

PUBLIC COMMENT 6-4-2020

To Whom It May Concern,

Please defund the police department and divert those funds to other departments. In particular, please cut all of the School Resource Officers employed by Hamden. Cops don't belong in schools. And fire the cop who shot those people in New Haven last year.

Best,
Raquel Otheguy

Honorable Members of the Legislative Council,

Please institute across-the-board fixed-
percentage cuts to all Town department budgets to prevent our mill rate from exceeding 50. Raising the town's mill rate to 52 (or even 54 mid-year) is unconscionable.

Thank you for your efforts

Sudhir Agir

Members of the Legislative Council:

I strongly urge you to make deep, across the board and targeted budget cuts in order to keep our already painfully high mill rate at or below 50.

Our town has one of the highest tax rates in a state which itself has the highest tax rates in the nation (a state which also has the highest per capita income). Something is dreadfully wrong if we are taxed more than almost all other Americans and still struggle to pay our bills. The answer cannot be: tax even more!

This time of crisis leaves us all with unfair and unwanted budget decisions. 20% in CT are out of work. Many, like our household, have reduced paychecks. It is wrong to demand even more from financially strapped citizens. Hamden must make necessary personnel, salary, and budget cuts.

Yes, cut the rumored 12 (or more) police officers.

As a homeschooler, I treasure the library. Public libraries are a marvel of our democracy. But when I read that the library will take a reduction to its budget for new books, I wondered why, in this time of crisis, the library has ANY money for new books. Perhaps this year (and next?) we survive on the current collection. We literally do not have money for new books. I know the feeling! My family has cut all extra expenditures. Perhaps passionate bookworms can take up a collection to get some of those new books for the library this year. Hamden cannot afford it.

I am pained to think social services may be cut, just when so many need them. We should prioritize deep, deep cuts everywhere else in order that services for the most vulnerable continue. Intentional partnership with private organizations and churches can serve the needy citizens of Hamden. As the recent food drives show, Hamden folks are happy to help one another when presented with the opportunity.

Thank you,

Mandi Mangler

Stonewall Dr.

Personal Reaction re: Town of Hamden's negative budget balance for FY22/21

I would like to ask the Legislative Council to consider the following proposals as it deliberates on possible solutions for this fiscal crisis:

— It is imperative that the Town of Hamden actively pursue projected revenue COVID relief— as a Donor State Connecticut has been contributing approximately 9 billion dollars annually to the Federal Government. Connecticut is entitled to receive much needed Federal support. And Hamden has to convince the State Legislature to support COVID relief for the town.

—Request our State Senators to introduce a Congressional Bill that repeals SALT. The State of Connecticut is currently forfeiting at least additional \$2 Billion. Connecticut needs these revenue dollars.

—Raising the Mill Rate to solve the current negative balance is not SMART because this move can displace unemployed residents from their homes.

—Implement a fixed percentage of across the board municipal cuts to all departments including the offices of municipal leadership to an amount necessary to keep the current mill rate.

Thank you for representing the tax payers of Hamden.

Renate Ringstad

Underhill Road

Hamden, CT 06517

WE SIMPLY CANNOT AFFORD THIS. YOU MUST IT IS YOUR DUTY TO CUT EVERYTHING SO THAT OUR PROPERTY VALUES ARE NOT DESTROYED.

WESTWOODS PEOPLE WERE DECIMATED BY THE TORNADO. WE GOT NO HELP. CUT BUDGET NOW!!!!!!

Lisa Bossoli

Please fine areas to cut expenses and renegotiate contracts to avoid a mill rate increase up to 52-54. Tax payers cannot absorb this and it will hinder new people from moving here.

Thank you,

Hedy Weiner
Thornton St.

Council Members,

Let me start this letter off by saying, what we seen happen to George Floyd is horrible and all those cops need to serve many years in jail. It was horrifying and should have never happened just as the Eric Garner case out of New York a few years back. In that same breath, I would not broad brush all cops with that stereotype. Most cops are good and became a cop to truly protect and serve everybody.

Earlier this week, Brad MacDowell in a post equated protesting and looting. They are completely different matters. Protesting is an American right and that is also how this country formed it ideals. I fully support protesting if done in a non-violent matter. Looting, burning structures, and injuring innocent people is not protesting! I think by equating the two, It goes against everything George Floyd stood for(Statement was released from family asking to stop the looting and violence).

We need to think about our words, before we put them on social media. If we truly want to fix problems like this, violence is not the answer. For a council member to promote looting, it is dangerous and should not have happened.

Concerned citizen of Hamden!

Good Morning,

Please adopt across-the-board cuts of a fixed percentage to all departments in order to keep the town's mill rate to 50.

We, Hamden residents cannot pay more taxes. My work hours has been cut due to covid 19. I cannot afford a tax increase.

I know it's not easy. You just need to make the cuts and then RAISE money.

The town cannot afford the big pay checks/benefits your offer.

Please do not be afraid to cut department budgets. I have cut my household budget (it's very similar. I'm not buying new clothes and have cut back on food)

Thank-you for listening,

Helen Barajas

Brook Street

Dear Hamden Legislative Council,

I am resending this email with a few edits, which I originally sent by mistake to publicinput@hamden.com. Thank you for your hard work examining the budget in detail to determine how we can make decisions that are responsible for our town and its taxpayers.

This budget negotiation is a critical moment for our town, and an opportunity to do better. The Hamden mill rate is already prohibitively high - nearly at the top of tax rates in our state! We're in a tough spot due to irresponsible decisions in the past, but we have to face reality: we need to make real, serious cuts to keep the mill rate at 50 or lower and protect our economically vulnerable population. I am in favor of across-the-board cuts to all departments, but I also urge Council members to take a hard look at specific cuts to the police, fire, and public works departmental budgets. The police budget is bloated, and should not be blindly increased each legislative budget session. 20 people in the police department (not including additional expenses in benefits/pensions) cost us \$2 million per year in salary alone.

Some questions I've run into while perusing the town budget: Why are starting salaries for our suburban officers double the NYPD? Why do we have two deputy chiefs? Why is the police chief given a \$15k stipend for running the traffic department, which should simply be part of the chief's job description? Why do we have so many police vehicles, which are expensive to purchase and maintain - clearly there's excess if we rent them out for extra duty?

At a minimum, we need hiring and salary freezes. It makes no sense in the current financial and political climate to spare the police budget at the expense of education, or to make choices like giving the fire chief a raise simply because the police chief received one. I do not want my property taxes to continue to increase in order to fund an inflated police department budget (and the public works maintenance budget for police vehicles). Do we want Hamden's reputation built on an infamously high mill rate and a police department with high salaries and low transparency? Or do we want to take the financially responsible steps to cut expenses, pay down our debts, and keep police spending in line with what's truly necessary?

Thank you for your consideration.

Emily May and Daniel Kane

Treadwell St, Hamden CT

A Final Plea as the Legislative Council Prepares to Vote on the Town's Budget Tonight

Dear Members of the Legislative Council,

I know how hard you have all been working to try to address the town's financial situation. I also know that you recognize what an increase in the mill rate to 52 (with the possibility of additional mid-year increases to 54) would mean for the town and its residents. The financial impact it would have on people already struggling with the fallout from the pandemic. How it would affect property values. What it would mean for our ability to attract new residents and businesses to the town. Having corresponded with many of you, I know that you know that more significant cuts to the town's expenses are necessary, but that you don't see how such cuts can be accomplished this budget cycle given the constraints you face (requirements in union contracts, the looming deadline to pass a budget, a lack of cooperation from the Mayor, etc.).

If we embrace the reality that cuts MUST happen in order to protect the town and its residents from significant tax increases during a time of global recession and ultimately from financial collapse, then our focus can shift from identifying reasons why the cuts can't happen to identifying ways to make them happen in spite of the obstacles. Union contracts would need to be renegotiated in order to achieve cuts of this magnitude? Fine - include the cuts in the budget now and task the Mayor with conducting such renegotiations. If he fails, we will have to deal with the consequences. But that is better than giving up on meaningful cuts now and accepting those consequences from the get go. Going budget line by budget line is not producing meaningful savings? Impose across-the-board cuts and let the Mayor and his department heads figure out how best to absorb them. Again, when the alternative is untenable (as I know you know a tax increase of this size is) you find a way to make the cuts happen.

The situation you currently find yourself in has been foisted upon you by years of mismanagement and a Mayor who is unwilling and/or unable to provide any form of leadership in response to this financial crisis. But you have a responsibility to the town and its residents. Are you prepared to look your constituents in the eyes and tell them that your current budget is an acceptable outcome? That it is fair? That it is the best we can do? That Hamden residents who have lost jobs, suffered pay cuts, are waiting in line for food donations, etc. and are already among the highest taxed residents in the state should be asked to shoulder a potentially double-digit tax increase while town employees receive millions of dollars in raises?

I beseech you...do the right thing. It won't be easy, but we all know that the alternative isn't tenable.

Best,

Christian McNamara

Dear Members of the Legislative Council,

Please adopt across-the-board cuts of a fixed percentage to all departments in order to keep the town's mill rate to 50. Raising the town's mill rate to 52 (or ultimately as high as 54 if mid-year increases are adopted) at a time when residents are dealing with the economic fallout of the pandemic is unconscionable. Let the Mayor and his department heads figure out how to make 50 mills work. It's their job and they are ones in the position to know how to absorb necessary cuts, not the Legislative Council.

If the Mayor's answer is that the town cannot be run on 50 mills, then we should be having some very difficult conversations about state intervention via MARB, Chapter 9 bankruptcy, etc. If the town cannot be run on the money available to it without crippling tax increases, then clearly more serious financial intervention is required.

Further, a quick glance in the grand list for FY2020 shows that out of the 611 towns reported for Real and Personal Property taxes, Hamden ranks at #5! A move like this would put us at #3, next to only Bridgeport and Hartford. I have considered moving out of this town for this very reason. How many others will foreclose or have to move because of these high taxes. We are a leader on a list that bodes failure, something should be done to get us back to a normal or average range.

Thank you for all your efforts,

Tami Stanford

Robinwood Road, Hamden

I am NOT in favour of reducing our police force in anyway, shape, or form. In fact, the force should be increased.

Sincerely,

Russell Rawson
Greenes Ridge Rd

Dear Council Members:

These past few weeks have been hard for you but **HARDER** for us to watch. My voice and emphasis on important issues cannot be conveyed by letter. I can't tell you how much I am screaming at home while watching you all slowly lose your ability to think when you keep long hours and go line-by-line on a budget that is huge. .

In my opinion, many of you lack "the right stuff" to do the job that is before you. You discuss, think, talk, knit, get up and leave, look at your emails or phone, look blank and then double back and **make the same EASY decision to do NOTHING of substance. What is wrong with you?** You live in Hamden, too. We are in big financial trouble. Why would you run for office when you don't feel comfortable making the decisions that **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE** for making? It is your responsibility to get the finances in order. Last night's last minute motion by Mr. Austin is a good example. "Let's give him, the Fire Chief, a parity raise because it is customary" is just unconscionable. And this was voted and passed by the LC! This demonstrates the lack of financial common sense that I'm seeing.

I have had it and I think I speak for a lot of people in Hamden. It is a disgrace to watch this process. MARB will be here and you could have done the right thing, but chose not to. I'm sorry, but I am disappointed beyond words of expression.

This isn't personal, this is a fact. We need to do better.

Sincerely,

Elaine M. Dove

Santa Fe Ave

Hamden

Honorable Members of the Legislative Council,

Please institute across-the-board fixed-
percentage cuts to all Town department budgets to prevent our mill rate from exceeding 50. Raising the town's mill rate to 52 (or even 54 mid-year) is a terrible idea as people are dealing with an already tough situation both socially and related to the pandemic.

I work in business and swift decisive action around cost is the responsibility of those that lead enterprises. Pushing for revenue increases in this environment makes no sense.

Thank you for your efforts,

Dennis Lange

Mill Rock Road

Who is responsible for the BOE budget spending and forcing them to look at cutting administration costs or requiring department Supervisors to also have a minimal teaching load instead of cutting teachers.

This also helps keep them in touch with the issues the teachers are dealing with.

Steven Annis

I would like to submit my public comment urging the Legislative Council to **dramatically decrease** the police budget and reallocate the funds to public service with a better track record of actually reducing crime and increasing safety and security - education, health outreach, adequate subsidized housing, etc. It is unconscionable that the police chief received a \$10k raise (and closely followed by a similar raise for the fire chief) when the officer who fired his weapon in New Haven last year has still not been held accountable.

Our communities are being torn apart by racism and racial injustice and the police do nothing to provide a solution to this. If anything, the increased funding and presence of police exacerbate the problem. It is time Hamden starts to invest in the health and safety of its citizens through supporting programs and departments that actually support health and safety, instead of fueling fear and division.

Sincerely,

Kerrigan Warnock

(Wakefield Street Hamden)

I received word that the Legislative Council will be voting on the reduction of 12 police officers today.

As a resident of Hamden, I strongly disagree with this proposal.

Ana A. Rios

Please forward my personnel feelings concerning the possible cut-back of 12 Officer Positions of the Hamden Police Department. Speaking as an individual with over 45 years experience, in emergency management and 32 years as a paid fire officer, I disagree with the possibility of cutting back Police Department manpower.

With the new world that we live in since 911, the recent pandemic, and civil unrest, we need more protection, not less for our citizens now more than ever! Every town/city in America is a target for unrest, violence and a higher level of disaster now more than ever in our history. Our town covers over 33 square miles with a population of close to 62,000 residents not to mention the addition of students from Quinnipiac and the neighbors who visit our community on a daily basis. As a resident of Hamden for over 25 years and a member of our Community Emergency Response Team, for the last 11 years, I have seen first hand what our police officers and firefighters face on a daily basis. **They are under-manned at the present time and it is not uncommon for the police to have calls stacked up and our dispatchers having to wait for a police unit to clear from their present assignment before having them dispatched to the next call for assistance!** Please forward my request to the Council to fully educate themselves (pursue the Hamden Citizens' Police Academy Class) or monitor radio communications to make them fully aware of what the men and women who wear the badge and place their lives in danger every day, are faced with in the town of Hamden. We have been relatively lucky that we haven't had a major tragedy here in Hamden but reducing the present manpower of police officers is only a recipe for a major disaster that would place us on the map for America to see our failure, to plan for the future! I know along with our community members that money is scarce and all departments are making cuts in their budget, but please explain to me what might be more important than public safety and protecting our citizens and our children who will bear the impact of lowering the protection of their lives and their property? In closing, I extend my sincere gratitude to the members of the Legislative Council for the many hours of work you provide our residents for the betterment of our town. Your efforts are truly appreciated.

Respectfully,

RJ Freeman Jr.

Centerbrook Road

I would like to submit my public comment urging the Legislative Council to **dramatically decrease** the police budget and reallocate the funds to public service with a better track record of actually reducing crime and increasing safety and security - education, health outreach, adequate subsidized housing, etc. It is unconscionable that the police chief received a \$10k raise (and closely followed by a similar raise for the fire chief) when the officer who fired his weapon in New Haven last year has still not been held accountable.

Our communities are being torn apart by racism and racial injustice and the police do nothing to provide a solution to this. If anything, the increased funding and presence of police exacerbate the problem. It is time Hamden starts to invest in the health and safety of its citizens through supporting programs and departments that actually support health and safety, instead of fueling fear and division.

Sincerely,

Margo Nicolson

Thornton St

Dear Council Members,

Since moving to Hamden 16 years ago, my taxes have gone up by roughly three thousand dollars. Had I been thinking of buying a home here now, I would not consider it given the town's fiscal situation. Something must be done, something that does not involve wringing every last dime out of the town's home owners. Freeze pay; freeze hiring; limit over time; give no raises; cut hours/furlough employees; turn off the fountain in the center of town; cut back on the independently contracted landscapers; raise the temperature of the air conditioning by a degree or two in Town Hall, the Police Department, and all municipal buildings. In short, do all of the money saving/generating strategies those of us in town who are not getting raises or are living on fixed incomes are implementing in order to make ends meet. These actions are all difficult; however, the situation calls for the hard choices.

I appreciate greatly the work you do and the hard calls you will have to make; however, the alternatives to making these hard choices is a town that cannot grow or prosper or entice new businesses or invite new families.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. DelVecchio

Braeside Drive

Hamden, CT 06514

Dear Legislative Council Members,

Please ensure that the newly established fiscal stability committee has members that reflect a wide variety of viewpoints

Also, please put Charter Revision and the Hamden Tree Ordinance on your agenda immediately.

Thank you for all of your hours of service and the hours you will be devoting in the future.

Sincerely,

Diane Hoffman

Wilmot Rd.

Dear Members of the Legislative Council, Please adopt across-the-board cuts of a fixed percentage to all departments in order to keep the town's mill rate to 50. Raising the town's mill rate to 52 (or ultimately as high as 54 if mid-year increases are adopted) at a time when residents are dealing with the economic fallout of the pandemic is unconscionable. Let the Mayor and his department heads figure out how to make 50 mills work. It's their job and they are ones in the position to know how to absorb necessary cuts, not the Legislative Council. If the Mayor's answer is that the town cannot be run on 50 mills, then we should be having some very difficult conversations about state intervention via MARB, Chapter 9 bankruptcy, etc. If the town cannot be run on the money available to it without crippling tax increases, then clearly more serious financial intervention is required. We have regrets for purchasing a home in Hamden 33 years ago. Taxes are too high. Make cuts and no more tax hikes!!!! Thank you for all your efforts,

Nancy & Jeff Bartell

To the Hamden Legislative Council,

Before another 20 million dollars is borrowed by Hamden, I'd like to know that all members of the Council have been updated as to the extent of the worsening financial condition of Hamden and what our options are. We taxpayers have not been updated.

Does the Council have any clue as to the expected shortfall in property tax receipts because of the shutdown? We also don't know yet what the federal government will do in terms of a helping Hamden along with other desperate municipalities across the country. Is 20 million dollars even going to be enough if our tax shortfall is disastrous?

As a Hamden taxpayer I expect full disclosure as to the possible depth of the financial hole that we are falling into and what our options are including receivership/bankruptcy. I hate to borrow more money without a clearly articulated master plan including best and worst case scenarios.

Please provide Hamden taxpayers with the transparency that we deserve. We are facing financial pain and need to be prepared for the extent of it. There are some very smart people in this town; publicly soliciting the advice of citizens after educating them as to the extent of this crisis might generate some new ideas and will certainly inspire more confidence and trust.

Thank you for your efforts on our behalf during this fiscal disaster.

Michael Connair, MD

Old Hartford Turnpike