CITY OF NORWALK
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 31, 2025
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

ATTENDANCE: Joshua Goldstein; Chair, James Frayer, Lisa Shanahan, Barbara Smyth, Heather Dunn, Jalin Sead (6:05 p.m.), Darlene Young (6:05 p.m.), Nicol Ayers, AnneWennerstrand, NiKolb Eaddy

STAFF: Sabrina Godeski

OTHER: Jared Schmidt; CFO, Tom Ellis, Tom Livingston, Vanessa Valadares, William Hnatuk; ADA Coordinator, Sherelle Harris, Jay Habansky, Lamond Daniels, Neil Rennie, David Westmoreland, Deanna D'Amore, Glendaly Padilla, AnaVivian Estrella, Nora Niedzielski-Eichner (6:18 p.m.), Dajuan Wiggins (6:18 p.m.), Ralph Kolb, Robert Stowers, Ken Hughes, Chris Torre, Jim Meehan.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Goldstein called the meeting to order at 6:00

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Goldstein called the role as reflected above.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Special Meeting: March 17, 2025

**** MR. FRAYER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FOR THE MARCH 17, 2025 MEETING.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Diane Lauricella
21 Little Fox Lane
Ms. Lauricella discussed themes she requested the committee members to think about. She felt the gadget didn't correctly reflect wants versus needs. Considering what is happening in Washington, she felt they needed to show restraint. She listed the various items she felt should be addressed. She suggested soliciting more private donors. She also asked the committee to return the Teslas the city had purchased, and under park maintenance, she commented no artificial turf fields.

Mr. Goldstein introduced the new Director of Economic and Community Development, Mr. Jay Habansky. Mr. Habansky introduced himself and stated he was very excited to join the team and learn the best way to serve the residents of Norwalk.

Mr. Sead and Ms. Young joined the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. Review and presentation of the 2025-2026 Capital Budget.

**** MR. FRAYER MOVED TO PRESENT AND REVIEW THE CAPITAL BUDGET.**

Mr. Schmidt the CFO for the city of Norwalk gave his presented a slideshow on the Capital Budget which included the following:

- The 2025-26 Capital Improvement Plan.
- Capital Budget recommendations
- Capital Budget Impact on Debt Load

Ms. Smyth asked if there was a recommendation on the debt service balance. Mr. Schmitt said for this year it was a lot to borrow but they woulsd still remain under the cap. He stated that in the future there will have to be some belt tightening to maintain their AAA rating..

Mr. Frayer gave a further description. He went on to say they had to start getting into the mindset that it was a matter of what we must have not what we would like. Mr. Schmudt agreed, stating they would need to make reductions next year.

Mr. Ellis noted their bond advisor who would be quick to mention there are a series of thresholds and limits reviewed in totality. He noted they wouldn't lose the AAA rating because it would be taken into consideration with a number of other factors.

1. **Historical Commission**

Mr. Westmoreland presented the Historic Commission's requests for the following projects.

- The Smith Street buildings
- The Lockwood house (City Museum) – ADA
- Lockwood– Matthews Mansion code and repair
- ADA Access At Mill Hill & Master Plan
- Cemetery site work
- WPA murals

He provided the requested details for each project.

Mr. Frayer wanted to know why maintanance and repair was in the Capital Budget and not the Operating Budget. Mr. Ellis stated maintenance and repair will gradually be moved to the Operating Budget over a two to three year period..

Ms.Niedzielski-Eichner and Mr. Dajuan Wiggins joined the meeting at 6:18 p.m.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner wanted to know if the request for the Lockwood Matthews Mansion was for the overall renovation and repair of the project or if it was for yearly maintenance. Mr. Westmoreland stated the request was to hire conservators to write the specifications for various repairs so they could go out to bid. He noted they don't have the knowledge in-house to write the specifications. Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner said they should be thinking about getting routine maintenance into the Operating Budget for next year. Mr. Westmoreland indicated they were working on a maintenance plan to come up with a budget for next year. He also stated there was a plan to raise donations to cover the exterior work, but they would probably have to come back to the commission for some of the money. Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner then wanted to know why the City museum was on this year's budget. Mr. Westmoreland stated that other projects took precedence over the museum. The museum project was on hold for three years and they are looking to move forward with it.

2. **Community Services**

Ms. Estrella summarized a PowerPoint presentation to provide the breakdown of their request. It covered the following:

- The request to modify or replace seven service counters in City Hall, and a request to complete projects in City Hall.
- The priorities for accessible facilities.
- The current accessible service counters at City Hall
- The thirteen service counters that need to be made ADA compliant.
- The order of priority and the amount to be spent for each project.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner wanted to know why the service counter at the Tax Collectors office was so much more expensive than the rest. Mr. Hnatuk stated the counters would be more costly due to necessary security measures and the need to remove the existing counter and rebuild it.

- The completion of the Concert Hall lobby restrooms.
- Completion of the curb ramps to make them ADA compliant.

Mr. Sead wanted to know how integrate ADA is in all the city's projects. He wanted to make sure they wouldn't be coming back and fixing things that could have been done in the first place. Ms.Estrella stated the Mr. Hnatuk is ADA certified and reviews all the plans to ensure compliance. Mr. Hnatuk discussed the departments he's advising to complete the projects they are currently working on.

3. **Health**

Ms. D'Amore the request for one new item so they can continue painting the Health Department building. She explained last year's request was for the first floor and this year they hope to complete the second floor.

Mr. Frayer wanted to know why this request was made part of the Capital Budget because it seems like routine maintenance. He noted that this seemed more like a routine maintenance item that should be addressed later in the year. Mr. Ellis said he would highlight the request for review.

4. **Library**

Ms. Harris listed the four general budget requests/ They are as follows:

- Completing the installation of the sixty ADA compliant interior door handles and the three exterior door handles with lock sets.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner asked if these door handles would have to be replaced if the Library is renovated. Ms. Harris stated they would transfer over.

- The funding of a new library van to replace the current van that is 17 years old and falling apart

- The request for funding to complete the Norwalk Newspaper Digitization Project.

Mr. Goldstein expressed the importance of the project to preserve Norwalk History.

- The refreshing of the laptops in two of the libraries' laptop vending machines.

5. WPCA

Ms. Valadares noted the numbers on the spreadsheet, a $17,000, 000 cut. She stated the back-up on the books reflects the regional number and does not reflect those cuts and the Mayor's recommended budget. She noted that any further cuts would affect major infrastructures and services they provide

Mr. Kolb from the Water Pollutant Control Authority provided details for the WPCA requests The requests are as follows:

- Collections system rehabilitation and improvement over the next ten years.

Mr. Kolb clarified for Mr. Goldstein that this was an ongoing project. He gave a description of the project and it's benefits over the long term. Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner asked if there was a concern that the cost reductions might set back the long-term maintenance goals. Mr. Kolb explained the request was for the next planned projects. He noted there would be new projects every couple of years. He stated over the next tent years they would be making requests for additional projects.

- Pump station upgrade and replacement.

Mr. Frayer was concerned there wouldn't be enough funding to cover the project. Ms. Valadares gave a full explanation as to how they calculated the amount of their requests and assured the commission they would have enough money and wouldn't have to come back for more. She noted they have yet to receive state approval, but were doing what they can in the interim.

- WWTP Rehabilitation and improvement.

Mr. Kolb discussed the ten-year plan for their waste water treatment plant. He noted they haven't received DEEP's answer on the plan, but they were moving forward nonetheless with their capital projects..

6. Building Management

Mr. Rennie gave his presentation, going building by building. He described the various projects associated with each building at length. The list of buildings and associated projects is as follows:

- City Hall repairs and improvements
- Public works center improvements
- Main Library

Mr Goldstein questioned whether items like the elevator and roof would be kept if there was a full library redesign and renovation. Mr. Rennie answered that unless the structure was ripped down in its entirety, the roof and elevator would stay intact.

- Branch library improvements
- Health department
- Police facilities
- Fire head quarters
- Ben Franklin improvements
- Electric vehicles/ Sustainability projects
- Roosevelt center improvements
- Nathaniel Ely improvements

Mr. Frayer had questions about the windows at Ely. Mr. Rennie said several projects needed doing, but they couldn't be done while the children were in the school. He stated they needed to come up with a plan a year or two in advance to relocate the children to make the necessary repairs. He noted there was no immediate danger, but abatements would be necessary and added that the danger arises when the items that need to be addressed are disrupted. Electrical systems surveys

- Matthews Park

7. **Recreation and Parks**

Mr. Stowers gave a general overview of their capital requests. He stated their priorities this year are centered around preparing the new Community Center, improvements to the beach, increasing the athletic fields, new maintenance vehicles, and continued improvements to the playgrounds at the schools. Mr. Stowers provided an outline of what was intended for each project. The full list of projects is as follows:

- South Main Community Center
- Broad River Athletic Complex Project

Mr. Stowers answered Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner's question stating the fields would be a hybrid combination of synthetic turf and grass. He stated it had been approved by the Rec and Parks Committee. Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner wanted to know if the DPW's flood remediation plans were part of the project. Ms. Valadares described what was entailed in the flood remediation project, including the funding. She stated part of the drainage portion of the project has already been installed.

In response to Mr. Frayer, Mr. Stowers noted the estimate for the project is $7 million, and they have already accumulated $5 million. Ms, Valadares explained that the project cost would be closer to $10 million. She noted $2 million coming out of the engineering budget for the drainage project. She explained all the items they were proposing for the complex. Ms. Valadares assured Mr. Frayer that the final estimate for everything they have planned would be $10.2 million. Mr. Frayer felt the project cost was rather high and when looking at the project they should take into consideration its total cost. Mr. Stowers noted that the designer estimates the field would be more than $7 million.

Ms. Smyth pointed out doing the flood remediation at the field is crucial to be able to do the New Canaan Avenue remediation. She also stressed the need for the fields. She registered her concerns about possible issues with the artificial turf being near the watershed.

Ms. Shanahan stated she was concerned with a hybrid field. She noted her research into them showed there were no safe artificial turfs. Ms. Smyth noted that runoff from the artificial turf could ultimately harm the oyster industry.

Ms. Dunn wanted to know if there is any coordination with the state. Ms. Valadares indicated it would be just city drainage. Ms. Dunn also wanted to know if there were any funds allocated for testing.

Mr. Sead noted they were testing as much as they can for PIFAs in the first district. He explained there are very few labs in the state, and they are strained. He stated he agreed with the PIFAs concerns.

Mr. Stowers noted that the bulk of the field would be grass.

- Calf Pasture Beach

Mr. Hughes discussed the renovation of an existing structure at Calf Pasture Beach making it a home base for the summer camp. He stated the camp would be a revenue generator. He then indicated the building could have other uses. Mr. Stowers stated it could add to the facility rentals.

Next, they discussed restroom issues and a recommendation to use Portland Loo. Mr. Stowers described the modular system with all the core elements of a standard restroom.

Mr. Hughes discussed the replacement of walkway poles down at the beach with wind-resistant poles with LED lights.

Mr. Hughes then described plans to renovate the basketball court.

Ms. Smyth had questions about a stage. Mr. Hughes said they were looking to acquire a semi-permanent stage in an out year.

In response to Mr. Frayer's question, Mr. Stowers said the the restroom units weren't heated, but you could the added component of a heating element in them.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner wanted to know if the walkway poles would pay for themselves. Ms. Valadares indicated they would over their ten-year lifespan..

- Vehicles
- School and park playgrounds

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner had questions about moving forward with park signage. Ms. Ellis explained signage and the other projects listed were moved to operating expenses. Mr. Stowers said they were ready to implement the signage but needed the $100,000 to do it. Mr. Goldstein established the projects contained nothing new or major but were ongoing maintenance and would be paid for with the debt premium.

8. **Public Works and Operations (Solid Waste, Engineering, Fleet Maintenance)**

- Transfer station improvements

Mr. Torre discussed the need for a new roof on the transfer station before they can install fiber optics that will connect the transfer station to the city's network.

- Fleet replacement
- Various department fleet vehicles

Mr. Torre stated the request for fleet management was $665,000. He listed all the vehicles and equipment they were hoping to purchase with the money.

At his request, Ms. Valadares explained to Mr. Goldstein how they trimmed their request from $990,000 to $665,000.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner asked if they were anticipating tariff problems. Ms. Valadfares said most likely they will. If there is an increase she stated they would revisit the budget and see what purchases they have to put off. Mr. Torre noted they do have a backup plan. Mr. Torre discussed the need for a new roof on the transfer station before they can install fiber optics that will connect the transfer station to the city's network. Mr., Torre then listed the vehicles

Mr. Meehan gave line by line description of the following items:

- Bridge repairs
- Pavement management program
- Sidewalks and curbs
- General drainage.
- Watercourse maintenance
- Storm water management plan
- New Canaan Avenue/Ponus storm drain
- Glendenning/Cannon Street storm drain
- Tree planting
- East Avenue roadway and bridge reconstruction
- Grant local matching funds
- Green infrastructure

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner wanted to know what the plan was for the Lawrence Street Storm drain. It was indicated it is being put off until next year. She wanted to know if pushing this project off would be a problem. Ms. Valandares stated that the project was a lower priority.

Ms. Valandares explained to Ms. Smyth the process used to determine which places need remediation.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. FRAYER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
China Mayhew
Telesco Secretarial Services