

(Note: These Minutes are draft until approved at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Town Council)

**NEW MILFORD TOWN COUNCIL & BOARD OF FINANCE
JOINT BUDGET HEARINGS**

MINUTES

February 11, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26 and 27 2025

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NEW MILFORD, CT

Tuesday, February 11, 2025 at 6:15pm

Present: Mayor Peter Bass
Sal Rynkiewicz, Town Council
MaryJane Lundgren, Town Council
Paul Murphy, Town Council

Walter O'Connor, Chair, Finance
Diane Klaif, Finance
Roland Castro, Finance Alt.
Walter Bayer, Finance
Ellen Conklin, Finance
Brian Whitfield, Finance

Also Present: Olga Melnikov, Director of Finance

Mr. O'Connor called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 6:15 pm. Mayor Bass called the Town Council meeting to order at 6:15 pm.

1. **Public Comment** (Note: These meetings are presentations, not deliberations on the budget. Public comment will be available at the beginning of the meeting for 15 minutes with each speaker limited to 3 minutes. Sign up is required prior to the scheduled start of the meeting. Additional time will be provided at the end of the meeting to address the council if more than 15 minutes in total is necessary. In addition, public comment will be available when the Council deliberates and at the Town Meeting.)

There was none.

2. **Presentation of the Town of New Milford Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026 and Mayor's comments.**

Mayor Bass presented his 2025-26 budget thanking the Town employees, volunteers and non profits, and the volunteers who serve on Boards and Commissions. The Mayor said the budget presentation consists of the Mayor's recommended Town budget, the Board of Education adopted budget and the 5 year capital plan. He said he would be presenting the Town side and allow the Board of Education to discuss the Board of Ed budget at a later date. The Mayor said he cut over \$2 million in department requests to keep the budget as low as possible. He said there are increases in the budget including First Responders budget, health insurance, building maintenance, IT and debt payments. The Town has used capital reserve to purchase needed capital items so as not to go back to the taxpayers. There was some grand list growth but the revenue from that was wiped out by the way the State has now required towns to tax

motor vehicles. The Town continues to support education as this budget is 61% of the total. The Town is 39% but includes all the debt, interest and principal payments for items such as the high school roof, the Sarah Noble roof and the sewer plant expansion among others. The Town has faced inflationary pressures just as the average citizen has – supplies, materials, contractual services, etc. have increased due to higher costs.

The Mayor discussed some revenue losses due to State Legislature actions. First is the reduction of \$1.4 million due to the way motor vehicles are now being taxed. The Mayor did find some increased revenues including in the Mayor's office, Town Clerk, Building permits, and Parks and Recreation. Increased expenses, however, are due to Health Insurance, Ambulance personnel, police, public works, IT, debt, and the fire departments.

The mill rate if the Town was the only increase would be 1.89%; of the Board of Education was the only increase it would be 3.31%; with both Town and BOE the mill rate is 4.99%.

Mayor Bass reminded all that the budget presentations will start next Tuesday, February 18th at 7 pm.

Motion to recess Special Board of Finance Meeting at 7:14 pm to Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 7:00pm

Motion to recess Special Town Council Meeting at 7:14 pm to Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 7:00pm

Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 7:00pm

Present:

Town Council: Mayor Peter Bass
MaryJane Lundgren
Katy Francis
Paul Murphy
Robert Gambino
Sal Rynkiewicz
Alexandra Thomas

Board of Finance: Walter O'Connor, Chair
Walter Bayer
Brian Whitfield
Eleanor Conklin (by phone)

Also Present: Olga Melnikov, Director of Finance

Mayor Bass called the Town Council meeting to order at 7:01 pm. Mr. O'Connor called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

1. **Public Comment** (Note: These meetings are presentations, not deliberations on the budget. Public comment will be available at the beginning of the meeting for 15 minutes with each speaker limited to 3 minutes. Sign up is required prior to the scheduled start of the meeting. Additional time will be provided at the end of the meeting to address the council if more than 15 minutes in total is necessary. In addition, public comment will be available when the Council deliberates and at the Town Meeting.)

Joseph Failla, a New Milford resident, expressed his concern for the proposed budget. He said a 5% increase was untenable, and that the town should instead be looking to make cuts. He offered his services in this venture, which he likened to the federal DOGE agency. Mr. Failla said that increased spending, and increased taxes, would hurt the core constituency of the town, which he characterized as being largely blue collar.

2. Discussion of the Finance Department Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Ms. Melnikov presented the Finance Department budget.

The Finance Department is responsible for: the annual audit, financial reporting/budget management, compilation and management of financial statements, preparation of the annual and 5 year capital budgets, debt issuance and ratings reviews, maintaining the general ledger and financial system, accounts payable, purchasing, payroll, adherence to state and federal financial requirements, investments/treasury functions, pension management, budget transfers/adjustments, risk management, banking relations, recording and verifying all town revenues.

The Finance Office maintains records and bank reconciliations for over 30 town funds.

The department includes a Director of Finance, Comptroller, purchasing specialist, accounts payable specialist and a payroll specialist. Ms. Melnikov said that the Comptroller had recently resigned, and that has given her the opportunity to take another look at the department and assess the needs of what they do and possibly restructure and align it with the direction the Town is going in terms of utilizing software and other amenities. Ms. Melnikov said although the department may be short-staffed for the time being, they do not anticipate any disruption in service or performance. She applauded the staff of the department.

The Finance Department revenues encompass all revenues not raised by fees, fines or taxes. Ms. Melnikov said that fiscal year 2026 revenue projections are flat, and are on target with 2025 projections. Proposed State aid for the Town of New Milford remains at the same level. Ms. Melnikov said an additional \$20,000 has been projected as a result of increases in interest income due to additional investment opportunities.

The budget request is \$503,716 and includes	PERSONNEL	\$468,078
	AFSCME OVERTIME	\$1,000
	MATERIALS & SUPPLIES	\$14,538
	CCM MEMBERSHIP	\$18,500
	GFOA MEMBERSHIP	\$1,600

Mr. O'Connor asked if the department was accepting candidates for the Comptroller position. Ms. Melnikov said she was not, and would be doing a thorough analysis of the department to see what the best way to address those tasks would be going forward.

3. Discussion of the Legal Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mayor Bass said the legal budget was done with the assistance of the Town Attorney and is a decrease of \$10,000 for the next fiscal year. He noted an increase in the amount of legal personnel as the Town would be engaging in negotiations next year.

Ms. Thomas asked about the reduction of \$30,000. Mayor Bass said that amount had been money put aside for the Birch Henning case and that the Town had since settled for part of it, and CIRMA had paid some of the legal fees so the \$40,000 is for additional incidentals mainly geared towards that case.

4. Discussion of the Mayor's Office Budget for the fiscal year 2025-2026

Mayor Bass started with revenues, and said that passports have proven a robust business which has been above the budget, adding another \$7,000; instead of anticipating \$10,000 from passports, \$17,000 is now the estimate. The Mayor's Initiative has also exceeded expectations, from \$10,000 to now \$13,000 through the selling of town merchandise such as hats and coats. Ms. Thomas asked if this entails setting up a retail shop. Mayor Bass said they've already done that, and that it is in line with the revenues received.

In terms of expenditures, the department as a whole is up \$17,350 with the stipend is up \$6,500 and tourism line down \$24,000. Mayor Bass said in terms of personnel there is one addition that would work part time for the Mayor's office and part time for land use and economic development. This individual would serve as a community information administrator. Required tasks will include maintenance of the NewMilfordNow and other related websites, share community stories, provide relevant information and analysis for people wishing to partake and invest in New Milford's economic offerings. Mayor Bass said payment for this position would be almost revenue neutral due to the reduction in the tourism line item. This new position will be boots on the ground.

Mayor Bass said there is a contractual increase for union employees, and 2.5% increase for non-union employees.

Mayor Bass said that materials and supply expenses will remain the same.

5. Discussion of the Board of Finance Budget for the fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. O'Connor said that the Board of Finance budget is unchanged, and has not deviated in a number of years.

6. Discussion of the Town Council Budget for the fiscal year 2025-2026

Mayor Bass said it is down about \$500, from \$42,000 to \$41,500.

Mr. O'Connor recessed the Board of Finance meeting at 7:25 pm until February 19th.

Mayor Bass recessed the Town Council meeting at 7:25 pm until February 19th.

Wednesday, February 19, 2025 at 7:00pm

Present: Mayor Peter Bass
Katy Francis, Town Council
Paul Murphy, Town Council
Alexandra Thomas, Town Council

MaryJane Lundgren, Town Council (arrived 7:05 pm)
Chris Cosgrove, Town Council, by phone

Walter O'Connor, Chair, Finance
Walter Bayer, Finance
Brian Whitfield
Diane Klaif, Finance
Ellen Conklin, Finance

Also Present: Olga Melnikov, Director of Finance
Christopher Ludwig, Registrar of Voters
Sandro Carvalho, Registrar of Voters
Nancy McGavic, Tax Collector
Brian Lastra, Tax Assessor
Greg Bollaro, Director of Personnel
Sean Delaney, Water Witch Hose Co. Assistant Chief
Russ Coyle, Northville Chief
Tyler Bergemann, Gaylordsville Chief
Donna Hespe, Ambulance Association
Chief Spencer Cerruto, New Milford Police
Captain Alan Wilcoxson, New Milford Police
Lieutenant Earl Wheeler, New Milford Police
Lieutenant Kathryn Relyea, New Milford Police

Mr. O'Connor reconvened the Board of Finance meeting at 7 pm. Mayor Bass reconvened the Town Council meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

1. Public Comment (Note: These meetings are presentations, not deliberations on the budget. Public comment will be available at the beginning of the meeting for 15 minutes with each speaker limited to 3 minutes. Sign up is required prior to the scheduled start of the meeting. Additional time will be provided at the end of the meeting to address the council if more than 15 minutes in total is necessary. In addition, public comment will be available when the Council deliberates and at the Town Meeting.)

There was none.

2. Discussion of the Registrar Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Ludwig said the requested increase was for early voting and there is no increase in salaries. He said there will be 14 days of early voting for municipal and state elections for 2025.

Ms. Thomas asked about the reduction from the Mayor and Mayor Bass answered that they looked at the trends noting the highest turnout is during a presidential election so they felt the expenditures would be less than proposed.

Mr. Bayer asked if there was any discussion about moving the Odd Fellows polling station back to Pettibone and Mr. Ludwig said the Odd Fellows was supposed to be temporary.

3. Discussion of the Tax Assessor Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Lastra said the office generates a small amount of revenue for copy fees - \$300. The office has three staff members - the assessor, assessor technician and a secretary - \$224,946.

The overtime is used as needed up to \$500.

The department request includes \$10,000 for property tax audits for personal property. The audit goes back three years on the personal property declarations. They have been able to generate \$30,000 in taxes as a result.

The professional development and dues for workshops, certifications and continuing education is \$3,000.

Under materials and supplies the department is required to print the grand list on paper, mail forms and pay for DMV and NADA subscriptions.

Vision Appraisals hosts the Towns data and this is the licensing fee and maintenance.

The capital request is for \$50,000 which goes into a fund to pay for the required revaluation every 5 years.

The GIS system shows mapping of the Town including boundaries of properties, contours, and aerial photos. The maps are updated on a yearly basis.

Ms. Francis asked why the grand list has to be printed on paper and Mr. Lastra said the Town is required by State law to print and bind the books, four for real estate, one for personal property and two for motor vehicles.

Mr. Cosgrove asked if the revaluation was done extensively every 10 years and less extensively every five years and Mr. Lastra said in 2020 they did every property and in 2025 they will do a statistical reassessment but will not visit every property.

Mayor Bass asked Mr. Lastra to discuss the new motor vehicle tax law as changed by the State. Mr. Lastra said the Town used the retail value established by NADA which gave a clean retail sale price for a vehicle. The Legislature passed a law that requires the Town now to use the MSRP with a fixed depreciation schedule – so the value now is MSRP times 85% and then 70% of that value for tax purposes. This means the Town will lose 14.5% of income on the motor vehicles or \$46 million in assessments.

Mayor Bass asked Ms. Melnikov to discuss the calculation of the mill rate. Ms. Melnikov said the mill rate is the amount to be raised by taxes from the grand list. She said the reduction in the grand list means a new mill rate needs be calculated to make up for the loss of motor vehicle collections. She said the grand list grew at .8% but the motor vehicle reduction negated the mill rate growth.

4. Discussion of the Tax Collector Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Ms. Melnikov discussed the tax collections and said the budget shows an increase in the estimated collections to reflect actuals in the past couple of years.

Ms. McGavic said the personnel line is \$202,245 which includes a contractual increase. There is also an overtime line if needed of \$1,000. Mayor Bass noted the department has two people and interns during the summer. Ms. McGavic said the remainder of the department budget is motor vehicle assessments, training and materials and supplies.

5. Discussion of the Personnel Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Bollaro said his office crew consists of the director, a personnel assistant and office coordinator who is shared with the Fire Marshal. The department is responsible for all HR functions for all Town departments except the Board of Education. The personnel budget is \$203,431.

The Personnel Department handles benefits, labor relations, recruitment and discipline as needed for 201 full time employees and 113 part time as well as seasonal employees. The supplies/expense accounts covers: Tuition Reimbursement; Materials & Supplies; Recruitment Expense; Drug and Alcohol Testing; Safety Committee expenses; Employee Assistance and Wellness Program; and Training and Development for a total request of \$61,300.

6. Discussion of the Gaylordsville, Northville Fire Departments and Water Witch Hose Co. 2 Budgets for fiscal year 2025-2026

Water Witch Hose Co. #2

Assistant Chief Delaney said the request is a 3% increase and said the calls have risen by 10% last year to 763 calls up from 693. They had 8,100 volunteer responses and 25,000 community hours up 3,000 from last year. The increase will help the department acquire new radios for interoperability. The active shooter equipment has been purchased and they will conduct a drill in March with the Connecticut State Police. They will also be purchasing a 2 1/2" hose for all engines which will help them reach certain properties. Engine 19 will be replaced in the next couple of years and funds will come from the capital reserve. They had four new recruits and two probationary members who are in their first year. Mr. Delaney said the cost to replace engines has risen dramatically as the ladder truck they purchased 5 years ago for \$1.3 million is now valued at \$2.2 million.

Mr. Cosgrove asked with the new recruits is the department fully staffed and Mr. Delaney said they can always use volunteers for fire fighting and other volunteer activities in the fire house.

Ms. Thomas asked the Mayor why the \$15,000 reduction in the Lanesville request and Mayor Bass said that will be part of the renovation work to be done.

Gaylordsville Fire Department

Chief Bergemann said the department budget request has increased 9% due to inflationary costs to update rescue and medical supplies. They experienced a 12% increase in calls from last year and they offer mutual aid responses as requested.

Northville Fire Department

Chief Coyle said they had 165 calls more than the year before and said they have increased new members so training has increased and the cost of physicals are up. Their new engine is being built and the money to purchase has come from capital reserve.

Mr. Gambino asked about the radios and Chief Coyle said they have been moving forward with the LED switch. They will see how it goes once up and running in March.

Mr. Bayer asked where the burn building was located and Mayor Bass said it was supposed to be at the Century Brass site but the permitting has been delayed.

Ms. Thomas asked what the \$41,000 for equipment was and Chief Coyle said nozzles, hoses, turn out gear, and air packs that get replaced throughout the year.

Mr. Cosgrove asked if the benefit that the Town provides for tax reduction helps in recruiting and Assistant Chief Delaney said it rewards those who are doing their part but the gas cards have been very much appreciated.

7. Discussion of the NM Ambulance Budget for fiscal year 2025-26

Ms. Hespe said 2025 is the 96th year for the New Milford Ambulance Association. They have four ambulances including two sprinters, one box car and one ALS. They have two paid crews on duty 24/7.

The Ambulance Association has been low on volunteers but did recruit three new ones in the past year. They can staff a third ambulance if needed with the dedicated medic. They provide mutual aid as needed which is billed to the Towns that require it.

Ms. Hespe said they receive an average of 9 calls per day with Monday's being the busiest. There is more housing coming to town which means more population and an older population which means Medicare and Medicaid and less funding paid for the ambulance.

The EMS staffing cost was covered by ARPA and surplus funds helped in the past but the Association billed out \$2.4 million but collected \$1.1 million. She noted New Fairfield has a contract with Nuvance with one staffed ambulance at a contract cost of \$1.6 million.

Ms. Hespe said the vehicle repair cost is huge as the four ambulances go in and out all day long. They will look to replace one in the next year. Cost of supplies is up and the behavioral calls are up. With the change from Nuvance to Northwell they expect to have to take trips to Charlotte Hungerford and Waterbury.

Mr. O'Connor asked what the current price of an ambulance is and Ms. Hespe said about \$200,000.

Mr. Cosgrove said the cost of New Fairfield's contract increased by 8% and wondered if that is what the Town should expect year to year. Ms. Hespe said the increase will come from staffing salaries and medical supplies.

8. Discussion of the Police Department Budget for fiscal Year 2025-2026

Chief Cerruto thanked the Town for its support and said he was proud of this police department. The goal of the department is to present a reasonable budget that offers training to officers as needed and equipment to keep their jobs safe.

2024-2025 - Police Budget Statistics

<u>2023 Activity Report</u>	15,981	<u>2024 Activity Report</u>	17,784
MV Accidents	909	MV Accidents	954
Infractions	798	Infractions	1,243
Domestic Violence	115	Domestic Violence	164
JRB's conducted	28	JRB's conducted	78
Larcenies	118	Larcenies	91
Criminal Mischief	49	Criminal Mischief	38
Assault	24	Assault	22
Drug Overdoses	18	Drug Overdoses	7
Robbery	0	Robbery	1

2025-2026 Police Budget Recent Traffic Enforcement Focus

Budget Avoidance – Traffic Enforcement Grants Total

FY2023-2024 FY2024-2025

Motor Vehicle Grant Awards \$167,126 \$117,171

(DRE, DUI, Distracted Driving, Click It or Ticket, Rural Speed Enforcement)

Traffic Enforcement	2023	2024
Motor Vehicle Stops	2,335	3,463
MV Accidents	909	954
Infractions	798 (\$151,447)	1,243 (\$309,071)
Written Warnings	1,028	1,033
DUI Arrests	26	95
Misdemeanors	79	386

Chief Cerruto said the department is now fully staffed including officers, dispatchers and support staff. They have received accreditation.

Lieutenant Wheeler showed a recent video of a de-escalation as the department has been training to decrease violence in arrests. Chief Cerruto said they use a reality video training simulator to teach de-escalation skills.

Mayor Bass asked about the community officer – Jake Schneider – and Chief Cerruto said he has been effective in working with Social Services, the Senior Center and the Youth Agency on issues of drug addiction and mental illness. The department also focuses on community engagement with events such as coffee with a cop, shopping with a cop, K-9 support and assistance with getting supplies to victims of Hurricane Helene in West Virginia.

The Chief said these are the Strategic Accomplishments the department worked towards in this fiscal year:

- Improvements in Officer Wellness
- Ranked 5th Safest Town in CT
- Active Shooter Training
- Continuous De-escalation Training
- Added a Third Lieutenant
- Record Number of JRB's-78
- Implemented New Glock 45 Firearms with Red Dot Optic
- Drug Overdoses Down
- Expansion of the Crisis Intervention Team
- ASSO or SRO in every school and plans to expand
- Aviation Team- Assisted Victim's from Hurricane Helene
- Drug Certified K9 (Rio)- April 2024
- 3 Detectives with the Federal Internet Crimes Against Children's Taskforce
- Awarded Tier 1 POSTC Accreditation
- Working on Tier 2 and Tier 3 Accreditation
- Completed 5th Citizen's Police Academy
- Qualified for Traffic Enforcement Grants
- Community Outreach Officer-Officer Jake Schneider
- Certified each Officer in TLO- Law Enforcement Database used to assist with investigations- Intelligence
- Added two new Field Training Officers
- Implemented the Officer of the Year Award
- Hired a New Records Clerk
- Part-Time FBI Taskforce Affiliate
- New Traffic Police Cruiser
- Hired Five New Officers- Fully Staffed
- Statewide Taskforce

Lieutenant Wilcoxson discussed the 501c3 partnership they have with the Aviation Unit which deployed 5 personnel to North Carolina earlier this year.

Lieutenant LaFond spoke about the K-9 unit which has 3 patrol dogs for search and rescue and drug detection. They will be bringing on a community outreach dog that will support the officers, schools and the community.

Lieutenant Relyea heads up the detective division and they have added an internet crimes to children task force.

Chief Cerruto said the budget increase is 2.26% the majority of which is due to salary increases.

Mr. Cosgrove asked if the Police Department assisted the Youth Agency with building assets in our communities youth and Chief Cerruto said they work very closely with the Youth Agency.

9. Public Comment (As needed)

There was none.

10. Any other town department whose presence may be requested.

Ms. Klaif recessed the Special Board of Finance meeting at 9:25 pm to Thursday, February 20th at 7 pm.

Mayor Bass recessed Special Town Council Meeting at 9:25 pm to Thursday, February 20th at 7:00pm.

Thursday, February 20, 2025

Present: Mayor Peter Bass
Katy Francis, Town Council
Alexandra Thomas, Town Council
Sal Rynkiewicz, Town Council
Paul Murphy, Town Council
Chris Cosgrove, Town Council, by phone
Tom Esposito, Town Council, by phone
MaryJane Lundgren, Town Council

Walter O'Connor, Chair, Finance
Walter Bayer, Finance
Brian Whitfield, Finance
Joseph Troiano, Finance

Also Present: Olga Melnikov, Director of Finance
Noreen Prichard, Town Clerk
Caitlin Patterson, Deputy Town Clerk
Katherine Reilly, Library Director
Jason O'Connor, Youth Agency Director
Jeff Rondini, Building Department
Ivana Butera, Social Services Director
Mark Howarth, Candlewood Lake Authority Director
Steve Kluge, Candlewood Lake Authority
Will Meikel, Candlewood Lake Authority

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Mr. O'Connor reconvened the Board of Finance meeting at 7:01 pm.

Mayor Bass reconvened the Town Council meeting at 7:01 pm,.

2. Discussion of the Town Clerk Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Ms. Prichard said the revenues include \$13,000 for historic document fees, \$7,000 from LOCIP and \$675,000 in recording fees, conveyance taxes and license fees. Expenses include personnel (\$205,428), overtime as needed (\$200), contractual services (\$3,400), historic document preservation (\$7,500), and materials and supplies (\$40,200). The total request is \$256,728. With revenues the department profit is \$438,272.

Ms. Francis asked what was in the supplies and materials line and Ms. Prichard said paper, binders, microfilm noting the State mandates what the Town Clerk's office does.

3. Discussion of the Youth Agency Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. O'Connor said the Youth Agency is actually three organizations under one umbrella - the Youth Agency, childcare center and Youth Services Bureau.

Programs and services offered include:

- Juvenile Review Board
- Diversion and Restorative Practices
- Referral and Assessment
- Counseling
- Youth Leadership and Advocacy
- Parent Workshops
- Special-needs Programming
- Youth Groups and Workshops
- Peer to Peer Mentoring
- Summer Childcare
- School Year Childcare
- The Maxx rentals and events
- Youth Culinary Programs
- Afterschool Enrichment
- Youth Video Program
- Youth Volunteer Opportunities
- Adventure-Based Activities
- Youth Employment
- Regional Coordination for CYSA and LIST

Mr. O'Connor said the Youth Agency receives financial support from the State, foundations, United Way and Federal money. They employ 89 seasonal staff. The Juvenile Review Board has been successful with 73 out of 78 juvenile cases.

The Youth Agency receives a grant as the Youth Services Bureau of \$39,256. The personnel request is \$302,595, fixed charges are \$3,700, materials and supplies are \$8,300 and self sustaining is \$59,257 for a total of \$334,596.

The Maxx is self sustaining in expenses and is expected to be a revenue generator being used as a rental unit for events for local organizations. The total income is projected to be \$42,500 with expenses budgeted at \$22,300. The increased of \$2,500 should be attainable with increased rentals.

The before and after school program is also self sustaining with revenues of \$746,743 and expenses including personnel which now includes a minimum wage increase to \$17 per hour, materials and supplies and self sustaining programming.

4. Discussion of the Library budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Ms. Reilly said the library is now open 227 more hours per year. In 2023-2024 the library had 8,432 reference transactions, hosted 758 programs with 9,158 attendees, 7,905 cardholders, total circulation of 132,449, holds 72,009 items in its collection, and 84,041 visits.

The library holds many programs including 13 Book Clubs, ESL Café, Computer Help, SCORE Mentoring, Artificial Intelligence, Storytime, Teens Write-Stuff, Genealogy Club, Renaissance Day, Community Baby Shower, Global Community Engagement Day, Taxes 101, Teen Knit & Crochet, and Learn to Play the Ukulele among others.

Impacts on the budget include increased utility costs, Connecticut minimum wage increase, Connecticut sick time wages, and general increases in services from 2 to 7%. The requested 2025-26 budget for materials and supplies is \$454,740 or an increase of 3.4%. Total personnel requested is \$827,887 or a 5.1% increase. The total request is \$1,282,627 for a total increase is 4.6%.

Ms. Francis asked how many employees the library has and Ms. Reilly said there are 8 full time and 15 part time. Ms. Francis asked what is in the materials and supplies line and Ms. Reilly said that is where the programs for all ages is including consultants to provide some of the programs.

Mayor Bass asked what the growth has been at the library since reopening and Ms. Reilly said the number of people varies by day but they have grown from 300 per day to 400+ per day. Mayor Bass noted the library is welcoming to all citizens and offers children's programs, teen programs, etc. Ms. Reilly said they have STEAM programming, legos, reading for young children; STEAM, college education counseling, gaming and crochet and knitting for teens. Ms. Reilly said they bring books to the Senior Center, they work with the youth agency and social services.

Mr. Cosgrove asked how the number of visitors was calculated and Ms. Reilly said there is a sensor at the doors. He asked if that number was 84,000 different people and Ms. Reilly said they could look at the cardholders to determine how many were unique visitors. Ms. Cosgrove asked if the library offered any assets to the youth in town to help strengthen their mental health wellness and Ms. Reilly said the library does offer wellness for teens and adults including meditation and anxiety reduction.

Mr. O'Connor asked what Hoopla was and Ms. Reilly said it is a digital service for audio books, e-books, movies that can offer instant downloads. The library purchases titles and the cost is \$44,000 per year.

5. Discussion of the Building Department Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Rondini said he took over for Bill Murphy in July. He reviews the plans and stays up to date on continuing education taking 30 credits per year. He said the building department is very busy and is not slowing down. Mr. Rondini said they have issued 1885 permits to date versus 213 in 1968. One thousand five hundred and fifty nine inspections have been conducted. Mr. Rondini said the goal in July of 2024 was \$475,000 in fees or \$34 million in permits processed – as of now the department is at \$443,893.28 and is on track to meet if not pass the \$475,000.

The personnel request for the department is \$235,207.60 with \$200 allowed for over time, materials request is \$4,000 for a total of \$239,407.60.

Ms. Thomas asked how many permits were for new and how many for renovations and Mr. Rondini said most are remodels or additions.

6. Discussion of the Social Services Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Ms. Butera read the mission of the Social Services Department: Offer resources & programs to enhance the well-being and sustainability of New Milford residents experiencing financial hardship by addressing basic needs including food and household self-sufficiency.

The budget of Social Services is mostly salary driven including Office Coordinator (40 hrs./wk.), Program & Volunteer Coordinator (40 hrs./wk.), Volunteers [15-20] (avg. 112 hrs./wk.), MSW Social Worker & Crisis Navigator (40 hrs./wk.), MSW Social Worker & Diverse Community Advocate (35 hrs./wk.), and Director [LMSW] (40 hrs./wk.).

Social Services operates in three main areas – volunteer management, crisis intervention and supporting a diverse community. They provide accessibility to services, a range of options and a commitment of time, respect and attention to details to provide resources for those who walk in the door.

The budget request is \$284,316.

Ms. Francis said the community needs to understand that the social services office in New Milford is unique with 44% of residents of New Milford at the ALICE level (asset limit, income constrained, employed) or in poverty. Ms. Butera said the office needs to pivot as things change as they work with ALICE level, poverty level and low and moderate income folks.

Ms. Lundgren felt the social workers were underpaid compared to other department personnel. Ms. Thomas asked why there was a \$21,700 increase in personnel and Ms. Butera said the ARPA funding used to support the crisis navigator is coming to an end.

7. Discussion of the Candlewood Lake Authority Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Howarth said the CLA budget request has increased by 2%. He discussed the expectations the CLA had for 2025 for Public Safety / Marine Patrol including Adaptive Strategies: Alternative approaches for law enforcement to reduce negative impacts from changing recreational use including Marine Patrol Jet Skis, Marine Patrol Officers at launches, etc. Collaboration: Continue to strengthen relationships with our municipalities and their emergency services and the CT DEEP EnCon Police to provide comprehensive coverage and emergency response on the lake. Earlier Mornings & Later

Nights: To address early morning and late evening activity on the water the CLA will continue to use a flexible approach to shift deployment. Patrol Boats: Modernization and overhaul of Marine Patrol fleet to be completed this season with vessels stationed at southern, northern and mid-lake for efficiency and better response times.

Other expectations included Lake Ecology:

- Nutrient Pollution Phase 2: Groundwater and streams nutrient analysis for CLA Lake Management Plan.
- Rapid Response Plan: Develop early detection and response plan for potential incoming new invasives.
- Lake Steward Program: 5th summer of grant-funded boat and trailer invasive species inspection program.

Education & Outreach

- Educational Videos: Expand on successful first year of video series on safe boating and water quality.
- Website Refresh: Launch new home page with CLA projects and initiatives and educational videos.
- Zebra Mussels: Continued education on zebra mussel impacts and expectations.

Mr. Meikel discussed the budget noting Watershed Budget increases \$21,865 due to COLA increase for Director of Ecology and the Lake Management Plan, new research boat. Administration Budget increases \$13,910 due to the COLA increases: Executive Director & Administration and increases for professional services and technology services. Public Safety Budget increases \$8,720 because of technology hardware and software to improve efficiency and effectiveness and increases in additional boat maintenance servicing for new Silver Ships vessels. Equipment & Facilities Budget decreases \$22,995.

Ms. Francis moved to suspend the rules to extend the meeting until 9:40 pm, seconded by Ms. Lundgren and passed unanimously.

Ms. Lundgren asked about the overall health of the lake and Mr. Howarth said the water quality generally has maintained if not improved over time. There is always variability such as salt from the winter storm runoff. Ms. Thomas asked if First Light and CLA shared information on water data and Mr. Howarth said they work with all key partners. Mr. Cosgrove asked about the grass carp and Mr. Howarth said there is still limited vegetation in the summer.

8. Public Comment (As needed)

9. Any other town department whose presence may be requested.

Mr. O'Connor recessed the Special Board of Finance Meeting at 9:42 pm, to Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

Mayor Bass recessed the Special Town Council Meeting at 9:42 pm, to Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

Present: Mayor Peter Bass
Katy Francis, Town Council
Alexandra Thomas, Town Council
Sal Rynkiewicz, Town Council
Chris Cosgrove, Town Council, by phone
Paul Murphy, Town Council
MaryJane Lundgren, Town Council

Walter O'Connor, Chair, Finance
Walter Bayer, Finance
Brian Whitfield, Finance
Diane Klaif, Finance
Joseph Troiano, Finance
Ellen Conklin, Finance, by phone

Also Present: Olga Melnikov, Director of Finance
Dave Watson, IT Director
Ken Kozlowski, IT
Shayn Donaldson, IT
Dan Calhoun, Director of Parks and Recreation
Graham Musson, Program Director, Parks & Recreation
Alfred Esposito, Parks & Recreation
Blaze Tuz, Parks & Recreation
Jon Wittmann, Sewer Commission
Ken Cook, Sewer Commission
Kathleen Torres, Sewer Commission
Mike Ducey, Sewer Commission
Jack Healy, Consultant to the Sewer Commission
Matt Marciniak, New Milford Center Cemetery
Sean Delaney, New Milford Children's Center

1. Public Comment (Note: These meetings are presentations, not deliberations on the budget. Public comment will be available at the beginning of the meeting for 15 minutes with each speaker limited to 3 minutes. Sign up is required prior to the scheduled start of the meeting. Additional time will be provided at the end of the meeting to address the council if more than 15 minutes in total is necessary. In addition, public comment will be available when the Council deliberates and at the Town Meeting.)

There was none.

Mr. O'Connor reconvened the Board of Finance meeting at 7:02 pm.

Mayor Bass reconvened the Town Council meeting at 7:02 pm.

Mayor Bass moved to suspend the rules to move the Economic Development Commission presentation to Wednesday night, seconded by Mr. Rynkiewicz and passed unanimously.

2. Discussion of the Information Technology, Computer Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Watson said two years ago they introduced a ticketing system for computer repairs and issues and have received 2,600 tickets and 99.6% of the issues were fixed immediately receiving 5 star reviews from the staff. He said security is a big focus for the IT department since he arrived in the office as at the outset an initial risk assessment identified 78 vulnerabilities of which 12 were critical. In a most recent assessment the report was the Town is using "security best practices." He said cyber security is a big issue and the cyber security assessment revealed a handful of findings most of which were addressed within 24 hours.

The personnel line for IT has increased due to the hiring of a part time paid intern and union salary increases. The IT department works with the police department, Town Hall, John Pettibone offices, the library and the Senior Center working with over 300 employees.

The professional services line includes help from outside resources since the IT department is only three employees and occasionally there are issues they cannot handle. Contractual is up to \$44,392 due to the rising costs of services but also some of these items were covered with ARPA funding which is now done. Materials and supplies have increased by \$4,000 so that the department can purchase things such as cables so that operational readiness can be maintained.

Mr. Rynkiewicz asked what was in the contractual line and Mr. Watson said it was for firewall renewals, SSL certificates, asset management tracking and internet connections. He asked how many hours the employees put in each week and Mr. Watson said it depends as they are on call for the police department 24/7/365 and they alternate who is on call.

Ms. Francis asked what was under professional services and Mr. Watson said they use one vendor for telecommunications, for instance, and other vendors for needed services.

Mr. Troiano asked how many malicious attacks there have been on Town sites and Mr. Watson said they block 12 to 24 on a daily basis.

Ms. Thomas asked how many hours the intern would work and Mr. Watson answered 16 per week.

3. Discussion of the Sewer Commission /WPCA Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Wittmann introduced Ms. Torresso, Mr. Cook and Mr. Ducey. Mayor Bass reminded the Council and Board that the Sewer Commission budget is not in the Town budget but the Town does cover some of the debt service for the plant and sewer plant expansion. Ms. Torresso said the overall budget request is a 2.23% increase. Salaries for 2025-26 are \$865,585 and includes overtime and holidays. Employee benefits include training, uniforms, pension and medical insurance totaling \$547,449. Utilities at the plant are \$274,000 and laboratory fees are \$44,600. Maintenance expenses are \$215,600. Process expenses are \$382,000. Miscellaneous expenses are \$15,500 and overhead is \$172,800. Capital expenditures are budgeted at \$660,000 for a total operational budget of \$3,177,534.

Ms. Lundgren asked if the results of Covid testing were posted and Mayor Bass said they are on the Department of Public Health site. She asked if they tested for PFAS and Ms. Torresso said the State does not require that yet.

Mr. Cook discussed the FOG program which stands for fats, oils and greases and said the original FOG program was just supposed to be for the restaurants but then companies started to bring in their fats, oils and greases and the plant was losing \$0.25 per gallon on taking the septage so it stopped doing so since it is not required by the State to do so. He also discussed the CMOM program or capacity, management, operations and maintenance that allows municipalities to identify and incorporate widely-accepted wastewater industry practices to better manage, operate and maintain sewer collection systems.

Mr. Ducey discussed the nitrogen program where waters in Long Island Sound during the summer experience hypoxia due to discharge of human activities as the primary pollutant. CT DEEP and New York DEC with the US EPA determined the total maximum daily load of nitrogen that can be discharged into the Sound. CT DEEP created a strategy to reduce the nitrogen load among 79 sewage plants through a nitrogen credit exchange which has reduced the nitrogen load by nearly 65%.

5. Discussion of the Parks and Recreation Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Calhoun said Parks and Recreation maintains 20 Parks with 500 + Acres including: Town Green, Lynn Deming Park, Carlson's Grove, Addis Park, Baldwin Park, Clatter Valley, Hulton Meadow, John Pettibone Park, Young's Field and River Trail, Andrew Gaylord Barnes Park, Ray Ramsey Park, Emanuel Williamson Park, Helen Marx Park, Sega Meadows Park, Northville Soccer Fields, Sarah Noble Soccer Fields, Conn's Pond, Pickett District Road Ball Fields, Nostrand Trail, and Chappuis Park.

They maintain 19 facilities including: Roger Sherman Town Hall, New Milford Library, Paul S. Richmond Center, The Maxx, New Milford Police Department, 25 Church Street Parking Lot, 47 Bridge Street, John Pettibone Community Center, Department of Public Works, Facilities Maintenance, Water Witch Hose Company #2- Lanesville, Gaylordsville School House, Railroad Station, New Milford Historical Society, Old Boardman Bridge, Rotary Park, Patriots Way Sidewalks and Mowing Sidewalks throughout Town.

Some of the programs run by Parks & Recreation include: Archery, Badminton, Ballet Princesses, Basic Boating Class, Basketball Camp, Coding, Color Me Creative, Crafty Art, Cricket, Crochet & Knitting, Cross Country Color Run, Dog Training, Fitness – Let's Dance, For Tikes Only, Golf Lessons & 9 Hole Leagues, Horseback Riding, Ice Skating Lessons and Karate - Kids Kicks.

Revenue generators to offset the budget expenses include: Program Fees, Day Pass, Resident & Non-Resident, Park Stickers Annual Fee, Boat Slips Fees, Boat Launch Fee, Lynn Deming Pavilion Rental Fee, Carlson's Grove & Clatter Valley Pavilion Rental Fee, Kayak Rack Rental Fee, Application Fees, Resident One Time Launch Fee, Paddleboard, Pedal Boat, Kayak Rentals, Food Concessions, and Enhanced Summer Camp Program.

The goals for 2025-26 include providing quality and affordable programming to all segments of the population, maintain clean, attractive and safe parks for the residents of New Milford, increasing revenue through additional programming, rentals and appropriate fee increases, replacing the climbing net at JPSS Playground, replace park entrance signage throughout the park system, repair siding and re-paint the bathhouse at Lynn Deming, install two air conditioning units in program rooms at JPCC and replace the gravity rail with a new glide along piece at Young's Field Playground.

The total budget request for 2025 is \$1,463,980 offset by revenue of \$674,986

Ms. Lundgren asked what behavioral specific qualifications camp counselors needed and Mr. Musson said they need school counselor certifications as they do not do one to one counseling. Ms. Thomas asked how the lifeguards are trained and Mr. Musson said they are certified through the New Milford Fitness and Aquatics center.

4. Discussion of the Commission on the Arts Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Lou. Mandler was not present for this meeting so the Mayor presented the budget including \$500 for the self-sustaining account, expenses included consultants which were down \$12,000 as the art festival will use ARPA money for the next fiscal year. Overall the expenses are down \$7,700.

6. Discussion of the New Milford Center Cemetery Association Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Marciniak said the New Milford Center Cemetery Association comprises 84 acres of which 55 are maintained with 3 full time employees. They conducted 59 burials this past year and they do stone cleaning and repairs as needed. They will be working on repairing and repainting the iron fence and will put in a columbarium for urns so as to make burials more affordable. The budget request is \$42,108 which is down \$3,000.

7. Discussion of the Children's Center Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Delaney the Children's Center Board Treasurer said there is no change in their budget request from this fiscal year. He said they have 70 kids enrolled and the contribution from the Town helps defer the cost of the budget which last year was \$1.21 million. He said they have been able to fo \$175,000 in repairs and renovations to the facility. He noted every child deserves an education whether they can afford to pay or not. The sliding scale for child care is based on the families income.

8. Discussion of the Housatonic Valley Association Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mayor Bass said this is a multi town organization that does educational programming about the Housatonic River and their request is the same as this fiscal year of \$350.

9. Discussion of the Service Officers Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mayor Bass said this is the American Legion and VFW and they are requesting a \$900 increase for marker stones and personnel.

10. Discussion of the various Not for Profit Contributions for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mayor Bass said this is the same amount as last year and will once again go through a subcommittee for the decision.

11. Public Comment (As needed)

12. And any other town department whose presence may be requested.

Mr. O'Connor recessed the Special Board of Finance Meeting at 8:43 pm to Wednesday, February 26th at 7:00 p.m.

Mayor Bass recessed the Special Town Council Meeting at 8:43 pm to Wednesday February 26th at 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Present: Mayor Peter Bass
Katy Francis, Town Council
Alexandra Thomas, Town Council
Paul Murphy, Town Council
Bob Gambino, Town Council
MaryJane Lundgren, Town Council

Walter Bayer, Finance
Diane Klaif, Finance,
Joe DeGregorio, Finance
Brian Whitfield, Finance
Rolando Castro, Finance

Also Present: Olga Melnikov, Director of Finance
Jasmin Ducusin-Jara, Senior Center Director
Tom Williams, Senior Center
Marisa Levine, Senior Center Municipal Agent
RJ Yarrish, Senior Center Municipal Agent
John DeLaura, Senior Center Chore Service
Gretch O'Shea Reynolds, Commission on Aging Board
Jim Ferlow, Inland Wetlands Enforcement Officer, Emergency Management Director
Jack Healy, Director of Public Works
Mike Boucher, Highway Foreman
Chris Jurgen, Highway Foreman
HollyAnn Meserve, DPW
Dave Martin, Facilities
Chuck Ballard, Town Engineer
Laura Regan, Zoning Enforcement Officer
Kevin Reynolds, Fire Marshal
Marcin Stankevich, Office Coordinator, Fire Marshal

Ms. Klaif reconvened the Board of Finance meeting at 7:00.

Mayor Bass reconvened the Town Council meeting at 7:00 pm.

1. Public Comment — (Note: These meetings are presentations, not deliberations on the budget. Public comment will be available at the beginning of the meeting for 15 minutes with each speaker limited Page 4 of 6 2023-2024 Joint Budget Special Meeting February 10, 2023 to 3 minutes. Sign up is required prior to the scheduled start of the meeting. Additional time will be provided at the end of the meeting to address the council if more than 15 minutes in total is necessary. In addition, public comment will be available when the Council deliberates and at the Town Meeting.)

Joseph Failla, a New Milford resident, said the landfill money was to serve the community with new parks and ballfields and should not be used for tax relief. He said if the \$800,000 from the landfill account comes out of the budget the increase is closer to 7%. He said it is time to stop spending and start making spending cuts.

Howard Hill, a New Milford resident, said the DPW budget is full of waste for substandard work.

Joe Baker, a New Milford resident, supports the Zoning Commission budget but thought there should be more money for enforcement which hurts everybody in town if there are no consequences to those who break zoning laws.

Pete Bass, speaking as a New Milford resident, said this budget is complex and the expenses to operate the government have increased due to inflation. The Town side of the budget including debt and capital items is a 3.35% increase. The Board of Education budget is up 3.9% and the blended increase is 3.61%. The mill rate is increasing 4.99% due to the way the State has told the Towns to restructure the motor vehicle assessments. The Town is also now paying the ambulance personnel. He noted a decrease in the budget would mean a decrease in services to the community.

2. Discussion of the Senior Center and Commission on Aging Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Ms. Ducusin-Jara said the fastest growing population in New Milford is the senior population and the Senior Centers serves just over half of that population. The personnel consists of the Director, Program Coordinator, Office Coordinator, two bus operators and two substitute bus operators, a part time Chore Services Coordinator, and two State mandated Municipal Agents and the request is \$477,832 with \$4,000 for overtime as needed.

The contractual request is \$23,700 for Senior Center Database and Resource Website – Support and Services; Health & Wellness Screenings/Programs; Elderly Nutrition Program – Homebound; Meals - Meals on Wheels; and AV System Service, Repair, and Support.

Materials and supplies request is \$8,800 and includes Educational, Social and Recreational Program and Activity Materials & Supplies; Office Supplies/Equipment Maintenance and Repairs and Professional Development.

The materials and supplies request for self-sustaining is \$31,014 and includes Fee-Based Programming and Activities, and Misc. Repairs and Maintenance of Senior Buses (13b Transportation Grant).

The congregate luncheon budget request is \$55,000 and includes Elderly Nutrition Program – Congregate Meals and Title III Congregate Meals (Self- Sustaining).

The Center receives transportation grants for the buses, Chore Service Grants from the Western Connecticut Area on Aging, fees from those who can afford to pay, and money through the Congregate Meal payments all totalling \$142,844.

Resources provided by the Senior Center include: **BENEFIT SERVICES**

- Information, assistance, guidance, and advocacy from Senior Service Advisors/Municipal Agents with various local, state, and federal assistance programs
- Chore Services

PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

- Social and Recreational Programs and Events
- Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities
- Health and Wellness Promotions and Classes
- Congregate Meals

TRANSPORTATION

- Bus available for seniors and individuals with ADA-certification within Town of New Milford boundaries
- Rides include: gainful employment, non-emergency medical appointments, personal, programs and activities, and benefit services appointments

Ms. Ducusin-Jara said the Senior Center goes beyond the four walls and has leagues including the cornhole league which recently won the league championship. The Senior Center sees approximately 120 people a day. Mayor Bass noted the revenues were down because the Center will be getting a new bus from a grant and the State has cut the reimbursement on the congregate meals program.

Mr. DeGregorio asked if people could make a donation to the Center and Ms. Ducusin-Jara said they do now have a senior center enrichment fund.

Ms. Francis said she had a concern about the chore services coordinator in that people are told they need to come to the center to get the services but she said many may not be able to do so.

3. Discussion of the Land Use Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Ferlow and Ms. Regan presented the Land Use Budget. The Land Use Budget Consists of the combined budgets of Aquifer Protection, Inland Wetlands, Planning, Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), and Zoning.

The total budget request is \$455,026 which includes personnel (\$376,026) ZEO/Town Planner, Wetlands Enforcement Officer, Assistant Land Use Enforcement Officer, Land Use Administrator, part-time Land Use Compliance Officer & 5 Recording Secretaries for Commissions; Overtime of \$1,000; Consultants to update and maintain land use GIS layers, update regulations, and map preparation at \$25,000; Contractual/Self Sustaining to hire engineering consultants to review applications for the land use boards and commissions with all expenses reimbursed by applicants at \$40,000; Legal Notices Per State Statute all public hearings and decisions of the land use boards and commissions must be published in the newspaper at \$8,000; and Materials & Supplies at \$5,000.

Zoning Permit & Application Fees (44103)	75,000
ZBA Application Fees (44106)	3,000
Zoning Engineering Review Fees (44107)	25,000*
Planning Subdivision Application Fees (44108)	1,000
Wetlands Permit & Application Fees (44109)	18,000
Wetlands Significant Activity Fees (44110)	15,000*
Total	\$137,000

The increase in the 2025-2026 proposed budget is primarily attributed to the alterations to the Land Use Self Sustaining Accounts. Personnel is slightly reduced due to combining the new part-time Land Use Compliance Officer with a position at the Public Works Department.

Ms. Thomas said she felt the Town Planner should not be responsible for all the other positions because the Town does need a plan. Mr. Ferlow said the Planning Commission has not had a lot of requests for subdivisions until recently. Mayor Bass said the Town Council did approve the Town Plan – the Plan of Conservation and Development which it does follow.

Discussion of the Local Emergency Planning Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Ferlow also serves as the Emergency Management Director and he said the LEP is not just a townwide organization rather community wide for public and industries. The budget request is flat at \$4,000 which includes funds for CERT and Northville Amateur Radio Association which are two critical components of emergency response.

The LEPC has many responsibilities including :

- Develop and implement emergency action plans and notification procedures
- Inventory emergency equipment and facilities, and persons responsible for same
- Develop and implement evacuation plans and alternative traffic flows
- Schedule training programs
- Integrate LEPC emergency plans with emergency facilities and state and federal emergency plans

In addition to the State Emergency Response Commission duties the New Milford LEPC also coordinates other emergency response groups such as the Community Emergency Response team (CERT) and Northville Amateur Radio Association (NARA).

Discussion of the Emergency Management Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Ferlow said the budget for the Emergency Management program is \$19,000 and they are trying to get grants to create a Emergency Operations Center.

Mr. Gambino asked what happens if emergencies overlap and Mr. Ferlow said there are memorandums of understanding between fire departments, ambulances, police and DPW. The Town is in region 5 and can request a team as needed but each town needs to have 3 days of supplies and handling of its own emergency before help is expected.

4. Discussion of the Fire Marshal Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Mr. Reynolds said the Fire Marshal salary line has increased 2.1% and includes the Fire Marshal, Assistant Fire Marshal and a part time office coordinator. Materials is \$1,000, Fire Marshal Special Supplies has increased to \$5,800 to be used to hand out fire extinguishers to the public, and the computer software is budgeted at \$8,000. Overtime remains flat at \$5,500, professional development is \$6,125 and training increases due to AED training to \$5,783. Fire Marshal revenues are projected at \$70,000.

In 2024 the department conducted 1,656 inspections of apartments and condos and 170 commercial units. They issued 33 open burn permits, conducted 24 food truck inspections, 25 complaint

investigations, 81 fire investigations, did 24 presentations and events and installed 30 smoke and CO units.

5. Discussion of the Sullivan Farm Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Unfortunately Mark Mankin slipped on ice and was unable to attend this meeting, Mayor Bass said the revenues are up to \$38,838 due to production of farm and auxiliary products such as maple syrup. Expenses are up for some personnel and repairs and maintenance.

6. Discussion of the Public Works, Highway, and Facilities Building Maintenance Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Ms. Meserve read the Departments mission statement: *Our Mission, Pledge and Commitment EVERYDAY we come to work is to: Provide top quality, professional, effective, and timely services to residents, businesses and customers. We do this by focusing on relationships with ourselves and our customers, and on customer service and satisfaction, thus improving our image and maintaining the community's trust. We support and enhance a high quality of life for the Town's residents, businesses and visitors by providing well planned, environmentally sensitive, cost effective infrastructure and services to promote public health, personal safety, transportation, economic growth and civic vitality.*

Personnel for the department includes: Director/Town Engineer, Road Engineer, CAD Technician, Junior Engineer, Road Superintendent, Highway Foreman, Highway Operations Foreman, Operations , Assistant, Office Coordinator, Intern, and Part Time Engineering Inspector.

Highway personnel includes: 5 - Grade 1, 16 - Grade 2, 4 - Grade 3, 1 - Grade 4, Bucket Truck Operator, Lead 1/Yard Supervisor, Head Mechanic, Mechanic 1, and 3 - Mechanic 2/Welder.

Services Provided Include: Highway

- Infrastructure Construction and Maintenance
 - Paved (186 miles) and Gravel Road (27 miles)
 - 60+ Bridges
 - Drainage Systems
 - Sidewalks
 - Tree Management-Bucket Truck Crew
- Winter Maintenance and Snow Removal
- Emergency Response
- Vehicle & Equipment Management

DPW is committed to maintaining and improving our community's infrastructure. A key responsibility includes the replacement of town-wide drainage pipes and catch basins. These efforts ensure proper storm water management, reduce flooding risks, and enhance public safety, contributing to the town's overall sustainability and resilience.

Facilities Personnel includes a Lead Technician, a Senior Technician, 2 – Tech 1, 6 – Tech 2 and Tech 2/Floater.

Facilities maintains:

- Facilities Construction and Maintenance
 - Manage 257,000 ft²

— Custodial Services

- Streetlight Maintenance
- Security/Fire Protection
- Radio Tower Facility Maintenance
- Generator Maintenance Program
- Energy Management
- Town Roof Projects
- Maxx Renovation and Maintenance

Mr. Healy said it has been hard to get CDL licensed drivers so they have changed the grades on the personnel and can get them qualified as they work with the Town. He said they try to promote people from within the department and have graduated 7 people from T-2 training. They had gone 227 days without an injury.

Some highlights for this fiscal year include the school zone signs which will be installed when the weather allows; Hine Hill Road signalization; East Street and Elm Street improvements; Route 7 sidewalks; and Pumpkin Hill Road intersection widening which is awaiting Indian artifact discovery. The department used some ARPA funds to study Old Boardman Bridge and now are seeking grants to renovate it. They finished the Merryall Bridge and are working on the dam at Reservoir 4.

In 2025-2026 they will start working on clearing the road side hazards identified by highway team. The work on Van Car and Sand Road bridges will start which are 100% federal and state government funded. Brookside Avenue bridge work will start in the summer. The Wheaton Road bridge engineering is done and that is also 100% funded.

Mayor Bass asked Mr. Healy how DPW partners with the BOE and Mr. Healy said they helped with the roof at the high school, septic at Schaghticoke, parking at Northville and Schaghticoke, HVAC and solar panel work, and they lend them the bucket truck as needed,

Ms. Thomas asked if they are fully staffed and Mr. Jergen said they should have 33 members of the road crew and they have one grade 4 that will be getting their CDL and they drive the plow truck in the winter and then work with Parks and Recreation in the summer.

Ms. Thomas asked Mr. Healy to discuss the question asked by the member of the public about the road quality and Mr. Healy said they do not build a road to the DOT standards which costs \$1.2 million per mile. He said the matrix of road work includes crack sealing, fog sealing, chip sealing, as more cost effective ways to extend the life of the roads. They use a rubberized chip seal and they can mill and pave. The Town does reclaim which means grinding up the road and repaving a good base. The cost of milling and paving is \$380,000 per mile while reclaiming is \$680,000 per mile.

Mr. Boucher said the DOT standards are for long straight roads which New Milford does not have a lot of. Ms. Francis asked how many complaints the department has received about the Merryall Bridge and Mr. Boucher said other than the one member of the public they have had zero.

Discussion of the Economic Development Department/Commission Budget for 2025-2026

Mayor Bass said the personnel line for EDC is \$90,000 and includes the Economic Development administrator who is working with the land use department to help applicants work with the DST team. The position is the touch point for potential and new businesses. A new position proposed is the community information administrator which will work part time in EDC and part time in the Mayor's office. The position will work on all the websites – Newmilfordnow, Newmilfordedc and the town site itself.

7. Public Comment (As needed)

8. And any other town department whose presence may be requested.

Mr. O'Connor recessed the Special Board of Finance Meeting at 9:31 to Thursday, February 27th at 7:00 p.m.

Mayor Bass recessed the Special Town Council Meeting at 9:31 pm, to Thursday, February 27th at 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, February 27, 2025

Present: Mayor Pete Bass

Paul Murphy, Town Council

Sal Rynkiewicz, Town Council

Tom Esposito, Town Council (by phone)

Katy Francis, Town Council

Doug Skelly, Town Council (by phone)

Bob Gambino, Town Council

Alex Thomas, Town Council

MaryJane Lundgren, Town Council

Chris Cosgrove, Town Council, (by phone)

Walter Bayer, Board of Finance

Diane Klaif, Board of Finance

Joe Troiano, Board of Finance

Joseph DeGregorio, Board of Finance

Brian Whitfield, Board of Finance

Rolando Castro, Board of Finance

Also Present: Olga Melnikov, Director of Finance

Dr. Janet Parloto, Superintendent of Schools

Leslie Sarich, Board of Education Chair

Wendy Faulenbach, Board of Education

Tammy McInerney, Board of Education

Anthony Giovannone, Board of Education Director of Finance

Tom O'Brien, Board of Education

Holly Hollander, Assistant Superintendent of Schools

Laura Olson, Board of Education Director of Pupil Personnel Services

Jeff Turner, Board of Education Director of Information Technology

Sarah Herring, Board of Education

Brian McCauley, Board of Education
Terry Cavanaugh, Human Resource Director
Anne Bilko, Principal, Northville Elementary School
Randall Scofield, Board of Education

Ms. Klaif reconvened the budget hearings for the Board of Finance at 7:01 pm.

Mayor Bass reconvened the budget hearings for the Town Council at 7:01 pm.

1. Public Comment — (Note: These meetings are presentations, not deliberations on the budget. Public comment will be available at the beginning of the meeting for 15 minutes with each speaker limited to 3 minutes. Sign up is required prior to the scheduled start of the meeting. Additional time will be provided at the end of the meeting to address the council if more than 15 minutes in total is necessary. In addition, public comment will be available when the Council deliberates and at the Town Meeting.)

Jackie Eaton, a New Milford resident, said the Town should support and defend public education which appears to be under attack at the federal level. She said it is critical towns ensure students are not casualties. She said the flag belongs to everybody regardless of political affiliation and asked that the Town Council and Board of Finance pass the Education budget as presented.

2. Discussion of the Board of Education Budget for fiscal year 2025-2026

Ms. Sarich, Board Chair, presented the proposed Board of Education Budget. She said the goals of the BOE are student achievement, family and community engagement, budget development and fiscal management, district and school environment, and district workforce that is passionate and caring.

The budget process includes the schools and departments receive a template in October; enrollment projections are finalized in October; schools submit their budget to the business office; superintendent and director of fiscal services meet with the schools in November; superintendent and cabinet determine a proposed budget in January; and Budget is presented to the Board in January for presentation to the Town in February.

The BOE budget has increased fixed costs totaling \$2,481,672 - \$1,587,688 for contractual salary increases; \$675,218 for contractual benefits, \$176,651 for the bus contract, \$17,532 for utilities, \$24,573 for insurances or told comes to a 3.38% increase over the 24-25 budget.

Some salary reductions from the 2024-25 budget due to enrollment include -2.0 certified staff grades K-5, -5.0 certified staff grades 6-12, and -3.0 paraprofessionals grades K-12 equaling 10.0 FTE reductions.

The student population is decreasing but the needs of the students are increasing in terms of number of English learners, free and reduced lunch participants, and number of students with IEPs.

Personnel requests for the 2025-26 budget include 1.0 armed school security officer at NMHS, 1.0 career and technical education teacher at NMHS, 1.0 social worker at SMS, 1.0 multilingual teacher at SMS, 1.0 special education teacher at SMS, 1.0 special education teacher at SNIS. 1.0 interventionist from Title I to general fund, .5 psychologist at SNIS, .5 psychologist at HPS, .4 assistant principal at HPS, and 1.0 central office secretary.

Some examples of state and federal unfunded mandates include districts must provide special education services until the end of the school year when the student reaches twenty two; special education services to private school students; reading curriculum model as approved by the State Department of Education; medical school advisory; and indoor air quality programming.

Special education out of district placements for 36 students run from \$124,000 picked up by the district to \$156,520.

Questions arose about the agri-science program at Shepaug; to the cost per student which is \$22,500; why the reading and math scores are so low compared to other State school districts; how to fix the busing for the schools. Other questions centered on making sure students who go to the schools live in this district; current drop out rate; Sherman school tuition; and various technology and property services lines in the schools budgets.

3. Public Comment (As needed)

4. And any other town department whose presence may be requested.

Mr. Bayer moved to adjourn the Board of Finance budget hearings at 9:18 pm, seconded by Mr. Troiano and passed unanimously.

Mr. Gambino moved to adjourn the Town Council budget hearings at 9:18 pm, seconded by Ms. Francis and passed unanimously.

Minutes recorded by:



Recording Secretary