

## Written Public Comments

### **Public Hearing on Mayor's proposed 2021-2022 FY Budget – Town side**

**March 30, 2021**

#### COMPLIMENTS:

First Mayor Leng and Chief Financial Officer Jackson are both highly-experienced in regard to Town and Brd of Ed budget lines, tax revenues, benefit costs, and Council history. This is a key advantage when the Town presents to bond counsel, bonding entities, regional nonprofit entities and union negotiators. Further, they have apparently avoided projected FEDERAL COVID-19 related funds even though they can be expected in substantial sums. Hence, that gives our Council "leeway." Many Town Supervisors have over ten years with either Hamden or other CT Towns.

#### QUESTIONS & Proposed Amendments which may assist in maintaining the Balance required by law:

UNDER TEN departments/budget lines contribute at least one million dollars or more to Estimated Revenues. Therefore, it is hereby respectfully recommended that COUNCIL ask for details to allow moving ONE FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT to be divided, fifty-fifty, to TOWN CLERK (Est Rev. \$ 2.4 million) and TAX OFFICE (Est. Rev. \$ 214 million). Both Departments can expect heavy workload in view of re-evaluation and the long COVID-19 "shut down" as CPA's, Residents and Attorneys become more active through this coming fiscal year.

The Police Department funding increase can be divided BETWEEN UNIFORMED, ARMED personnel and 'paraprofessional' case worker/juvenile/gang personnel. Example: add Three Armed Officers rather than five. Then ADD two unarmed PERSONNEL with two to four years of specialized education/skills and at least five years of related civilian experience. Skills can include counseling gangs, reducing truancy related to crime, follow-up with State Juvenile Court and Probation Officers, and counseling victims of violence (domestic or assaults). This ADJUSTED INCREASE SHOWS SUPPORT of our Town for our fine Department's uniformed and nonuniformed personnel. Also, as an "inner ring suburb" with multiple Rt. 91 and Merritt entrances/exists, we know from violent assaults perpetrated in the past six months against our retail/gasoline outlets that more Department funds are needed. Our exits make our stores that have cash "targets."

THIRD, Miscellaneous Est. Revs. appears overly somewhat optimistic and might be reduced to 1.1 million or etc. What are the top three categories--the term miscellaneous is not informative. Again this budget line is among ours ten largest, without explanation. Further, what is the CONTINGENCY RESERVE FOR STORMS, unexpected equipment loss, etc.? That should be at least two million--ARE THOSE AMTS IN OTHER LINES?

Thank you for the hard work this process entails for OUR SUPERVISORS, TOWN ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS, AND THE COUNCIL MEMBERS.

Respectfully submitted,

Gordon Fain, town residential taxpayer over twenty years; Town Hamden Schools parent of Three young adults, total school years over 35!!

Council Members,

This budget is a travesty, a complete betrayal of the taxpayers of Hamden.

The mayor has chosen to squander the 8% growth in the grand list, which might have driven a long-overdue 4 mil tax-rate reduction, by requesting a \$10.4 Million increase in spending!

He has failed to economise on hardly anything, particularly personnel.

The new budget would fund 19 vacant positions and give substantial raises to many non-union people, mostly managers, as well as contractual raises to union employees. The total cost of personnel and their benefits, including pension contributions, is about 80% of the budget.

The town must economise on personnel starting by eliminating most of the vacant positions and discretionary raises. Every employee, even lower paid staff, costs the town millions over their lifetime; higher paid people, police and fire for example, cost several million or more each. Staff in those departments, plus Public Works are bloated and must be reduced.

Going forward, the town must eliminate every possible job and negotiate every contract strenuously. Jackson and Leng have failed to do so for the last decade and that must change!

For years, the pension contract with Police and Fire has been open without resolution; the potential to save money for example, by simply increasing the age to collect a pension is huge.

Again Leng has failed.

By the way this budget, as always, expects to deliver millions in savings from union concessions and efficiencies. Those have never been delivered before and are not likely now. The best union concession is not filling an unnecessary job.

The current administration is a complete failure and must be stopped from enacting this terrible budget. It is your job to say "NO" and deliver fiscal responsibility to the town.

The taxpayers are depending on you.

Thank you,

George Levinson

Shepard Avenue

Dear Legislative Council Members:

I listened to last night's very thorough presentation of the Annual Financial Report (June, 30, 2020). I am not a licensed auditor, and I'm sure like many of you, I don't understand everything in detail in that report. I'm going to sit down with my hardcopy and do the homework and ask a lot of questions from others who are more knowledgeable than I. However, what **I DID** take away was the gravity of our town's financial picture. We have some very hard work to do and it starts with the Legislative Council.

As I mentioned last year, you have the difficult, but necessary job, of making Hamden's Budget realistic and honest. The mayor's job is to tout how great things are because he hopes to get reelected. I just read the New Haven Register's article published today and coupled with the stark realistic presentation last night and this rosy outlook that the mayor presents, one would think we are talking about two different towns. Unfortunately, we are not. Much of what the mayor is presenting is "fluff", not an honest look at where we are and what we have on hand to spend and where we can COUNT ON getting actual revenue. As far as I can see, we can count on property tax. We have done a poor job of billing for extra police duty (\$500,000 not noted by June 30,2020), for example, and do we see that we have collected this sum and more in this new budget? Probably not. Do we see line items for the Hamden Skating Rink? What we have seen is deception. The skating rink utility bill (which I might add was one of the reasons we put this mess out to bid under our new finance director, Scott Jackson's stewardship) has been hidden in the town's general utility costs. If it is still hidden, we have a big problem. I'm guessing we don't know very much about what revenues we REALLY have or should have and which liabilities are accurately notated. We have a flawed proposed budget in my opinion,

I hope you will use a big red pen and start crossing the fluff out and looking for details that need to be understood. All of you, including those that I've noticed over the past year who seem to not pay attention to this serious business of our budget, need to be actively thinking about how we fix this financial problem, which would start with a realistic budget. For those of you who have worked diligently and conscientiously, I applaud your efforts and I am thankful for all you are doing. I know this is a volunteer job and it is a hard job. My harsh statements are not meant for the thinkers, the questioners, and the listeners. They are meant for the sheep who are following the Mayor's Proposed Budget.

Speaking solely for myself, thank you for your time to read this letter,

Elaine Dove  
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Hamden CT