

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

May 2, 2023 - 7:30 P.M.

Honorable Mayor, Dean Esposito, called the meeting to order at 7:38 p.m.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & PRAYER**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Sean Hatch. Councilman DiGilio led all in prayer.

**ROLL CALL:**

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:** Buzaid, Eriquez, Knapp, Levy, DiGilio, Rotello, Henry, Britton, Perkins, Esposito, Esposito III, Fox, Chianese, Cavo, Palma, Merchan, Visconti, Cammisa and Masi.

**COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:** Halas and Molinaro.

**PRESENT: 19, ABSENT: 2**

**ALSO PRESENT:** Bob Yamin, Corporation Counsel; Les Pinter, Deputy Corporation Counsel; and Elisa Etcheto, Legislative Assistant.

**PUBLIC INPUT:**

Jehad Sabbagh, Resident, 98 Deer Hill Avenue, spoke on item 13.  
Thomas Vanbenschoten, Resident, 27 Tanglewood Drive, spoke on item 13.  
George Sousa, Resident, 16 Old Forty Acre Mountain Road, spoke on item 13.  
Roseann Press, Resident, 58 King Street, spoke on item 12.  
Francis Powers, Resident, 28 Driftway Road, spoke on items 13, and 12.  
John Woodruff, Resident, 57 Middle River Road, spoke on item 13.  
Roberto Alves, Resident, 7 West Redding Road, spoke on items 13, and 1.  
Larry Riefberg, Resident, 6 Ervie Drive, spoke on item 13.  
Albert Russo, Resident, 220 Franklin St. Ext., spoke on items 13, and 14.  
Michael Safranek, Resident, 24 Jackson Drive, spoke on items 13, and 14.  
Ken Gucker, Resident, 89 Padanaram Road, spoke on item 13.  
Greg Davis, Resident, 30 Cannonball Drive, spoke on item 13.

**MINUTES - Minutes of the Council Meeting held April 4, 2023**

***A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, and was seconded by Councilman Perkins, to waive the reading of the minutes, as all Members have copies and copies are on file in the Legislative Assistant's Office.*** The motion carried unanimously.

**CONSENT CALENDAR:**

3. **COMMUNICATION - Appointment to Government Entity – Library Board of Directors**

**Receive the Communication and approve the appointment of John Harmon to serve on the Library Board of Directors.**

6. COMMUNICATION - Appropriation of Funds – Registrar of Voters - Finance

**Receive the Communication and approve the appropriation of funds totaling \$20,600 to the Registrar of Voters related to the April Bond Referendum as presented.**

7. RESOLUTION - Renewal of Easement Acquisition - Franklin Street Extension Bridge

**Receive the Communication and adopt the Resolution related to the Franklin Street Extension bridge renovation easement acquisitions as presented.**

8. RESOLUTION - Ratification: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) 2021 - Reallocation of Funds

**Receive the Communication and adopt the Resolution ratifying the April 4, 2023 approval of American Rescue Plan Act reallocation of funds totaling \$6,650,000 as presented.**

10. RESOLUTION - CTDPH Public Health Infrastructure Grant – Health & Human Services

**Receive the Communication and adopt the Resolution authorizing Mayor Dean Esposito or Kara Marie Prunty, Director of Health, as his designee, to apply for and accept funding from the State of Connecticut Department of Health CDC Public Health Infrastructure Grant Program not to exceed \$310,048.69 with no local match required as presented.**

11. RESOLUTION - CTDHS FFY 2022 Homeland Security Grant - Office of Emergency Management

**Receive the Communication and adopt the Resolution authorizing Mayor Dean Esposito, or his designee, Matthew Cassavechia, Director of Emergency Management to enter into the Region 5 Memorandum of Agreement through the 2022 Federal Fiscal Year State Homeland Security Grant Program with no local match being required as presented.**

17. REPORT & ORDINANCE - Government Entities Review Committee (G.E.R.C.)

**Receive the ad hoc and public hearing reports related to the Government Entities Review Committee and adopt the 2023 Ordinance amending Section 2-259 renewing The City of Danbury Cultural Commission, The Commission on Aging, The Parking Authority of the City of Danbury, The Lake Kenosia Commission, The Flood and Erosion Control Board of the City of Danbury, and The Youth Commission through June 30, 2027 as presented. Please note there is a scribe's error to be corrected in the ad hoc report changing the reference from councilman Boyce to committee member Boyce.**

19. REPORT - Planning & Engineering – Application for Renewal of Water & Sewer Extensions - Great Plain Road and Great Meadow Road

**Receive the reports from the City Engineer and the Planning Commission and adopt their positive recommendations related to the extension of time for the renewal of sewer and water extensions located at Great Plain Road and Great Meadow Road as presented.**

**A motion was made by Councilman Knapp, and was seconded by Councilman Perkins, to accept the Consent Calendar as presented.** The motion carried unanimously.

1. COMMUNICATION - Police Department Appointments – Molenda, Avallone, Barthelemy, Murph, Zutter, Gentile, Kryeziu, Evans, Coley, Sotomayor, Benitez & Tine to Certified Police Officers

*A motion was made by Councilman Henry, seconded by Councilman Knapp, to receive the communication and confirm the appointments of Matthew Molenda, Oliver Avallone, Dominic Barthelemy, Erick Murph, Derek Zutter, Giuseppe Gentile, to the position of Certified Police Officer in the City of Danbury.* The motion carried unanimously.

*A motion was made by Councilman Esposito, seconded by Councilman Visconti, to receive the correspondence and approve the appointments of the following, Police Officers to the City of Danbury Minator Kryeziu, Jonathan Evans, Glendalis Sotomayor, Kenneth Benitez, and Michael Tine.* The motion carried unanimously.

2. COMMUNICATION - Appointment to Government Entity – Environmental Impact Commission

Withdrawn

3. COMMUNICATION - Appointment to Government Entity – Library Board of Directors

*\*CONSENTED* - as received.

4. COMMUNICATION - Appointment of Assistant Counsel & Outside Counsel – Attorney Candace V. Fay, Esq. – Corporation Counsel

*A motion was made by Councilman Levy, to refer this to an Ad Hoc Committee, Corporation Counsel and a representative from the Mayor's Office.* So Ordered.

The Mayor appointed Councilman Levy in the Chair, along with Councilmen Esposito III and Chianese.

5. COMMUNICATION - Application for Deferral of Tax Assessment Increase – 11 Boughton St.

*A motion was made by Councilman Knapp, to refer this to an Ad Hoc with Corporation Counsel, the Director of Finance, the Tax Assessor, the Director of Planning, a representative from the Mayor's Office, and the petitioner present.* So Ordered.

The Mayor appointed Councilman Knapp in the Chair, along with Councilmen Henry and Perkins.

6. COMMUNICATION - Appropriation of Funds – Registrar of Voters - Finance

*\*CONSENTED* - as received.

7. RESOLUTION - Renewal of Easement Acquisition - Franklin Street Extension Bridge

*\*CONSENTED* - as received.

8. RESOLUTION - Ratification: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) 2021 - Reallocation of Funds

*\*CONSENTED* - as received.

9. RESOLUTION - Downtown Special Services District

*A motion was made by Councilman Masi, seconded by Councilman Rotello, to receive the communication and adopt the resolution levying the property tax for the Danbury Downtown Special Services District, for the fiscal year, July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024.* The motion carried unanimously.

10. RESOLUTION - CTDPH Public Health Infrastructure Grant – Health & Human Services

*\*CONSENTED* - as received.

11. RESOLUTION - CTDHS FFY 2022 Homeland Security Grant - Office of Emergency Management

*\*CONSENTED* - as received.

12. ORDINANCE - Senior Tax Freeze for Elderly Homeowners

*A motion was made by Councilman Eriquez, seconded by Councilman Cavo, to receive the communication and adopt the ordinance of the Tax Freeze Program for elderly homeowners, as presented.* The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Murphy provided a brief overview of the program data, application process, and population eligibility for Councilmen Perkins and Chianese.

Councilman Esposito III asked about the application notification process.

Councilman DiGilio clarified the ordinance amendment process for Mr. Chianese.

13. REPORTS & ORDINANCE - An Ordinance Making Appropriations for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024, and a Resolution Levying Property Tax for the Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024, including budgets for General Government I, General Government II, Education, Public Works, Health & Human Services & Public Safety.

Ad Hoc Reports:

*A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Levy, to waive the reading of the minutes of all the mentioned reports, as all Members have copies and copies are on file in the Legislative Assistant's Office.* The motion carried unanimously.

Councilman Rotello requested a point of order to clarify the voting process for this item.

*A motion was made by Councilman Knapp, seconded by Councilman DiGilio, to receive the communication on General Government I, and approve the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee to accept the Mayor's budget, as presented.* The motion carried unanimously.

*A motion was made by Councilman Fox, seconded by Councilwoman Cammisa, to receive the report of the Committee, and adopt the recommendation of the Committee to adopt the Mayor's budget, as presented, for 2023-2024, for General Government II.* The motion carried unanimously.

Councilman Fox thanked City staff and Department Heads for their hard work.

**A motion was made by Councilman Levy, seconded by Councilman Esposito III, to adopt the Mayor's Educational budget of \$150,300,000, and an additional \$208,575, for school health and welfare.** The motion carried unanimously.

Councilmen Perkins, Britton and Fox spoke in support of the Education budget, and urged that the discussion regarding next year's funding begin immediately.

Councilman Levy thanked the Committee for their hard work.

**A motion was made by Councilman Cavo, seconded by Councilman Esposito III, to receive the communication, the report from the Ad Hoc Committee (Public Works), and adopt the unanimous recommendations by the Committee, to accept the Mayor's budget, as presented.** The motion carried unanimously.

Councilman Cavo thanked fellow Committee Members and city staff for their hard work.

**A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Esposito, to receive this report of the Ad Hoc Committee for Health & Human Services and Public Safety, and adopt the recommendation to fully fund it at the Mayor's budget request, as presented.** The motion carried unanimously.

Councilmen DiGilio and Rotello spoke in support of fully funding the Health & Human Services and Public Safety budget, market inflation, and thanked Public Safety employees.

Main Motion:

**A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Knapp, to approve an ordinance making appropriations for the fiscal year, beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024, along with a resolution levying the property tax for the fiscal year, beginning July 1, 2023, and ending June 30, 2024, to further clarify, the entire budget amount is \$295,750,000, as well as a mill rate beginning set at 23.33.**

The motion carried on roll call vote. 13 Yes, 6 No (Rotello, Visconti, Britton, Merchan, Perkins, Chianese).

Councilman Rotello spoke on the effect of the Revaluation and a phase-in of property assessments.

Councilman Perkins asked about past phase-ins of property assessments.

Mr. Garrick and Ms. Murphy addressed a phase-in option, and noted that property values have increased since the 2022 Revaluation.

Britton stated he will not be voting on the proposed budget and asked for a phase-in.

Councilman Levy discussed the budget presentation and process as required per the City Charter and explained his opposition to a phase-in.

**A motion was made by Councilman Perkins, seconded by Councilman Chianese, to amend the main motion to Phase-In the Revaluation over a 5 Year Period.** The motion was withdrawn.

Mr. Pinter cautioned the council on considering the proposed amendment. He clarified that the motion to amend the budget with a phase-in is outside the legal scope of this action, and is out of order. He noted that an alternate budget can be presented but would have to be done outside of this action.

Councilmen Esposito III and Knapp asked for clarification of the amendment's validity.

(Back to the Main Motion)

Councilman DiGilio spoke in opposition of a phase-in due to the uncertainty of property values in the future and discussed the budget process.

Councilmen Knapp and Esposito III spoke in support of the Mayor's proposed budget.

14. REPORT & ORDINANCE - An Ordinance Appropriating \$3,000,000 for Public Improvements in the 2023-2024 Capital Budget and Authorizing the Issuance of \$3,000,000 Bonds of the City to Meet said Appropriations and Pending the Issuance Thereof the Making of Temporary Borrowings for Such Purpose

*A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Rotello, to waive the reading of the minutes, as all Members have copies and copies are on file in the Legislative Assistant's Office.* The motion carried unanimously.

*A motion was made by Councilman Fox, seconded by Councilman Rotello, to receive the report of the Committee and adopt its recommendation, adopting the ordinance appropriating \$3 million for public improvement projects in the 2023-2024 Capital budget, and authorizing the issuance of \$3 million bonds of the City to meet said appropriations and pending the issuance thereof the making of temporary borrowings for such purpose as presented.* The motion carried unanimously.

15. REPORT & ORDINANCE - Sewer Rates as of July 1, 2023

*A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Rotello, to waive the reading of the minutes, as all Members have copies and copies are on file in the Legislative Assistant's Office.* The motion carried unanimously.

*A motion was made by Councilman Masi, seconded by Councilman DiGilio, to adopt the ordinance for the sewer, as presented.* The motion carried unanimously.

16. REPORT & ORDINANCE - Water Rates as of July 1, 2023

*A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Rotello, to waive the reading of the minutes, as all Members have copies and copies are on file in the Legislative Assistant's Office.* The motion carried unanimously.

*A motion was made by Councilman Esposito III, seconded by Councilman Rotello, to receive the communication and adopt the water rates as proposed in ordinance Sections 48-70 through 40-77, as presented.* The motion carried unanimously.

17. REPORT & ORDINANCE - Government Entities Review Committee (G.E.R.C.)

\**CONSENTED* - as received.

18. REPORT & RESOLUTION - CTDRS Neighborhood Assistance Act (NAA) Program – Finance Dept

*A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilwoman Cammisa, to waive the reading of the minutes, as all Members have copies and copies are on file in the Legislative Assistant's Office.* The motion carried unanimously.

*A motion was made by Councilman Knapp, seconded by Councilman Cavo, to receive the communication and adopt the resolution authorizing Mayor Dean Esposito to apply for and accept funding from the 2023 Neighborhood Assistance Act Program, as presented.* The motion carried unanimously.

19. REPORT - Planning & Engineering – Application for Renewal of Water & Sewer Extensions - Great Plain Road and Great Meadow Road

\**CONSENTED* - as received.

**DEPARTMENT REPORTS - Police, Fire, Health & Human Services, Public Works, Permit Center, U.N.I.T., Elderly Services, Public Library, Tax Assessor**

*A motion was made by Councilman DiGilio, seconded by Councilman Rotello, to waive the reading of the Departmental Reports, as all Members have copies and copies are on file in the Legislative Assistant's Office, as well as accept the reports as presented.* The motion carried unanimously.

Councilman Esposito noted a correction in the Public Utilities Report, there are 31 fire hydrants are out of service, not 311.

Ms. Carvalho provided an update on the homeless population (46) located at the Lake Avenue shelter (Pacific House) for Mr. Chianese.

Ms. Murphy spoke on the elderly homeowners' property tax program and the notification process.

Mr. Day noted that the reservoirs are at capacity for Mr. Esposito III.

Mr. Rotello asked Mr. Carvalho about the city's (Elm Street) shelter capacity. She noted that capacity is 20 with no current occupants.

Mayor Esposito thanked the City Council and staff for their hard work on the budget.

**Mayor Extended All Committees.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion was made by Councilman Rotello, seconded by Councilman DiGilio, to adjourn.* Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:13 p.m.

Copies of Agenda Items are available in the Legislative Assistant's Office and on the City's website.

Respectfully submitted,  
Christina Martinez, Recording Secretary  
Attest,  
Elisa Etcheto, Legislative Assistant