



Board of Aldermen
Shelton, Connecticut
FINANCE COMMITTEE – MARCH 22, 2005

Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Alderman Stanley Kudej, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. All those present rose and pledged allegiance to the flag.

Roll Call - Finance Committee

Alderman Stanley Kudej, Chairman, present
Aldermanic President John F. Anglace, Jr. - present
Alderman Nancy Minotti - present

Public Session

Alderman Kudej asked if any member of the public wished to address the Finance Committee.

Ann Walsh, 189 Coram Road

I'm totally unprepared; I happened to notice today that you were having the Senior Tax Relief on your agenda today. I wanted to come because it is an important issue for a lot of senior citizens in town. I wanted to express my opinion – not yet being in that senior category. I'm concerned about how the shift of the tax – I don't know what research you've done or where it stands, and I'll stay until the end of the meeting to see how far it has come – but I'm concerned about any tax cuts that might happen and the burden of the taxes being put on the people that are left.

I'm sure it's not the only thing that we can talk about tax cuts on, but since I saw it there, it's something that - I have a long way to go yet – I'm working two jobs – I have a full time job and a part time job; I have two kids in college.

I can tell you the story that I've been here for 25 years paying taxes. I know what it is to pay for my taxes, I know my responsibilities. I've taken on the extra job to help my family.

I'm just concerned about when the cuts come, who is going to pay? I didn't really get a chance to look at anything else. I'm worried about how you're going to shift the burden of the tax payment on those of us that are going to continue to pay, until I'm a senior. I don't even know if that's going to be around when I'm old enough to qualify for a senior tax break; I don't even know if it will be there at the time I'm of the age that you're considering a tax break for. My concern is with the cuts and how you are going to make up, and who is going to have to make up the difference.

I want to say quickly, I am so for tax relief for people who cannot afford it. I don't mind helping those in need. But just because a person hits 65 to me is not a reason to cut their taxes. If they can afford to pay, I think they should. If a person's income is limited, then it stands to reason that they need help - I have no problem with that. But someone just coming to the age of 65, just because they are 65 and they may have money in the bank for all I know. It's going to be hard, and it's going to be up to me, and people like me, and people coming up behind me, to make up the difference.

So I know you've modeled after some towns, and I know that you're still doing research. I just could not miss this and state my opinion that I really want my age category people and those coming behind me - we are going to have to make up the difference. I really am concerned. There are so many other things in society that are increasing in prices, and like I said - I'm already working two jobs. I can't work three; there aren't enough hours in the day.

Thank you very much.

Alderman Kudej asked if any other member of the public wished to address the Finance Committee. Being none, Alderman Kudej declared the public session closed.

Alderman Anglace MOVED that Agenda Item 14 be discussed first, with discussion not to go beyond 45 minutes; SECONDED by Alderman Minotti. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

14. Senior Tax Relief

Discussion:

The Finance Committee members, along with Assessor Gloria Kovac, Mr. Ronald Pavlucik, and Mr. Steve Morse, reviewed the handout entitled "Shelton Senior Tax Cap / Freeze Discussion Fairfield."

Alderman Anglace noted that he and Ms. Kovac visited the Town of Fairfield and sat with the Director of Finance for the Town, Paul Hiller, and met with Assessor Tom Brown.

SIDE TWO

Alderman Anglace stated, this decision ultimately will be a judgment decision. I am leaning in the direction of making it a manageable amount that we transfer. We were cautioned, we were advised, by the Fairfield people, to do it slowly and not go hog wild. You'll notice the history of the state. They went in to this program and said, 'we're going to do for you,' and then they quickly dropped it. It just becomes a nightmare to manage. We're learning; we're gathering data and I believe we're going to make the right decision. But I think they've got to be prudent decisions. I have to strike a balance, because I really see the benefit of providing an incentive to keep seniors in their homes. I would not qualify for this program under any circumstances. I have three bedrooms. If I sell my house somebody should come in with two kids. One guy called me who has five bedrooms, and it's just him and his wife. There is some credence on that side, and there is something to be gained. He explained to me that his Social Security isn't going up much, his pension is not tied to a cost of living. Every year he has to take a loan on the house to pay the taxes and keep going. Sooner or later he'll have to go to a condo. They don't want to, but that's the direction they're going.

Alderman Anglace explained, we're not going to rush into this. It's worthy of some investment to help seniors to stay in their homes. It's a balancing act.

Ms. Kovac stated, as administrator of my department I have to say this – I caution you about this. If you implement these three tracks, the burden falls on the Assessor's office. I cannot stretch my staff any more than they are stretched. If you implement this, you will be implementing this at a revaluation year. We have in-house revaluation. I cannot stretch my staff any more than I am stretching them. Right now, when an elderly comes in, we take at least 15 minutes, if not more if there is some complication with the application, or if they don't have all of their information, to fill out the form. If they come in now, at least double that time because you have to spend all that time explaining their options. Please, bear that in mind that the staff, especially when you want to implement this, will be very overburdened because we are implementing an in-house revaluation. I know you people have no idea all the work that involves, but I invite all of you to stay with us a day or two and you will see all the work that involves.

Alderman Anglace stated, supposing we were to beef up the current program this year, as Ron pointed out earlier, for adoption next year. And supposing we took it from \$150 to \$200. That wouldn't unnecessarily put a burden on your staff. Then, I think the following year we would implement the freeze and the deferral.

Ms. Kovac agreed, that is manageable.

Alderman Anglace continued, if you go with the deferral you're not losing anything, you're going to get your money back with interest.

Mr. Morse stated, you have to carry whatever is deferred from year to year until the house is sold. It's an investment; a secured debt. While this is going on, you have to carry forward a non-revenue balance.

Alderman Anglace explained, when somebody defers, Fairfield defers the increase. You defer the tax increase. This is not a windfall.

Mr. Pavlucik stated, we could go with Westport's, which defers the entire thing.

Alderman Anglace replied, we could do a number of things, but we've got to see how this plays out and do some evaluation.

Mr. Morse stated, I agree with the \$200; but wouldn't it be smart at this time to put in a tabled matrix of values rather than just a straight \$200? Because at some point in time, maybe the groups would want to expand that matrix – much like Fairfield has, much like Trumbull has. Put the matrix in place so it can be adjusted two years away or three years away, rather than just go to a straight number.

Alderman Kudej will schedule another meeting in a couple of weeks to further the discussion.

1. Approval of Minutes

Alderman Anglace MOVED to recommend to the full Board to waive the reading and approve the minutes of the regular Finance Committee meeting of January 25, 2005 and the March 3, 2005 meeting minutes as amended and filed with the City Clerk on Wednesday March 9, 2005; SECONDED by Alderman Minotti. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

2. February Statutory Refunds

Alderman Anglace MOVED to recommend to the full Board that the report of the Tax Collector relative to the refund of taxes for a total amount of \$46,883.95 be approved if found to be correct, and that the Finance Director be directed to make payments in accordance with the Certified List received from the Tax Collector. Funds to come from the Statutory Refunds Account #001-0000-311.13.00; SECONDED by Alderman Minotti. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

3. March Statutory Refunds

Alderman Anglace MOVED to recommend to the full Board that the report of the Tax Collector relative to the refund of taxes for a total amount of \$45,934.01 be approved if found to be correct, and that the Finance Director be directed to make payments in accordance with the Certified List received from the Tax Collector. Funds to come from the Statutory Refunds Account #001-0000-311.13.00; SECONDED by Alderman Minotti. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

4. Suspense List

Alderman Anglace MOVED to recommend to the full Board that the report of the Tax Collector relative to the Grand List, for a total of \$187,934.30 be transferred from the Grand Lists into Suspense per State Statute Section 12-165:

<u>GRAND LIST</u>	<u>TAX</u>
1998	\$161.30
1999	\$5,480.84
2000	\$32,115.16
2001	\$60,338.06
2002	\$89,649.49
2003	\$189.45

SECONDED by Alderman Minotti.

A full copy of the suspense list is available in the office of the Clerk of the Board of Aldermen.

A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

5. Lease – Perry Hill Road

Letter received from renter. Review of Lease.

Discussion:

This is the lease of 58 Perry Hill Road –

Alderman Anglace read the letter from the tenant into the record:

I would like to know if it is possible for my son and I to move into the apartment next door. It also has been vacant now for two years and what really bothers us is that we are paying to heat an empty apartment, which I don't think is fair for the past two years. I had asked last year if there was any way we could get help or reimbursed somehow, but was told there was nothing that could be done at that time. The bill for February was \$700, the last month \$559, and right now the total is over \$3,000. Last year I was able to get help, which paid \$2,400, but this year I can't. What we are preparing to take over the other apartment and pay \$1,000 for the both and take care of all of the utilities – the electric and water bill are fine, it's just the gas that is the problem. We take care of the yard, do all the shoveling, painting the apartment, and feel we have been good neighbors and give nobody any problems. Please let me know of your decision.

6. Appraisal – Long Hill Avenue, Map 21, Lot 46

Alderman Anglace MOVED to recommend to the full Board to authorize payment of \$1,000 to John M. Rak for property appraisal as noted on Map 21, Lot 46 as authorized by the Board of Aldermen on January 13, 2005 with funding to come from the Professional Services Account #001-0100-411.30-01; SECONDED by Alderman Minotti. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

7. Title Searches – Unknown Lots

Alderman Anglace MOVED to recommend to the full Board to approve the payment of \$1,000 to Land Titles Incorporated for title searches regarding the four "unknown lots" located in Pine Rock Park

with funding to come from the Pine Rock Park Fund; SECONDED by Alderman Minotti. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

8. New Phone System – Highways & Bridges

Alderman Anglace MOVED to recommend to the full Board the installation of a new phone system at the Highways & Bridges Department at a cost not to exceed \$4,100 with funding to come from LOCIP, and further,

MOVED to add this to the Capital Improvements List; SECONDED by Alderman Minotti. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

9. Garage Doors – Highways & Bridges

Alderman Anglace MOVED to recommend to the full Board to approve the purchase of a new garage door from Overhead Door Company with a cost not to exceed \$3,800 with funding to come from LOCIP, and further,

MOVED to add this item to the Capital Improvement List and further, to approve the waiver of the third written quote required by Charter; SECONDED by Alderman Minotti.

Alderman Anglace explained that they went out to get quotes, and got two quotes, and couldn't get a third written quote. This is why we are recommending the waiver of the third written quote.

A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

10. Lease Extension – Hide Out

Review of current lease for possible extension.

Alderman Anglace MOVED to TABLE; SECONDED by Alderman Minotti. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

11. Additional Funding – Professional Services Account

Alderman Anglace MOVED to recommend to the full Board the transfer of \$700 from the Contingency General Account 001-0900-900.90-00 to the Professional Services Account # 001-0300-412.30-01 to cover the contracted price of the auditor as approved by the Board of Aldermen on January 27, 2005; SECONDED by Alderman Minotti. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

12. Funding Request Transfer – Special Area Study Account – Planning and Zoning Commission

Alderman Anglace MOVED to recommend to the full Board the transfer of \$15,000 from Contingency General Account 001-0900-900.90-00 to Special Area Study Account 001-0900-414.30-31 to cover the cost of the Traffic Consultant for the 2005 Plan of Development; SECONDED by Alderman Minotti.

This is a reimbursement request for money expended on the Traffic Consultant for the '05 Plan of Development.

Jason Perillo of the Planning and Zoning Commission explained, the Traffic Study is a component of the Plan Update project. That money runs through Planning and Zoning which is why the money is coming through Planning and Zoning.

Alderman Anglace AMENDED the motion to include "subject to written verification from Planning and Zoning of the amount that was expended for the Traffic Study."

Mr. Perillo will have staff write a letter to the Board verifying the amount spent.

A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

13. Plumb Memorial Library Restoration – Funding Request

Alderman Anglace MOVED to recommend to the full Board per the recommendation of the Plumb Memorial Library Building Committee to approve \$62,000 for the restoration of the Library with funding not to exceed \$62,000 to come from LOCIP, and further,

MOVED to add this item to the Capital Improvements List;
SECONDED by Alderman Minotti. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

Alderman Anglace stated, between now and the meeting we have to ask Paul DiMauro if the air conditioning system has been already designed, or if it is going out to design. That is not clear.

Adjournment

At approximately 7:45 p.m., Alderman Minotti MOVED to adjourn;
SECONDED by Alderman Anglace. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia M. Bruder
Clerk, Board of Aldermen