

**CITY OF NORWALK  
BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES – MARCH 11, 2026  
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE**

**ATTENDEES:** Mayor Smyth, Ed Abrams, Joseph Andrasko, Kendrick Constant, Anne Yang,

**OTHERS:** Tom Ellis, Marsha Elbourne, Zabrina Roman, Jared Schmitt, Stephen Ivan, Jeff Mangels, Chris MacDonnell, Doug Stern, Matt Pentz.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Abrams called the special meeting of the Board of Estimate and Taxation to order and welcomed everyone to the March 11th special meeting. This was a continuation of the departmental budget reviews with a focus on grant requests. Mr. Abrams reminded the public that there is no public comment during these budget review sessions and that the opportunity for public comment would be at the March 25th hearing.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Ms. Elbourne called the roll and a quorum was established.

**III. BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION - BUDGET DELIBERATIONS**

**A. Harbor Commission (Grant)**

Mr. Ellis stated that the Harbor Commission was asking for ten thousand dollars for fiscal year twenty-seven and that last year the grant had been zero. Mr. Mangels, chair, and Mr. MacDonnell, vice chair and treasurer, presented. Mr. Mangels noted he had recently become chair after serving as vice chair on November eighteenth, twenty-five. He described ongoing expenses including the twelve thousand dollar harbor master stipend and ten thousand dollars for water quality interns. He explained the commission's plan to continue building transient moorings, which generate revenue for both the commission and the city as boaters visit local restaurants. Revenue from transient moorings had increased from approximately two thousand dollars to over nine thousand dollars. He stated that dropping a new mooring costs about three thousand dollars and that all nine moorings must be inspected every two years with chain replacements. The commission had issued a purchase order for a floating dock similar to the one in Milford Harbor at a cost of nine thousand dollars, excluding hardware, mushroom anchors, installation, and chain. Mr. MacDonnell clarified that mushrooms are a type of anchor weighing approximately one thousand pounds.

Mr. Mangels added that the commission wants to improve the islands, including continuing cleanup on Shea Island in coordination with Boy Scout Troop two twenty-two, and noted that facilities on Shea Island are in disrepair even though that responsibility belongs to Recreation and Parks. Mr. MacDonnell expanded on recurring costs including harbormaster maintenance

related to walk bridge activity, barges, and restricted vessel movements, contingency for abandoned vessel removal, a planning consultant budgeted at approximately twenty thousand dollars annually, secretarial services, water quality interns at ten to twelve thousand dollars per year, an annual fee of about two thousand dollars for transient moorings, and another two thousand dollars for an online service for permanent moorings that collects fees and generates revenue. He stated that mooring fees and transient mooring fees are the commission's only sources of income aside from city grants used for capital improvements such as the transient docks.

Mr. Abrams asked why the commission had been able to accomplish its entire mission last year without a grant and whether that could not continue this year. Mr. Mangels replied that the commission is looking to expand what it has started, which means more transient moorings and the floating dock program. Mr. Abrams noted that those improvements would also be revenue generating and should offset the expense. Mr. Mangels explained that transient moorings generate forty dollars per night per vessel and that floating docks are not considered moorings under Connecticut statute, allowing the commission to charge a going rate of forty or fifty dollars per foot instead of the two hundred dollar yearly maximum for moorings.

Ms. Yang asked for total revenues when considering the two hundred dollar maximum per mooring. Mr. Mangels and Mr. MacDonnell responded that last year's mooring fees totaled fifty-five thousand eight hundred fifty-three dollars and that revenues without the city grant were fifty-eight thousand four hundred twenty-one dollars while expenses were sixty-seven thousand thirty-six dollars. They clarified that the fifty-five thousand eight hundred fifty-three dollars included payments from the yacht clubs and that the additional two thousand dollars came from transient day users.

Ms. Yang asked how the deficit was made up in the year with a zero city grant. Mr. MacDonnell stated that the current fiscal year budget is sixty-five thousand seven hundred dollars with projected revenues of fifty-four thousand dollars, resulting in a shortfall covered in part by carryover from the prior year, and that the bank balance is around seventy thousand dollars.

Mr. Jellerette confirmed that no ten thousand dollar grant had been given last year and asked why the commission was requesting the ten thousand dollars given the seventy thousand dollar reserves and only a projected twelve thousand dollar deficit. Mr. Mangels replied that the funds would continue efforts to expand transient moorings and the floating dock program, which could allow the city to transition from moorings to floating docks as done in Milford Harbor, and would support acquiring a launch to serve transient mooring users and reduce lost revenue.

Mr. Jellerette confirmed that the improvements or enhancements would generate revenue once implemented. He asked for the specific dollar amounts for those improvements. Mr. Mangels stated that each floating dock costs nine thousand dollars plus hardware, with two anchors bringing the total to approximately fifteen thousand dollars per dock, and that one dock is already being placed in service this season.

Mr. Jellerette asked what revenue could be expected from that dock. Mr. Mangels replied that it would operate as a transient mooring at forty dollars per night and could accommodate two

vessels instead of one, with revenue increasing as the program grows. Mr. Constant thanked Mr. Mangels for the explanation. Mr. Ellis asked about the expected payback period for the improvements. Mr. Mangels stated it would be a multi-year payback, estimating a two-year return on the nine thousand dollar dock investment. Mr. MacDonnell noted there are three private yacht clubs: Norwalk Yacht Club, Rowayton Yacht Club, and Sprite Island Yacht Club.

Mr. Jellerette asked for the revenue received from those clubs. Mr. MacDonnell provided the figures: nineteen thousand three hundred seventy-eight dollars from Norwalk Yacht Club, eight thousand three hundred seventy-five dollars from Rowayton Yacht Club, and three thousand six hundred twenty dollars from Sprite Island Yacht Club. Mr. Jellerette asked whether the commission relies on the clubs to report boat sizes and how verification occurs. Mr. Mangels confirmed that the clubs provide vessel owner names, registration numbers, and lengths, and that the harbormaster and commission members perform spot checks.

Mr. Jellerette expressed that he was not thrilled about relying on the clubs' self-reported data and stated that the commission has sufficient reserves and can self-fund the revenue-generating projects it has described. Mr. Mangels thanked Mr. Ellis. No action was taken on the grant request.

#### B. Fair Housing Officer (Grant)

Ms. Roman, the Fair Housing Officer, presented the request of one hundred fifty-four thousand eight hundred seventy-five dollars, which represented a fourteen percent decrease from the previous year. She provided background on the office, noting that the Norwalk Fair Housing Advisory Commission and the position of Fair Housing Officer were established by court order and municipal ordinance in 1986 following a lawsuit by the Norwalk chapter of the NAACP against the City of Norwalk. She stated that the office handles investigation, education, outreach, and policy guidance related to housing discrimination and supports compliance with federal and state fair housing laws. Ms. Roman reported that from July 2025 through February 2026 the office had handled one hundred forty-four complaints, primarily from tenants.

Ms. Yang asked how many of the complaints were CHRO-related versus fair housing-related and requested clarification on the difference between a fair housing complaint and a CHRO complaint. Ms. Roman explained that fair housing complaints are tied specifically to housing discrimination under the Federal Fair Housing Act while CHRO covers broader civil rights issues. She noted that approximately ten percent of complaints had been referred to CHRO and that the office focuses on education and informal mediation before escalation.

Ms. Yang asked additional questions regarding referrals to the state CHRO office, the scope of the office's work, and the 1986 court order. Ms. Roman confirmed that the office deals solely with housing discrimination and that residents can file directly with federal or state agencies but that the local office provides faster support.

Ms. Yang requested a copy of the consent decree from 1986. Ms. Roman agreed to provide it. No action was taken on the grant request.

### C. Probate Court (Grant)

Mr. Stern, the probate judge, presented the request for ten thousand dollars. He explained that the amount covers the Norwalk portion of shared expenses with the Town of Wilton for the regional probate court. He stated that the split is calculated based on grand list numbers, resulting in Norwalk being responsible for seventy-four percent. Mr. Stern noted that supplies are ordered through WB Mason because the court cannot maintain an Amazon account or debit card.

Ms. Yang asked how the Norwalk versus Wilton expense split is derived and confirmed that the court maintains its own account for ordering supplies. Mr. Stern replied that the statute directs the use of grand list numbers and that his chief clerk performs the calculation. No action was taken on the grant request.

### D. Transit District (Grant)

Mr. Ellis stated that last year the amount had been six hundred ten thousand eight hundred eighty-five dollars and that the original ask for fiscal year twenty-seven had been six hundred sixty thousand eight hundred eighty-five dollars. He noted that Mr. Pentz was present.

Mr. Schmitt provided introductory remarks, explaining that the city had met with the transit district to review their finances and audits comprehensively. He stated that some balances had been identified and that the city had suggested reducing the grant for fiscal year twenty-seven. Mr. Schmitt noted that the city's contribution had been dropped to one hundred thousand dollars for fiscal year twenty-seven, with the intent to restore funding in fiscal year twenty-eight, and that Mr. Pentz had been amenable and accommodating as a good partner with the city. He added that there should be no impact on services or ridership. Mr. Andrasko asked whether this would be a one-time reduction that would not immediately impact operations but that continuing it over a long period would impact operations. Mr. Schmitt confirmed that was his understanding and deferred further detail on long-term impact to Mr. Pentz.

Mr. Jellerette asked where the excess balances referenced had come from. Mr. Schmitt replied that part of it was related to ARPA funding that they have until twenty twenty-nine to spend and deferred the details to Mr. Pentz. Mr. Pentz thanked Mr. Schmitt and Mr. Andrasko and acknowledged the recap. He addressed the balances by first thanking the board for last year and noting the annual timing issue between operating expenses and receipt of state funding. He stated that the district had worked with the city, been referred to Webster Bank, and explored avenues but had not found a lower interest rate source.

Mr. Pentz described last year as a big year during which the district rolled out new routes and a redesigned network, including two months of free fare to soften changes for the public after discussions about funding cuts. He reported that the cuts proposed by the board had been restored after a public hearing process, enabling the free fare period, and that ridership had grown about twelve percent over the prior year with the new routes despite a rough winter. Mr. Pentz emphasized that the district would be able to maintain existing services and that local city

funding had helped address impacts when the Senior Center cut transportation. He noted that the services are relied upon by many people and that federal ARPA grant funds remain available.

Mr. Pentz stated that no other funding source can cover the interest need and described ongoing efforts to collect historical accounts receivable from DOT, including a productive meeting that day securing a verbal commitment for two point one million dollars of two point three million owed by the end of the month. He added that Senator Duff had provided a short-term three hundred thousand dollar infusion this year for Norwalk ADA services, which had typically been covered by the city but is short-term in nature. Mr. Pentz emphasized the importance of restoring the funding next year to meet needs for Norwalk ADA services for seniors, reduce interest exposure, and build reserves in the future.

Mr. Jellerette thanked Mr. Pentz for the update and confirmed that the request had been dropped from six hundred sixty thousand dollars to one hundred thousand dollars. Mr. Schmitt confirmed this was correct for fiscal year twenty-seven. Mr. Jellerette asked for the amount of the line of credit and its interest rate. Mr. Pentz replied that it is a four million dollar line at prime plus one quarter percent. Mr. Jellerette asked about utilization this year. Mr. Pentz stated that through seven months the interest had been a little over two hundred thousand dollars. Mr. Jellerette asked whether the city is seeing quicker repayments from the state on receivables. Mr. Pentz explained that long-term outstanding receivables had required significant effort to collect but that the district is now nearly square on items from fiscal year twenty through twenty-four and expects smoother collections going forward. He noted that funding occurs every quarter with a typical one-month lag that the district plans for, as the state budget process can delay allocation until September.

Mr. Jellerette asked for the high point of borrowing on the line. Mr. Pentz replied that it had probably been about three point two million dollars, noting that ongoing construction for nearly three years had involved both operating and capital money with capital projects funded eighty percent federal and twenty percent state. Mr. Jellerette asked whether unused fees are paid on the line and if it is a committed facility. Mr. Pentz confirmed that only interest is paid with no other unused fees. Mr. Jellerette noted that it is not a committed facility and, drawing on his banking experience, suggested adjusting to three point two million dollars to avoid any unused fees. Mr. Jellerette asked whether the city can supply a line of credit at a cheaper rate than prime plus one quarter percent. Mr. Schmitt replied that the city cannot do so in any practical way, as it is not a bank or private organization and any such mechanism would tie up a portion of the city's fund balance.

Mr. Jellerette asked for the dollar amount of the balances. Mr. Pentz described existing grants, five in total with most targeted for capital but a couple million dollars left for operating expense to address the coastal link shortfall and plug deficits previously covered by local money. He stated that the district believes it will have those funds through twenty twenty-nine, though they are dwindling, which is why there is less concern this year.

Mr. Jellerette thanked Mr. Schmitt and Mr. Pentz and noted it was good to see the amount down this year. Mr. Pentz reminded the board that the district provides a service and that the municipal contribution is very helpful, especially as the city changes and the district adapts its fixed route network, paratransit, and microtransit program. He stated that ridership is healthy and that he looks forward to restoring the funding next year as a sign of a healthy district that enables response to community needs.

Mr. Jellerette asked whether the district is considered a quasi-government entity and whether the prime plus one quarter percent rate is comparable to what the city pays for working capital. Mr. Schmitt replied that he is not aware of a city working capital line of credit and confirmed the district is quasi-public. Mr. Pentz added that Webster Bank had performed a full analysis and determined that the scale of operations does not align with their credit tolerances. Mr. Jellerette asked about the city's relationship with Webster Bank. Mr. Schmitt confirmed it is the city's primary checking account and that the city meets with them at least once a year while constantly pushing for the best rates.

Ms. Yang asked for the current cash balance. Mr. Pentz replied that the district has three accounts with a sweep and that the balance fluctuates but would be in the negative because they constantly rely on the credit line. He added that one point seven million dollars had been placed in reserve due to old money owed by the state, making that essentially the debt, and that collecting the two point one million dollars should bring them back to even once fiscal year twenty-five issues are finalized. Mr. Pentz noted the agency had been in debt of three point three million dollars back in twenty eighteen and expects to be about whole upon closing fiscal year twenty-five before building reserves.

Ms. Yang asked for the aggregate level of funding visibility out to twenty twenty-nine. Mr. Pentz confirmed she was referring to grants and stated that the remaining ARPA funding is currently about five million dollars, though it may be less depending on how fiscal year twenty-five issues and state funding for that year resolve. Ms. Yang thanked him. Mr. Abrams thanked Ms. Yang and asked for any additional questions. No action was taken on the grant request.

#### E. Redevelopment Agency (Grant)

Mr. Ivan presented the request of five hundred thousand dollars, which is the minimum needed to maintain current staff and operations including grant administration and coordination with other city departments. He noted that active grants total approximately fifty million dollars.

Ms. Yang asked why Mr. Bidoli, the executive director, was not presenting and requested details on his compensation, headcount, salaries, and whether staff are in-office or remote. Mr. Ivan stated that Mr. Bidoli is currently in Germany pursuing a PhD and that the time difference prevented his attendance. He agreed to provide financials, personnel details, and information on staff locations by email.

Mr. Jellerette asked about the percentage of Mr. Bidoli's time devoted to city work versus his PhD program. Mr. Ivan confirmed that Mr. Bidoli maintains full working hours for the city.

Mayor Smyth stated that Mr. Bidoli had received approval from the Redevelopment Authority for the program and that he had been available whenever needed, including a Zoom meeting the previous day. No action was taken on the grant request.

**IV. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MR. JELLERETTE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Courtney Baldwin  
Recording Secretary

