

**CITY OF NORWALK
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 31, 2026
BY ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING**

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Members of the public may call in to participate. Callers will not be able to see the meeting participants. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, dial *9 on the phone and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda, and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually-explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.

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Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be included into the record, they must be submitted by 12:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. Please email Sabrina Godeski at sgodeski@norwalkct.gov with the subject line "Public Comment" to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Goldstein called the meeting to order at 6:04p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Chair Goldstein called the Roll: Josh Goldstein, Anne Wennerstrand, Jim Frayer, Jan Degenshein

At Roll Call there were four (4) Committee members present, constituting a quorum. Jalin Sead arrived at 6:05p.m. Darlene Young and Nicole Ayers were absent.

ATTENDANCE: Josh Goldstein; Chair, Jan Degenshein; Vice-Chair, Anne Wennerstrand, Jim Frayer, Jalin Sead (6:05p.m.)

STAFF: Sabrina Godeski, Jay Habansky, Jared Scmitt, Tom Ellis, David

Westmoreland, Bill Hnatuk, Sherelle Harris, Diana Paladino, Matt Lane, Vanessa Valadares, Ralph Kolb, Neil Rennie, Jim Meehan, Chris Torre, Robert Stowers, Ken Hughes, Dilene Byrd

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. REGULAR MEETING: FEBRUARY 5, 2026

There was no report on this item.

****MR. DEGENSHEIN MOVED THE ITEM
MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

Chair Goldstein closed the public participation at 6:07p.m.

V. NEW BUSINESS

A. REVIEW AND PRESENTATION OF THE 2026-2027 CAPITAL BUDGET.

[HTTPS://WWW.NORWALKCT.GOV/DOCUMENTCENTER/VIEW/38587/FYE-2027-CAPITAL-PROJECT-REQUEST-DETAILS](https://www.norwalkct.gov/documentcenter/view/38587/fye-2027-capital-project-request-details)

Chair Goldstein stated that this is part of their review of the capital budget. The capital budget has been through a few different stages on the administrative level, as well as the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of Estimate and Taxation's recommendations. He said they are going to go department by department through the various requests and give them an opportunity to present those requests. There will not be any votes taken at this meeting. He said they would listen to the presentations and ask questions if needed. He asked the committee members to take notes as they will vote on the forwarding of the capital budget to the full council on Thursday.

Mr. Ellis went through the format of the spreadsheet and explained each of the columns of the capital budget for the department heads.

1. HISTORICAL COMMISSION

David Westmoreland reported on the Historical Commission's capital budget items. Lockwood Matthews Mansion, under code and repairs, is a big item. They need to

replace the conservatory. There are rotten structural members and are in danger of collapse. The Council advanced \$250,000.00 so they could get started on the research, engineering and design work for the project. He said the \$1.25 million is fine for next year. Smith Street Buildings is an ongoing project they have been working on since 2010 to repair the old jailhouse. The project is being done in phases. The exterior and ADA are done. They are working on restoring the interior. They had a bid opening on Friday for the first couple of phases. That will fund the final phase of the reconstruction of the jail and put it back into use. The first floor has all the jail cells, and the walls have graffiti on them from the prisoners from the 1800s. They are restoring and conserving it, and it'll open as a museum. The second floor will be an extensive exhibition of the Norwalk pottery industry, and the third floor will be collection and storage space. The Lockwood House ADA project will be completed in phases to make it ADA compliant, renovating the spaces and remodeling the basement. They will include exterior access to the basement, which will give them a lecture hall space and an educational training room, along with more exhibit space. They have partial funding for this project, about \$360,000. They put out an RFQ for the construction documents and are looking for additional funding to complete the project. The ADA access Mill Hill is in need of some repairs to the buildings and a redesign of the parking lot and the front steps. Cemetery site work was not recommended for funding, but they asked for \$10,000.00 for tombstone repairs every year.

A discussion ensued about the Lockwood Matthews Mansion funding of \$250,000.00. The Historical Commission's original request was reduced by \$250,000.00 and now the request is \$1.25 million, although the mayor's recommendation was \$1.5 million. It was stated that \$1.25 million should suffice.

2. COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mr. Degenshein recused himself from this presentation.

Mr. Hnatuk reported that he was unaware until Friday evening that the original budget request for ADA Improvements was completely removed. Mr. Hnatuk gave a summary of the original request. He said the city has an ADA Transition Plan that specifically lays out the improvements that need to be made for accessibility and to make facilities more inclusive which are laid out and prioritized. They consider new projects that are ongoing and are unrelated to the ADA but then trigger ADA requirements. The city invested in a new parking lot at the Benjamin Franklin Community Center about a year ago, and they would like to add power door openers to the entry door where there is a ramp entrance. Safety and compliance improvements are needed for three (3) restrooms that are tagged as accessible but do not meet the compliance and safety concerns. They would also like to add signage throughout the floors of the facility. They are expected to expand senior services there, so the upgrades would greatly enhance usability and accessibility. The next item was the Senior Center on Allen Road. The courtyard has

been unusable and unsafe for the last several years. They would like to reconstruct the courtyard, including the ramp, which will provide an accessible route and door upgrades and door openers. That would greatly improve emergency egress for that area of the building. He explained the reasoning to the committee. The last item was for improving accessibility at Gallagher Mansion at Cranberry Park. He explained the need for the improvements. Mr. Hnatuk gave a breakdown of the reduced budget.

3. **LIBRARY**

Ms. Harris presented the library's two (2) requests. The first request is for a digitization project. This is to complete the final stage of their digital access to the hour, partnering with NewsBank to digitize the missing years from 1971 through 2006. They completed the digitization of the Norwalk Hour from 1872 to 1970 in 2022. The Norwalk Gazette from 1818 to 1899 and the South Norwalk Sentinel from 1870 to 1945 all have been digitized with the partnering with NewsBank in 2018. The second item is for the self-checkout. They are looking to be ADA compliant with modern technology.

4. **REGISTRAR OF VOTERS**

Ms. Paladino presented a request for poll pads. She explained that they are electronic poll books which represent a modernized election infrastructure. She said this would improve efficiency and accuracy. Long-term staffing costs will be reduced, and voters will have a better voter experience. They will have a much greater operational resilience as well. Ms. Paladino mentioned that the electronic poll books are a scalable solution that is available at this time to really allow for meaningful reduction in their traditional staffing models. She briefly explained state mandates, election security and statutory compliance in elections. They feel that poll books would support that and make a great hybrid with their paper check-in books. A discussion ensued about possible grant opportunities that could reimburse them for the costs of the election equipment. The Registrar's Office stated they would look into possible grant funding. Ms. Paladino explained that the poll pads have been federally approved, but they have not yet been officially adapted by the State of Connecticut. That would be the only concern and, for that reasoning, she is unsure if grant funding would be available. She said there could be private grant funding available, and they would be willing look into that.

5. **BUILDING MANAGEMENT**

Ms. Valadares addressed the committee. She explained their process for the preparation of the budget. Ms. Valadares talked about the rising costs of construction. She introduced her staff, Ralph Kolb, Senior Environmental Representative representing the WPCA, Robert Stowers, Director of Recreation and Parks, Jim Meehan, Principal Engineer for the Engineering Department, Chris Torre, Superintendent of Operations, Ken Hughes, Superintendent of Recreation and Parks and Dilene Byrd, who assists with the budget process, and Neil Rennie, who is on the

call for Building Management. She stated they would like to begin with WPCA. She reminded the committee that WPCA is an enterprise fund. She gave a brief explanation of the enterprise fund's role.

Ms. Valadares presented the requests for Building Management. The first request is for city hall repairs and improvements. She explained the need to repair the 33-year-old fan coils in the building. There are mechanical upgrades needed in city hall as well. She explained the need for the salt shed improvements. The administration building's roof needs to be replaced, and the dispatch building needs work as well. A discussion ensued about the salt shed and the salt issues. Their goal is to reestablish the salt shed by this winter so they can stock the shed prior to the winter season. It was stated that for operational purposes, the salt shed is where it needs to be.

6. WPCA

Ms. Valadares stated they are requesting two (2) capital budget items. The first is the Wastewater Treatment Plant Rehabilitation. They are requesting \$10 million related to the settling tank project. The second is for the Pump Station Upgrade Replacement and they are requesting \$8 million. Most of the funding will be directed at the Keeler Brook Pump Station. She said that is the pump station they lost a year and a half ago and are now in the process of rebuilding.

7. RECREATION AND PARKS

Ms. Valadares presented two (2) requests for Recreation and Parks. The first request is for Calf Pasture Beach. They are looking for additional signage in front of the park, conducting a study for a bench shell, improving the sailing school, and changing the beach streetlights. They have changed half of the lights already and would like to complete the other half. They have \$325,000 for the new pavilion that will be next to the concession stand. The next item is for Cranberry Park for \$883,000.00; \$808,000 of that request is to match a grant they have for the trail. They will also install a fence for \$75,000.00 to keep the dogs away from the mansion should there be an event taking place there. She said the other items are minimal and related to small capital improvements that is conducted on all of their sites. The Manquist Field is another item that is also a matching grant. They are requesting \$1 million to match a grant that they already have for \$2.5 million. They would like to put in a new track with lights. The total project will be \$3.5 million and \$2.5 million will come from the grant.

8. PUBLIC WORKS (OPERATIONS, SOLID WASTE, ENGINEERING, FLEET MAINTENANCE)

Ms. Valadares presented on Operations. They have two (2) items, Fleet Replacement and Centralized Fleet Maintenance. They are requesting \$992,000.00 for Fleet Replacement. The reason for that number is they are requesting a Mac plow truck. They would like to replace the old trucks in fleet, one a year, as they have been doing every year. They are requesting a John Deere Loader. The current loader they have is giving up. There are a couple of Ford F550's that are at their request as well. She explained that in past years there have been many fleet cuts in the budget, and now they need replacements. The centralized fleet maintenance funding is used for every part to fix all of their vehicles.

The solid waste request of \$200,000.00 is for the Transfer Station improvements. The transfer station needs repairs, particularly the roof. There are issues with the roof leaking. There are drainage improvements needed, and the weight master's office needs to be in working condition.

The engineering capital budget begins with a \$1.4 million bridge request. Public Works is responsible for the maintenance of all the bridges that are less than twenty feet in span and culverts also qualify. There was a study completed about five (5) years ago and there are three (3) more bridges that need repair. They also need to refresh the study because they must re-evaluate all the other bridges and culverts for updated information. She explained the paving budget. She stated the request has increased due to the budget alignment of sidewalks and curbs, so they can comply with the complete streets design. She stated they were able to reduce the watercourse maintenance budget by \$1.3 million from their usual request of \$2.5 to \$3 million a year. Those funds cover some small standalone projects and the drainage improvements made before they pave or install sidewalks in some areas. She reiterated that all the streets that will be paved under that \$6 million, and all the drainage that needs to be done to restore anything that is broken or needs to be added is already included under the \$1.3 million. She explained how they were able to reduce that line item. She explained the Ponus Avenue project. It will be done in two (2) phases. She explained that the first phase will be completed under the Broad River baseball field project under Recreation and Parks. They will put in a new outfall and all the piping from the river to the fields with the \$3 million. Ms. Valadares explained the East Avenue Reconstruction Project request of \$1.5 million and the under grounding of the utilities in that area. There was a brief discussion about the Norwalk River Flood Control and Coastal Resiliency cuts. Ms. Valadares gave a brief clarification of the East Norwalk Reconstruction Project, stating the city is responsible for funding the design of widening of the road and all the drainage improvements. That project began over 20 years ago. The construction of the widening of the road and all the drainage improvements will be funded by DOT. She explained the history of underground utilities and locations. They are proposing 16 roads to be paved, approximately 6 miles of road to be paved.

Chair Goldstein stated that they will continue the capital budget review on Thursday night. There are a couple of items they will attend to before the capital budget. They will also vote on forwarding the whole capital budget, including what was presented tonight, to the full council.

Mr. Frayer asked if the committee would be looking at the impact of the capital budget on their debt service and their borrowing capacity and how that affects their rating.

Chair Goldstein responded, Yes, they need to have that discussion. He stated that it was addressed in the transmittal letters they received. A brief discussion began about the impacts, borrowing capacity and rating.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Frayer moved to adjourn.
Motion passed unanimously.
The meeting was adjourned at 7:33p.m.