CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - MARCH 2, 2026
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

ATTENDEES: Mayor Barbara C. Smyth, Ed Abrams (Chair), Joseph Andrasko, Kendrick Constant, Troy Jellerette, Artie Kassimis, Anne Yang.

STAFF: Tom Ellis (Director of Management & Budgets), Marsha Elbourne (City Clerk), Vannessa Valadares (Chief of Operations and Public Works), Neil Rennie (Building Management), Jared Schmitt (Chief Financial Officer).

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Abrams called the regular meeting of the Board of Estimate and Taxation to order at approximately 6:30 p.m. on March 2, 2026, via Zoom virtual meeting.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Elbourne conducted the roll call. A quorum was confirmed.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: February 9, 2026

Mr. Kassimis offered the first motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Jellerette noted a correction on page 2 regarding the spelling of "Minister debt presentation" (which actually belonged on the current agenda, not the prior minutes) and a typographical error in the spelling of Mr. Jellerette's own name on page 1 (one "l" instead of two). Mr. Ellis confirmed both points and noted that the Minister debt item was incorrectly placed in the February minutes. No other changes were proposed.

> ****MR. KASSIMIS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 9, 2026, REGULAR MEETING AS PRESENTED WITH THE CORRECTION TO THE SPELLING OF MR. JELLERETTE'S NAME.**
> **** MR. JELLERETTE SECONDED THE MOTION.**
> ****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS CORRECTED.**

IV. SPECIAL APPROPRIATION AGENDA

There were no special appropriation requests on the agenda.

V. TRANSFER AGENDA

A. Transfer FY2025-2026

Mr. Ellis introduced the transfer agenda, beginning on page 13 of the meeting package, and requested that each transfer be considered and voted on individually to expedite discussion.

1. Civic+ software/board applications for charter changes – $5,500 internal transfer from wages and salaries (not from contingency).
Mr. Ellis explained that Civic+ provides website hosting, meeting minutes and agendas, and other services primarily for the Mayor's office. This transfer adds board applications specifically related to charter change processes. Ms. Elbourne added that the City already uses Civic+ for multiple services and that bundling additional offerings with the same vendor is cost-effective and logical.

> ****MR. ABRAMS KASSIMIS MOVED TO APPROVE THE CIVIC+ SOFTWARE TRANSFER OF $5,500 AS PRESENTED.**
> ****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. Public Works – meal allowance for storm-related emergency work – $40,000 from contingency.
Mr. Ellis introduced the request, noting recent severe winter storms and the need to feed workers clearing roads, sidewalks, and city/Board of Education properties.

Ms. Valadares provided detailed testimony: the union contract (Local 2405) increased the meal allowance from $15 to $20 per eligible six-hour period (specifically at 6 p.m., midnight, and 6 a.m. during emergency shifts). Budgeted amount was approximately $9,000; year-to-date spending already exceeded $27,000 (excluding the most recent blizzard), creating an $18,000+ deficit. Approximately 100 workers are involved during major storms, including DPW laborers, drivers, fleet mechanics, and supervisors. Storms have consistently occurred on weekends, requiring mandatory meal provision under the contract. The $40,000 request covers the current deficit plus anticipated needs through fiscal year-end and applies to all emergency days (not only snow events).

Ms. Yang inquired whether shifts could be staggered so weekend workers receive compensatory days off during the week, preserving a five-day workweek. Ms. Valadares responded that past attempts to negotiate such changes with the union were unsuccessful, staffing is severely limited (only 67 laborers/drivers compared to 150 twenty years ago), there is no second crew available, and workers perform critical maintenance, MS4 compliance catch-basin cleaning, pothole repairs, tree/shrub work, and permit-related duties on non-storm days, making staggering impractical without reducing service levels.

Mr. Andrasko confirmed the $40,000 covers the existing deficit, unreported recent storms, and remaining fiscal-year needs.

Mr. Kassimis asked whether non-emergency tasks (e.g., mailbox repair) trigger meal allowances; Ms. Valadares clarified that only emergency work qualifies.

****MR. ABRAMS MOVED TO APPROVE THE PUBLIC WORKS MEAL ALLOWANCE TRANSFER OF $40,000 FROM CONTINGENCY AS PRESENTED.**
****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Rennie presented the request for an additional transfer from contingency to cover third-party contractual services for snow removal at certain municipal sites, including the Police Department parking areas. He described the unique challenges at these locations: the Police Department lot requires small vehicles and frequent maneuvering due to tight quarters and multiple runs to dump snow at DPW; 98 South is a small, confined setup; 3 Belden involves significant internal sidewalk clearing at the Ben Franklin Center site. The vendor, recently selected through a three-year bid process, handles these specialized tasks that exceed the capacity of the City's larger DPW trucks.

Mr. Kassimis confirmed that the line item labeled "other contractual services" refers to a third-party vendor rather than in-house services. Mr. Rennie affirmed this and noted the contract was recently bid for three years.

Mr. Jellerette asked whether billing is based on a per-hour rate or another structure and inquired about the number of hours involved. Mr. Rennie explained that charges are event-based and tied to the size of each snow event (measured in inches of accumulation). Mr. Jellerette pressed for specifics on the Police Department site: the physical size of the lot, duration of plowing per event, and the exact billing mechanism used by the vendor. Mr. Rennie stated he could confirm the exact number of events (14 to date, where an "event" may include multiple returns to the same site during a single storm or across storms), but he did not have immediate access to the per-event breakdown or hourly details and apologized for needing to provide more information.

Mr. Abrams summarized that the $26,000 figure for the Police Department portion appeared to cover 14 plowing events, resulting in an average of roughly $1,857 per event (noting the figure seemed closer to $2,000 per event in some calculations). Mr. Jellerette expressed concern that the documentation was insufficient to approve the transfer at that time and suggested tabling the item until clearer details were available.

Mr. Kassimis asked whether any funds remained in the current budget for "other contractual services." Mr. Rennie confirmed there was an original budget, which had been set by taking the highest of the prior three years' actual expenditures and adding a small percentage buffer. That budgeted amount ($18,000 for the Police Department portion) had already been exceeded, and the current season's costs had "blown that out of the water."

Mayor Smyth asked about the specific operational challenges at the Police Department parking lot. Mr. Rennie described the process as a continuous "dance": vehicles must be moved in stages, areas cleared, vehicles returned, and the cycle repeated throughout the storm due to the high volume of police vehicles that cannot all be relocated simultaneously. He noted additional complications at mixed-use public parking areas (e.g., near the train station, daily parkers, long-term parkers, and hotel guests), where many vehicles remain in place for extended periods, making complete clearing more difficult and often requiring partial or staged work.

Mr. Abrams acknowledged the legitimate operational difficulties but emphasized the Board's need for precise documentation to support a fact-based decision. He calculated a rough per-event cost (combining the original $18,000 budget plus the requested $26,000 across 14 events) of slightly more than $3,100 per plow-out and asked whether billing is strictly per instance/event, with the fee structure driven by storm size, duration, crew requirements, and additional services (shoveling, salting/sanding). Mr. Rennie confirmed the charges are event-based and influenced by snow accumulation totals, crew size, and whether salting/sanding is required. He attempted to display the vendor agreement and billing detail document during the meeting but encountered technical difficulties pulling it up on his computer or phone and again apologized, promising to provide the full information.

Mr. Abrams asked Mr. Schmitt and Mr. Ellis whether there was any compelling reason the transfer had to be approved at the current meeting rather than at the next regular meeting, once supporting documentation was available. Mr. Schmitt reviewed the account status: original budget of $74,800; $40,800 spent to date; approximately $31,000 encumbered. He noted that delaying approval would allow the account to go negative temporarily, which might require a manual override in the Munis system but was manageable. Mr. Ellis asked Mr. Rennie whether the vendor could wait an additional month for payment. Mr. Rennie indicated he would confirm with the vendor the following morning, noting that costs had remained manageable until the most recent heavy storm month.

Mr. Jellerette sought clarification on Mr. Schmitt's reference to the $74,800 budget, $40,800 spent, and $31,000 encumbered. Mr. Abrams explained that the encumbrance likely covered other items within the same contractual services account beyond just snow plowing.
After further discussion, Mr. Kassimis made a motion to table the item.

> ****MR. KASSIMIS MOVED TO TABLE THE REQUESTED TRANSFER FOR THIRD-PARTY SNOW PLOWING SERVICES UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING WHEN ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON THE ACCOUNT AND BILLING STRUCTURE IS PROVIDED.**
> ****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE ITEM WAS TABLED UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING.**

Mr. Abrams noted his frustration that a fully fact-based discussion was not possible due to the unavailable documentation and technical issues, while acknowledging that the difficulty was not Mr. Neil Rennie's fault.

Mayor Smyth initially appeared to oppose but clarified her support after a brief delay.

Mr. Rennie asked how the Board preferred to receive the vendor agreement and billing details. Mr. Abrams requested clarity on exactly how bills are derived (per event, per snow accumulation, per crew size deployed). Mr. Schmitt confirmed the team understood the Board's needs and would work with Mr. Rennie to compile and provide the necessary information prior to the next meeting.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Contingency Tracker FYE 2026
Mr. Ellis provided an update on the contingency account status. He reported that the Board entered the month with $335,000 remaining in contingency. Following the earlier approval of the $40,000 transfer for Public Works meal allowances (Ms. Vanessa Valadares's request), the balance stood at $295,000. He noted that an additional $40,000 request related to third-party snow plowing at school properties (presented by Mr. Neil Rennie) had been tabled until the next meeting pending further detail. With several months remaining in the fiscal year, Mr. Ellis indicated the current balance of $295,000 was the standing amount at that point. He referenced historical contingency reports for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 that were included in the meeting package for members' review.

Mr. Jellerette inquired about the City's salt inventory in light of the ongoing winter storms, asking whether supplies were sufficient or if additional purchases would be necessary. Mr. Ellis noted that Ms. Valadares was no longer present but confirmed a prior conversation had occurred regarding alternative funding sources. He invited Mr. Schmitt or Mayor Smyth to address the question.

Mr. Schmitt explained that the City had access to $10 million in municipal grant and aid funding. He recalled that approximately $3 million in eligible DPW expenses had already been shifted from various general fund accounts to this grant funding, including salt purchases, as salt is an allowable expense under the grant guidelines. He stated that the administration was continuing this practice and anticipated additional salt needs for the remainder of the current season and going forward. The plan was to fund these additional salt requirements through the municipal grant and aid money rather than through the general fund or contingency account. When asked by Mr. Jellerette for an estimated dollar amount, Mr. Schmitt indicated the current projection for remaining salt needs was approximately $100,000.

Ms. Yang raised a separate but related concern regarding contingency expenditures for relocation costs associated with property condemnations. She requested a detailed analysis covering the past three years, specifically the total amounts paid by the City for relocation expenses and the amounts successfully recovered from landlords and/or insurance carriers. She expressed the view that these were large ongoing expenditures and that, in her estimation, the City should reasonably expect to recover approximately 90% of such costs through reimbursement, liens, or insurance claims. She emphasized the need to confirm that aggressive pursuit of these recoveries was occurring.

Mr. Abrams acknowledged that this issue had been raised in prior meetings and that actions had been directed previously, but he noted that follow-up reporting had not been consistently returned to the Board. He characterized Ms. Anne Yang's request as legitimate and directed staff to ensure proper follow-up this time.

Mayor Smyth added context, referencing the recent significant condemnation issue at Halstead Apartments as an example of a high-cost case. She stated that she had immediately involved the

City’s legal department to pursue recovery aggressively, confirming that liens had been placed on the property as part of the standard process.

Mr. Jellerette asked whether the responsible parties (landlords) were actively fighting reimbursement. Mayor Smyth described them as “tough” negotiators. Mr. Jellerette expressed incredulity that reimbursement would be resisted, noting that displaced tenants would typically file insurance claims for relocation coverage and that, in landlord-owned properties, the City could place a lien to secure repayment.

Ms. Yang reiterated that securing reimbursement (beyond just placing liens) should be treated as a high priority. She proposed that the Board receive a standing monthly status report on all open relocation expense reimbursement cases during every regular meeting until each matter was resolved—either through full or partial recovery or through a formal write-off decision. She observed that the Board had repeatedly asked the same question over multiple years without receiving concrete information on actual recoveries achieved.

Mr. Schmitt confirmed that staff had begun collecting historical data on past condemnation/relocation incidents and was actively working to gather more complete information. He agreed that establishing a solid baseline of historical recovery rates would allow for more meaningful ongoing reporting. He committed to providing whatever data was currently available at the next regular meeting.

Mr. Abrams thanked Mr. Schmitt for the commitment and requested a firm timeline for completing the initial analysis and for establishing the frequency of future reporting (noting Ms. Anne Yang’s suggestion of monthly updates but indicating openness to a quarterly alternative if staff recommended it based on volume and complexity of cases).

Mr. Jellerette interjected, thanking Mr. Ellis for previously distributing contingency reports covering the past three years. He reviewed those reports and noted only five total contingency items across 2024 and 2025 fiscal years (three in one year, one in another, and one more recent), arguing that compiling and reporting status on such a limited number of items should not require a full month.

Mr. Abrams stated that he did not wish to debate the matter further, confirmed the request had been clearly made, and emphasized that Mr. Schmitt would return with available information at the next meeting. Mr. Jellerette reiterated that he had requested this information the previous month and wanted it recorded in the minutes for clarity. Mr. Abrams affirmed that the request was noted and that the direction could not be made any clearer.

No formal motion was made or taken on the contingency tracker item itself, as the discussion focused on status updates, salt funding redirection, and the new directive for recurring relocation reimbursement reporting. The $40,000 school snow plowing request remained tabled from earlier in the agenda.

B. NPS Construction-Monthly Project Update February 2026
No discussion took place on this item.

C. Follow-up discussion as needed — Munistat Debt Presentation
Mr. Ellis reminded the Board that a formal recommendation letter on capital bonding levels must be submitted by the end of March. He referenced the prior Munistat debt presentation by Bill Lindsay and proposed scheduling a special meeting to review last year's letter, consider the
Mayor's forthcoming capital recommendations (due March 13), and reach consensus on the Board's recommendation to the City Council and Finance and Claims Committee.

The Board agreed to schedule a special meeting for Monday, March 23, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. to discuss and finalize the capital budget recommendation letter. Mr. Ellis will circulate last year's letter in advance and prepare a draft based on the discussion for Mr. Abrams to sign by March 31.

D. Follow-up discussion — Update on Condemnation reimbursement
This topic was fully addressed during the contingency tracker discussion (see item VI.A above).

VII. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A. Financial Reports
The following reports were included in the meeting package for member review but were not discussed during the meeting:
1. Oak Hills Park Authority Monthly Financial Statements for January 2026
2. Narrative on Tax Collections dated January 2026
3. Monthly Tax Collector's Reports dated January 2026
4. Year-to-date Capital Budget Report - FY 2025-2026
5. Year-to-date Operating Expenditure Report - FY 2025-2026
6. Year-to-date Operating Revenue Report - FY 2025-2026
7. Police, Fire & DPW Wages - FY 2025-2026
8. Year-to-date BOE Operating Expenditure Report - FY 2025-2026

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

****Mr. KASSIMIS MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN**
****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at

approximately 7:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Courtney Baldwin
Recording Secretary