



Fiscal Committee - Board of Representatives

Jay Fountain, Chair

Frank Cerasoli, Vice Chair

Committee Report

Date: Monday, September 29, 2014

Time: 7:00 p.m.

Place: Democratic Caucus Room, 888 Washington Boulevard, Stamford, CT 06905-2098

The Fiscal Committee met as indicated above. In attendance were Chair Fountain, Vice Chair Cerasoli and Committee Member Reps. Coleman, Day, DeLuca, Di Costanzo, Fedeli, Figueroa and Silver. Absent or excused was Rep. Kooris and Mitchell. Also present were President Skigen; Clerk of the Board Summerville, Reps. McMullen and Zelinsky; Donna Loglisci, Town Clerk; Chief Jon Fontneau, Stamford Police Department; Robert Mislow, Smith House; Kathy Emmett, Corporation Counsel; Karen Cammarota, Grants Office; Michael Pollard, Chief of Staff; Mayor Martin; and several members of the public.

Chair Fountain called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
¹ 4. F29.207 \$18,915.00	ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION (Operating Budget); Board of Representatives; Board of Reps/Salaries, FICA; as a result of organizational changes, to fund the full-time salary line within the BOR department. A review of existing budget identified part-time funds which will no longer be needed. 09/02/14 – Submitted by Mayor Martin 09/11/14 – Approved by Board of Finance	Approved 8-0-1

President Skigen stated this will permit the Board to staff the Board office as it is currently staffed. A motion to approve this item was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 8-0-1 (Reps. Fountain, Coleman, Day, DeLuca, Di Costanzo, Fedeli, Figueroa and Silver in favor; Rep. Cerasoli abstaining.)

¹ Video Time Stamp 00:00:18

- ²1. [F29.202](#) RESOLUTION for public hearing and final adoption; **Held 5-4-0**
Amending the Local Real Estate Conveyance Tax
Rate.
08/06/14 – Submitted by Mayor Martin
08/18/14 – Approved by Committee as amended
10-0-0
08/18/14 – Approved by Committee for public
hearing 10-0-0

Chair Fountain opened the public hearing at 7:05 p.m. Several members of the public spoke. (See attached [sign-in sheet](#).)

- Thaddea Sheridan, President, Stamford Board of Realtors, spoke in opposition to the resolution, noting that increasing this tax will burden seniors, builders, and sellers who owe more than their houses are worth. This is a 43% increase in the conveyance tax and is out of line with current cost of living increases and puts Stamford at a disadvantage in comparison to neighboring communities.
- Mike Feldman, past President Stamford Board of Realtors and future President Connecticut Board of Realtors spoke in opposition to this resolution, expressing concerns regarding the taxes in Stamford
- Art Layton spoke in opposition to this resolution, stating that this tax is not related to any services that are provided and wrongly targets one group of taxpayers. The City should seek to have the State amend the tax to split it between buyers and sellers
- Daniel Willey stated that this is a regressive tax, because it is not related to the ability to pay taxes; it could be a double tax on both the buy and sell side of the transaction and the real estate market is still recovering and may limit economic development

Chair Fountain closed the public hearing at 7:20 p.m.

A motion to hold this item was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 5-4-0 (Reps. Fountain, Coleman, DeLuca, Di Costanzo and Silver in favor; Reps. Cerasoli, Day, Fedeli and Figueroa opposed.)

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- ³2. [F29.205](#) ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION (Grants Budget); **Approved 9-0-0**
\$47,628.00 Justice Assistance Grant; Overtime for extra working
patrols (100% grant funded).
09/02/14 – Submitted by Mayor Martin
09/11/14 – Approved by Board of Finance

Chief Fontneau explained that this is a grant to permit extra foot patrols to attack violent crime. This is a 100% match. The first patrols to be increased will be downtown but the patrols will be available throughout the City. The patrols will be from 7pm until the bars close. A motion to approve this item was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 9-0-0 (Reps. Fountain, Cerasoli, Coleman, Day, DeLuca, Di Costanzo, Fedeli, Figueroa and Silver in favor).

² Video Time Stamp 00:02:16

³ Video Time Stamp 00:18:11

43. [F29.206](#) ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION (Grants Budget); **Approved 9-0-0**
 \$22,600.00 Distracted Driving Grant; Overtime for increased
 enforcement. (25% City match from existing police
 overtime account).
 09/02/14 – Submitted by Mayor Martin
 09/11/14 – Approved by Board of Finance

Chief Fontneau explained that this is a 25% match grant. The first 4 days of this program the department issued 107 summons, demonstrating the need for this program. This program will continue until the money runs out. It's a \$105 summons and the City keeps \$31 (25%). A discussion ensued regarding the need to also increase enforcement for pedestrians and bicyclists who are not obeying traffic laws. Chief Fontneau said that this is part of the second phase of the plan to improve traffic and pedestrian safety. A motion to approve this item was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 9-0-0 (Reps. Fountain, Cerasoli, Coleman, Day, DeLuca, Di Costanzo, Fedeli, Figueroa and Silver in favor).

5. [F29.208](#) ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION (Operating **No action taken**
 \$131,375.00 Budget); Human Resources; HR/Salaries, FICA;
 restore funding to ensure continued departmental
 operations.
 09/02/14 – Submitted by Mayor Martin
 09/11/14 – Failed in Board of Finance

56. [F29.209](#) ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION (Operating **Approved 8-1-0**
 \$117,921.00 Budget); Revenue Services; Rev. Svs/Salary &
 FICA; A reduction in staff would be needed to follow
 through with the budget reduction; a reduction in
 staff would prevent the Tax Collector from carrying
 out the responsibilities prescribed under CGS Title
 12.
 09/02/14 – Submitted by Mayor Martin
 09/11/14 – Approved by Board of Finance

Michael Pollard explained that this is for the position of Revenue Services Manager. The work done by this position is required to oversee all cash transactions in the City and implement all e-billing. This is a position the auditors look for. There is nobody in the department able to fill this function. Outsourcing would cost more than having an employee fill the function. This position has existed in the past but was not funded this year. This comes out of contingency. E-billing accelerates payments to the City and also makes it easier for people to pay, so increases payments. A motion to approve this item was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 8-1-0 (Reps. Fountain, Coleman, Day, DeLuca, Di Costanzo, Fedeli, Figueroa and Silver in favor; Rep. Cerasoli opposed).

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- ⁶7. [F29.210](#) ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION (Operating Budget); Smith House; Smith House/Salary, Seasonal, FICA; restore funding to ensure continued departmental operations. **Approved 8-1-0**
 \$88,565.00
 09/02/14 – Submitted by Mayor Martin
 09/11/14 – Approved by Board of Finance

Bob Mislow explained that this is to permit seasonal people to staff the lobby in evenings and on weekends. It is the only way to have a person monitor who comes into the facility and to handle incoming calls. This includes outpatients and visitors. This amount is also for a person who handles the on-site banking transactions for patients and oversight of patient transportation. A motion to approve this item was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 8-1-0 (Reps. Fountain, Coleman, Day, DeLuca, Di Costanzo, Fedeli, Figueroa and Silver in favor; Rep. Cerasoli opposed).

- ⁷8. [F29.211](#) RESOLUTION; Authorizing the Mayor to sign an Agreement with the CT Department of Transportation for the reconstruction of the Riverbank Road Bridge. **Approved 9-0-0**
 09/03/14 – Submitted by Mayor Martin

Karen Cammarota explained that Stamford has a commitment from the State to fund 80% of the preliminary engineering costs for the reconstruction of the bridge. The total cost is \$260,000 and the state will pay \$208,000. A motion to approve this item was made, seconded and approved by a vote of 9-0-0 (Reps. Fountain, Cerasoli, Coleman, Day, DeLuca, Di Costanzo, Fedeli, Figueroa and Silver in favor).

9. [F29.212](#) RESOLUTION; Authorizing the Mayor to sign an Agreement with the CT Department of Transportation for the reconstruction of the Hunting Ridge Road Bridge. **Withdrawn**
 09/03/14 – Submitted by Mayor Martin

- ⁸10. F29.116 REVIEW; Financial Controls, Reporting Requirements and Other Contractual Obligations between the City of Stamford and Funded Third-Party Organizations **Report Made & Held in Committee**
 06/03/14 – Submitted by Rep. Buckman
 06/09/14 – Held at Steering
 08/11/14 – Held at Steering

Kathy Emmett explained that the Legal Department provided the Committee with a breakdown of the documentation the Law Department has of agreements with non-City agencies which receive City funding, in response to a request from Rep. Buckman, as follows:

⁶ Video Time Stamp 00:50:14

⁷ Video Time Stamp 01:00:23

⁸ Video Time Stamp 01:02:12

- Yerwood Center – Lease
- Mill River Collaborative – Agreement which provides what the Collaborative is supposed to be doing and the City funding
- Ferguson Library – Lease for Harry Bennett property which provides that it is to be used as a library
- Smith House – Lease
- Stamford Partnership / DSSD – No documentation other than ordinance creating DSSD
- Brennan Golf Course – No documentation
- Chester Addison Community Center – No documentation
- Lathon Wider Community Center – No documentation although there was a lease with NEON and is now owned by the City
- Glenbrook Community Center – Lease
- East Side Partnership – No documentation
- Multicultural Council of Stamford – No documentation
- Stamford Museum / Nature Center - No documentation
- Bartlett Arboretum – Lease which requires that it be an arboretum
- Old Town Hall Redevelopment Agency – No documentation other than resolutions creating OTHRA

Committee members noted that the funding of these agencies is discussed every year during the budget process and whether there is a need for any additional process or to have agreements other than leases with each of these agencies in order for the City to provide funds. The possibility of formally requiring financial materials in the budget process was discussed.

⁹11. [F29.204](#) REVIEW; Fiscal Implications of Amendment of Chapter 220, Article IV of the Code, Senior Citizens Tax Abatement **Report Made**
08/15/14 – Submitted by Fiscal Committee

Secondary Committee – Legislative & Rules

Chair Fountain distributed the proposed changes to the ordinance. Any changes will have to be made by the Legislative & Rules Committee. He explained that the current maximum abatement is \$1,200 and that the deferral is not used, so the purpose is to give seniors additional relief. State law does not permit a homestead exemption.

Changes include:

- Clarifying the definition of principal residence
- Making it available to people who place their homes in trust
- Making sure that it was only available to property tax payers
- Increasing the income limits
- Increasing the asset limits

⁹ Video Time Stamp 01:21:30

- Eliminating the tax deferral, because nobody uses it
- Eliminating the requirement of the limit recommendation from the Board of Finance which has not been being provided to the Board of Representatives
- Consolidating the number of tiers for abatements and increasing the amount of the abatements to a \$2,000 maximum
- Making this a pilot program which will then have to renewed by the Board of Representatives
- Moving up the application dates so the City can build it into the budget

Committee members discussed:

- whether the asset numbers in §220-14.B.2, are too high, since they include deferred compensation and savings and recommended changing them to \$400,000 for single and \$600,000 for married
- Whether there should be a longer residency requirement, and recommended a 5 year residency requirement; anybody who already receives this would be grandfathering; the Law Department needs to research this
- Applicants would need to provide taxes from the previous year
- Income needs to be based on the AGI from the Federal Income Tax return
- Changing the income limits to \$85,000 for single and \$100,000 for married

These changes will be incorporated before the draft ordinance is sent to the Legislative & Rules Committee for further consideration and action.

As a Secondary Committee:

1. [E29.016](#) REVIEW and APPROVAL; Use of 200 Strawberry Hill Property as a school contingent on State approval of magnet funding (at 7:00 p.m.)
09/02/14 – Submitted by Board of Education
2. PS29.021 RESOLUTION; to accept a gift/donation of \$283,000 for the Animal Shelter.
09/03/14 –Submitted by David Yanik

Chair Fountain adjourned the meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Jay Fountain, Chair

This meeting is on [video](#).