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~AD HOC REPORT~
Senior Energy Assistance
Thursday, May 17, 2007

Hon. Mark D. Boughton, Mayor
Common Council Members

Chairman Charles Trombetta called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 17, 2007, in the Caucus Room, 3rd Floor, Danbury City Hall, 155 Deer Hill Avenue. Present were Committee members Shay Nagarsheth and Duane Perkins. Also present were Mayor Mark Boughton, Corporation Counsel Laszlo L. Pinter, Tax Assessor Colleen Burke, Assistant Finance Director Dan Garrick, Tax Collector Scott Ferguson and interested citizens.

Chairman Trombetta introduced everyone in the room.

Chairman Trombetta asked Mayor Boughton to explain the purpose of the evening's meeting. Mayor Boughton pointed out the escalating energy costs with regard to natural gas, electricity, gasoline and heating costs. For the past year, ways to relieve such a burden have been explored. Of particular concern was finding relief for the senior and elderly homeowners who have to pay exorbitant amounts of money to heat their homes during the winter months and cool their homes during the summer months. After reviewing several of the plans put together, one plan in particular has been developed to provide such assistance—an additional tax credit on their property taxes. In addition, the qualifying income levels have been broadened to include higher income levels to afford as many people as possible the opportunity to benefit from the program. The purpose of the evening's meeting was to bring forward the proposed ordinance. Mayor Boughton informed everyone that enrollment for the program was underway. A mailing was sent out to 3,300 residents to let them know the program was available. In addition, any venue that included seniors, information was provided in an effort to notify as many seniors as possible of the program. Ms. Burke explained that approximately 720 individuals have applied for the program. There is one application that is filed every other year. Chairman Trombetta asked how many individuals would be impacted by the program. Ms. Burke said that currently there are seniors on the program that have filed for the energy assistance program. Many of them are over the state income guidelines but do meet the energy assistance guidelines. There are a lot of new applicants that have come in to apply just for the energy assistance program. Councilman Perkins asked if the classification "single" included head of household as a filing status. Corporation Counsel Pinter said he would have to review Connecticut General Statute Section 12-170aa. Mayor Boughton pointed out that the language in the ordinance reflected the language in the Connecticut General Statutes. Corporation Counsel Pinter agreed. Councilman Perkins said that Section 18-12(5) mentions the threshold has been changed from \$5,000 to \$10,000. He questioned the reasoning for the change—was it to include a broader scale of individuals. Corporation Counsel Pinter agreed noting that by increasing the income qualification standard, more individuals would qualify to take advantage of the program. The State establishes the benchmarks and allows the municipalities to adjust the income qualifications. Councilman Perkins asked what the qualifying income was and Ms. Burke explained that the levels have changed, as they do every year. This year, the levels are \$28,800 for a single individual and \$33,800 for a married couple. Councilman Perkins expressed concern that individuals might alter their filing status in order to qualify for the credits. Ms. Burke explained that if two individuals who are married filed jointly, their status is married. If two individuals who are married file separately, they still fall under the qualifications as being married. Chairman Trombetta inquired whether or not there was a provision in the program which included the permanently disabled. Corporation Counsel Pinter said yes, under Section 18-12. Councilman Perkins asked where the funding came from in order to pay for the program. Mr. Garrick explained that the program would be offset by the supplemental tax bill for motor vehicles. Mayor Boughton explained that during the period of October 1st and January, there is a collection of motor vehicles. The amount in the fund depends upon how

strong the market is for motor vehicles. It is not a line item in the budget because of the fluctuation of the funds. The money is used to pay for tax relief and assistance programs. Councilman Perkins asked how much the program will cost. Ms. Burke said approximately \$200,000. To date, 99% of the applications have been entered. Councilman Perkins asked if the figure included both programs. Ms. Burke explained that the State program is reimbursed and the \$200,000 is for the energy assistance program.

A motion was made by Councilman Nagarsheth and seconded by Councilman Perkins that the Committee recommend that the Common Council adopt the Ordinance Section 18-12.2 together with the amendment of 18-12 in order to provide more seniors with the benefit to assist in helping them handle their energy expenses. The motion carried unanimously.

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Nagarsheth and seconded by Councilman Perkins. The motion carried unanimously at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charles Trombetta, Chairman

Shay Nagarsheth

Duane Perkins