Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Charlotte Madar, Chairman of Board of Apportionment and Taxation, called the Budget Hearing meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. All those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Board of Apportionment and Taxation

Charlotte Madar, Chairman- Present
Joe Palmucci, Vice Chairman- Present
John Belden- Present
Joe Knapik- Present
Louis Dagostine- Present
John Zikaras- Present

Board of Aldermen

John Anglace, President- Present
Jack Finn- Present
Stan Kudej- Present
Lynne Farrell- Present
Eric McPherson – Present
Noreen McGorty- Present
Anthony Simonetti- Present

0600 Inland/Wetlands

Department Requested $90,828; Mayor recommends $90,828

John Cook represented the budget for Inland/Wetlands.

John Cook mentioned that his budget for this year has remained the same this
year, with the exception of payroll, with the recognition that Connecticut as a whole is slow to recover has a budget of the same parameters as last year. The part time account should show as a slight reduction, recognizing that my part time employee also works for the Planning & Zoning Department, as well as for the Blight Department.

Charlotte Madar referred back and mentioned that his part time employee account last year was $17,816, and this year you have requested $19,872.

John Cook replied, it was an earlier submittal. On the budget printouts it might show the $19,872 however the sheets uploaded on your Chromebooks should show a $2400 reduction. The new request for the Part Time Account should show on the budget runs as $14,190.

Joseph Knapik asked if the Inland/Wetland Department returned any money to the City last year? If so, how much?

John Cook replied that he did not have those figures at the meeting. He said he went to print off his copy of the Revenue section and his budget, but in the submittal that should be on your screen there were unused account items or revenues that were generated.

Charlotte Madar asked if there was a surplus in the budget?

John Cook replied that he did not generate that figure of a surplus. Legal notices are expensive, and the amount expended on that account solely hinges on how much public hearings are held, how many meetings are held. With the reduced amount of activity, there has actually been less of a need for legal notices. So the amount expended in that particular line item may be smaller.

Joseph Knapik added that any money given back was due to reduced activity.

Louis Dagostine mentioned there is a slight increase to the Regular Payroll line item on the hard copies, from last year’s requests.

John Cook replied that it was from the accrual. Right now the union is under negotiations so the contract salary remains the same at the present time until there is a new contract.

Louis Dagostine asked if there were any revenue accounts?

John Cook replied yes. The department generates fees from applications, permits, miscellaneous fees such as surcharges and also from certificates.
Louis Dagostine mentioned in the Inland/Wetlands application fee line item under the Revenue Accounts, the department has exceeded; last year it was budgeted as $6,600 and your request for this year is $8,000. We base that figure from the number of individual projects that come in. Those fees changes depending upon the scope of development; it can vary quite a bit.

Charlotte Madar asked if the Inland/Wetlands Department has any six-year capital items?

John Cook added the replacement of the department vehicle, which is also shared with the Planning & Zoning Department.

0700 Economic Development Commission

Department Requested $51,551; Mayor recommends $51,551

Fred Ruggio represented the budget for Economic Development Commission.

Charlotte Madar mentioned that the Mayor has matched the department’s requests.

Fred Ruggio then said that his budget sheet that was printed off from the Finance Department was not correct.

Charlotte Madar went through his line items and the numbers did match up from the Department Recommended and the Mayor’s Recommendations.

John Anglace said the Chromebook listed different numbers for your line items, but the hard copies are correct.

Louis Dagostine asked about the Meeting, Travel and Conference line item: it looks like there is over $4,000 left. Do you anticipate spending that much?

Fred Ruggio replied it is the main economic event for the business community. Usually we have a gathering in order to tell the various companies about the City of Shelton. I have had it in the budget for the last two years, and the Mayor keeps saying let’s do it later. That is why I keep putting it in the budget. If I do not use it, it comes back to the City obviously.
Joseph Knapik asked if there were any funds that were returned to the City last year?

Fred Ruggio responded around $4,000, which was the main economic event as well another $1,000 besides that figure.

**0800 Economic Development**

Department Requested $105,000; Mayor recommends $95,000

Jim Ryan represented the budget for Economic Development.

Jim Ryan mentioned a question that the committee always asks, can you get by with less than what with you had originally requested? We have always agreed that if the administration challenges us to get creative and to do more, then we need to try to do that. We will try to do that; we plan on doing better and if we have an issue then we will come back and speak to you about it. That has happened to us twice in 31 years where we had to come back to the Aldermen, this Board and to the Mayor for supplemental funding, but we try to avoid that.

Alderman Finn had a question relating to the Capital Outlay item: Riverwalk Extension. You will be requesting $250,000 from us in 2016, 2017 and 2018. Have you applied for any federal grants, or received any federal grants that will help to pay for this?

Jim Ryan replied yes, in the last year that earmarks were given out Shelton received 2, $800,000 earmarks that will be applied towards this third phase. The City does need to match that with 20%. The City finished the second phase last year, completely with City resources and you have saved over $500,000, because you have avoided all of the federal paperwork costs. I believe at the last Board of Aldermen monthly meeting, they have deferred the decision on the engineering agreement but we expect that will get addressed soon.

**0900 Planning & Zoning**

Department Requested $329,761; Mayor recommends $304,761

Rick Schultz represented the budget for Planning & Zoning.
Rick Schultz said we are requesting a net reduction of $40,000. There was a passing of my Assistant, Pat Tisi, this year. My department now is 3.5, instead of the 4.5. We are a very close team, and will continue to provide the service to the community.

I placed another $40,000 to do the balance of the blocks. You can decide to reduce that if you deem fit, but as you I can spend $10,000 without requiring going out to bid for a professional consultant. That is what we did with the two-block area, and so far that dollar amount is working. We would like to do two blocks at a time because it works well that way. If you decide to reduce it, we need to do more planning because the economy is going to get stronger, so we would have to come before your board again to talk about it.

Charlotte Madar pointed out that the Mayor reduced your Special Area Study line item by $25,000. Your requested amount was $40,000 and he gave you $15,000.

Rick Schultz replied that was the dollar amount for the balance of the blocks. Generally we are going to request $10,000 for a two-block study.

Charlotte Madar asked can you live with $15,000, or do you absolutely need the $40,000?

Rick Schultz replied no. As Jim Ryan has said, you do what you have to do and we would always come back to you. We are here to tell you what our planning proposal is. The planning is needed because my Commission and the Mayor’s Office has agreed they want new thinking outside the box, instead of doing it in-house.

Alderman Finn added you are looking at ten blocks in total downtown, at $10,000 for every two blocks. Then, the $5,000 is useless.

Rick Schultz replied that they would have to come back to the board to request an additional $5,000 to complete the two-block study.

Alderman Finn added that the Mayor reintroduced his budget to us, and now $105,000 in an unbalanced budget so if you can do without the $5,000, that would help us to try to balance the budget.

Rick Schultz said certainly, we will try to work with you.

Joseph Knapik asked how does the $40,000 help you save, due to the passing of your employee, Pat Tisi, fits into the total picture of your department?
Rick Schultz responded that we have employed 4.5 employees, including the part-time employee that is shared with the Inland/Wetlands Department and the Blight Program. Patrick Tisi was my Assistant for the past 18 years; his understudy is Tom Dingle and he has been in our department for at least 15 years so we always had a good team approach. The workload is there and we will deal with it, so I do not anticipate any problems with one person missing. We are a bare bones budget, so we spend money that is allocated to us and we do not have capital improvement items.

Charlotte Madar asked are there revenue accounts?

Rick Schultz replied yes. We are projecting around a little under $40,000 this year, and I think that is going to underscore what we are really going to get this year because of the anticipated applications that are forthcoming.

1300 Conservation Commission

Department Requested $66,001; Mayor recommends $61,812

Tom Harbinson represented the budget for Conservation Commission.

Charlotte Madar pointed out that Mayor has decreased your Regular Payroll line item by $5,000.

Tom Harbinson said just to clarify; it is shown as a Regular Payroll item, which would be for the regular staff person, who is actually part time for the Conservation Commission, Teresa Gallagher. In addition to doing the Conservation Commission role, she has also been utilized for Project Clean Sweep, Community Garden and other affairs that the Mayor’s Office has directed her to do. When we first hired a staff person many years ago, the title was full time and it was called a Natural Resource Officer. When that person departed, we did utilize the part time service but there have been so many activities that have been added on. A couple of years ago, we have talked to the Mayor’s Office to make that a full time position, and that why last year’s request was at $45,000. I do not whether the thinking is to keep that position part time, or becoming a full time position in the course of the next fiscal year? From our Conservation Commission standpoint, we would really like to see that position become full time. Even though it is shown as Regular Payroll, there is a dollar under the part time account and that position is part time.

Charlotte Madar asked does $40,000 cover her position because you have
requested $45,000?

Tom Harbinson replied when talking to Tom Taylor two years ago, when we put the request in for $45,000 was that when it bumps up to a full time position, there are other costs that come into play. That was a budgeted number that we thought would be adequate for a full time position.

Charlotte Madar also pointed out that the Mayor gave you $20 more in the Meeting, Travel and Conferences line item.

Tom Harbinson added if you look at what is spent year to date, we do not have many conferences. This year we only spent around $110. The Mayor has taken away $10 from the Dues and Subscriptions line item. There was an agency that has increased their dues this year by $10, so that is why we increased that line by $10. The $10 should be placed back into that line item, please. We participate in the Clean Sweep project, we had 4 Eagle Scout Projects this year, we have businesses plus an additional business that adopted a street, 6 guided hikes with our volunteers, and we provide work parties for students who have completed their public service requirements for graduation. So, the dollars that are spent in this department are really leveraged into volunteer activities beyond on what the City is expending financially.

Charlotte Madar asked does that also go into your Community Garden expenses? Or is that different?

Tom Harbinson replied that it is a puzzlement on why the Mayor gave the department extra money for Community Garden expenses; $800 more. The $1,200 expense item is an equal mash to the $1,200 in revenue that is generated, of the fees that the participants in the Community Garden pay. Although we do not have line items shown on an income side, which for that instance would be a revenue item of $1,200 somewhere in your budget that should be matching that. I do not have an idea of what the Mayor has in mind for his increase of $2,000 in our budget.

Charlotte Madar pointed out we can take $10 out of that account and place it into the Dues and Subscriptions line item, and $20 back into the Meeting line item. That would then leave you with $770 extra.

Tom Harbinson mentioned that would be satisfactory to me, in order to keep the line items status quo. We also do not have any items for capital improvement at this time.

More discussion found on tape.
**1800 Zoning Appeals Board**

Department Requested $19,064; Mayor recommends $19,064

No representation from Zoning Appeals Board.

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**2000 Public Safety & Emergency Services**

Department Requested $123,404; Mayor recommends $123,404

Michael Maglione represented the Public Safety & Emergency Services budget.

Michael Maglione mentioned there was not much of a change to his budget this year.

Charlotte Madar mentioned that the Mayor has matched your budget dollar for dollar.

Louis Dagostine asked the EOC Maintenance line item may be an error, but I see a balance of $3,730 with a request of $5,000 from last year. The year to date actual is $0. Those numbers do not match up. It has a balance but with nothing that was spent.

Alderman Finn said this department encumbered $1,270; that is in a new run off that we have just received tonight.

Charlotte Madar asked are there any capital or revenue items for this department?

Michael Maglione replied no, not at this time.

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**2100 EMS Commission**

Department Requested $123,102; Mayor recommends $123,102

Noreen McGorty represented the budget for EMS Commission.
Noreen McGorty mentioned that the department change is very minimal from last year. It was based off of the communications system; that is our biggest increase. There was also a minor change for the paramedic service.

There are also a few line items in this budget that are zeroed. I would like to have line items for Communication Maintenance and Communication Equipment removed.

Charlotte Madar said the line item for Bundle Billing is $1. Do you want to still keep this line item open?

Noreen McGorty responded yes. As well, the Professional Services line item is for $1 to be kept open.

Charlotte Madar added that the Mayor has matched your budget dollar for dollar.

Alderman Finn asked a question pertaining to the Personnel Training line item. Historically all of that revenue has been returned back to the City, and I understand the personnel training is for the commissioners only.

Noreen McGorty replied that it can be for the commissioners. We put it in the budget if we wanted to do something on behalf of the City. It is mainly for the commission, but it could also for the community.

**2200 Fire Marshall**

Department Requested $272,146; Mayor recommends $272,146

Jim Tortora represents the budget for Fire Marshall’s Office.

Jim Tortora stated that he does not have any major changes to his budget; he noted that it actually decreased this year.

Alderman Simonetti asked why is your budget a little lower this year?

Jim Tortora replied that he has eliminated one part time position in his department. There are two positions, but we are not going to need two people until sometime next year.

Alderman Finn pointed out that historically there has not been any usage in the Gasoline account. At the end of the year, they transfer that revenue over to the Fire Department. This year, the Mayor has reduced the Fire Department’s Gasoline account. Can we zero this out and transfer this amount to the Fire
Jim Tortora stated that his Gasoline account does not get transferred to the Fire Department; it gets transferred to the Police Department budget.

Alderman Finn asked if that amount could get transferred to the Police Department budget?

Jim Tortora stated that he gets his gas from the Police Department.

Charlotte Madar asked do they charge your department for the amount?

Jim Tortora replied yes they take the actual amount out, and then transfer it to the Police Department account. Paul Hiller will have to transfer it; we usually do that in April.

Charlotte Madar added that it looks like you have reduced that account from $8,000 to $5,220.

Jim Tortora replied yes. I set that budget amount depending on the price per gallon, by the Purchasing Agent.

Charlotte Madar stated that the Mayor has matched that amount you have requested.

Louis Dagostine mentioned that there are two line items with $0 as a Department Request: Overtime Pay and Communication Equipment. Do you still need those line items open?

Jim Tortora replied no. The radios are brand new, so we are not anticipating on buying new radios. We also do not get overtime pay; I do not know why that line is still listed in my budget. That line item has been zeroed out in the past 5 or 6 years. However, leave the Communication Equipment line item open with $1 to keep it open.

John Zikaras pointed out a larger increase in the Medical Supplies line item. Do you expect to be purchasing more medical supplies?

Jim Tortora replied yes, we are looking into purchasing a couple AED machines for one of the vehicles. We are trained in the use of an AED machine, through City Hall.
2400 Fire Department

Department Requested $991,970; Mayor recommends $956,970

Fire Chief, Fran Jones and Michael Maglione represented the budget for Fire Department.

Charlotte Madar had a question concerning the Pension Incentive Awards line item, in the Fire Department budget. The Mayor has decreased it by $30,000. Can you manage with the cut?

Fran Jones replied it would greatly affect the funding for that plan. Last year, it cost us $143,000 to fund the plan; the previous year was $140,000 to fund the plan. Two years ago, it was funded at $100,000 and I had asked for a funding increase based on the actuary studies of what the plan was going to cost. This board granted the $40,000 increased budget for the plan. It turned out to be $143,000 in change but we pretty much on mark for last year. This year, the actuaries are looking $160,000 to $180,000 to fund the plan to the appropriate levels, depending, which way they are looking at the numbers. The $30,000 decrease is significant in itself. The plan’s value continues to increase.

Charlotte Madar asked is this contractual?

Fran Jones replied it is a length of service awards program. It is the only incentive program that the volunteer fire department has. Besides the chief officers that receive a stipend, everyone else in the department is completely volunteer. This is the only incentive program for the volunteers, and it provides a very small payment at the age of 65 after they have completed 25 years of service to the City of Shelton, as a firefighter. I believe the program started in 1988 and it has been continuous since 1988.

Michael Maglione added think of it as a pension. The maximum number a person can receive, with the maximum amount of time at age 65 is $375 per month. The funds that we are talking about are sitting around $600,000, which according to the actuarial, funds 51% of the anticipated cost for whatever the lifetime is. The $180,000 that the Chief mentioned is at the recommendation at the actuarial that it should be at a minimum of 75% funding. This $180,000 would be $180,000 over several years in order to get where we should be. We have requested $140,000, but that was before the $180,000 number. We are looking at this closely, as the Fire Commission is concerned. We have been in communication with the new Pension Board that has been in existence for about 8 months now. We are possibly looking to do things a little different, but the dollar request is based upon what the actuarial has told us.
Alderman Anglace mentioned that one of the issues that this has brought up to this point is that the benefit level has been determined by the Fire Commissioners. The Board of Fire Commissioners change the level but does not look at the actuarial cost going forward; then they come to us to say they need to fund it. The Pension Board is taking on all of these things and taking a look at it, saying business needs to be done differently.

Michael Maglione added I provided the members of the Pension Board with a 150-page document, establishing the history, what increases that have taken place through the years. Actually there has been one increase in the benefit from $10 per year of service to $15 per year of service.

Alderman Anglace mentioned we need to make sure that when these guys retire, the money is there to take care of them.

Fran Jones pointed out that the $110,000 is not going to cut it in order to fund it appropriately.

Joseph Knapik asked is this a matter of time before this gets resolved?

Michael Maglione replied I believe the City will receive guidance in the right direction to go that will maintain that benefit for the firefighters.

Joseph Knapik asked so this is minus $30,000 is not serious at this time?

Michael Maglione replied there is a concern because the actuarial is saying this is what you need to put in now in order to maintain the growth through the years.

Charlotte Madar pointed out that the Mayor has decreased the Gasoline line item by $5,000.

Fran Jones mentioned that he usually goes to the Board of Apportionment and Taxation for a modest transfer in funds, towards the end of the fiscal year. I expect us to spend around $35,000; it may be $30,000 if gas prices continue to be low. I would like us to stay around the range of $35,000; we would usually be able to stay within budget or would have to go to the Board of Apportionment and Taxation for a modest transfer.

Alderman Finn asked a question regarding the line item for Fire Company Allowance. Each Fire Company is given $10,000 per year for their allowance, which covers their insurance and other activities. Yet, there is $11,087 remaining in that account. Why is there $11,087 left over?
Fran Jones replied that when one of the Fire Company Commissioners took money out, they took it out of the Professional Services Account so we would have to transfer that over. It is an Accounting error that showed up on the budget run off.

Alderman Finn asked per City Charter, the Fire Marshall must submit his budget to the Board of Fire Commissioners for their approval. Has he done that this year?

Michael Maglione replied no.

Charlotte Madar asked what is your six-year capital outlay?

Fran Jones replied some of the items that the Board of Aldermen and the Mayor have been consistently funding for us is the structural fire gear replacement. When I first became chief, we have developed a replacement plan for our fire gear: fire hose, different vehicles so we could budget appropriately over the years instead of asking for lump sum funding. When looking at the 2015-16 Capital Improvement Plan, you will see the $180,000 for structural fire gear replacement phase 1 of 6. Every year we try to replace 40 to 50 sets of fire gear; fire gear has a life span of 10 years. We also want to replace 8,000 feet of fire hose every year within the next 6 years. The next items are the Fire Department Command Vehicles; I have asked for a replacement of the two oldest vehicles. Next is the replacement of the aerial ladder at Company #1. Other items are purchasing a security system for all four companies, renovations for Company #4, #3 and #5. As well, Chairman Maglione, Deputy Chief Hongo and myself are looking into replacement location for Echo Hose Fire Headquarters; this has been in the capital plan since 1988.

Alderman Finn asked why is there not anything in the capital plan for communications? It would be particularly for the White Hills section. With the radio, you cannot communicate from Ten Coat Lane, Thoreau Drive; those are all dead areas. Are you looking to put up an antenna to improve communications?

Fran Jones replied yes, on the Public Safety side: the Chairman, myself and the Public Safety Council have looked into it and have looked into studies that will greatly enhance the Police Department’s communication in the upper White hills area, and it will also enhance the Fire Department’s communication system as well. We have some preliminary numbers, around $250,000 to $300,000 for a tower to take care of that.
Adjournment

Chairman Madar MOVED to adjourn the March 31, 2015 Budget Hearing meeting; seconded by Joe Palmucci. A voice vote was taken; motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned approximately 7:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Brittany Gannon, Clerk