



The City of Danbury's 2007-2008 Annual Budget

Mayor Mark D. Boughton

“Building Danbury's Future Together”

March 6, 2007

Mr. President. Honorable Leaders and Members of the Common Council, Madam Clerk, City Officials, Department Directors, Employees and my fellow Danburians.

In accordance with the my duties as Mayor and those prescribed by the Charter of the City of Danbury, I respectfully present my proposed budget, and the Comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan for the Fiscal year 2007-2008.

Before I begin my budget details, let me say thank you to the legislative body of our city, the Common Council, and its leadership. Our Council spends hours working on the City's business in a voluntary capacity. In the coming month, they will be giving up their evenings and weekends to deliberate over this body of work. For their dedication and commitment we should all be thankful.

Of course our thank yous would not be possible without recognizing our Director of Finance and Personnel Dena Diorio. Dena has spent hundreds of hours pouring over these numbers and with the aid of her capable assistant Judy Baris, has been able to create a first class document that all of us can be proud of. Dena's work is outstanding in every way.

I also want to thank Dena for all of years of hard work with the City of Danbury and all of her dedication. Dena has left a lasting legacy to our city and I know that all of you thank her and wish her well in her new position in North Carolina. Each year our City budget has earned awards for its presentation style as well as its content. I am sure that this year will be no different. Thank you, Dena. The City of Danbury will miss you and your husband, Robert.

My friends, as in the past Danbury stands on strong financial footing. Danbury continues to maintain the highest credit rating and bond rating in our history and we continue to have one of the lowest effective property tax rates in the state. I would encourage you to review the graphs and charts that are included in your budget. In particular, I would like

to point out our low debt service rate and our strong fund balance. Both of those numbers continue to remain healthy and strong.

“The City of Danbury’s mission is to ensure a superior quality of life for its citizens by providing the most cost effective municipal services while preserving the cultural, historical and natural resources of the City. We are committed to working with citizens to enhance Danbury’s position as a premier place to live, work, and raise a family in a traditional yet progressive community.”

The mission statement defines and drives our decision making process in the City of Danbury.

Last year’s budget reflected our core mission. In addition, each of our departments was asked to develop their own mission statement that connects back to the City’s statement. In this way, our mission is clear, and the flow of communication down to our departments is seamless.

This year the 2007-2008 Budget continues that commitment with the introduction of performance measurements in the City’s budget presentation. In a separate section of the budget you will find logic models for a program or service for each City department which is designed to assist managers to focus on what they want to accomplish and how to reach their goals.

Our 2007-2008 budget reflects careful planning and an eye towards the future. This budget targets three core areas that have been the focus of our attention over the last several years. Specifically, Public Safety, Education and Public Works are the focus of our spending plan.

Public Safety

Most important to our mission statement and to quality of life in the City of Danbury is the delivery of public safety services. On May 9th of 2006 our city made a decision on funding for a new police station and on funding for much needed public safety technology and equipment. The Police station will be 75,000 square feet and will include all of the ancillary uses that are required of a modern day police department. Most importantly, the new police station will be equipped for centralized dispatch for police, fire, and EMS. Planning is moving forward and we anticipate a June ground breaking for the new building

To complement the delivery of these services and the new Police building, the 2007-2008 budget has a number of improvements to the Danbury P.D. The capital budget includes funding for 15 new vehicles for the Police Department and increased funding for training.

Finally, there is the issue of operations within the Police Department. Last year Chief Baker presented a strategic plan for the Police Department that would reflect the needs of

growing diverse community in the 21st Century. Chief Baker and Deputy Chief Shanahan called their plan “*Vision 2009*”

This plan is comprehensive and is thorough. It reflects and updates recommendations from the strategic plan developed in 1983 for the Police Department by the International Association of Chiefs of Police. These recommendations were never implemented by prior administrations. “*Vision 2009*” analyzes staffing levels, equipment, sworn officer training, traffic enforcement, and quality of life enforcement.

Over the last 10 months both the City and the Police Union have been engaged in negotiating the impact of the new table of organization. In anticipation of a positive outcome of those negotiations, the 2007-2008 budget funds “*Vision 2009*”. This plan prioritizes increasing the minimum manpower by adding fifteen more officers. The Police Department continues as a priority of my administration with a twenty-one percent increase in funding in the past four years. When “*Vision 2009*” is fully implemented and we complete the new Police Headquarters, nearly two dozen more officers will be patrolling the streets with the increased manpower and reassignments outlined in “*Vision 2009*.”

The May 9th vote also included funding for the Westside Fire Station. The 2007-2008 budget funds *ten new firefighter positions* to fully staff the new Fire Station. A new fire pumper – Engine #26 – will arrive in late April for use in the new Fire Station. The building will be completed this summer and we anticipate a dedication of the building around Labor Day. This project is the first major expansion of the Danbury Fire Department in over a generation.

Finally, we are making improvements to the delivery of ambulance services in our City. The 2007-2008 operating budget includes funding for increased staff during peak hours, as well as a new computer system for electronic ambulance call reporting. This new system will improve patient care by improving real-time transmission of clinical data. This investment translates into a forty-percent increase in ambulance services for our community since I conducted a competitive bid for ambulance services several years ago.

Education

Education spending continues to be one of the main drivers in our budget. Our Board of Education has asked for approximately 7.1 % increase in their operating budget. Education spending over the last five years has increased by 22.4%. This year is no different. I am proposing an increase to the Board of Education of 6.1% to 106.1 million dollars or approximately 6.1 million dollars more than last year.

Of course I would be remiss if I did not mention Governor Rell’s bold initiative to place more resources in education. ***This spending plan puts all of the ECS increase that the Governor has proposed right where it belongs, in our public schools.***

Finally, let me emphasize that we are excited about the future of education in Danbury. This past fall the new Western Connecticut Academy of International Studies opened to rave reviews. It provides a state-of-the-art educational experience for our young people. In addition, Broadview Middle School renovations are complete and the Rogers Park Middle School renovations will be completed in a matter of months. The Roberts Avenue Replacement School will begin construction later this summer.

Indeed Danbury's children are poised for academic success with new facilities. We are thankful to our taxpayers who understand the economic benefit of quality schools *and* an educated work force.

The 2007-2008 budget reorganizes and shifts resources to focus on the quality of life issues that are critical to the health of our neighborhoods. This spending plan is important to our mission statement and ultimately to the delivery of services to our residents.

Office of Neighborhood Assistance

Two years ago, I introduced to the Common Council the Livable Neighborhood Plan. The plan focused on three core areas. Specifically, we created a new Department called the UNIT – the Unified Neighborhood Inspection Team. Secondly, we proposed the Danbury Neighborhood Bond which was adopted by the voters in November of 2005, and finally we proposed a number of initiatives within the 2005-2006 operating budget relating to the improvement of our neighborhoods.

Last year I expanded the organization to full-time status. Over the past year the UNIT has been very successful at improving the quality of life in our neighborhoods.

This year I have increased funding for the UNIT to allow the team to perform more inspections, hold more community forums and engage in more neighborhood planning. In addition, earlier this year, I introduced Cityline 311. The 311 line allows residents to call a single phone number to get answers to frequently asked questions, request service and obtain other information. This budget includes funding for a fulltime 311 operator who works under the direction of the UNIT Neighborhood Coordinator. Having CityLine 311 be part of the Office of Neighborhood Assistance allows us to take a comprehensive approach to quality of life issues.

Finally, CityLine 311 will give us vital information to measure how well we are helping our residents and help us determine where to best allocate city resources.

DPW/Engineering

With the retirement of City Engineer/Public Works Director Bill Buckley and the hiring of Antonio Iadarola, I asked Mr. Iadarola to review the operations of all of the departments that report to him and develop a strategic plan that does several things.

1. Improve delivery of critical services to our residents
2. Improve maintenance programs in our Parks Department
3. Develop a management plan to implement capital improvement projects that are ongoing, and develop organizational plan for future capital projects as we rebuild the City's infrastructure.
4. Develop strong internal controls for city assessment projects and develop a strategic plan to reduce back logs of those projects.

We have reorganized the roles and functions of each department. Tonight, I am presenting a sweeping reorganization of the City's Public Works Department. Highlights of the new reorganization include the creation of a new Public Services Division to include Park Maintenance, Forestry, Equipment Maintenance, and Highways. These four divisions will be led by a Public Service Superintendent and will allow for a more coordinated approach to the delivery of these services. In addition, a new division will be created entitled Public Project Construction and Administration. This division will have sole responsibility for the execution of the City's capital projects and will report directly to the Director of Public Works. This will leave the Engineering Department with responsibility for permits and land use reviews, GIS mapping, public utilities engineering, public project design, and traffic engineering. By segregating public project design from project management, we can ensure the most efficient execution of key projects that will be getting underway this spring and future projects that are waiting for funding.

This reorganization will provide enhanced focus and direction as we seek to implement the various bond issues that have been approved by our voters over the last two years, and provide additional supervision and management of our Public Works departments.

Sewer & Water Funds

Our Sewer and Water funds are beginning to see positive cash positions after three years of gentle rate increases. This year I am proposing *no increases* in rates to either the Sewer fund or the Water fund. For the first time in recent memory we are also adding a second crew to address water main breaks and to support ongoing maintenance issues in the water system. I am also proposing no changes to the current connection fee structure.

Energy Tax Credit; tax credit for elderly homeowners

Due to the increasing pressure on our seniors relating to the rate increases in electricity and to escalating costs of heating and cooling their homes, I am also proposing a tax credit to be used as energy assistance for our seniors. The new program grants a property tax credit of \$250.00 for single residents and \$350.00 for married couples. In addition, the income level for qualification for the energy tax credit has been raised to \$51,500 for single residents and \$58,000 for married residents. Because of higher income guidelines, for the first time, we will be touching a whole new group of people who are on fixed incomes and need assistance in paying their energy bills. This proposal is fiscally

responsible and will provide real relief for those seniors who have to make a decision between heating their homes and buying their groceries.

Other Post Employment Benefits (OPEB)

The General Accounting Standards Board -- commonly referred to as GASB, has added a new accounting standard that requires cities and towns to begin accounting for something called "other post employment benefits". These benefits are the retiree medical insurance benefits that the City of Danbury provides for each of its retirees for their lifetime.

In Danbury, our actuarial has calculated that this unfunded liability to be around 70 million dollars.

The 2007-2008 Budget begins to account for retiree medical costs by creating an OPEB trust fund that will be treated similar to one of our pension funds. This important public policy decision begins saving for this liability – unlike government's previous pay as you go manner. This year's contribution to the trust fund will be 1.2 million dollars.

Why should we fund OPEB? Credit rating agencies and bond rating agencies have indicated that they will judge the creditworthiness of cities and towns by whether or not they fund OPEB, and by the strategic plan they have in place for future funding. A reduction in our bond rating would result in the City paying higher interest rates and cost the taxpayers more dollars.

While OPEB is a significant unfunded mandate which negatively impacts our mill rate, we must fund our obligation to our retirees so that we are well positioned in the future to meet this challenge.

Comprehensive Capital Improvement Program

The 2007-2008 Budget provides for several unique initiatives regarding capital improvements in our City. Specifically the program:

- Allocates \$75,000 for the completion of Richter Park's master plan. Over the last several years Richter Park has struggled to compete in the marketplace and has had discussions about the future of the Richter House and the golf course. A comprehensive Master Plan will allow the Richter Park Authority and the City to strategically plan improvements and develop a long term vision that embraces the arts community and enhances recreational opportunities.
- Allocates \$250,000 towards the White Street streetscape project - scheduled to start construction this summer.
- Allocates \$100,000 for sidewalk repairs.
- Allocated \$100,000 for repairs and improvements to Rogers Park fields.
- Allocates approximately \$100,000 for paving and drainage projects.

Summary

The 2007-2008 Budget is full of change and improvements and reaches to attain the core values of our mission statement. The impact of these changes to our taxpayers is minimal.

This year I am asking our mill rate to be set at 22.20. This represents an increase of less than 1% . With this gentle investment, we will have expanded public safety services with more Police Officers on the street, more firefighters to battle emergencies, fully fund the Board of Education's budget, responsibly fund our OPEB obligation, and provide meaningful energy assistance to our seniors

Our spending plan calls for *no increase* to sewer and water rates.

Our spending plan has a mission statement that reflects a progressive, forward thinking city that serves our residents. Our budget gives us a mission statement that reaches down to our city departments and connects with our residents. It now includes logic models to set goals and enhance performance.

The 2007-2008 budget gives us a plan for strong management and strong accountability. A plan that gives us clearly defined goals and a vision that all of us can be proud of.

A realignment of the Public Work Department and funding of the Police Department reorganization plan that reflects the growing needs of our community yet saves the city valuable tax dollars and resources.

A senior energy assistance program that will help our seniors address the escalating costs of energy.

Our comprehensive capital improvement plan enhances the quality of life by improving our sidewalks and our streetscapes.

This is what our City is about and what we will be working to implement in the coming year.

Tonight, I ask for the Council's cooperation as they deliberate over this spending plan. Our finances have never been stronger, our outlook never been brighter. Let's work together on a bi-partisan basis to keep Danbury moving forward.

With these thoughts in mind, Madam Clerk, I respectfully submit to you this budget for our City's 2007/2008 fiscal year. Thank you, God Bless America and God Bless our Great City....

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