

**TOWN OF HAMDEN, CONNECTICUT
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
FY 2023-2024 BUDGET DELIBERATIONS
May 16, 2023**

***To view the recording, please click the following link and observe the instructions when/if prompted:** https://hamden.zoom.us/rec/share/eiEg-HaEw7Lyh7y5Z7yw3_DUBzPfYwy1LRWUBpoZV1hIwRMu-bnuDOhP0C26HbV9.kaJIPS4VQ-9pdXmF

**** If you are reviewing a print copy of these minutes and wish to view the meeting recording, please visit the Agenda Center at www.hamden.com/agendacenter and click the MEDIA link found next to this agenda under the meeting date. OR download the digital version of these minutes and click the link above.**

Legislative Council budget deliberations were held on Tuesday, May 16, 2023. This was a hybrid meeting held both in person and electronically via Zoom. The meeting was called out of recess at 6:13 P.M. by Council President Dominique Baez.

Z = Zoom P = in Person

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dominique Baez (P)	Paula Irvin (Z)
Katie Kiely (P)	Betty Wetmore (Z)
Laurie Sweet (P)	Lesley DeNardis (Z) after roll call
Bob Anthony (P)	Justin Farmer (Z)
Abdul Osmanu (P)	Sarah Gallagher (Z)
Adrian Webber (Z)	Jeron Alston (Z) approx. 7:15pm
Ted Stevens (P)	Cory O'Brien (P)
Kristen Zaehring (on Zoom then in person at approx. 7:15pm)	

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

PRESIDING: Dominique Baez, President

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Sean Grace, Chief of Staff; Curtis Eatman, Finance Director; Christian McNamara, Finance Commission Chair; Tom Della Ventura, Finance Commission member; Sue Gruen, Town Attorney; Karen Bivens, ARW&C Director

PUBLIC HEARING: Opened at 6:14pm – There was 1 speaker in person – 3 speakers on Zoom – Closed public hearing at 6:30pm

The following finance report was given by the Finance Commission Chair Christian McNamara: <https://www.hamden.com/DocumentCenter/Index/665>

Mr. McNamara said this budget was more realistic than past budgets. He asked for backup and got most and was pleased and impressed by the Medical Broker. He thinks the \$500,000 raise the Council added was the right choice. He then went over the cuts suggested for a flat mil rate with no increase. He suggests and recommends all new positions in the budget should be eliminated saying any new position has to be essential to delivering core town services or a position that is revenue positive. Vacant positions should be evaluated. Existing, occupied positions he recommends when the budget process is over and after recovering begin to prepare for 2025 now and start evaluating these things. Additional savings found in cushions that have been built in like the E&C since we now have a realistic budget he thinks \$500,000 would be a good number. For the BOE he supports the full funding of the Mayor and the use of up to \$3,000,000 in Wintergreen funds and not the additional \$700,000- funded from the Council. He then asked for the Finance Commission to become full so they can do their work.

Mr. Ventura said his main objective was to try to keep the mil rate flat. They went through each department carefully and came up with \$5,000,000 in reductions and think they should continue to reduce over the years.

There was then some discussion on the budget and positions.

Mr. O'Brien asked about ARPA funds in the 2023-2024 budget and what their thoughts are on using one time money to lower the mil rate. Mr. McNamara said generally he's very leery using one time money to balance a budget to push it one year down the road, especially when adding new positions. He would be okay with using Wintergreen one time funding. Mr. Ventura said he disagrees, it sounds like found money and anything that can help keep a mil rate flat is advantageous. He said we need to use all the tools in our toolbox and use it at our advantage. Mr. O'Brien stated that is the reason we are in this position.

Mental Health

Ms. Baez moved a motion to take this off the table, seconded by Ms. Kiely.

Mr. Scott McDole from Yale Behavior Health then explained the program and who they treat.

There was then some discussion on this. Mr. Grace said there is no current contract with Yale for the Child Study but they have an appointment coming up in a few days to discuss how to use that money for Town residents and will bring something back to the Council.

Ms. Baez took a vote on Mental Health as proposed and it passed unanimously.

State of CT – Town Revenue

Ms. Baez requested a motion to take this off the table. Moved by Ms. Kiely, seconded by Mr. Osmanu.

Mr. Grace explained the Municipal Grant line saying they reached out but there was not an exact answer but they think there's extra ARPA money allocated to Towns throughout the State. General consensus said don't budget for it, it likely will not continue.

Ms. Baez took a vote on State of CT Town Revenues as proposed and it passed unanimously.

QVHD

Ms. Baez moved a motion to take this off the table, seconded by Ms. Kiely.

Mr. Grace explained how they reached out to QVHD but they are in the middle of a change of Leadership. He went on to say this is a formula based on Town population.

After a lengthy discussion on contracts, agreements, and what other Towns do, Mr. O'Brien asked if they could get a time-frame of maybe 45-60 days for a report of where we're at and what services they provide. Mr. Grace said absolutely, he'll get the next Director to come and speak.

Ms. Baez moved a motion to amend this and add to the description "a quarterly report due to the LC." The motion was seconded by Mr. Osmanu and approved with 1 abstention (Zaehringer)

Ms. Gallagher said she feels like having the name in the title ties us and then moved a motion for the title to be "Hamden Health District" and to add to the comments "currently provided by QVHD." A vote was taken and it passed with 4 opposed (Stevens) (Zaehringer) (Wetmore) (DeNardis) and 1 abstention (Anthony)

Ms. Kiely said she thinks the funding should remain the same as the previous year until they get population projections. Mr. Grace said it does say in the description how it's formulated. Mr. Eatman said he believes we'd still get billed this amount based off the formula and he'd have to come back and get the money from council.

A vote was taken on QVHD as amended and approved with 6 opposed (Wetmore) (Sweet) (Osmanu) (Zaehringer) (Kiely) (Anthony)

Animal Control

Mr. Eatman explained the \$203,283 budget is a decrease of \$21,317 due to not funding the part time position.

There was a lengthy discussion about an Animal Shelter. Mr. Stevens said he cannot see himself voting on a solo animal shelter in Hamden as opposed to working with another Town. Mr. Grace said their sense was the Council wanted a solo one and said he'll put a proposal together for comparison and they'll also look for grants.

Ms. Baez asked for the Land/Bldg. rental ytd. Mr. Grace said they don't have that right now. Ms. Baez asked what about historic? Mr. Grace said \$32,000; \$27,000; \$34,000 before Covid.

Ms. Baez moved a motion to decrease 12317-0552 Land/Bldg. Rental by \$40,000 to \$35,00. The motion was seconded by Mr. Stevens.

Mr. Stevens asked how we're charged. Mr. Grace said per cage and our staff goes and takes care of our animals there. Mr. Stevens asked if we would owe them the \$75,000 regardless asking if it was a fixed bill. Mr. Garce said the ytd is correct so we don't always use the full allotment. Mr. Eatman stated there is \$38,000 encumbered in addition to the \$31,000 spent. He said we've used about 98% of this account. Mr. Stevens said he'll support the motion. Mr. O'Brien said the 10 year actuals average \$38,000 with only a slight spike in 2 of those years and he too will support the motion.

Expenses

Ms. Baez moved a motion to open the expenses, seconded by Mr. Stevens.

Ms. Baez then repeated her motion to decrease 12317-0552 Land/Bldg. Rental to \$35,000. The motion was seconded by Mr. Stevens and approved with 1 opposed (Zaehringer) and 2 abstentions (Wetmore) (Osmanu)

A vote was taken on expenditures as amended and approved with 1 abstention (Wetmore)

Positions

Ms. Baez requested a motion to open positions and approve as proposed. Moved by Mr. Anthony, seconded by Mr. Stevens and approved unanimously.

Revenues

Ms. Baez moved a motion to open and approve revenues as proposed. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kiely and approved unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Ms. Baez moved a motion for an executive Session to speak about strategy and negotiation and said it includes only the Council. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kiely. In Executive Session at 8:53pm.

Out of Executive Session at 9:24pm - Moved by Ms. Kiely, seconded by Mr. O'Brien.

Ms. Baez moved a motion to add a Police Commission line, seconded by Mr. Farmer.

Ms. Gallagher said the Charter requires funding of .4% total of the PD budget and that number is \$74,302 to the Town Attorney office expenses.

Mr. Farmer suggested with a description of use from the Police Commission. Mr. Garce said they'll use language from the Charter.

Ms. Baez repeated the motion to add \$74,302 to the Town Attorney's budget for the Police Commission and called for the vote and it passed unanimously.

Ms. Baez requested a motion to open the Town Attorney budget and add a line for the Police Commission funded at \$74,302. The motion was moved by Mr. farmer, seconded by Ms. Kiely and approved unanimously.

Ms. Baez then moved a motion to accept the expenditures as amended and it passed unanimously.

Legislative Council

Expenditures

Ms. Baez moved a motion to open the expenditures, seconded by Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. O'Brien moved a motion to lower the E&C (Emergency & Contingency) account to \$500,000 saying they have the fund balance for minor things. The motion was seconded by Mr. Farmer and approved with 2 abstentions (Wetmore) (Zaehring)

Mr. Stevens moved a motion to lower Settlement Reserve to \$50,000, seconded by Mr. O'Brien.

Ms. Gruen stated that line will be utilized this fiscal year.

A vote was taken and it passed with 3 opposed (Alston) (Wetmore) (Zaehring) and 4 abstentions (Anthony) (Sweet) (Osmanu) (Farmer)

Mr. Farmer moved a motion to add \$1.00 into the Training line 10101-0612T. The motion was seconded by Ms. Sweet and it failed with 3 in favor (Osmanu) (Sweet) (Farmer) and all others opposed.

Mr. Farmer mentioned how New Haven raised their stipend by \$5,000 for each Council person.

Ms. Kiely said she wonders if the Legal Lawyer line should be at \$75,000 and then moved a motion to reduce the Legal Lawyer by \$25,000. The motion was seconded by Mr. Farmer.

Ms. Wetmore said she won't vote for this and thinks it should remain.

After some discussion a vote was taken and it passed with 2 opposed (Wetmore) (Farmer) and 1 abstention (Gallagher)

Mr. Stevens moved a motion to lower the Prof./Tech. line 10143-0590 by \$10,000 to \$6,200. The motion was seconded by Ms. Kiely and it failed in a tie vote of 7 in favor (Anthony) (Baez) (DeNardis) (Irvin) (Kiely) (O'Brien) (Stevens) – 7 opposed (Zaehringer) (Sweet) (Osmanu) (Farmer) (Webber) Wetmore) (Gallagher) and 1 abstention (Alston)

After a brief discussion on the Food Products line Ms. Baez took the vote on the LC expenditures as amended and it passed with 5 opposed (Wetmore) (Zaehringer) (Farmer) (DeNardis) (Anthony)

Positions

Moved by Mr. O'Brien, seconded by Ms. Kiely and approved as proposed with 1 abstention (Farmer)

Community & Youth Services

Ms. Baez requested a motion to take Community & Youth off the table. Moved by Mr. O'Brien, seconded by Ms. Kiely and approved unanimously.

Expenditures

Ms. Baez moved a motion to open the expenditures, seconded by Ms. Kiely.

Ms. Sweet moved a motion to increase line 12002-0636 HPYC to \$30,000. The motion was seconded by Mr. Osmanu and approved with 6 abstentions (Zaehringer) (DeNardis) (Webber) (Alston) (Anthony) (Gallagher)

Mr. Farmer moved a motion to raise 12002-0670V Youth Opportunities to \$68,400. The motion was seconded by Ms. Wetmore.

Mr. Farmer said this is for youth employment year-round. Ms. Bivens said the Workforce Alliance grants cover the summer months. There was then some discussion on the grants. Mr. Stevens said how about 20 youth instead of 15, that comes out to the \$68,400. Mr. Farmer said that works for him. There was some discussion on programs. Ms. Gallagher said she would like to see the 8 weeks extended and she supports the motion.

A vote was taken and it passed with 1 abstention (DeNardis)

Ms. Baez took the vote on expenditures as amended and it passed unanimously.

Positions

Ms. Baez moved a motion to open positions, seconded by Ms. Kiely.

Mr. Osmanu moved a motion to cut the Fair Rent Specialist, seconded by Mr. O'Brien.

Ms. Baez said she would rather cut this position in half and not zero it out and offered a friendly amendment. Mr. O'Brien said no to the friendly amendment.

Ms. Bivens explained the position then asked for one position of Housing Specialist to clerk and do administrator duties and to fund it higher at \$55,164.64. Mr. Farmer said he's opposed to combining the two positions and wants to vote to remove it.

A vote was taken and approved with 3 opposed (Baez) (Webber) (Gallagher)

Ms. Baez then moved a motion to table the rest of the department. The motion was seconded by Mr. Farmer and approved with 1 opposed (Zaehring)

There being no further business Ms. Baez recessed the meeting at 10:29 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Renta
Clerk of the Council