



**SPECIAL VIRTUAL
BOARD OF ALDERMEN and the
BOARD OF APPORTIONMENT & TAXATION
CITY OF SHELTON, CT
THURSDAY, APRIL 1, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.
in Auditorium, Shelton City Hall, 54 Hill Street, Shelton, CT
Live-streamed at www.cityofshelton.org
MEETING MINUTES**

Call to Order/Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Mark A. Lauretti called the Special Virtual Meeting of the Board of Aldermen to order at 4:00 p.m. in the auditorium at Shelton City Hall. All those present stood and pledged allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Roll Call

Board of Aldermen

Alderman John F. Anglace, Jr., President- Present
Alderman Eric McPherson, Vice President- Present
Alderman Cris Balamaci- Present
Alderman Joanna Carloni – Present
Alderman David Gidwani- Present via Phone
Alderman Noreen McGorty- Not Present
Alderman Anthony Simonetti- Present
Alderman Bernie Simons- Present

Board of Apportionment & Taxation

John Francino-Quinn – Not present
John Belden- Present via phone
Steve Guralnick – Present via phone
John Boyko – Not present
Michelle Laubin – Present via phone
Joseph Knapik – Not present

- AGENDA ITEM

- *Mayor Mark A. Laretti presents his budget for Fiscal Year 2021-2022 to the Board of Aldermen and the Board of Apportionment and Taxation.*

I just want to begin by calling attention to the March 17, 2021 article in the New York Times titled 'Shelton CT. More Living Space & Lower Taxes.' It's prefaced by saying, 'the up-and-coming city in Fairfield County is part suburb, part gritty downtown, with more residential and commercial development in the works.' It's so true. For me, it's particularly gratifying when it's coming from someone outside our borders because when people look at the City of Shelton, this is a reflection of what they see. Quite honestly. it's something we have worked towards for years.

Last year's theme was uncertainty and for the most part, I believe we are in the same situation again. Much will depend upon the ability of our economy to rebound and clarification of use on the federal stimulus monies coming to municipalities and Board of Education's across the state is still not known. And, for the BOE, it represents about six million dollars.

Next year's budget will look much like this year's only reflecting contractual increases.

Change is always inevitable- the most significant in my 30 years is people's willingness to say anything with total disregard for truth and facts. This could not be clearer than with Charter Revision last November.

Some issues:

- *Vote no—keep education bipartisan.* I thought to myself, how is that possible? We are operating under the existing Charter where education isn't bipartisan. There is a controlling party dictated by the Charter.
- *Charter change will cause your taxes to go up.* Really? Documents make your taxes go up and not people? In fact, take a look at our mill rate over the last thirty years. Twenty times we have either left the mill rate alone or lowered it. I don't think there is anyone in the State of Connecticut that can be more consistent when it comes to tax stability than the City of Shelton and demonstrated by our mill rate and also the fact that we are recognized by so many other entities outside our borders.
- *Claims of A&T as the oversight fiscal watchdog.* That is almost laughable. A reading of the Charter shows that there are two responsibilities for the Board of A&T. One of them is delivering a budget and passing it on to the Board of Aldermen. In the last ten years, four times the Board of A&T couldn't even deliver a budget to the Board of Aldermen negating their responsibilities under the Charter. Actually, the Board of A&T wanted to defund the police by \$1 million and that same group on social media supports the Shelton Police Union. You can't have it both ways.

This radical social agenda that has moved across our country is now here in Shelton and we must push back. Not only is our Police Department going to be fully funded in this budget, it is also state accredited-which has never happened before. We are upholding standards for performance. We are ensuring that people do their jobs, so that girls don't get raped and supervisors don't cover it up. If that's what you want to support, I got to tell you, I am not there, and you can expect a lot of push back from me.

This budget reflects a modest increase for the Board of Education and at some time before final adoption, the Board of Aldermen can and will modify that number once clarification on the use of federal stimulus monies to the tune of \$6 million has been made or other monies have been made available.

We recognize that there are new and important programs to enhance learning due to the effect of the pandemic such as:

- Eureka Math K-8
- Reading Writing K-8 called wit and wisdom
- New Social Studies courses that are now state mandate – African American and Latino studies. Shelton is slated as a pilot program.
- Along with social and emotional learning which may be implemented

On the subject of school buses, we enter our third year at a fixed price of \$3,150,000 compared to the Durham transportation bid of \$4,300,000 with escalators every year that has established cost stability and savings in the amount of over \$3 million. Now some in Shelton are critical of our performance this past year totally negating the fact that there is a worldwide pandemic. Everything has been disrupted.

While school systems across the state and country struggled with school transportation, we are supposed to be immune to it. I want to call to everyone's attention that back in early November, our school system closed for 2 ½ months, like most school systems across the state because of teachers and substitutes were not available because of Covid-19. I don't recall having to close school because we couldn't pick up kids. Yes, we missed some runs, but I think if you look at our performance in comparison to everyone else you might be surprised at the results. Just this past week Seymour, Ansonia, and Derby had to cancel school and why? No bus drivers. This has been an issue across the State of Connecticut for months and months through no fault of anyone's. It's just the way it is. We are now updating the school system's automated bus routing program that has not been done in 10 years. This is the school system's responsibility as well as purging the children in the system who are no longer there. I am happy to tell you that the purging was completed to the tune of almost 300 to 400 kids who were in the system, are now off. This will allow us to take the next step with the updating of our automated school bus routing system. Once we are able to consolidate the routes, we are going to affect some savings. I told some of our board members that the savings that we are going to affect will go directly back to the Board of

Education. We have our contract and we are staying with that number. Those are some of the things that we are dealing with instead of being able to focus on getting results. I am going to remain committed to getting results like I always have. I believe our results speak for themselves.

Consequently, I am proposing a budget for FY 2021-2022 with revenues and expenditures of \$128,225,767 that will result in a mill rate of 22.03, a 1.74% reduction in our mill rate.

As we move forward, once the schedule is set for meetings, there will be a number of department heads who will not be required to come to in person hearings. Mainly due to their own choice because they don't want to be in public but certainly due to the fact that their budgets have been held steady for the last three years in a row and the only changes in those budgets are the contractual obligations for our employees.

With that I will conclude, I wish you all well and stay safe.

ADJOURNMENT

Alderman Simonetti MOVED to adjourn the Special Virtual Meeting.

SECONDED by Alderman Balamaci.

A voice vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Theresa Adcox

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Board of Aldermen Clerk

DATE APPROVED _____ BY: _____

Mayor Mark A. Lauretti