



Nancy Donne asked if more forecasting can be done for vacancies. DC Weihe said they cannot hire more staff than approved for. Jay Wolk asked if the dispatch center was understaffed. DC Weihe said it is a separate budget but they are addressing the staffing situation and streamlining some procedures.

Chris Carroll questioned the downside of overstaffing. DC Weihe said they generate a list of eligible candidates that they can draw from so they don't have to start the process all over; however, they cannot go over the number of approved staff. Ms. Georgiadis asked if the universities alert the police about enrollment increases to which DC Weihe said it would likely come up in conversation since they have a working relationship with both.

Mr. Steele asked if the smash & grab at the jewelers at the Trumbull Mall effects our policing. DC Weihe said years ago there was a smash & grab on Black Rock Tpk so there is a heightened awareness. Mr. Steele said he would support additional staff and more LSWs.

Interim CFO David Becker said they would work with the department to address staffing. Several members thanked the police for all they do for the town.

Legal Services: Town Attorney Phil Pires said the proposed budget now stands at \$775,000 to reflect a \$100,000 cut by the BOF to the funds for charter revision. He and the first selectman are appealing the cut. The significant increase is due to the ongoing litigation with UI.

Pierre Ratzki asked what can be done better this time with charter revision. Atty. Pires said the single question had vague language. First Selectman Gerber said the majority of time was spent on the form of government.

Ms. Georgiadis asked what was spent on the past charter revisions. Mr. Magneri said he believes it was about \$200,000.

Peter Britton asked if the \$200,000 for the UI litigation was enough. Atty. Pires said he felt confident in the number which assumes they may need expert services if a stay is necessary.

In response to Ms. Zezima, Atty. Pires said the type of work has not changed, but the budget proposal has his best estimates for the different areas of work. Mr. Steele asked about the fee schedule. Atty. Pires said Fairfield does not follow a retainer model. His firm charges \$250 an hour while others range from \$200-\$650. The fill pile case is not paid from this budget; the environmental attorneys are billing at \$600 hourly.

Mr. Steele said a lot of good work was done on charter revision already. He does not think it should be one question. He asked if those elements would be broken out into separate questions. First Selectman Gerber said he thinks there are some other basic items should be included such as compensation review and internal audit reporting. Atty. Pires said there are some areas that have vague language that need to be researched and improved.

Chris Shea asked if the City of Bridgeport would participate in some of the litigation costs with UI. Atty. Pires said it would be nice to partner with them but the offer has not been made. There will be some coordination of strategy. Mr. Shea asked where the budget is tracking this year. Mr. Magneri said the current budget is \$1,065,000 reflecting a \$500,000 BOF transfer and \$820,000 spent YTD.

Mr. Astarita said that although charter revision is definitely needed, he felt there is a need for more police officers. First Selectman Gerber said the ask wads for more headcount at the dispatch center not for more police officers where they have had a significant increase in headcount. Mr. Becker said with the captain

coming back that will help with organizational adjustments, and they will look at ways to speed up the hiring process. Marcy Spolyar asked how much support is provided to the RTM. Atty. Pires said it would be assumed in the general amount.

Fire: Fire Chief Denis McCarthy gave a department overview and explained the budget drivers are the CBA settlement, arbitration award, four firefighters, training for 8 new lieutenants with no added headcount and apparatus maintenance. There has been an increase in calls to assisted living facilities as well as simultaneous calls, and emergency calls on I-95 and the Merritt Parkway. Recent OSHA changes will impact the budget along with the cancer bill which requires attention to exposure to carcinogens.

Ms. Georgiadis asked about fire hydrant maintenance. DC Dunn said the fire hydrants are maintained by Aquarion; the rate is paid by the Town and Aquarion works on them.

Ms. Zezima asked if the department can wait until 2026 for the fire boat replacement. Chief McCarthy said Station 4 personnel go to Ye Yacht Yard if there is an emergency called in.

In response to Mr. Steele, Chief McCarthy said having a fire officer on a truck is a best practice. As an example, the Rescue truck responds to a call on the Merritt Parkway without a supervisor which is a dangerous situation. \$37,500 in the training budget is our contribution to the Regional Fire School.

Several members thanked the fire dept for all they do for the town.

Purchasing: Director Adam Tulin said the budget is flat except for personal services. The department is fully staffed and he is hoping to find efficiencies within the department.

Assessor: Ross Murray explained the funds for the aerial mapping images was moved from fees & professional services to IT software and \$225,000 is included in fees & professional services for the revaluation that started in spring 2024.

Tax Collector: Dave Kluczowski said there were inflationary increases for the printing and mailing of the tax bills. Mr. Wolk asked if the department was fully staffed to which Mr. Kluczowski explained a portion of the sewer rent collector is allocated to his department for the collection of sewer use and tax bills.

Sharon Pistilli asked about the change in delinquent tax collections. Mr. Kluczowski explained there was a large delinquent account that was collected when the house sold and the large amount of properties that sold during the pandemic. The increase for FY25 is due to a planned tax sale. At the annual budget meeting the resolution reducing the motor vehicle tax payments from 2 to 1 will be considered and voted on. 70% of people pay the entire motor vehicle bill in July already.

IT: Dave Kelley said this is mostly a maintenance budget this year which includes an Adobe pdf upgrade, security enhancements for PC monitoring and increased software costs. Collin Colburn asked how successful the website has been. Mr. Kelley said some people like it and others don't; the work order system does not work. Mr. Colburn said cosmetically it's an improvement. First Selectman Gerber said the work order system needs to be fixed as it is not efficient for the users.

Finance: Interim CFO Becker explained there were contractual adjustments and reductions by the BOF to the personal services lines. Mr Steele asked where the CFO search stood. First Selectman Gerber said the salary range was developed by the HR Department; they are looking for someone who is seasoned and has the skills to modernize the department. He will send a CFO benchmarking document to the RTM.

Library: Director Scott Jarzombek gave an overview of library activity at the main and Fairfield Woods branch which has increased 16%. Several members of the Body spoke in favor of the teen librarian position at the branch library and the libraries being vibrant, welcoming places especially for the teen population with teen angst and behavioral issues.

Ms. Georgiadis asked if the increase to library materials was enough. Mr Jarzombek explained the leasing program for E-materials and how the ROI is not as high as physical materials.

Building: Building Official Pat Mahoney said the budget is flat except for personal services increases and the department is fully staffed.

Public Works: Interim DPW Director John Marsilio said the public works budgets are a reflection of collaboration and sharing within these service departments. After the BOE it is the largest budget at \$39 million.

Engineering: Mr. Marsilio attributed the budget increases to the change from part time to full time administrative support and upgraded survey equipment. A new sign inventory is required to be incorporated into the GIS system which will be conducted by seasonal help. Seasonal employees are shared among the DPW departments as needed.

Solid Waste & Recycling: Mr. Marsilio said the new contract for the 12-community consortium for tipping fees increased by 21% with no economies as only 1 bid was received and there is no competition in the state. Ms. Pistilli asked if there were any recycling rebates in the foreseeable future. Mr Marsilio explained that single stream recycling has impacted the market particularly with contaminated product diminishing the value from \$35 rebates to \$100 tipping fees. The kitchen waste plan is mission driven not fiscally driven. There's no consistent, state-wide program to address this as there is a monopoly with no controls.

Mr. Steele sked how much MSW goes out of Fairfield. Mr. Marsilio said 31,000 tons of MSW from town goes to Wheelabrator; recycling goes to Oak Ridge in Shelton. Mr. Marsilio noted that Wheelabrator is very profitable and spends a lot on maintenance of their facility.

Public Works Administration: Mr. Marsilio said the budget increase was for personal services lines.

Public Works Operations: Mr Marsilio said there were contractual increases for employees, but staffing levels remain consistent. There will be surplus in the FY24 OT account for snow removal; although there were not a lot of snowstorms there were several occasions of icy conditions. He further explained the new steel plow blades get through three events now which was not the case previously.

WPCA: Mr. Marsilio said there were several salary increases as a result of the operational audit conducted by a third party. He noted there is a large problem in town with I&I that needs to be addressed and cured as best we can.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth P. Browne, MMC, MCTC  
Town Clerk