seat - no microphone], until the mill rate is set and grand list is set, I can't come up with any estimates.

Ms. Fashjian stated, but how can you propose a program that you want to move ahead with, naturally, without having that done? It seems like putting the cart before the horse.

Alderman Anglace stated, let me ask you, how could the State pass such a law without knowing what it's going to cost each municipality? It's enabling legislation. You've got to put it in place before you find out what it's going to cost.

Ms. Fashjian asked, am I hearing that it's a State mandate?

Alderman Anglace stated, if it costs us money in excess of what we think it's going to cost, I think I have a way to make up that money for the citizens of Shelton without taking a penny from the citizens within this town. But I'm not releasing that now; that's later. That's not what we're talking about. Do you have any other points you want to make?

Ms. Fashjian replied, no, that's it. I just want to clarify that I hear you do have an idea, and later on you might release it?

Alderman Anglace replied, I am not about to release my ideas. I released what I think will work in the best interest of the City and I have to wait and see until we see how many people sign up for the program what kind of cost impact it has, and then I'll be ready at that point.

Ms. Fashjian asked, and this is driven by State mandate?

Alderman Anglace replied, the program is enabled by the State, not mandated. We are allowed to enact an ordinance adopting the State program that they suggested. In their program they give us some latitude to put a lien on, or not to put a lien on, you can put the legislation forward any way you want but you cannot deviate from the law. You've got to stay within the law.

Ms. Fashjian asked, and the law only says that you can do it, and the people only have to be residents of the City for one year? Any other parameters?

Alderman Anglace stated, it is Public Act 06-176. It is three pages long. You can look it up to see the details of it. After the meeting, if I have an extra copy I'll be glad to give it to you.

<http://www.cga.ct.gov/2006/ACT/PA/2006PA-00176-R00HB-05093-PA.htm>

Harriet Pesah, 2 Fairlane Drive

I've been a resident for 47 years. I think it's overdue that the seniors in Shelton have some relief. A question concerning the ordinance - are you proposing just what the State, or are you obligated to just stay within that framework of \$35,300 per couple?

Alderman Anglace replied, yes Ma'am.

Mrs. Pesah continued, is there any way that the City of Shelton can offer another type of program when sometimes couples just miss meeting that, not by much, maybe by \$500 and they are still struggling and they don't get any relief. Is there any way that the City can offer something?

Alderman Anglace stated, the City already has in place a local program,

Mrs. Pesah interjected, with a much lower cap per couple.

Alderman Anglace continued, no, it's the same cap. Our income limits are set by the State of Connecticut.

TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO

[Mrs. Pesah speaking] Other communities have offered other types of programs on a sliding scale, or however you wish to refer to it, so there must be a way of a community offering something themselves where they're doing something beyond the State mandate.

Alderman Anglace stated, yes, but that's not the subject of this public hearing tonight, and we're going to stick to the subject of this public hearing. We had an Elderly Tax Relief Committee in place for 18 months. We had very little interest beyond the committee. All those things were talked about. They came up with recommendations. It's all a matter of record in the minutes of their meetings. We'll be glad to share that with you. Their minutes are on the Internet.

<http://cityofshelton.org/gengov/meetings/SeniorTaxRelief.htm>



Bob Nolan, 498 Long Hill Avenue

First of all, thank you John, and anyone else that has been working on this effort. We appreciate it. Essentially my question is the same as the other, I'm zeroed in, I just heard you say that it's fixed at \$35,300. That is my question, really. Is it within your province, do you guys have the authority or the influence to adjust that?

Alderman Anglace replied, no, that is part of, the enabling legislation sets the guidelines and they come out annually. As the Assessor said earlier, they change, they go up every year. That is set by the State and we can't deviate from that.

Mr. Nolan stated, okay, I understand. I was just going to propose that if it was within your jurisdiction to make an adjustment or an alteration, maybe as an idea, to qualify more people, instead of taking the Social Security on two, perhaps take it on one, or perhaps if it was possible, to raise it, so that more people could become eligible.

Alderman Anglace stated, back in 2004 the Committee talked about the senior tax freeze. At that time they recommended it. It was not possible to do because the law enabling us to do it was not enacted by the State. Subsequently, last year, the public act came out and we jumped on it.

Mr. Nolan stated, and I'm all for it. I'm just saying, if it is something that you can do, perhaps you could consider things along those lines. Thanks a lot.

Richard Dormer, 51 Brentley Drive

I've been a resident for better than 42 years. I've given to the City and I've given to my country and I'm concerned quite seriously about why we are following on the coattails of what is proposed by the State. Why can't we create our own area of tax advantages?

Alderman Anglace replied, that's a good question; that's a very fundamental question. The City of Shelton, Connecticut exists only because the State of Connecticut allows us to exist.

Mr. Dormer stated, Mr. Anglace, I know that.

Alderman Anglace stated well, we can't go off doing what we want. We can only do what is allowed for us to do within the State law.

Mr. Dormer asked, how come other towns aren't?

Alderman Anglace stated, other towns, any town that wants to put in a senior tax freeze has to follow the same law. Listen, I'm not here holding a public hearing for other towns. I'm here holding a public hearing,

Mr. Dormer interjected, I just need some background information so you can answer my questions. For you to evade that question I think is wrong. I have great respect for what you've been trying to do for senior citizens, don't get me wrong. But I do need to have a direct answer.

Alderman Anglace stated, we can't do it. We cannot act unilaterally.

Mr. Dormer stated, excuse me, but you started a hearing or you created a committee 18 months ago?

Alderman Anglace replied, no, the Committee was formed and met for some 18 months.

Mr. Dormer asked, for what purpose?

Alderman Anglace replied, for the purpose of reviewing elderly tax relief.

Mr. Dormer asked, under what conditions, under what the State proposed?

Alderman Anglace stated, that committee looked at everything that is allowed under State law.

Mr. Dormer asked, where did they get their information from?

Alderman Anglace replied, you are asking the wrong person.

Mr. Dormer stated my only question is, you started something 18 months ago, how come none of us know anything about it?

Alderman Anglace stated, well it was all public information; all the meetings.

Mr. Dormer stated, well it doesn't appear as though it was hollered very loudly.

Alderman Anglace stated, I don't understand your line of questioning. I told you that an Elderly Tax Review Committee met not only once in 2004, but back in 1994. Now I'm sure that most people are not aware of it. Most people - you know - that's natural.

Mr. Dormer stated, it's not said very loudly, that's my problem.

Alderman Anglace stated, oh yes, there were articles in the newspapers.

Mr. Dormer stated, I know, I know, but come on, you know, why weren't there some letters sent out by the City?

Alderman Anglace asked, what do you mean letters? What are we going to send out?

Mr. Dormer stated, send out a letter that it's a proposal or something. Oh, we don't want to discuss that tonight I realize that.

Alderman Anglace stated, they did propose, they raised the tax credit – they doubled it to \$300 the last time they met.

Mr. Dormer stated, yeah, whoopee, but, I thank you very much.

Alderman Anglace stated, that is in addition to the State tax credit. So ours supplemented the State. That is all it was intended to do.

Mr. Dormer stated, so we're here tonight just to follow what the State mandate is.

Alderman Anglace stated, you're here tonight to a public hearing on ordinances proposed – Senior Tax Freeze.

Mr. Dormer stated, okay. Well like most retired people I am unfortunately feeling the pinch in my wallet like everybody in this room. Somehow we never received any, in spite of the fact that there are people that have written books that we've all bought, and it's worked out very well for them, but it hasn't worked out for the senior citizens. Everybody talks about it but nobody does anything about it. That's the big, serious part of it. I am a citizen of this City and I've given back, I think quite a bit. However, at this point in my life, I need badly some help from something more than what the State is offering. So if that's all we can vote on tonight, this is a done deal as far as you guys are concerned, and there is nothing more we can move on with. I thank you very much.

Irving Steiner, 23 Partridge Lane

I am co-founder of We-R-1. I am 78 years old. I don't qualify for this. But I gave this speech previously when there was less attendance here and I feel it's necessary that I repeat a few points.

First of all, the senior citizens in the City deserve what benefits you are giving them, but I think they deserve more. Unfortunately I think the Board or this Commission did not show much empathy to these people when tax time came around and you hit them in the pocketbook. And now I ask, why did you wait so long before you took this pain away from them? It's been here for now two months. Why is it that right a month before election time you throw them this bone? I'll tell you this is giving money and taking it away. No matter how you want to cut it, that's exactly what is happening here. I think that more empathy should have been shown for these senior citizens. I thank you.

Al Sabetta, 77 Coram Road

I've been here for the last 57 years. I want to make a couple of comments on what is going on here tonight. First off, I'd like to say thank you to the committee for their efforts in the last 18 months to come up with some type of a program to benefit the senior citizens in this community.

Talking about income, touching on Social Security, pensions, as what the guidelines are for a person's gross income. We all know, those of us that are on Social Security, the government gives us a piddly cost of living increase every year and 80 percent of each year's increase is eaten up by Medicare. It's about time that something was offered to the seniors to help them with their finances, because the government sure as hell isn't helping us.

I think you are on the right path. Perhaps in the interim or even if this ordinance goes through, maybe somewhere down the line adjustments can be made to benefit some of the comments that were made this evening. Most of us that are seniors 70 or over were in the workforce for 40, 50, some of us 60 years. We paid our dues. We paid our taxes faithfully every year. It's about time we seniors got some Alka Seltzer® relief. That is, we hope all eight Aldermen vote to pass this ordinance. Thank you.

Steve Morse, 8 Willard Road

I was a member of the Senior Tax Relief Committee. We all understand and recognize that our mothers and fathers put a lot into the work effort over the years, and it's time we recognized some of these folks need some help.

Part of our structure for the Tax Relief Committee was to do just that. We spent an awful lot of time and we queried 30 towns the size of Shelton within the State of Connecticut and as part of that query we also interviewed all the Tax Assessors associated with those towns. We looked at local programs, tax abatements, tax freezes, we looked at various schedules to put together relief for our seniors. The final outcome of our group on the Committee, we ended up with recommending an increase of \$150 to \$300 for a local tax credit providing the income State levels were met.

A couple of us on the Committee wanted to do other things like a number of the other towns have done. Raise the income level, create a graduated scale based on income versus the amount of tax credit. But again, part of our democracy is the consensus prevails and that's why we ended up with the \$300.

Part of this thing is a tax freeze. Many of the towns that implemented a tax freeze had very, very little participation because they froze the taxes but that amount frozen got put on a lien against the property. Many of our moms and dads and homeowners probably have paid off their home already and didn't want to see a lien on their property. So most of the towns that we looked at, including Fairfield, Westport, Stratford, a lot of the big ones, they have very, very low participation because of that lien. If I were a senior, I wouldn't do it either.

But this proposal, I think is good, and I support it. I hope some of the other members of our Committee, although I haven't talked to them, would support it also.

There are two changes I'd like to recommend. One is to add a delinquency clause. You'll find that in the current local tax regulations. "***If a taxpayer was delinquent in payment of any taxes, assessments, or usage fees due the City of Shelton shall be ineligible for tax relief under this program.***" That's the first thing I'd recommend.

The second thing I'd recommend is an Asset Test. That says, "***Excluding the value of the City of Shelton legal residence, the applicant's remaining assets may not exceed \$200,000 as attested in the application affidavit to the Tax Assessor.***" The reason for that is, there may be situations where someone may have a large IRA or 401k or home in Vermont or home in California. And even though their income is low, they've got these other assets and they should be able to survive under the State guidelines. That is why I recommend the Asset Test be placed in it. That's all I have.

Ron Pavlucik, 287 Eagle's Landing

Just like Steve Morse who spoke before me, I was also on the Mayor's committee to review tax relief options for senior citizens for that 18-months period during 2004 and 2005. There were five of us that were appointed by the Mayor to that committee – a combination of Democrats and Republicans by the way. Joining us in our studies and analysis and investigations was Gloria, the Tax Assessor, and also the Tax Collector, Debbie Onderko. We had an awful lot of resources, we had a lot of cooperation from other towns, some of us visited Tax Departments and Tax Assessors in other towns. Like Steve said, we investigated about 30 cities and towns of comparable size to Shelton. I back up everything that he said, we looked at options that were available to us, we made some recommendations to the Board of Aldermen and if you recall, you people, back in August 2006 increased the tax credit, the so-called local tax credit, you doubled it from \$150 per year to \$300. But keep in mind that was still in addition to any other people that might qualify under the State's homeowners income and grant program, so that people in Shelton, if they qualified, would be getting a break from two different programs.

The topic of tonight's hearing is on a third type of tax relief program and as I understand it, somebody could actually qualify for all three. I think that's good. If somebody meets the requirements of the State's program and meets the requirements that currently exist for the local tax credit, where by the way the age cutoff is 65 and over, and they get that extra \$300, as I understand the ordinance that's being considered tonight, if this ordinance passes in some form, they would still qualify to have their taxes frozen. So that could mean quite a substantial tax break for a number of people in town, and a number of people in this room, and that's exactly like it should be.

I think time is of the essence. As the Tax Assessor said, the application period is traditionally from February 1<sup>st</sup> to May 15<sup>th</sup>. It would take some time for you people to finalize the details of this ordinance we're discussing tonight, and I think it would be very helpful to have the tax freeze program go into effect as soon as possible which would be next July 1<sup>st</sup>, those taxes set then would be frozen the following year. So, time being of the essence, I would rather see very little discussion and effort spent modifying this existing ordinance, I've got a copy of it in front of me, the one that was read tonight, because so many different things in here could be changed. You could change the age to 65 instead 70 or 75, you could say that they should have been in their house for five years, like somebody suggested today or 10 years. You could say the freeze might only be good for five years instead of indefinitely.

So instead of exploring all the permutations of this ordinance like any other one, why not try to get a consensus on that Board up there, get this thing passed into law, have it effective as soon as possible, which is next year, let Gloria over here start taking applications for those that qualify for this new program February 1<sup>st</sup>, and down the road, if you want to reconvene the Tax Relief Committee made up of the same people or different people, we can fine tune it and make it 72 years of age, or 68 years of age, or whatever changes could be done. Once we see what the impact is from a dollar point of view which somebody asked about, which is a legitimate question.

Alderman Anglace stated, we are not empowered as a municipality to change the law. The law says age 70. You can't go below it. You can go 70 and above. You can't go below it unless they change the law. The Committee could also recommend to the State to change the law. That's possible.

Mr. Pavlucik stated, okay, maybe that part of it can't be changed, but I think we should try to get it adopted as soon as possible. I've done some projections. It really is hard to guesstimate how many people might qualify for this program, what the impact would be on the budget, how much less money would be collected because taxes are frozen. We do know that there are more than 550 people in the current local tax program that get the \$300 or so tax break today, but the cutoff there is 65 years of age. Some number lower than 550 would probably be candidates, but how many exactly, we could only guess, but one thing is sure is that it has been pointed out, it's a win-win no matter how you look at it because every one of those senior citizens that stays in their residence that's precluding, preventing, another person from moving in, usually with young children if it's an older person's house, a house valued at \$300,000 or \$400,000, that many senior citizens have in town right now and those are the people that have the two or three kids in the school system. I think that this thing would pay for itself and I'm in favor of it the way it is drafted. I say put it into effect as soon as possible and if the State allows you can always fine tune it down the road.

Thank you very much.

Gordon Lewis, 70 Poplar Drive

My wife and I have lived in Shelton for 35 years. I want to mention, I know you've got the ordinance pretty much nailed down, but there's an aspect I'd like to mention anyway. In the 35 years my wife and I have lived here, my taxes have gone up five times. They've gone from \$900 to \$5,000 roughly, including a Korean War Veteran's exemption.

We had one child who went through the Shelton School System, and she graduated from Shelton High School 21 years ago. Now, 60 percent of our tax money goes to support the education system in Shelton. For the last 21 years, and there are probably other people in the same situation, we haven't had any children in the School System, and yet 60 percent of our tax money in 21 years is still going to support the tax system. I feel this is rather unfair. I wouldn't expect that 60 percent decrease in my taxes, but I think there should be some consideration there for senior citizens who no longer have children in the school system. I think there should be some tax relief along those lines, along with possibly working in with the ordinance that you proposed. It probably couldn't be done under the State guidelines, but I think it's something that should be considered, I felt it should be mentioned anyway. And regardless of what the income level is, I think it's unfair for people to continue to support the school system completely after they have no children left going through the school system. That is my feeling on the situation.

Theodore Shevzov, 23 Buck Hill Road

I would like to say again, I thank Mr. John Anglace and others who have participated in this program.

Alderman Anglace stated, believe me, Mr. Shevzov is NOT related to me! [Laughter throughout].

Mr. Shevzov continued, I think in order to help the Board of Aldermen and also those who have done some work for 18 months on this, I think in order to help this further, to have better tax relief, which I think many of us are in favor of, to be more fair, we should contact our State Representative and talk to them, I think one is currently Lawrence Miller, if I'm not mistaken. All of us. I make an appeal to all citizens to do that. I happen to know that, who recently passed away Mr. Richard Belden was in favor of it. So therefore, I hope the current Representatives will help us and that way we will help ourselves together - all seniors - to get better relief and also help the Board of Aldermen and let us do that. I appeal to all citizens to thank the Board of Aldermen and again John Anglace who has worked for 14 years I understand on this, and the Committee, thank them for what they have done so far. But in order to help it further, let's contact our State Representatives so that the State guidelines can be changed in favor of senior citizens. Thank you.



Joseph Lanzi, 29 Union Street

I'm a lifelong resident, and former Alderman. I want to encourage all of you to vote for this because it will affect all of us. Sooner or later the majority of seniors will benefit by it. At one time as I recall, we had estimated that the Second Ward has approximately 35 to 40 percent retirees. That would benefit all of them, not only in the Ward, but throughout the City. Good luck.

Letter from Betty Wallace, President, Board of Directors, Views of Long Hill Condominium Association, 493 Asbury Ridge Road

Mrs. Bruder read the following letter into the record:

*Dear Mr. Anglace,*

*We understand that when the Board of Aldermen meet on Tuesday September 25<sup>th</sup> they will be discussing the proposed tax freeze for seniors. Much to the regret of many of us in The Views, your meeting falls on the same evening and at the same time as the annual meeting of the Asbury Ridge Residents Association, and few of us are therefore available to come to City Hall to give you the support we all feel the Board deserves.*

*I write this letter on behalf of all our residents to say how grateful we are that such a proposal has been made, and to express the hope of all of us that it may have smooth passage to its acceptance by all City officials concerned with its eventual outcome.*

*Sincerely,*

*Betty Wallace, President  
Board of Directors*

### **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:15 p.m., Alderman Papa MOVED to close the Public Hearing; SECONDED by Alderman Perillo. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 8-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia M. Bruder  
Clerk, Board of Aldermen

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

SEPTEMBER 25, 2007

BOARD OF ALDERMEN  
PUBLIC HEARING ON ORDINANCES  
SENIOR TAX FREEZE ORDINANCE

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DATE APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

BY: \_\_\_\_\_

Mark A. Lauretti  
Mayor, City of Shelton