

**TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING**

May 15, 2021

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A meeting of the Legislative Council was held on Saturday, May 15, 2021. This meeting was held electronically, via Zoom, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The meeting was called to order at 10:45 A.M. by the Council President. The Clerk took the roll followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Brad Macdowall	Dominique Baez
	Mick McGarry	Jody Clouse
	Valerie Horsley	Jeron Alston
	Justin Farmer	Adrian Webber
	Austin Cesare	Kristin Dolan
	Marjorie Bonadies	Athena Gary (after roll call)
	Kathleen Schomaker	Berita Rowe-Lewis
	Betty Wetmore	

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

PRESIDING: Mick McGarry, President

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Scott Jackson, Finance Director; Adam Sendroff, Chief of Staff

PUBLIC INPUT SESSION: There were 2 speakers which can be heard at Time Code 00:20:30 and 1 written comment which can be read here:

<https://www.hamden.com/DocumentCenter/View/4143/LC-PUBLIC-COMMENTS---05-15-2021>

AGENDA:

1. Adoption of Town Budget Ordinance, Establishment of Tax rate and Levy, Expenditures and Accounting FY 2021-2022

-- Moved by Ms. Bonadies, seconded by Ms. Horsley.

Mr. Jackson said the current mil rate stands at 52.60 and the budget at \$262,400,000. There was some discussion on where the current numbers and mil rate were.

Mr. Farmer moved a motion to transfer \$25,000 from line #12401-7074 Street Outreach in the Police Department to line #12202-0366 JRB in Youth Services. The motion was seconded by Mr. Macdowall.

After a brief discussion and Mr. McGarry saying he'd rather do this outside of budget and with a focus of services, a roll call vote was taken and it failed with a tie vote of 7 in favor (Alston) (Baez) (Clouse) (Farmer) (Macdowall) (Schomaker) (Webber) – 7 opposed (Bonadies) (Cesare) (Dolan) (Horsley) (McGarry) (Rowe0Lewis) (Wetmore) and 1 absent (Gary)

Ms. Schomaker moved a motion to increase the Tax Collection rate to 98.8%. The motion was seconded by Mr. Cesare.

Ms. Schomaker said she was concerned with overtaxing the taxpayers. She said she checked with Finance and they think there's an opportunity with the new tax position to collect this but they wouldn't push beyond this though. She said \$613,000 is the financial impact and it's .16 off the mil rate. After some discussion on this a vote was taken and the item passed with 2 opposed (Cesare) (Wetmore)

Mr. Cesare moved a motion to call the question (on agenda item#1). The motion was seconded by Ms. Horsley and it failed with a roll call vote of 6 in favor (Bonadies) (Cesare) (Dolan) (Horsley) (McGarry) (Rowe-Lewis) – 7 opposed (Alston) (Baez) (Farmer) (Macdowall) (Schomaker) (Webber) (Wetmore) and 1 absent (Gary)

Ms. Bonadies asked what the mil rate was at after Ms. Schomaker's motion. Mr. Jackson said 52.44.

There was some discussion on revenues and on the Back Taxes and Motor Vehicle lines with Mr. Jackson saying there were more aggressive efforts there. He said Council reduced it by 1.1 million and adding back \$275,000 a piece should be achievable.

Ms. Schomaker moved a motion to increase line 10108-0802 Back Taxes by \$275,000 and increasing line 10108-0802S Motor Vehicle by \$275,000. The motion was seconded by Mr. Alston.

Ms. Schomaker said again, she's concerned with overtaxing so she's being persistent. Mr. Macdowall said he's concerned with this. Mr. Jackson explained how this would work and then said our last collection rate is 98.9% and we are at 98.7% now and still collecting. Mr. Farmer said he's unsure of this. Ms. Dolan said she is strongly against this motion. Ms. Wetmore also said she is against this.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion failed with 3 in favor (Alston) (Baez) (Schomaker) – 10 opposed (Bonadies) (Cesare) (Clouse) (Dolan) (Horsley) (Macdowall) (McGarry) (Rowe-Lewis) (Webber) (Wetmore) – 1 abstention (Farmer) and 1 absent (Gary)

Ms. Baez moved a motion for the following cuts:

<u>DEPT.</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>CUT</u>
Animal Control	Building Rental	\$ (40,000)
Building	Clerk Typist	\$ (43,653.60)
Community, Arts & Youth	Garden	\$ (5,000)
	Special Projects	\$ (25,000)
Finance	Grant Coordinator	\$ (10,000)
IT	Computer Equipment	\$ (10,000)
Police Dept.	Traffic Stipend	\$ (10,000)
Public Works & Parks	Parks Special Events	\$ (7,500)
Recreation	Recreation Yearly	\$ (5,000)
	Food Products – Animal	\$ (2,500)
		\$ (158,653.60)

As well as a \$250,000 cut to the BOE for a total of \$408,653.60. The motion was seconded by Mr. Farmer.

Mr. Macdowall said he appreciates these findings and will support this. Mr. Farmer said he thinks they're fare cuts and will support it.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion failed with 6 in favor (Alston) (Baez) (Dolan) (Farmer) (Macdowall) (Webber) – 8 opposed (Bonadies) (Cesare) (Clouse) (Horsley) (McGarry) (Rowe-Lewis) (Schomaker) (Wetmore) and 1 absent (Gary)

Mr. Farmer said he'd like to know from those opposed what they want to see shaved from that list.

Mr. Macdowall moved a motion to move Ms. Baez's package without the BOE reduction. The motion was seconded by Mr. Alston.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion failed with 6 in favor (Alston) (Baez) (Dolan) (Farmer) (Macdowall) (Webber) – 8 opposed (Bonadies) (Cesare) (Clouse) (Horsley) (McGarry) (Rowe-Lewis) (Schomaker) (Wetmore) and 1 absent (Gary)

Mr. Macdowall then moved a motion to decrease the BOE budget by \$250,000. The motion was seconded by Mr. Farmer.

There was some discussion on this motion with Mr. Macdowall saying most of these increases go to 60 Putnam anyway and that we need more for students. He also clarified that this reduction was from the \$500,000 increase given earlier in the process so they still have a \$250,000 increase to their budget.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion failed with a tie vote of 7 in favor (Alston) (Baez) (Dolan) (Farmer) (Macdowall) (Schomaker) (Webber) – 7 opposed (Bonadies) (Cesare) (Clouse) (Horsley) (McGarry) (Rowe-Lewis) (Wetmore) and 1 absent (Gary)

Mr. Macdowall stated everyone wants a mil rate decrease but no one wants to vote to decrease it. Ms. Clouse said there's a lot she doesn't love but a lot of hard work was done and they need to

stick with it.

Ms. Gary has joined the meeting.

Mr. Farmer moved a motion for the Baez package minus the shelter (Bldg. Rental) of \$40,000 and the Traffic Stipend of \$10,000 (\$50,000 off the Baez package and a savings of \$358,653.60). The motion was seconded by Mr. Macdowall.

After some discussion on the motion a roll call vote was taken and the motion failed with 7 in favor (Alston) (Baez) (Dolan) (Farmer) (Gary) (Macdowall) (Webber) and 8 opposed (Bonadies) (Cesare) (Clouse) (Horsley) (McGarry) (Rowe-Lewis) (Schomaker) (Wetmore)

Mr. McGarry moved a motion to reduce the Medical Line #14040-0214 by \$500,000. The motion was seconded by Ms. Schomaker.

Mr. McGarry said they have a little wiggle room but it makes him nervous. Mr. Jackson explained how the amount was chosen saying they were given a low range of 44.2 and a high range of 48.2 and they went in the middle and said he'd be comfortable with a \$500,000 reduction.

Mr. Farmer said he'll support this but if they don't meet it, it may mean layoffs.

Mr. Alston said when ranges are given most go to the low range so he wonders if maybe in past history we didn't meet the ranges. He said in the accounting world you book the low end of the range unless you're given info to exceed the low end. Mr. Jackson said those claims haven't been incurred. Mr. Alston said we have 2 million built into this so a \$50,000 reduction still gives room and thinks there's more than \$500,000 of wiggle room here. He said he'll support the \$500,000 but would like to talk about raising it to \$700,000.

Mr. Macdowall said he'd support the \$500,000 or \$700,000 and then asked Mr. McGarry if he'd take a friendly amendment to \$700,000. Mr. McGarry said no.

Ms. Bonadies said she'd rather have the wiggle room and save savings for other parts of the budget that may need help. She thinks it could backfire saying she doesn't think we'll see the low side, but more the middle or high side.

Ms. Schomaker said she's in favor of this based on the description from our Financial Advisor and Mr. Jackson's comfort with it, as well as Mr. Alston's explanation. She said she thinks the bigger risk is overtaxing Hamden.

Ms. Horsley said our goal has been to get our fund balance up and we expect a positive fund balance at the end and that's a win. She said if we cut this line and mass people go to the doctor we lose all that. She said she opposes this, any extra in this line can go into the fund balance and help move Hamden forward.

Mr. McGarry said he understands all of it but prefers prudence.

A roll call vote was taken and the motion failed with 7 in favor (Alston) (Baez) (Farmer) (Gary) (Macdowall) (Schomaker) (Webber) and 8 opposed (Bonadies) (Cesare) (Clouse) (Dolan) (Horsley) (McGarry) (Rowe-Lewis) (Wetmore)

Mr. Macdowall moved a motion to reconsider reducing the BOE by \$250,000, seconded by Mr. Farmer. Ms. Gruen said it has to be the prevailing side. Both withdrew their motions.

A recess was called.

In recess at 12:51pm

Out of recess at 1:05pm

Mr. Macdowall moved a motion to reduce Medical by \$250,000. The motion was seconded by Mr. Farmer and it failed with 6 in favor (Alston) (Baez) (Farmer) (Macdowall) (Schomaker) (Webber) – 8 opposed (Bonadies) (Cesare) (Clouse) (Dolan) (Horsley) (McGarry) (Rowe-Lewis) (Wetmore) and 1 absent (Gary)

Ms. Gary dropped out during the last vote due to technical difficulties but has returned.

Mr. Jackson gave the mil rate at 52.44 with a budget amount of \$262,418,955.

Ms. Wetmore said she'll be voting no on this due to the increase of the tax collection rate and said cuts should have been made while they were deliberating.

Mr. Cesare said he agrees that it should have been done then and not now and he's not happy.

Mr. Macdowall said he disagrees. He said he thinks once they get the mil rate they may need to make adjustments and that's what their job is today. He said he hates this budget, but it's better than the Mayor's and one of the most honest ones he's seen.

Ms. Schomaker said she'll be voting for it. She said she has a lot of respect for the expertise on the Council and with departments. She said no one is ever 100% happy, including herself, and she stands behind the work they did together.

Ms. Clouse said she'll vote for the budget. She said she appreciates all the work the departments and staff does.

Mr. Farmer said we don't have a vision for the Town and they have different priorities. He said it is only because of Covid that we're not in the MARB. He said they need a long term plan and a Capital Budget and asked everyone to pay attention to Charter Revision on the 18th.

Mr. Alston said he echoes Mr. Macdowall saying he thinks today is the day of addressing key points and doesn't think they put enough work into addressing the mil rate during the process. He said he supports what they've done to this point.

Ms. Gary said she echoes all her colleagues. She said she never liked any of the budgets and hopes next year they can do better. She said she'll support this budget because she doesn't want to support the Mayor's.

Ms. Rowe-Lewis thanked everyone for sticking with them through this process. She said she's not for the change in collection rate and that it's not a perfect budget but she'll support it because of she doesn't she knows what will happen.

Mr. Cesare said he's not happy about the collection rate but there are some positives in it. He said it was nice to see a BOE increase and some things put back in the Police Department after those cuts.

Ms. Bonadies said they worked hard and fought hard but she wants to let all her colleagues know she respects all their work and comments even when they don't agree. She said she thinks they did great work and that it's expensive to run a government and town of this size.

Mr. McGarry thanked the Department Heads and apologized to all loved ones for not engaging with them during the process.

Mr. Webber said he appreciates learning this process and appreciates all the hard work from everyone. He said he would like to see more continuity and looks forward to working with everyone.

Mr. McGarry said he thinks the Council budget is better than the Mayor's, but the Mayor's is the best he's seen in some time. He then said he'll be pushing for the Capital.

A roll call vote was taken on approving the 2021-2022 Fiscal Year Budget in the amount of \$262,418,955 and a mil rate of 52.44 and it was approved with 14 in favor and 1 opposed (Wetmore)

There being no further business Mr. McGarry requested a motion to adjourn. Moved by Mr. Macdowall, seconded by Ms. Schomaker and adjourned at 2:04 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Renta
Clerk of the Council