

BUDGET FISCAL ANALYSIS TASK FORCE
Meeting
Monday, November 2, 2009

1. Welcome and Introductions: The meeting of the Budget Fiscal Analysis Task Force was called to order at 5:15 PM by Councilman Jim Boucher. Present were task force members Tim Sullivan, Joe Kask, Yvon Alexandre, and Lyle Wray (on speakerphone). Also present were David Panagore, COO, Julio Concepcion, MetroHartford Alliance, Vinnie Carbone, and Linda Bayer. Councilman Boucher indicated that Linda Bayer had been asked to take minutes and provide other routine support to the Task Force, such as research and logistical matters. There were no objections. Other support may be provided by the CT Conference of Municipalities, CRCOG, the MetroHartford Alliance, and others.

2. Selection of Chair: Councilman Boucher explained that the Council believed that the Task Force would probably wish to choose its own chair or moderator. The task force members discussed the selection of a chair, but did not make a decision. It was suggested that the Task Force may be able to function effectively without a chair. Maybe there could be rotating chairs. Further discussion will be held at the next meeting.

3. Options for Structuring and Organizing the Task Force's Work: Councilman Boucher noted that the Task Force can have up to seven members, so there are three vacancies which can be filled. Some names have been suggested and resumes will be provided to the members for review and advice before the Council makes additional appointments. Jim reminded the group that all members must be independent and nonpartisan and for that reason, no current or former elected officials are to be considered.

Task Force members reviewed the notes from the October 13th meeting of the Task Force and used them as the basis for further discussion. It was noted that the Task Force is expected to complete its work by February. Given this time frame, it will not be possible to touch on everything. The Task Force must determine what to focus on if their recommendations are to have a meaningful impact. It was agreed that both revenues and expenses must be looked at. It was suggested that the Task Force must be as creative as possible, but leave implementation to the City.

It was suggested that looking at the experiences of other cities will be useful, not just to see what they did, but what the effect of their actions were. For instance, if the size of the police force was reduced, what changes in the crime rate resulted?

David Panagore suggested that the Task Force should identify the outcomes they want. For example, if the deficit in 2010-11 is anticipated to be \$40 million, recommendations that can have significant impact must be focused on, i.e. those that result in material cost savings and/or revenue increases. The group also suggested that major expense drivers be focused upon and that cost/benefit must be evaluated for every recommendation.

It was suggested that all opportunities for savings and revenue increases be 1) prioritized as high, medium, and low priority and 2) be identified as short-term, medium term, or long-term. It was also suggested that the Task Force establish a \$500,000 "floor" for an opportunity to be considered. That is, an action must result in at least \$500,000 of savings/revenue in order to be considered.

It was suggested that the Task Force focus on 4-5 areas. The following were suggested:

1. Internal and External Service Sharing – both with other towns in the region and between the Board of Education and the City.
2. Employee Benefits – including health insurance, pensions, and other post-employment benefits
3. Maximizing Available Resources – including Federal stimulus funds, State revenue, and grants
4. Department-specific Issues – including how reductions in staffing have affected both service and revenue.

Additional areas to look at were tax exempt properties, school transportation, and risk management.

The Task force agreed that they needed to digest all the information discussed before making decisions and additional ideas might be brought to the table. Jim Boucher asked whether there was additional information that the Task Force would like to have in order to identify areas to work on. Members requested the following:

- First Quarter Financial Report
- Tax collection rates
- Information on tax liens sold
- List of ARRA monies (stimulus dollars) obtained by the City

Once decisions on focus areas are made, a timeline will be established for each area.

4. Meeting Dates: The next meeting will be held at 5 PM on Monday, November 23, 2009 in Council Chambers. Additional dates will be established once all task force members have been appointed.

5. Other Business: The public meeting requirements were discussed. The Task Force is subject to open-meeting laws. All meetings of the Task Force must be noticed and all meetings are open to the public.

6. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda A. Bayer
Staff