

The Special Budget Meeting of the 25th Board of Representatives of the City of Stamford will be held Wednesday, May 9, 2001 at 8:00 p.m. in the Legislative Chambers of the Board of Representatives in the Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard, Stamford, Connecticut.

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 9:25 p.m.

President Domonkos read the call of the meeting:

“I, Carmen L. Domonkos, President of the 25th Board of Representatives of the City of Stamford, Connecticut, and pursuant to Section C2-10-4 of the Stamford Charter, hereby call a Special Meeting of said Board of Representatives at the following time and place:

Wednesday, May 9, 2001
8:00 p.m.
Legislative Chambers, 4th Floor
Government Center
888 Washington Boulevard
Stamford, CT 06904-2152

to consider and act upon the following:

1. Operating, Capital, E.G. Brennan Fund, Grants and Police Extra Duty Fund, Risk Management Fund, Smith House Fund and WPCA Fund Budgets for the fiscal year 2001/2002, as transmitted by the Board of Finance on April 12, 2001, pursuant to provisions of Section C8-30-7 of the Stamford Charter; and RESOLUTIONS associated therewith.”

AGENDA:

INVOCATION: Led by Rep. Giordano

“Almighty God, we gather tonight to vote on our budget, a budget that will affect the lives of all our citizens, young and old. Please grant us wisdom and patience so that we may vote in the best interests of the people. We ask your blessing on this assembly and

pray for your guidance on the tasks we must perform. Help us to put others before ourselves. Help us to be able to work with each other in the best way possible in the best interests of the citizens we represent. When we leave this evening, let us leave here knowing that we have done our best. Amen.”

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG: Led by President Carmen L. Domonkos

ROLL CALL: Conducted by Clerk of the Board Annie M. Summerville. There were thirty-four members present and six members absent/excused. Absent were Reps. Biancardi, Kernan and Gaztambide; Excused were Reps. Skigen, Mobilio and Nanos.

MACHINE TEST VOTE: The machine was in good working order.

President Domonkos thanked the Fiscal Committee and its Chair, David Martin and its Vice Chair, Bob Owens, for their hard work. She realizes it is a tedious job, but there is no way that you can learn the operations of the City of Stamford better than sitting on the Fiscal Committee. You meet the staff, you learn of all the activities and you get a real understanding of how the City operates. President Domonkos thanked everyone for their diligence and patience and hard work on the citizens behalf.

President Domonkos turned the floor over to David Martin, Chair of the Fiscal Committee.

BUDGET PRESENTATION: David Martin, Chair, Fiscal Committee

Chair Martin stated that the Fiscal Committee met many times, and the May 9, 2001 memorandum attached hereto lists the dates of the Committee’s meeting. Vice Chair Owens has submitted an attendance report to the Board Office, and Chair Martin added that there was always a quorum. Chair Martin thanked his Committee and the Board staff for their hard work during the budget process.

Chair Martin stated that there were many compromises in the budget process, and all of the members contributed to these compromises.

Chair Martin also stated there are matters regarding the budget that are not reflected in the budget book. This is because minor course corrections in City policy during the budget process. Last year, for example, the police administrative rate for off-duty jobs was changed and it had never been charged properly. This matter was corrected. There were discussions in the past about the City pay plan, and they are now following the types of policies consistent with the pay plan.

Chair Martin stated that Tom Hamilton and Dena Diorio deserve a lot of credit for their work, and it is obvious they are asking a lot more aggressive questions about budgets internally, and this is a positive step for the City.

Rep. DeLuca stated that since everyone knows the total cuts submitted by the Fiscal Committee, he moved to accept the operating budget as submitted by the Fiscal Committee; said motion was seconded. David Martin stated that this should include the Special Funds budget as well. The Operating (including the Board of Education budget) and the Special Funds Budgets (E.G. Brennan, Risk Management, Grants Budget, WPCA and Smith House) in the amount of \$354,789,201 was approved by unanimous voice vote.

President Domonkos stated that the Tellers were Rep. Esposito and Rep. Fedeli.

Rep. Green-Carter stated she is reluctantly accepting the school budget as voted upon. For the record, it is important to send a message that mediocrity in education is unacceptable. It is unacceptable in any other business, and education should be set at a higher standard. There should be more emphasis placed on improving the quality of education and expectation levels of children, demanding accountability and less emphasis on tenure – especially tenure without quality.

Rep. Green-Carter stated that the public school system is failing the majority of the children in our schools and a vast amount of those children comes from her district. The report cards for our schools have achieved a grade point of a D in her eyes. No one can convince her that our schools are okay, when the majority of the children in the system are failing. We should not close our eyes and look the other way because a minority of the children are doing okay. Rep. Green-Carter added that we know how averages work. If the majority of the children are performing poorly, it lowers the rating of the entire school system. She stated that you can slice and dice as much as you like, but the bottom line is that the public school system is failing our children in Stamford, when our schools should be one of the best.

Rep. Green-Carter stated that the schools have been failing the majority of the children for some time, and pouring more money into a system that is not working has not proved to solve the educational gap or improve the level of education as a whole. It is time for change and solutions that work, not continual trials and errors. Rep. Green-Carter stated she would have cut more out of the education budget if the support were there. There are many other school systems that do more with less. It is time for results and not excuses.

Rep. Green-Carter stated she is challenging the Board of Education and the Superintendent to better utilize the taxpayers' money by turning around a failing system.

Rep. Green-Carter thanked everyone for listening.

Rep. Mitchell stated that she wanted the record to reflect that she is voting to approve the operating budget tonight, however, this is not an automatic approval in the future regarding funding of the SRO program.

President Domonkos stated that there will be rolling motion. The capital budget will be reviewed page by page. A motion will be made to accept the capital budget, there will be a second, and then we will go page by page. If anyone wishes to make a cut on any line, they should raise their hand and that will be voted on if the motion is seconded. When we come to the cuts proposed by the Fiscal Committee, these will not be voted on because they are part of the rolling motion. Once we have turned a page, we will not go back. A motion was made and seconded to accept the Capital Budget.

Chair Martin stated that the first page where accounts are listed is Page 11, and there are no changes proposed by the Fiscal Committee on that page.

Page 12 - No changes

Page 13 - No changes

Page 14 - No changes

Page 15 - No changes

Page 16 - No changes

Page 17 - No changes

On Page 18, Chair Martin stated that the Fiscal Committee recommended reducing the Government Center renovation from \$100,000 to \$50,000, and that is reflecting the belief that there should be more accountability for the specific renovations, rather than a general fund.

On Page 19, Chair Martin stated there were no recommended changes.

Rep. Zelinsky asked about the Facilities Energy Conservation Measures line. Chair Martin explained that in fact the City is spending more than the \$100,000 allocated in this line. He stated that this is used to replace ballasts and the fluorescent lights overhead, among other things, due to the high costs of heating and electricity. The City has saved a fair amount of money in the energy area, and you don't see it in the budget because energy costs have gone up. This is one of the few areas where the City believes that it makes significant savings. There is additional detail as to the specific projects in the Board files.

Rep. DeLuca stated that in the past year alone, the City has saved \$50,000 in air conditioning costs.

Page 20 - No changes

Page 21 - No changes

Page 22 - No changes

Page 23 - No changes

Page 24 - No changes

Page 25 - No changes

Page 26 - No changes

On Page 27, Chair Martin stated that the Fiscal Committee took a reduction of \$100,000 in the City Wide Storm Drains account. This should not be interpreted as a lack of support for the work that needs to be done on storm drains, but merely due to the fact that they have \$600,000 currently available for spending on this, and the Committee felt they will not be able to expend all these funds in the coming year.

Page 28 - No changes

Page 29 - No changes

Page 30 - No changes

Page 31 - No changes

Page 32 - No changes

Page 33 - No changes

Page 34 - No changes

Page 35 - No changes

Page 36 - No changes. Rep. Zelinsky asked about the specifics of the Traffic Calming line. Chair Martin stated that the Traffic Calming Program is designed for residential streets to encourage drivers to drive at more reasonable speeds on these roads. Primarily, they mark the pavement and install speed humps. It is also used to pay for crosswalk markings. Chair Martin stated it is a very popular program.

Page 37 - No changes

Page 38 - No changes. Rep. Zelinsky asked about Government Center Security. He stated that the security issue was in the Operations Committee for some time, and meetings with the Police Department were held. The Police Department had given the Committee some of its rough ideas for improved security, but they never came back and finalized the recommendations. In fact, the Committee is still waiting for them to come back and give the final plan to it. Rep. Zelinsky added that the Board should not approve funds before the Committee has approved the plans. Rep. Zelinsky moved to reduce this amount by \$50,000.

Rep. Owens stated he would second Mr. Zelinsky's motion.

Rep. O'Neill stated that the security in the building is grossly inadequate. This is basically a first step in modernizing an antiquated security system, and he feels the Board should go ahead full speed. This is a modest appropriation and will be put to good use.

Rep. Owens stated that he seconded the motion because this matter has been on the Operations Agenda several times. The Police Department was supposed to come back to the Committee on several occasions, and did not come to address what they were going to do for security in the building. Rep. Owens stated that he is not saying he would not support this item in the future, but he would like to see what they are doing prior to voting on these funds.

Chair Martin stated he is supporting the actions of the Fiscal Committee. The police chief shared with the Committee that there are changes coming in the security in the Government Center lobby, and these changes will include swipe cards for employees and representatives. They will be probably change the camera systems and the television systems. They are changing the way people are checked in, and there were other changes described by the police chief.

Chair Martin stated that he would rather put the money in the budget and make a clear statement to the administration that we would like to see the specifics of the plan before anything is implemented.

Rep. Zelinsky stated that when the presentation was made to the Committee, they were told that full security improvements for this complex would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, and should be run by the Stamford Police Department. Now, the Board is being asked to approve a \$50,000 appropriation on a piece-meal basis. He added that the Operations Committee was concerned about the extraordinary cost of all intended improvements. No final picture of what the cost would be or what the plans would be was ever submitted to the Committee.

Chair Martin stated that this represents the capital needs that they anticipate. He can't say that they will never, ever come back and ask for more money, but it is his impression that this is the amount needed and that this is not a piece-meal program. Chair Martin stated that he believes the Board should approve the item, but that it should be before the Operations Committee for further review.

Rep. Loglisci stated that he understood that the police are trying to provide additional security at an affordable cost. He also thought these funds were strictly for the first floor entrance.

Rep. Owens stated that there was a price tag and many items brought to the Operations Committee by the chief, for example, turnstiles. This was never mentioned to the Fiscal Committee. He said that they also discussed a thumbprint situation, and he feels that it is a piece-meal project, and he recalled an approximately \$360,000 project being discussed. Rep. Owens stated he doesn't want to hold up any more security, but he wants more information on the \$50,000.

Rep. Lyons moved the question; said motion was seconded and approved by voice vote. The main motion failed by voice vote.

President Domonkos stated that this item would be placed again in the Operations Committee.

Page 39 - No changes

Page 40 - No changes

On Page 41, Chair Martin stated that the Fiscal Committee made no changes, but the Board of Finance made a \$50,000 cut to the Fire & Safety Study request.

Page 42 - No changes

Page 43 - No changes

Page 44 - No changes

Page 45 - No changes

On Page 46, Chair Martin noted that the Board of Finance reduced the South End Fire Station replacement amount to \$0.

Page 47 - No changes

Page 48 - No changes

Page 49 - No changes

Page 50 - No changes

Page 51 - No changes

Page 52 - No changes

Page 53 - No changes

Page 54 - No changes

Page 55 - No changes

Page 56 - No changes

Page 57 - No changes

Page 58 - No changes

Page 59 - No changes

Page 60 - No changes

Page 61 - No changes

Page 62 - No changes

On Page 63, Chair Martin stated that regarding the Secondary School Expansion, for the new magnet middle school on Scofieldtown Road, everyone should note that the Planning Board approved \$3,000,000 and the Mayor's request is for \$3,150,000. The Committee discussed whether the study was appropriate, but the Fiscal Committee felt very strongly that this auditorium should be built for this middle school. Many of the Committee members were upset that it hadn't already been funded. Chair Martin stated that this is a magnet school and many children will travel long distances to get there, and parents will be distressed to find that this middle school doesn't have an auditorium as all other middle schools have.

Chair Martin stated that the Board should consider a resolution in the future making clear that the Board agrees that it would like to see the auditorium built as expeditiously as possible. There was originally \$6 million set aside for an auditorium, and this was deemed too costly and was eliminated. The \$150,000 is seed money to start either cutting down on the costs associated with the existing plans or to start fresh with new plans.

Rep. Loglisci stated that information was supposed to be forwarded to the Committee regarding this. The Committee was told this was a study of a study, and that this was going to be an architect reviewing the plans. Rep. Loglisci stated comments were made that if this was just put in as a “feel good” item, that the Board would cut this. Rep. Loglisci asked if further information was forwarded to the Fiscal Committee.

Chair Martin stated he has spoken to the Budget Director, and it is his understanding is that this \$150,000 is to pay for a new outside architect to re-examine existing plans and figure out a way to cut the cost of this facility way down. Chair Martin stated that he is somewhat troubled by this as a process, and he is unsure if \$150,000 is the correct amount of money, but that is what it is set aside for.

Chair Martin stated he objects it to being called a “feel good” exercise. He feels strongly that there should be an auditorium there. To have a magnet middle school without this type of facility is a mistake that distracts seriously from what is trying to be accomplished. At this point in time, there is no auditorium and no plans for an auditorium, and if this is the only way to get that ball rolling and if this is the only choice available to the Board, then he chooses yes to the request.

Rep. Loglisci stated that there was a sense that this was not really going to create anything or get us any closer to having an auditorium. Rep. Loglisci asked if the Committee got written information on the specifics of this project to assure that this is not just a way to put off those who are advocating for an auditorium.

Rep. Owens stated that he is disturbed that an independent outside architect is being used rather than going back to the architect that caused the problem. These funds are to be used to study the feasibility of a less expensive alternative to the proposed auditorium. We are trying to lessen the costs of some of the materials going into the building, and it should not cost \$150,000 to do this. Further, the City of Stamford has architects and engineers that should be able to look at these plans and provide cost quotes.

Rep. Poltrack stated that she spoke with the City Engineer and asked whether this would be the right amount of money. She said that he said that the \$150,000 was not too much money but that it should suffice to prepare a new plan – not a rework of the plan.

Rep. Green-Carter stated that during the meeting, this was presented as a study of a study, and the Committee did ask for clarity on this item.

Rep. Zelinsky stated that this will be the only middle school without an auditorium. He understands that this is for an architect to prepare a less expensive auditorium, and the \$150,000 would be well spent if it saves the City a half million dollars or more for the auditorium. Not having an auditorium may cause parents to think twice about sending their child to this school.

Rep. O’Neill stated that there is an architect on the School Building Committee, and the engineers and architects already working on the project would be best suited to work with

the Building Committee to see what changes could be made to make this project less expensive. Rep. O'Neill stated this appropriation is unnecessary.

Chair Martin apologized for not getting the additional information in writing. Chair Martin also stated he is upset about this item. There is no back up material, and the Planning Board was submitted \$3 million dollars, and then it is increased by \$150,000 because they realized they should not have taken the auditorium out. There already exists plans for an auditorium, but the plans were taken out.. Because of complaints by parents, there is \$150,000 in there. You cannot get a project of that size for \$150,000, and you can't get a brand new architectural plan for \$150,000. You can review the old plans and reduce the cost, but it doesn't cost \$150,000 to make these cost reductions.

Chair Martin stated that at the end of the day he believes that an auditorium needs to be built, and the only choice offered is to approve this \$150,000. If the money is cut, the process will come to a halt. As for using city engineers, the City doesn't have any expertise in this area and it lacks manpower.

Rep. Boccuzzi agreed with Mr. Martin. If the Board really wants an auditorium in the school and it cuts the \$150,000, the process will only be delayed.

Rep. MacInnis moved to cut the \$3,150,000 by \$150,000. Said motion was seconded.

Rep. Alswanger spoke in favor of the auditorium. Rep. White stated he agreed with Rep. Alswanger and is also in favor of the auditorium. He added that an auditorium is an integral part of the educational experience.

Rep. DeLuca moved the question; said motion was seconded and failed by voice vote.

Rep. Loglisci stated the Board is not being fiscally sound nor rational. If you look at the out years, there are no funds for an auditorium. The \$150,000 will not bring the auditorium closer and the case will need to be argued to the Planning Board. Rep. Loglisci added that this money was thrown in extemporaneously to appease people, and in the end, there will be a study that wastes \$150,000. If the study is not acted upon, another study will be required five years from now. This is just to fool the people into thinking that \$150,000 will bring us an auditorium.

Rep. Green-Carter stated that she concurs with Rep. Loglisci's comments.

Rep. Owens stated that normally an architect's fee is somewhere between 7 and 10 percent of the total cost of the project. This is definitely not for a new plan because you cannot get a new plan on a \$7 million project for \$150,000. He is against bringing in a new architect for \$150,000 to study a plan that already exists.

Rep. Esposito moved the question. Said motion was seconded and approved by voice vote. The main motion failed by machine vote (12-20) (a copy of the vote is attached hereto and made a part hereof).

Page 64 - No changes

Page 65 - No changes

Page 66 - No changes

Page 67 - No changes

Page 68 - No changes

On Page 69, Chair Martin stated there were no changes. Rep. Zelinsky asked Chair Martin what the Vo-Ag Building expansion for an aqua cultural inter-regional magnet program for Fairfield County was. Chair Martin replied this is a vocational-agricultural building being constructed at Westhill High School. Because this is a special type of program that is designed to attract students from surrounding towns, the State is providing almost all, of not all of the funds for this particular facility. Everyone agrees that it is an expensive facility due to its specialization. Rep. Zelinsky was concerned that Stamford taxpayers were funding something to educate children from other towns in Fairfield County.

Page 70 - No changes

Page 71 - No changes

The total for the capital budget is \$39,922,744. This was confirmed by Rep. Esposito and Rep. Loglisci.

Chair Martin moved the capital budget; said motion was seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

Chair Martin stated the final matter before the Board is to pass the specific resolutions. Mr. Martin read Resolution No. 2642, a copy of which is attached and made a part hereof. Mr. Martin moved the resolution; said motion was seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Martin read Resolution No. 2643, a copy of which is attached and made a part hereof. Mr. Martin moved the resolution; said motion was seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Martin read Resolution No. 2644, a copy of which is attached and made a part hereof. Mr. Martin moved the resolution; said motion was seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Martin again thanked the hard work and efforts of his committee members, of the Board Office Staff and the City staff that attended the meetings.

Mr. Boccuzzi requested that in the transmittal letter to the Mayor, the sum of the remarks on the overall budget made by the several representatives be included, including those remarks of Sadie Green-Carter and Elaine Mitchell.

President Domonkos thanked Mr. Martin and the Fiscal Committee as well as those who have been part of the budget process. President Domonkos stated this is probably one of the most important things we do in that it involves taxpayer's money, and she believes everyone has been very conscientious.

ADJOURNMENT: Upon motion duly made and seconded and approved by unanimous voice vote, the meeting was adjourned at 10:33 p.m.

*The proceedings are available on audio tape at the
Offices of the Board of Representatives.*