

My name is Penney Burnett and I am a resident of Stamford. Like everyone else here, my taxes have more than doubled over the last 10 years. In just the last six years we have experienced a \$100 million increase in city-wide property taxes to fund the City's insatiable spending appetite.

It is essential that Stamford reduce expenditures immediately. Instead of threatening taxpayers with service cuts, however, the city first should **DEFER ALL DISCRETIONARY CAPITAL PROJECTS.**

1. Capital spending is significantly increasing the operating budget. The Office of Administration and the Office of Operations are responsible for the oversight and management of the city's capital projects. As capital projects have grown over the last five years, operating expenses for these two offices have tripled and doubled, respectively. In comparison, expenditures for city agencies responsible for essential government services have increased at much lower rates, i.e. 15% increase for Public Safety, 50% increase for Health & Welfare and 42% increase for Education.
2. Capital projects are driving up the city's debt service cost, which is the fastest growing line item in the operating budget. The Mayor's proposed budget for fiscal 09/10 shows a reduction in debt service, but this is done with financial engineering which will only cost the taxpayers more in the long-term.
3. I recommend the deferral or elimination of the following major capital projects from the 2009 /2010 and 2010/2011 budget:
 - Mill River Improvements and Pen Space Acquisition (budgeted for \$9 million)
 - Urban Transitway Phase II (budgeted for \$28 million)
 - WPCA Waste to Energy Project (budgeted for \$40 million)

At a minimum, PLEASE ELIMINATE THE \$40 MILLION WPCA WASTE TO ENERGY PROJECT FROM THE CAPITAL BUDGET. Even if it is completed at cost and is capable of generating the projected 15 MGW of energy -- doubtful given public admissions by the head of the WPCA -- it will cost at least two to seven times more than a conventional power generating facility. I ask you -- how will this generate a return for Stamford taxpayers when the power generated can only be sold at market rates which are based on significantly lower production costs? Stamford taxpayers should not have to pay such an astronomical cost for an unproven technology.

Stamford taxpayers are already losing money on another experimental WPCA project. Based on costs presented in the Mayor's Proposed Operating Budget, page 368, the \$17 million sludge pelletization facility is costing taxpayers over \$3.6 million annually, including current debt service; this is \$2 million higher than the costs to haul the sludge away. Let me reiterate -- we, the taxpayers, invested \$17 million to incur a \$2 million increase in our taxes -- this is outrageous. On March 9th, the Board of Finance held a special meeting to approve city-issued general obligation bonds to fund the WPCA because it does not have sufficient revenues to pay its bills. You -- the BOR and BOF are the stewards of our finances -- take a look.

Eliminating discretionary capital projects will result in significant savings in our operating budget. Please stop this needless and reckless spending. Represent the taxpayers who elected you -- not special interests. Mature political leaders know that to govern is to choose: to choose what to do and thereby to choose what cannot be done. Thank you.