

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES - MARCH 25, 2026
VIA ZOOM & CONCERT HALL, 125 EAST AVENUE**

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

STAFF: Marsha Elbourne.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The public hearing of the Board of Estimate and Taxation was called to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Concert Hall, 125 East Avenue, with remote access available via Zoom.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Elbourne (City Clerk) conducted the roll call & a quorum was declared.

III. PUBLIC HEARING ON THE FY 2026-2027 OPERATING BUDGET

Mr. Abrams as Chair turned the floor to Mayor Barbara C. Smyth for opening remarks. Mayor Barbara C. Smyth thanked everyone for attending and acknowledged the difficult budget season. She thanked the finance team, members of the City Council, and her fellow members on the Board of Estimate and Taxation for their thoughtful work. She reminded the public of the primary drivers of the budget challenges including contractual obligations, rising healthcare costs, and the impacts of the revaluation phase. She outlined steps being taken to address these issues including spreading out union contract negotiations, investing in the internal services fund to offset volatility in healthcare and benefits, growing the grand list, exploring additional revenue streams, and reviewing recommendations from the efficiency study to identify savings and operate more effectively. Mayor Barbara C. Smyth highlighted her priorities for the operating budget including continuing to invest in schools, providing the core services residents rely on, maintaining strong public safety with adequate staffing and tools for the fire and police departments, and investing in infrastructure and roadway improvements, all done in a fiscally responsible way that aligns resources with priorities and plans for long-term financial stability.

Mr. Abrams explained the process for public remarks. Speakers would be allotted three minutes each. The order would alternate between three in-person speakers from the sign-up sheets and three online speakers raising their hands. Remarks must focus on the operating budget.

The public hearing on the FY 2026-2027 operating budget was opened. The following members of the public addressed the Board.

Mr. Brian Bidoli, Executive Director of the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency, spoke about the results achieved by the agency over the past five years including securing more than fifty million

dollars in new grant funding that supported over five hundred million dollars in growth with projections for an additional four hundred thirty million dollars by 2033. He stated that these numbers represent new revenue for the city that helps fund services, stabilize taxes, and reduce the financial burden on residents. He emphasized that growth alone is not enough and that the agency is focused on affordability and quality of life through its recently adopted strategic plan that prioritizes investment in housing, infrastructure, and the environment. He noted the agency is actively working on an initiative to identify alternative funding sources to minimize reliance on taxpayer dollars and plans to engage in a broader community-wide conversation because affordability, growth, and investment are shared responsibilities.

Mr. Howard White of 300 Illy Avenue, speaking on behalf of the Board of Education Chair and other board members, discussed the importance of direction and focus for the Board of Education. He noted that this year the Board of Education voted on a six point five percent increase which was one of the lowest in his two years. He stated that the city awarded four percent and the Common Council awarded four point nine percent which allowed the Board of Education to maintain stability and focus on student achievement. He explained that things hit the city as a whole including insurance costs that could create an additional three million dollar deficit if not resolved. He stressed the goal of maintaining stability within the system to improve what has been done and warned that going backward would cause major issues affecting programs and the classroom.

Ms. Ashley Golias of 5 Cliffview Drive, Board of Education Secretary and parent of a second-grade student at Concord Magnet School, expressed support for maintaining the four point nine percent increase approved by the City Council. She stated that the Board of Education approved a six point five percent increase as a maintenance budget and was grateful for the City Council and Mayor raising the cap to four point nine percent with the additional point nine percent going into school-based budgets to keep schools whole. She noted that decreasing this amount would directly impact schools and create uncertainty unfair to educators and children. She shared positive experiences her daughter has had at school and stated that it would be impossible to reconcile cuts without impacting student-facing programs and positions. She recognized the responsibility to keep the city fiscally sound but implored the Board to maintain or raise the four point nine percent cap so student-facing programs and staff remain intact.

Ms. Ileana Zuniga of 8 North Running Brook Lane, parent of two boys, advocated for at least the four point nine percent increase for Norwalk Public Schools and ideally full funding. She noted that she has advocated for schools for twelve years and found it disheartening to have the same conversation. She stated that students, teachers, and families deserve stability with programs protected and schools able to plan ahead. She suggested using existing systems like the Request app for enforcement of blight infractions and zoning violations to generate revenue rather than shifting costs to taxpayers and putting education at risk. She asked the Board to fund at least four point nine percent, align decisions with accountability across the city, and do things differently under this administration.

Mr. Ben Hanpeter of 14 Haviland Street urged the Board to fully fund the Department of Transportation, Mobility, and Parking operating budget. He stated that the department is doing great work on critical infrastructure projects including the Wall Street Improvement Project, East

Avenue Corridor Study, and Seaview Avenue Improvement Project. He noted that full funding would continue timely progress for sustainability, safety, pollution reduction, and traffic congestion relief and would build the city's in-house capacity to execute projects quickly and efficiently.

Ms. Ana Tabachneck of 4 Gilbert Street, parent of two children in Norwalk Public Schools and alternate Planning and Zoning commissioner speaking as a resident, called for fully funding the schools at least at the four point nine percent level to prevent cuts to child-facing staff. She emphasized that the silent majority's views are unknown because they are silent and that residents speak through elected officials including the Board of Education and City Council. She stated that tax increases are primarily due to revaluation and that services should not be cut desperately. She highlighted the need for the Planning and Zoning budget and staff with improvements on enforcement so fines are issued and collected to recover revenue. She noted efficiencies could be made and advised against being tricked by complaints about abatements and affordable housing as the data shows the problem is not there.

Mr. Chris Dwyer stated he is running for State Senate and commended Mayor Barbara C. Smyth and the Board of Estimate and Taxation on a thorough and professional budget process. He noted that Norwalk's budget cycle will never be free from financial duress until the state legislature addresses the Educational Cost Sharing formula which does not work for Norwalk even with Senate Bill 7. He advocated strongly for up-leveling the base aid ratio for multilingual learners and special needs and removing commercial real estate and infrastructure from the three-year grand list calculation. He also supported preserving staff and fully funding the business development and special events department because Norwalk's businesses are hurting and need the events that make the city enviable.

Mr. Matthew Silver, Norwalk resident, history teacher at Brian McMahon High School, and member of Sustainable Streets Norwalk, spoke in opposition to proposed budget cuts for the Department of Transportation, Mobility, and Parking. He stated that the Board has proposed a budget one hundred eighty thousand dollars less than the Mayor's recommendation and that the department is not the place to trim the fat. He highlighted that the department has partnered to improve safety resulting in a major reduction in vehicular and pedestrian crashes and that more funding would allow additional staffing to complete projects faster with fewer disruptions. He asked the Board to restore the one hundred eighty thousand dollars the Mayor recommended and fully fund the department.

Mr. Nick Zerzan of One Gene Avenue, father of three children attending Norwalk Public Schools and member of school governance councils, pleaded for full funding of the school budget. He appreciated the additional point nine percent from the Mayor and Common Council which prevented the chaos of last year's staff losses. He noted that even with the maintenance budget special education programs are stretched thin and close to noncompliance and that the additional funding made a huge difference for families. He asked the Board not to take rising costs out on the children and to at least maintain the additional money provided by the Council and Mayor.

Mr. Stuart Garrelick of the Northwest Condominium at 80 County Street, board member and treasurer of the condominium association, discussed garbage and recyclable pickup. He noted

that the city picks up trash from single-family homes but not from condominiums and inquired why when he first became treasurer.

Mr. Jason Milligan of 48 Wall Street, business owner and board member of the Wall Street Neighbor Association, spoke about revenue and urged full funding for the Economic Development Office and the Department of Transportation, Mobility, and Parking. He stated that he pays around six hundred thousand dollars a year in taxes and that building approved projects would increase that to closer to a million. He explained that thirty million dollars in funded infrastructure cannot be spent without sufficient staff to plan, engineer, design, and build and that cutting staff now would be short-sighted because some funding could be lost if not spent in time. He noted that the Economic Development Office's events are working and that cutting staff before the new chief's one-year anniversary would signal the city is not serious about attracting businesses.

Ms. Diane Lauricella of 21 Little Fox Lane, speaking as a senior on behalf of many seniors, brought ideas for reducing costs because nothing is off the table. She suggested combining departments or divisions doing the same job including waste management and recycling under Operations and Public Works to take over the Board of Education's waste budget, combining IT and personnel departments, and adding a full-time grants person. She urged increased enforcement of ordinances, optimization of electricity costs with more solar and clean energy, better management of leaves to save four hundred fifty thousand dollars a year, and directing the business development and events staff to secure partnerships, donors, and sponsorships instead of cutting staff.

The speaker identifying as a resident of Kotroni Road and parent of a Norwalk Public Schools student asked the Board to approve the budget for Norwalk Public Schools so students are not affected and there is no risk of losing teachers or having less staff.

Mr. Alex Tunik of 35 First Street spoke about the event budget and the importance of maintaining funding for Norwalk's holiday-themed events. He stated that he moved here two years ago and that the events were a major reason he was drawn to the city because of its connection to arts and community culture. He noted that the events create memories for families and kids, bring revenue and exposure to local businesses especially on Wall Street and in South Norwalk, foster pride, and are investments in community, culture, and the future of Norwalk. He encouraged the Board to preserve these events and avoid cutting funding.

Mr. Harrison Knowles of Fort Gregory, business owner and resident, spoke as the owner of Manifest mobile cafe in East Norwalk. He stated that the Board is voting to make cuts to the Business Development and Tourism Department as well as city-funded events. He explained that his business relies on events like the Sono Saturday Market for revenue and awareness and that surrounding businesses also profit. As a resident he is proud that the city invests in events that bring the community together and reduce isolation. He hoped the Board would continue supporting community events and take care of the business development group.

Mr. Jalen C. of 140 Main Street, City Council member and chair of the Fair Housing Commission, spoke as a partner in the budget process. He explained that he voted to increase the

Mayor's proposed budget after conversations with the Board of Education, residents, and others because the city is a municipality with an obligation to protect citizens, provide education, and deliver services. He noted that the budget reflects the city's priorities and that Norwalk is doing great things including a thriving predominantly minority education system. He asked the Board to move the budget forward without cuts because there is no fat to cut.

Mr. Mike Harris of 19 Nairmake Avenue, coach at Brian McMahon High School and board member with Norwalk Junior Lacrosse, spoke about the events budget and the education budget. He stated that through city events he has seen lives changed and community built and that these events help drive businesses and attract families. He noted that he has visited over a dozen schools and sees staffing issues and lack of resources and that parents of wealthier backgrounds sometimes choose private schools. He asked the Board not to cut corners on education and the kids or on the events that celebrate community and culture.

Ms. Mary Ellen Flaherty Ludwig of 89 Soundview Avenue, lifetime Norwalk resident, spoke in favor of the Board of Education budget. She stood with the Board of Education Chair and members and stated that keeping the four point nine percent added by the City Council equals twenty teachers. She asked the Board to keep all teachers by maintaining the four point nine percent and more if possible.

Mr. Eric Vitiglione spoke in support of live events as vibrancy and vitality for the community and of fully funding the Department of Transportation, Mobility, and Parking because they are doing a great job maintaining the multimodal program. He suggested looking under every rock for savings including possibly saving thirty-three thousand dollars in the police category by reviewing the contract with Flock Safety Systems for automatic license plate readers.

Ms. Diane Cece spoke about the burden on homeowners becoming unsustainable and asked the Board to take another look at every line item and remove whatever is non-essential using zero-based budgeting if possible. She noted the concept of penny-wise and pound-foolish but urged creativity in funding business development, tourism, and events through special service districts, corporate sponsors, and grants so businesses contribute more.

Ms. Linnell Jones of 10 Point Road expressed concern about stormwater management and how many consultants have studied it over the past decade. She referenced Mr. Brian Bidoli's remarks on redevelopment bringing fifty million dollars to the city and stated that storms and the floodplain are very important.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business or additional public comments, Mr. Abrams thanked the public for their thoughtful input which would be considered during the Board's deliberations. The public hearing was closed and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,
Courtney Baldwin
Recording Secretary

City of Norwalk -- Board of Estimate & Taxation --Public Hearing for the FY
2026-2027 Operating Budget -- March 25, 2026

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SIGN UP SHEET

Please keep to 3 minutes or less -- Operating Budget comments only

Name

Address

6/J I Chr1) Dv□v-

47 To,!soN>f Ave

b',□1 ² d«ttk w S;lhP r

'? So Ec:.&--1-- A-x

1)fv ³ j I etc.. '2-<2 □,.,.,.

↓ J e u r A . . .

,;L) ⁴ 'i<a.□J

17 N,V5,Jc PI

7'127 ⁵ k.o wsk/

.Fz.,rjhca 0

-?□?J:,,_ ⁶ Jo r

! S "f e-VV'-OPi □ !

<J □ (JIS-7 Kerj m Pritchett

| 28 D. 1. c(:ivta, l. c& ±h.:J '(c.o.; ff 7J✓

7i{ □ ⁸ Gynde Bloom Lake-

3 g/z...nd ve.W.) .Aoevi£2=, U;:wa. | 1

,□51 ⁹ Diana Carpio

i) s□ur□ -sf Ah7'U2□□G(

- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20

CD 1--
t/fs e_
□

City of Norwalk -- Board of Estimate & Taxation --Public Hearing for the FY
2026-2027 Operating Budget -- March 25, 2026

5;1^h M

City of Norwalk -- Board of Estimate & Taxation --Public Hearing for the FY
2026-2027 Operating Budget -- March 25, 2026

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SIGN UP SHEET

Please keep to 3 minutes or less -- Operating Budget comments only

Address

1,011) J

4 Ch, J [unclear] Rd.

1'1bi²

[unclear] d(I [unclear]-f-

0_r0_J3

[unclear] L-4"lfi oelta

Little Fox

</[unclear](4/[unclear]ty [unclear]c [unclear]

17=5 1st v-t

i,07⁵

Harrison Knowles

Lf Gregory

t,0<⁶

Jalin se<- ol.

(40 LAAC in St' e-e,..j.

Mike

ctil<- 7

HMr;s

9 Naromake A"e, .

- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20

**City of Norwalk -- Board of Estimate & Taxation --Public Hearing for the FY
2026-2027 Operating Budget -- March 25, 2026**

Ru fd- 5/fi- z/n,

Outlook

Public Comment: 3/25 Board of Estimate and Taxation Meeting

From Erica DePalma <erica.depalma@gmail.com>

Date (Mon 03/23/2026 1:35 PM)

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from erica.depalma@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

An Open Letter to Norwalk's Council, Mayor and BET:

Everyone's priorities as a taxpayer shift over time. I believe advocacy is only as powerful as the perspective behind it. In pursuit of that perspective, my husband and I have served on both our City's Common Council and Board of Education.

Here is what that experience has made clear:

We can continue to advocate each year for our public school system to receive funding that keeps pace with inflation and meets the needs of our students. But doing so without addressing the underlying structural issue is an unsustainable response to a decades-long crisis.

The underfunding of our public schools transcends Superintendents and Boards of Education. It is rooted in the absence of a revenue-generating financial plan, a concept foundational to every successful enterprise, yet repeatedly cast aside in local government. Whether due to financial ineptitude or political insecurity, the result is the same: cyclical crisis budgeting.

Last year, we watched that cycle play out again. But in a departure from the status quo, NPS high school students unraveled the math themselves: our city cannot afford the full needs of its students, and there is no near-term financial trajectory that supports doing so under current conditions.

The only real opportunity to right-size this cycle is to confront Connecticut's longstanding, disproportionate ECS funding for Norwalk. That is what our students advocated for in the spring of 2025, free from political calculation and escorted by their Superintendent.

The retaliation was a familiar smear campaign, recognizable to those who have served inside local government. It successfully redirected a community advocating for its children away from the root cause: the City's structurally insufficient revenue stream and the State's chronic underfunding of Norwalk's share of ECS.

As recently reported by Nancy on Norwalk, Norwalk receives approximately \$2,514 per student in ECS aid, significantly less than comparable cities such as Danbury, which receives approximately \$4,582 per student (Explainer: How the ECS Formula Affects Norwalk's Education Funding | Nancy on Norwalk)

At this stage of the conversation, the debate naturally shifts to opportunities to trim 'fat' in the NPS budget. It is important to explain the mechanics in plain terms, because when details are blurred, the narrative becomes, intentionally, distorted.

The Board of Education operates on four primary revenue streams:

- Local tax revenue
- State ECS funding
- Federal aid
- Grant and donor funding

Teacher contracts include annual cost-of-living increases, the same type of adjustments most private-sector employees receive. Few would argue that teachers do not deserve to keep pace with inflation. Health insurance increases annually as well. This happens in every sector. It is projected and expected. When received as a "gotcha" moment in public presentations by the Council, the Mayor and BET, it should be a red flag for residents.

There is public confusion surrounding mandates attached to federal, state, and grant funding. We are legally obligated to comply with federal and state mandates, and grants come with specific stipulations. Compliance often requires defined programming and staffing.

What should not be confusing is the Council's, the Mayor's, and the BET's awareness of these contingencies.

They are regularly briefed on how these mandated components function, why they exist, and the consequences of eliminating them. In many cases, removing a position means forfeiting the funding attached to it, shifting an even greater burden onto local taxpayers.

The Council, the Mayor and the BET, who alone hold the purse strings of this City's budget, receive detailed BOE budget books, are privy to monthly budget reconciliations, as well as forward projections. Yet once cameras are present, the public narrative often pivots to shock and alarm. Whether due to an inability to digest complex financial contingencies or political motivation, the result is a decades-long storyline that the BOE is "not transparent."

Now, I recognize that the Council, the Mayor, and the BET face difficult decisions in prioritizing city spending. While I may not agree with how they prioritize City spending, I can respect their vote, if they own it.

And so, my advocacy shifts. I am no longer advocating to sway their vote in a public forum. If I'm being honest, I've conceded to the theatre. Instead, my position is simple:

If the Common Council, the Mayor, and the BET vote for a budget that falls below the cost of complying with state and federal mandates, below inflation, and below contractual cost-of-living increases, then own your vote.

Do not lean into the length of the budget process to diffuse accountability. Do not imply a lack of transparency from the Board of Education, which delivers granular line-item budgets and monthly financial updates. Do not assume a community that does not follow every detail in a year long process can substitute for your own accountability.

-Own the vote-

Tell the community you understand the implications: programs will be eliminated, specifically those not protected by federal and state mandates - Music, Arts, and Sports. Staff will be reduced. Services will shrink.

-Advocate for an appropriate share of ECS funding-

Connecticut's underfunding of Norwalk's fair share of ECS aid sits squarely within the purview of our State Officials. Yet the urgency to secure equitable funding has not matched the urgency for self-promotion.

Press conferences and social media posts are strategically timed and carefully curated to shape public perception, but they do not change the math. They obscure the reality that incremental tweaks to the ECS formula have failed to deliver meaningful equity for Norwalk.

Local leaders must step up to the State and demand Norwalk's fair share of ECS funding, not posture at staged press conferences or hide behind "proper protocol" out of fear of political retribution from Hartford.

"Proper protocol" has protected political careers. It has not protected our city's children.

-Develop a revenue-generating plan-

While a politically amplified crisis may have generated noise, division, and deflected blame in the 2025 election year, what elected officials did not anticipate was a community that demands a plan in 2026.

As it stands today, right sizing the gap in public school funding is not mathematically possible for Norwalk. Our current revenue stream will not catch up to the trajectory required to support a free and appropriate education for our children.

Leaders don't repeat the refrain, "It's a tough year." They respond with a plan.

Not an annual budget. Not a land-use strategy. A multi-year financial model that aligns projected revenues, with modeled expense growth, risk scenarios and most importantly, a deliberate strategy for responsibly growing our revenue streams. A city of this size deserves a financial roadmap. It is neither responsible nor credible to express surprise when operating costs rise with inflation year after year.

As a taxpayer and as a mother, I do not need anyone's spin for political validation. I need a revenue-generating financial plan, elected officials who own their vote, and unapologetic advocacy in Hartford for Norwalk's fair share of ECS funding.

Erica DePalma
110 Perry Avenue
Norwalk

Outlook

Public comment

From Lucineide Gode <Lucineidegode@gmail.com>

Date on 03/23/2026 2:13 PM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Outlook

Re: Inland wetland agency proposed cuts

From skypaw@aol.com <skypaw@aol.com>

Date " {ue 03/24/2026 1:09 PM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from skypaw@aol.com. [Learn why this is imP.ortant](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

This comment is meant for the hearing The Inland wetland agency (A.K.A.) Conservation Commission is part of planning and zoning.

On Tuesday, March 24, 2026 at 11:45:06 AM EDT, Ellis, Tom <tellis@norwalkct.gov> wrote:

Ed...I am not familiar with Inland Wetland Agency. Is that also known as the Harbor Commission? Is this comment meant for the BET Public Hearing tomorrow night at 6:30pm?

Tom Ellis
203.854.7708



From: skypaw@aol.com <skypaw@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 24, 2026 11:36 AM
To: Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>
Subject: Inland wetland agency proposed cuts

You don't often get email from skypaw@aol.com. [Learn why this is imP.ortant](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Dear Mr. Ellis,

As a former commissioner for 23 years on the commission, I can certainly appreciate the fact that the city has to reduce cost. HOWEVER, (notice the caps) the Inland Wetland Agency has also been shortchanged on having adequate staffing and a budget for years and is the last place you should be asking for further cuts.

Ed Holowinko

Outlook

operating budget feedback - P&Z dept

From Steve Klocke (he/him/his) <sklocke@swinter.com>

Date Tue-03/04/2026 3:19 PM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from sklocke@swinter.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Hello,

I am writing to object to the proposed reduction to the Planning & Zoning department's budget.

The Conservation Commission and Inland Wetland Agency (of which I am the chair) rely heavily on P&Z staff to support our duties, which are mandated by the state. Since the majority of P&Z's budget goes toward staff, reducing the budget may result in reduced staff, which will hinder our ability to perform our duties.

Please note, our duties are not optional, and our commissioners are not paid. We are not prepared to bear the weight of reduced support from city staff.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Steve Klocke, RA

Principal Sustainability Consultant

55 N Water Street, Suite 1, Norwalk, CT 06854

347.622.3118 (c)

sklocke@swinter.com

swinter.com

Steven
Winter



Outlook

Letter of Support

From Elise Allum <e1iseallum03@gmail.com>

Date 'Tue 03/24/2026 10:34 PM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from eliseallum03@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Just an email affirming that staffing

Good Evening Mr. Ellis,

It has been brought to my attention that the BET is looking to reduce the tax burden, as per the last tax assessment revaluation it underwent, and departments in the City of Norwalk have been asked to cut 10% of their budget. One such department is the Planning & Zoning department.

To the best of my knowledge, the Planning & Zoning staff includes a number of Conservation Office staff. As a Conservation commissioner for the City of Norwalk, any reduction in Conservation or Planning & Zoning staffing, support, or otherwise is of great concern. The City of Norwalk needs to stay well-informed and operate optimally for the health, safety, and equity of all residents. As a commissioner, without a doubt, staff who support the Conservation Commission, whether directly or indirectly, are *essential* in the work that we accomplish. Specifically, budget reductions would make it more difficult to keep the Commission informed and make optimal land use decisions. Please reconsider any budget cuts that would jeopardize the employment status of Conservation Office staff and Planning & Zoning staff. I offer this letter of support to keep all Conservation Office and Planning & Zoning staff for the sake of the Conservation Commission and the City as a whole.

Thank you.
Best Regards,
Elise Allum

NRWA - Community Engagement Coordinator
Pollinator Pathway - Social Media Coordinator
outreachcoordinator@norwalkriver.org

NRWA  [a](#)

Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.



Outlook

P&Z budget

From Tammy Langalis <Tammy.Langalis@Raveis.com>

Date Tue 03/24/2026 10:36 PM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from tammy.langalis@raveis.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Dear Mr. Ellis,

As a resident and P&Z commissioner, I am aware of the Mayors' request for all city departments to cut their budgets by 10%. If possible, please go easy on P&Z. The staff is hardworking and they run a lean department.

Thank you for your time and dedication to the BET and City.

Sincerely,

Tammy Langalis

11 Indian Spring Rd



Letter of support of Norwalk P&Z/Conservation staffing

From Devan Healy <dshealy88@gmail.com>

Date ¹ Wed 03/25/2026 9:23 AM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

@ 1 attachment (24 KB)

Letter to the Norwalk BET- March 2026.pdf;

You don't often get email from dshealy88@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Dear Mr. Ellis,

I am not able to attend tonight's meeting in person however, please see my attached letter of support for the Norwalk Planning & Zoning and Conservation staff.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Devan Healy; Norwalk Resident and Conservation Commissioner

March 25, 2026

Dear Members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation,

I am writing in advance of your upcoming public hearing to express strong support for maintaining current staffing levels within the Planning & Zoning (P&Z) and Conservation departments.

I understand the Board's goal of reducing the overall tax burden, particularly in light of the ongoing impact of the most recent tax assessment revaluation. However, I respectfully urge you to consider the significant consequences that a reduction to the P&Z operating budget would have.

The P&Z budget is already extremely lean, with the vast majority of funding dedicated to staffing. Notably, the current team includes five staff members who support both P&Z and Conservation functions-roles that are essential to maintaining regulatory oversight, environmental stewardship, and timely public service.

A reduction would substantially impact the department's ability to fulfill its responsibilities, leading to decreased service levels, slower project reviews, and reduced capacity to support critical conservation efforts.

Given that the department has already identified targeted reductions in response to changing city policies, further cuts of this magnitude would disproportionately affect core operations and staffing capacity.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Board maintain current funding levels for P&Z and Conservation staffing to ensure continuity of services and the effective functioning of these essential roles.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Devan Healy

Norwalk Resident and Conservation Commissioner

Public Comment: BET Operating Budget Hearing - Planning and Zoning

From Bryce, Chapin <CBryce@norwalkct.gov>

Date 03/22/2026 9:28 AM

To Mayor <Mayor@norwalkct.gov>; Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

Cc Kleppin, Steven <skleppin@norwalkct.gov>; Habansky, Jay <JHabansky@norwalkct.gov>

Dear Madam Mayor, Members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation, and Mr. Ellis,

I am writing to request that the Planning and Zoning department budget not be reduced as part of this budget cycle. I understand there are significant constraints and difficult tradeoffs in this budget, and I appreciate the work you have put into balancing competing priorities.

With that context, I strongly believe that maintaining funding for the Planning and Zoning department is essential for Norwalk. The department's operational budget is predominantly staffing, which means that a reduction translates into reduced capacity. This would directly impact our city's ability to conduct inspections, enforce violations, and support the planning work that residents rely on.

Zoning enforcement is one of the most frequent concerns raised by residents at our meetings, and the department and commission have made it a priority. Reducing the department's staffing would limit their ability to respond to complaints and violations. While generating revenue is not the goal of the zoning enforcement process, enforcing violations does provide revenue for the city.

This department's work has downstream effects on the city's fiscal health, as they provide expertise informing how our city should develop and resources we need to protect. They work closely with residents, municipal and state officials, and developers to understand how we can strengthen and invest in Norwalk.

Planning & Zoning is the first step in the development pipeline and generates revenue through collecting fees for submitted applications. These fees help offset the department's review of applications, ensuring projects align with our zoning code and the community's vision for conservation and development. This review enables projects to move forward to the building permit stage, where the Building & Code Enforcement department collects permit fees. In the 2024/2025 fiscal year, the building permit fees alone exceeded the 2025/2026 operating budget for the larger Economic and Community Development division.

Reducing the Planning and Zoning department's capacity to review these applications would delay or inhibit the revenue it generates downstream, both in permit fees and property tax revenue. I am concerned about how cuts to this department, and within the Economic and Community Development division, would impact our city's ability to attract investment that diversifies our tax base to reduce the burden on residential taxpayers.

<-CP1_...

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further and provide any additional context that would be helpful as you refine the budget.

Sincerely,
Chapin Bryce
Planning & Zoning Commission, Chair

Outlook

Public Comment

From Collette Agnese <collette.reny@gmail.com>

Date **Wed:03/25,'2026 9:38 AM**

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from collette.reny@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to support our school funding. I was heartened to learn that additional funding allowed for the allocation of \$2.2 million to the Board of Education which would mitigate anticipated budget related reductions to school-based budgets and would then bring the Norwalk Public Schools increase to 4.9%. This felt like such a positive move compared to last year, where things were to the wire. But, now I see there are further shortfalls of ~\$2 million due to health insurance premium increases. This is a contractual obligation and it's been very clear in nationwide public reporting that health insurance premiums are skyrocketing this year due to the changes enacted by congress to the affordable care act, among other factors. This is information we have known for months, so why were we not prepared for this, and why does it now seem like a surprise? While I do not agree with the changes that created these higher premiums, the city should have been preparing for them many months ago when it was clear there would be changes to the law that would have an impact. It feels negligent to say now there is this gap without owning up to the fact that this could have been mitigated with better planning.

Please work together to find a solution to the school funding, and allow our schools to be funded at the level necessary to provide our students a world class education.

Thank you,
Macintosh Road
Norwalk CT

Outlook

Public Comment

From N newms <new2236@yahoo.com>

Date: Wed 03/25/2026 10:05 AM

To: Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

Cc: N newms <new2236@yahoo.com>

You don't often get email from new2236@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Dear Mr. Ellis,

I am writing because I am unable to attend this evening's crucial public hearing on the City's FY 2026-27 Operating Budget, either via Zoom or in person. I unequivocally and sincerely support the preliminary budget cap that includes a 4.9% increase for the Board of Education, and I strongly hope it passes this evening.

This increase is critical for Norwalk Public Schools, and especially for BMHS, to continue improving the quality of education for all students in our city. It is essential for both our students and teachers, and it is long overdue. This funding is a vital investment in Norwalk's future, and I urge the Council to do the right thing and pass this measure without delay.

Best,
Nicole Uva
203-451-6120 (cell)

Outlook

City Meeting

From Willard Lawless <bjryansgroup@gmail.com>

Date Wed 03/25/2026 10:11 AM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

[You don't often get email from bjryansgroup@gmail.com. Learn why this is important at <http-s://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

To the City of Norwalk,

I am writing today to address the proposed budget cuts regarding the Norwalk community events.

As a member of the community and business owner I feel that taking away the funding for the community events is a terrible mistake and would be detrimental to our businesses, neighborhoods and communities. We have seen such fantastic results from these events both economically and socially. These events bring old and new members of our and surrounding communities to showcase our businesses and neighborhoods.

In the case of the Wall Street area, where we have struggled for decades, we are starting to see an awareness and spotlight put on the area, businesses and living accommodations to drive people back to this struggling area.

The recent "Melt" event, had a tremendous turnout of all ages. We sold 300 tickets to our soup competition which encompassed eight local restaurants. All received amazing feedback from regarding new customers and sales.

I truly know that we will be going backwards in our neighborhood if these events are taken away. Having the community events is a massive spring board for us to drive more businesses and customers to where we are.

Please don't take away the current momentum we have by not funding these citywide events.

Sincerely,

BJ Lawless

President of the BJ Ryans Restaurant Group and Wall Street Neighborhood Association



Outlook

Public Comment

From Chris Dwyer <chrisdwyerct@gmail.com>

Date Wed 03/25/2026 11:34 AM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

Cc Barbara Smyth <BCSmyth@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from chrisdwyerct@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Chris Dwyer
47 Toilsome Ave
Candidate for State Senate CT-25

First off, I want to commend Mayor Smyth and the BET on a thorough and professional budget process this year. We are living in hard times and you are asked to make harder decisions. I don't envy you and it takes courage to take this mantle.

But Norwalk's budget, Norwalk's streets, and Norwalk's people, will never be free from financial & socioeconomic squeezes that come direct from the State until we all come together and truly fight for a NORWALK THAT WORKS.

We all know that the ECS does not work.

We all know that even with SB7, the ECS does not work.

At the start of ANY budget conversation in this city, we have a looming and thundering cloud of Hartford's negligence inside of the Educational Cost Sharing formula; an erroneous formula does not make Norwalk's education work.

We need to advocate, strongly and consistently, for upleveling the Base Aid Ratio for multilingual learners and special needs, and we need to REMOVE commercial real estate & infrastructure from the 3-year grand list calculation. It is making Norwalk look richer, and it is stealing from our children. Everything starts from there and I will be spending the next 6 months loudly advocating for this.

Hartford works for Norwalk, not the other way around.

On a micro-level, as a Cranbury resident, I am **strongly opposed** to allocation of \$833,000 for Cranbury Park improvements just to match our State Legislature's gifted grant. If we are getting pressured to spend that to get \$400k match, we probably should look at NHS in a lesson of saying

"not right now, thanks but no thanks, Mr. Senator."

There are many great advocates here tonight for many causes and one such I'd also like to support is our Arts Business Development and Special Events. We must preserve the staff and FULLY FUND this department.

In an era where our roads are closed and ripped apart, lights aren't timed well, parking authority sucks the air out of any room, Norwalk's businesses NEED the Arts Business Development and Special Events and THEY are all the ones together making Norwalk enviable. Not Wegman's, Costco or god forbid, the Sono Collection.

Thanks for listening. I know we all have a part to play, so let's get to work - together.

Outlook

Public Comment

From Dan Darbandi <dan.darbandi@gmail.com>

Date Wed 03/25/2026 11:37 AM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from dan.darbandi@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Good day,

I am writing in support of approving funding for TMP and DPW at the level recommended by Mayor Smyth. This operating funding is important to retain skilled staff at city hall who are able to manage road construction and other public works projects across the city. Given the deleterious state of many Norwalk roads at the moment, I strongly believe we need to prioritize their repair and improvement.

Thank you,

Dan Darbandi
20 Ambler Dr.
Norwalk, 06851

PUBLIC COMMENT (BET Hearing 3/25)

From Benjamin Bowen Schwartz <bs2946@columbia.edu>

Date **Wed** 03/25/2026 11:55 AM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from bs2946@columbia.edu. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Good morning:

I am writing in strong support of maintaining or increasing the current TMP budget over the upcoming fiscal year. I am a homeowner in Norwalk's District A and directly benefit from the sidewalk construction, bus availability, and traffic safety initiatives that TMP has successfully stewarded over the two years I have resided in Norwalk. The infrastructure projects that TMP and Public Works hope to undertake in the future, including the improvement of East Avenue, are of vital importance to our city. I urge you to reconsider before approving a budget that would endanger these invaluable improvements and the livelihoods of those who make them possible.

Yours sincerely,
Benjamin B. Schwartz, PhD



Public comment

From Christina Taccone <cmt1012@sbcglobal.net>

Date W.ed,03/25/2026 11:59 AM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from cmt1012@sbcglobal.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

To tax committee,

The budget of the city is outrageous with very little to show for it. There needs to be a major audit.

It makes no sense how the public school budget keeps going up this drastically and high school graduation proficiency is sub par for decades.

I want to see line by line itemized budget of each penny to each school or program. You are correct we can't cover the increased costs and if you're blaming health insurance you need to get on state and Lamont and Duff and tell them to stop the bills and reverse bills they have DONE TO MAKE EVERYTHING UNAFFORDABLE!

I don't think anybody has been paying attention to the unaffordable bills that they've been passing in years past or have allowed companies to increase. This is an issue from Hartford and from the insurance companies. So you need to ask Duff some really hard questions because he likes to act like he had no hand in the unaffordability of Connecticut and pushes policy and they ALLOW insurance and private companies to do what they want in this state all the time.

Exhibit A: PURA getting pressured to change mind and allowed sale of Aquarion just this morning! That was with major pushback and state still let them. Prices will TRIPLE if not more. THEY SERVE PEOPLE IN NORWALK. People are fleeing CT in droves.

This article mentions how they ALLOWED DOUBLE DIGIT INCREASES FOR INSURANCE. This is not all information.

<http://ctmirror.org/2025/09/10/rate-hikes-ct-health-P-lans/>

We want schools and teachers to be funded but this is an issue from top down and needs to be addressed. Start with Duff and Hartford. Also more money has never shown improved tests out of HS. Money isn't the issue. This needs to be resolved in smart way.

Start with audit and question Hartford and insurance companies. Residents can't afford the taxes and will continue to leave. There are for sale signs everywhere. Two on my street alone. Many to follow.

Get rid of things that we don't need to waste money on. We need an exhaustive list and trim. We for sure know we don't need to have any contracts with any of these red light camera companies or the China surveillance flock systems. Stop wasting our money on surveillance.

We do not consent to being tracked and monitored every second. Get our money out of that contract and put towards the school. It is an invasion of privacy. We did not consent to it, we do not consent to it, and you can save a whole lot of OUR money and for you to be using any of our money to surveil us is unconstitutional.

So I don't know how much you guys are even spending on that but that needs to be done and I'm sure you'll save a fair amount of money. If you care that much about the teachers get rid of the surveillance, all of the system, do not upgrade any cameras we do not need cameras, we do not need flock systems and put the money into the school fund.

I'm sure that if we get a line by line list of everything that we pay for, the people could easily see and tell you where to cut money. We are not China and we are not going to be tracked. If there are any other surveillance cameras in any public setting, get it out as it's unconstitutional and you're wasting our money.

In addition, more lies and ignorance when people have voiced their concerns about the construction of the new Norwalk high school. The article just came out that they're going try to force another 21 million on us. That's not going fly. They lied or lied by omission.

The article was saying that this issue from Norwalk residents of the terrain in that area is a problem and whoever approved this is beyond negligent. The city was aware of this issue and proceeded anyway!

you could've probably renovated the whole thing and now you're going to try to tax us another 21 million because you ignored residents who SAID THIS VERY ISSUE!

No way you'll be out of your mind. I'm sure you guys were aware of the complaints and these issues were presented at the beginning of the issues of the terrain and the rocks in that area. In addition you guys are not going to be making good choices about West rocks. Leave West rocks middle school alone.

So this is on the record as you have already been told and I'm sure planning and zoning has been told that turf is toxic and causes runoff in the residence down in that area have told you about the runoff and the mud that occurs just with that if you try to change the whole thing, you're increasing cost for no reason. For one aesthetically it will look stupid and why would you want to have a school at the lower end of the hill, so that too could become flooded and again just incur more cost for no reason. The soccer fields there is the central part of Norwalk. The place is where the schools are is iconic. Leave West rock school where it is and return the soccer fields back to grass. You guys keep talking about carbon capture yet you're poisoning the land with toxic PFAS is from the plastic and grass is a living breathing item.

We need a very honest independent evaluation of the school, somebody who's not trying to make money off of anything and see what the issues are. Everybody's been around long enough the last six years to see how deals get done and increases go up.

Absolutely not!!

?1}

Norwalk High School project seeks \$21

million increase amid soil, site challenges

<https://www.norwalk.com/norwalk-high-school-project-seeks-21-million-increase-amid-soil-site-challenges/>

Norwalkers TOLD CITY HALL THE ISSUES AND IGNORED THEM!! We will not foot bill for negligence. It's Duff project let him pay out of his own pocket not taxpayers.

Clean up the expenses. This is out of control.

Christina D



Outlook

Public Comment- Operating Budget Meeting 3.25

From Jessica Garnett <jessicadgarnett@gmail.com>

Date **We_d03/25/2026--11:02 f5M**

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Please see below my public comments for the BET Meeting on 3.25.26

Good morning members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation,

Every year it becomes a little more frustrating to watch the hand wringing that goes on during budget season. The repeated villainization of the BoE, the back and forth about what amounts to pennies added to tax bills and who is to blame. Yet there is no discussion as to why we can never appropriately fund our city services year after year. While it is incredibly difficult for the average resident to pick apart the city budget without far more detailed budget information, I've noted some items below which raise questions that I would appreciate the BET look into deeper. I would also appreciate if the BET had a robust discussion with city leadership and the Common Council as to why not matter how much gets built in Norwalk we are not producing the revenue necessary to fund the city. While property taxes are a truly antiquated way to raise city revenue, it's the system we have to work with. How many landlords are cheating the tax system by turning single family homes into boarding houses? How many illegal apartments are cheating the tax rolls? Why doesn't it feel as though no matter how many large apartment buildings are put up promising additional tax revenue its never enough?

-The mayor's Chief of Staff only makes \$5,340 less than the Mayor. Instead of a Chief of Staff the City Should hire someone with extensive logistics expertise in running city services. Alternately the Chief of Staff should be making about 50% of what the mayor is paid.

-Director of Strategy and Policy should be moved to the position of grant writer. DEi initiatives can be handled within the HR department.

-The Director of Communications should also be the "digital content administrator" this is another position that is not necessary

-6 Full time people in the Registrar of Voters seems like a lot, but again with so few details how would we know?

-IT could probably use more funds to implement AI across the city which in turn could eliminate busy work/help find efficiencies

-Park Maintenance- Why aren't we outsourcing mowing and blowing? Surely we could concentrate our resources in other areas and outsource the daily maintenance.

- Code Enforcement- consolidate and make it more efficient, paring down the number of positions. Right now it is siloed across departments and highly inefficient.

-Libraries- Consolidate to one high tech, inviting library with all the resources!

-The Chief of Community Development does what exactly? Take that money and use it for code enforcement.

-Business Development and Tourism- what is this department adding to the city? I would eliminate this department.

-Neighborhood Improvement Manager does what exactly???? No one knows and we have seen nothing improved in our neighborhoods. The Building department doesn't even hold Blight Hearings anymore.

-TMP is not a necessary department. Eliminate the head positions and give the necessary engineers and workers to DPW.

-The BoE is stuck in the unenviable position of being hamstrung by state and federal unfunded mandates. They are also responsible for educating the children living in Norwalk. As our wealthy neighbors have pushed more poverty into Norwalk that has weighed on the school system. That is not a judgement but simply a fact that as a society we have pushed the issues of poverty into the school system for our teachers to handle. This also goes hand in hand with the fact that we are drastically underfunded by the state and so the cost falls to the local property tax payers. It would be worth it to know from the BoE exactly what they would need to cut this budget cycle and not have to play games like Senator Duff did last budget cycle with the BoE.

At the end of the day, residents of Norwalk want to see the city spend less of our taxes sitting in City Hall and more out paving the roads, filling in pot holes, cleaning up trash, fixing our crumbling city buildings, collecting our garbage on time, cracking down on slumlords and blight in our neighborhoods, closing Vape Shops selling illegal drugs, shutting down businesses in residential neighborhoods, providing a top notch education, etc. It's all the "non-sexy" day to day running of the city where we need to be spending our tax dollars.

Regards,

Jessica Garnett
Fillow Street

Fwd: **SAVE NORWALK EVENTS**

From Willard Lawless <wjlawless@aol.com>

Date: Wed 0.3/2 2026 2:12 PM

To: Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from wjlawless@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

BJ Lawless

President/Owner, The BJ Ryan's Group

Begin forwarded message:

From: Lindsey Sarate <lbarate11@yahoo.com>

Date: March 25, 2026 at 1:42:04 PM EDT

To: info@arcssl.com

Subject: **SAVE NORWALK EVENTS**

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to respectfully urge you to reconsider any plans to reduce or eliminate free community events in Norwalk.

These events are far more than simple "get-togethers"- they are essential to the social fabric of our community. They bring together residents of all ages, backgrounds, and income levels, creating opportunities for connection, inclusion, and shared experiences.

Beyond their social value, community events also **support local businesses** and make our city a more vibrant and attractive place to live or bring your business. They help foster a sense of belonging that cannot easily be replaced.

I understand that budget decisions are complex and require difficult trade-offs. However, the long-term benefits of maintaining these events-stronger community ties, increased local engagement, and improved quality of life-are well worth the investment.

Thank you for your time and for your continued service to our community. I hope you will prioritize keeping these valuable events accessible to all residents.

Events that I have attended (some multiple times) with my family.



- Wonderland on Wall Street
- Christmas Extravaganza on Washington Street
- Halloween Night Fare on Washington Street
- The Melt
- DJ Skate Night at Calf Pasture Beach Skate Park

Best,
Lindsey Buono
Lifelong Norwalk Resident

Outlook

Budget meeting

From eicheng@aol.com <eicheng@aol.com>

Date Wed 03/25/2026 2:55 PM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from eicheng@aol.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

It seems to me that tax abatements are a form of trickle down theory. That is that economic benefits will come to Norwalk over time. It's also an investment in the project. If you continue to offer abatements to developers, is there a way to share in revenue or equity from the asset?

George Eichen.

Norwalk

[Sent from the all new AOL aP.12..for iOS](#)

Outlook

PUBLIC COMMENT

From AV <roseamilia21@gmail.com>

Date Wed 03/25/2026 5:27 PM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Good evening, my name is Rosa Ayala. I live on Bedford Ave.

This email is in support for our schools budget.
Protects school-based budgets

Supports critical staffing and programs

Helps sustain free meals for all students

Addresses rising costs impacting our district.

Thank you!
Rosa Ayala

Late But Important- Public Comments -PUBLIC HEARING - BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION
AGENDA MARCH 25, 2026, 6:30 PM

From Courtney Kern <courtbkern@yahoo.com>

Date Wed 03/25/2026 5:53 PM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

Cc Courtney Kern <ckern@eventsbeyond.biz>

You don't often get email from courtbkern@yahoo.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Dear Tom,

We're paying close attention to tonight's Norwalk Board of Estimate and Taxation meeting, as the potential cancellation or limitation of local events is deeply concerning.

My husband and I moved to Norwalk from Manhattan after more than 20 years, largely for the lifestyle this community offers- coastal living, vibrant local culture, and a strong sense of connection. Over the past four years, we've truly fallen in love with Norwalk.

We are passionate supporters of small businesses and actively promote them on social media-often weekly, if not more-through Eventsbeyond. What makes this area special isn't just its location-it's the energy: live music, outdoor events, performing arts, wellness, and the ability to gather as a community. These are not extras-they are essential to the mental health, well-being, and identity of this city.

As someone who has planned events professionally and worked closely with small businesses for over 15 years, I strongly believe this is an area where we should be doing more-not less. Events, supported by thoughtful social media promotion, are not just "nice to have"-they are powerful drivers of community engagement, local business growth, and overall city vitality. This is how you build momentum, attract people, and create a place people are proud to call home.

A clear example is the summer concert series at Calf Pasture Beach. It's not just an event-it's the heart of summer here. Nights with Captain Jack, the Tom Petty Project, Neil Diamond tribute bands, and other nostalgic, crowd-favorite performances bring people together in an effortless, joyful way. It's tradition. It's a community. It's what people look forward to all year.

Sunday music at the beach is especially important this year. With the closure of Ripka Cafe and the loss of Friday night programming for 2026, these gatherings matter even more. Reducing or relocating them takes away from the very essence of what makes Norwalk special.

Scaling back these offerings feels like a step in the wrong direction. If anything, Norwalk should be investing in more community events, more support for local vendors, and more arts programming.

While we may not have children, we strongly believe in investing in the next generation. Organizations like East Coast Contemporary Ballet and other performing arts initiatives are vital-not just culturally, but educationally. They provide exposure, inspiration, and a sense of possibility that should be prioritized.

There's also a practical reality: this is not an inexpensive place to live. People choose Norwalk-and stay in Norwalk-because of the quality of life it offers. Especially in a region where winter is quieter, the spring through late fall seasons are essential. That's when this community comes alive. Reducing what makes those months special risks diminishing the very reason many of us are here.

We urge the city to reconsider any cuts and instead focus on expanding and strengthening these offerings. This is about more than events-it's about community, connection, and the long-term vitality of Norwalk.

Let's move forward-not backward.

2_1?

Thank you.

Courtney Kem-Giles
eventsbeyond

Courtney & Ben Giles
26 Belden Ave #2426
Norwalk, CT 06850
518-229-5683



W-1, W 1Yent: beyo: h. biz 0
cile: Jfp. □ □: Je) • orulbi:!

It; l&w

Crafting a Story, Creating an Experience, Capturing Memories!

Outlook

In support of not cutting the staffing at P&Z and Conservation Office

From Kathryn Sellschop <kathryn_sellschop@icloud.com>

Date)**Ned 03/25/2026 5:55 PM**

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

[You don't often get email from kathryn_sellschop@icloud.com. Learn why this is important at [httpP-s://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification](http-s://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification)]

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Dear Board of Estimate and Taxation,

I am writing to support Planning and Zoning request to not cut its operating budget by 10%. The P&Z office operating budget is already very lean and this cut would mean that they would have to reduce head count. This would significantly impact the effectiveness and ability of this important town function. Processing times, oversight, and environmental protections would be compromised. The cost to the environment and development in Norwalk would far exceed the savings. The long term impact of these cuts not something that we can claw back at a later date.

Best,
Kathryn Knight

Outlook

Public Content

From Jeanette Moore <moorej@norwalkps.org>

Date w.ed_Q3/25/2026 6:25 PM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from moorej@norwalkps.org. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Good afternoon. I have the pleasure of walking into City Hall and glancing over my right shoulder to see a list of veterans from Norwalk who served in various wars - among them, many of my own family members who fought on behalf of this country, all with roots from other places.

My family has resided in Norwalk and contributed to this city for nearly 100 years. We came first from the Bronx, and before that, from Italy by way of Ellis Island. My grandparents were multilingual learners who attended schools much like Winnipauk. Over the generations, family members and I have attended Jefferson, Tracey, West Rocks, Norwalk High School, Ben Franklin, and many more - too many to name.

For the past six years, I have worked closely with many of our schools to support reading initiatives, intervention efforts, and special education services. Literacy is my specialization and my passion.

Today, many of our teachers are stretched beyond their limits. The demand for special education services continues to surge - not just locally, but nationally - and the need to effectively serve our multilingual learners grows alongside it. Cutting any support roles within our school buildings would have a profound impact, not only on our teachers, but most importantly, on our children.

Thank you.

Dr. Jeanette Moore, CIT-A/ AOGPE

Literacy Specialist
Department of Specialized Learning
Norwalk Public Schools
Room 324 @ City Hall

- IDA Verified Dyslexia Practitioner
- National Council of Teachers of Mathematics



Outlook

Comentario publico

From Isabel Cabrera <isabel.cabrera5@icloud.com>

Date Wed 03/25/2026 7:42 PM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

[You don't often get email from isabel.cabrera5@icloud.com. Learn why this is important at <http-s://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Enviado desde mi iPhone

- Outlook

Current Budget Review

From Andy Conroy <atconroy@gmail.com>

Date Thu.Q.2/26/2026 11:21 AM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>; Kleppin, Steven <skleppin@norwalkct.gov>; Maldonado, Tammy <tmaldonado@norwalkct.gov>

Cc Andy Conroy <atconroy@gmail.com>; atconroy@norwalkct.gov <atconroy@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from atconroy@gmail.com. [Learn why. this is imP-ortant](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Hello, I want to weigh in to the current review process. My name is Andy Conroy and I have continuously served the City (writ large) since 1995, first helping rescue a failed school revamp, and then serving in the Zoning Commission, the Common Council for ten years, and the ZBA since then. When not in an elected, appointed position in the City I served as Treasurer in the 6th TD.

My focus on the Council was Finance and I was heavily involved in the budget work ups. Over time the number of employees was significantly reduced. We got to the point where we realized were affecting the service level(s) and actually added back employees.

My experience with the ZBA has demonstrated that we are at minimum support levels with regard to staffing. I have never encountered staff "sitting around".

I cannot speak to infrastructure, but it appears to be adequate. As you know, board members handle any necessary admin tasks on their own. Since Land Use training has been mandated by CT statute, the City pays for that training -- so I believe that item cost remains necessary.

Our staff is required to visit properties and that cost remains necessary.

The publishing costs (again writ large) have been greatly reduced since the board members no longer receive "packets" for each meeting.

These are my direct observations, please take them into consideration.

Regards, Andy Conroy

Outlook

School Budget

From Stacey Bergin <sbergin340@gmail.com>

Date Thu 03/26/2026 11:54 AM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from sbergin340@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Dear Mr. Ellis,

I had fully intended to submit this yesterday before the BET meeting; however, I was sidelined by an illness and am just now getting back on my feet.

In the interest of full transparency, I am not a Norwalk resident. I do, however, work here, own homes in both Connecticut and New York, and am employed by the Board of Education. It can be difficult for employees to speak openly about budget matters, as it can feel personal at times, like advocating for one's own job. In some ways, that is true. But more importantly, I am advocating for our students. At the end of the day, what matters most is that students and families have what they need to be successful.

I have spent over three decades in education. During that time, I have seen cities like Yonkers struggle as a result of insufficient school funding. I have also seen families relocate to places like Long Island, where school systems are more consistently supported. My sister often reminds me that her \$20,000 in taxes supports the education of her three children. While I pay less in taxes, I chose to send my children to parochial school. Perhaps I would have made a different decision if we had lived in Norwalk or on Long Island; there is no way to know for certain. What I do know is that families stay when their children's educational needs are being met.

When schools are not adequately funded, families leave, teachers seek opportunities elsewhere, and programs begin to erode. A 4.9% increase barely covers essential needs. Schools and central office departments are already making cuts, but we are reaching the point where there is little left to reduce without impacting quality. Our teachers need professional development, adequate classroom materials, and a sense of stability if we expect them to remain.

As a taxpayer in two states, I will always invest in the future of our students.

Sincerely,
Stacey Bergin



Belated public comment

From ana <serelle21@gmail.com>

Date 1:b_u03/2§/2026 5:55 PM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from serelle21@gmail.com. [Learn why. this is im12ortant](#)

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Hi Tom, can you please share with BET?

Hello BET,

Sorry, my public comment last night was on a dry erase board that got partially erased by a small child. I re-wrote it today, including a number of points that i didn't get to.

I'm Ana Tabachneck. I live at 4 Gilbert Street, and I have two children in public school. I also serve as an alternate commissioner on Planning and Zoning, but I'm speaking only for myself.

I've followed the BET, council, and BOE meetings throughout this budget cycle, and I want to share a few points.

First, please fully fund the schools-at least to the 4.9% cap-to prevent cuts to student-facing positions. Our elected Board of Education has clearly stated what is needed, and the council already acted to raise the cap to avoid those cuts. That should carry real weight in your decision-making. These are core services that directly impact children and families, and once those positions are cut, the impact is immediate and difficult to reverse.

Second, I want to address the idea of representing the "silent majority." The reality is, we don't know what silent taxpayers want. By definition, they are not telling us. The only clear input you have comes from public comments, emails, and the officials we elect to represent us. For all we know, the silent majority supports strong schools, functioning city services, and long-term investment in our community. So rather than making assumptions that the silent folks want cuts to city services, I urge you to ground your decisions in the input you *do* have, along with your own best judgement.

Third, much of the tax increase people are experiencing is driven by revaluation and rising property values-particularly on the residential side. Higher tax bills are largely a reflection of higher property values. Most people want their property values to increase-that's a good thing-but we can't try to offset that by cutting essential services. That approach undermines the very things that make this city a desirable place to live in the first place.

Fourth, from my experience on the Planning and Zoning Commission, I've seen how critical staff are to keeping the system functioning. A significant amount of work happens before applications even reach

the commission-staff ensure submissions are complete and meet baseline requirements. There is certainly room to improve efficiency, especially in zoning and blight enforcement, but cutting staff will only make those challenges worse.

Instead, we should be looking at ways to improve how we collect fines and enforce compliance. Right now, we are likely leaving a meaningful amount of revenue on the table. A more consistent and neutral approach-potentially involving the tax collector's office earlier in the process-could both increase compliance and generate additional revenue without cutting services.

Finally, I want to address tax abatements and their impact on city finances, because there's a narrative that they are a major cause of our revenue challenges. The data suggests otherwise.

Looking at the 13 properties in the EZ abatement program, my layperson's analysis shows that without redevelopment they would collectively be generating about **\$446,000 per year** in taxes. Today, even with abatements in place, they generate approximately **\$5.8 million annually**, and that will grow to **over \$10 million per year** once abatements expire.

From a grand list perspective, the difference is just as significant. Without redevelopment, these properties would represent about **\$19 million** in assessed value. Instead, they currently contribute around **\$217 million**, and that will increase to approximately **\$440 million** once abatements end-more than **20 times higher** than the pre-development baseline.

Put another way, if these developments had never happened, the city's grand list would be about **\$198 million smaller** than it is today. To raise the same amount of revenue on a smaller grand list, the mill rate would need to be higher-meaning higher taxes for everyone else.

Now, there is a theoretical scenario where all of this development would have happened without abatements, and in that case, yes, you could argue we left money on the table. But there is also a very real possibility that without abatements, much of this development would not have happened at all. In that scenario, the abatement program is not a loss-it is a net gain, already generating millions more per year than the status quo and continuing to grow.

If there is work to be done on abatements, it's not elimination-it's improvement. We should be publishing this data publicly and regularly evaluating whether abatements are being targeted effectively. Personally, I would rather see them focused on deeply affordable housing near transit and employment centers, rather than market rate development with standard affordable set-asides.

At the end of the day, housing affordability improves when supply outpaces demand and when we make intentional investments in affordability. We don't get there by not building.

I urge you to fully fund our schools, maintain critical city services, make decisions based on evidence, not assumptions, and on long-term impact rather than short-term reactions.

Thank you.



**CITY OF NORWALK
Office of the Mayor**

P: 203-854-7701 / F: 203-854-7939

125 East Avenue, PO BOX 5125
Norwalk, CT **06856-5125**

MEMORANDUM

April 6th, 2026

To: Members of the Board of Estimate & Taxation
Members of the Planning Commission
Members of the City Council

From: Barbara C. Smyth, Mayor -- City of Norwalk □

Re: Special Capital Appropriation Request from the Police Department for the purchase of a police rescue vehicle.

On March 24th, 2026, The City Council approved the purchase of a police rescue vehicle. This resolution is to transfer the funds from the Combined Dispatch Project to the Police Rescue Vehicle Project.

**RESOLUTION TO TRANSFER UNEXPENDED FUNDS TO FUND THE PURCHASE OF A
POLICE RESCUE VEHICLE**

BE IT RESOLVED, that a special capital appropriation of \$361,000.00 is hereby transferred from the Combined Dispatch Capital Project for the Communications Upgrade Project (account# 092-13610-5777-C0638) to the City's Police Department for the purchase of a new Police Rescue Vehicle (account number# 092-63010-5777-C0858).

MEMORANDUM

April 6th, 2026

To: Members of the Board of Estimate & Taxation
Members of the Planning & Zoning Commission
Members of the City Council

From: Tom Ellis, Director of Management & Budget@

Re: Special Capital Appropriation Request from the Police Department for the purchase of a police rescue vehicle

On March 24th, 2026, The City Council approved the purchase of a police rescue vehicle. This resolution is to transfer the funds from the Combined Dispatch Project to the Police Rescue Vehicle Project.

RESOLUTION TO TRANSFER UNEXPENDED FUNDS TO FUND THE PURCHASE OF A POLICE RESCUE VEHICLE

BE IT RESOLVED, that a special capital appropriation of \$361,000.00 is hereby transferred from the Combined Dispatch Capital Project for the Communications Upgrade Project (account# 092-13610-5777-C0638) to the City's Police Department for the purchase of a new Police Rescue Vehicle (account number# 092-63010-5777-C0858).

Finance recommends approval.

SECTION B

**CITY OF NORWALK TRANSFERS 2025-26
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION**

FISCAL YEAR 2025-26:

REGISTRAR OF VOTERS:

From		To		Amount
01-1210-5130	Wages & Salary – Temp.	01-1210-532A	Election Supplies	\$4,000

This transfer is to cover additional election supplies and to procure professional translation services.

Finance recommends approval.

RECREATION & PARKS:

From		To		Amount
01-9600-5900	Contingency	01-4150-Misc.	Grounds/Facilities Misc.	\$175,000

This transfer is to cover increased costs for labor contracts, winter storms and increased utility costs.

Finance recommends approval.

**City of Norwalk
FYE 2026 Operating Budget Transfer Request**

To process a budget transfer request please complete this form and email to: tellis@norwalkct.gov

Note: Any accounts that have cumulative transfers exceeding \$5,000 during the fiscal year must be approved by the BET.

Authorizing signature: _____ **Requesting manager:** Diana Paladino / Stuart Wells

Date: April 6, 2026
Fiscal year: 2025-26



Division / Department: Registrar of Voters

	"From" Account	"From" Account Name	"From" Account Available Budget	"To" Account	"To" Account Name	Transfer Amount
1	011210-5130	Wages and Salary Temp	\$ 16,000.74	011210-532A	Election Supplies	\$ 4,000.00
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
	Total		\$ 16,000.74			\$ 4,000.00

Explanations

Transfer 1:

Reconciliation of Negative 532A Balance:

We are currently working to reconcile a negative balance in account 532A. While expenditures have been limited to date, we anticipate upcoming costs associated with training implementation, election preparation, and statutory compliance in advance of a likely August 11, 2026 Primary.

Although the majority of election-related expenses—such as communications, printing, signage, and supplies—will occur closer to July, there are initial preparatory costs that must begin in the coming months to ensure readiness.

Additionally, the City has notified the Registrar of Voters Office that **three polling locations (Wolfpit Elementary, Marvin Elementary, and Nathan Hale Middle School)** will be unavailable for the August Primary due to scheduled HVAC and abatement work. As a result, we must begin early planning efforts for:

- Polling location reassignment logistics
- Voter notification strategy
- Updated signage and directional materials

Further impacting this account is compliance with **Public Act 25-168 (§§ 297 & 298), codified at CGS §§ 9-236c and 9-236d**, which establishes new requirements for translated election materials. Under this law:

- All required translated materials must be completed by a **qualified professional translator**
- Materials must be submitted to the **Translation Advisory Committee (TAC)** for review no later than **65 days prior to the election**

The Secretary of the State has confirmed that the City of Norwalk’s current staffing does **not meet the statutory definition of a certified professional translator**. Therefore, we are required to:

- Procure professional translation services
- Recreate and reprint election signage and materials in compliance with the new law
- Submit all translated materials to TAC within the mandated timeline

These requirements necessitate **unplanned but mandatory expenditures**, including the redesign, translation, validation, and printing of election materials for the upcoming Primary.

In summary, while spending has been minimal to date, the negative balance reflects the need to **proactively prepare for election operations, address polling location changes, and comply with new state-mandated translation requirements**. Additional expenditures will continue as we move closer to the election cycle.

**City of Norwalk
FYE 2026 Operating Budget Transfer Request**

To process a budget transfer request please complete this form and email to:	tellis@norwalkct.gov
--	--

Note: Any accounts that have cumulative transfers exceeding \$5,000 during the fiscal year must be approved by the BET.

Authorizing signature:	Requesting manager: Robert Stowers
-------------------------------	---

Date: April 6, 2026

Fiscal year 2025-26

Division / Department: Recreation & Parks

	"From" Account	"From" Account Name	"From" Account Available Budget	"To" Account	"To" Account Name	Transfer Amount
1	019600-5900	Contingency	\$ 295,747.00	014150-misc	Grounds/Facilities misc	\$ 175,000.00
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						
	Total		\$ 295,747.00			\$ 175,000.00

Explanations

Transfer 1: Cover increased costs for labor contracts, winter storms, increased utility costs
Transfer 2:
Transfer 3:
Transfer 4:
Transfer 5:

Management & Budgets Approval:

Date:



CITY OF NORWALK
Jared Schmitt
Chief Financial Officer
jschmitt@norwalkct.gov

Office: 203-854-7870
125 East Avenue, PO BOX 5125
Norwalk, CT 06856-5125

N

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 6, 2026
To: James Frayer, Chairman, Finance committee
From: Jared Schmitt, Chief Financial Officer □ .>
Subject: Audit of Services FY 2026 (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026)

Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S. Section's 7-396 and 4-232) requires the appointing authority of any municipality, audited agency or non-profit agency to file with the Secretary of the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM) the name of the independent auditor designated to conduct the audit. The notification must be made at least thirty days before the end of the fiscal period of the entity for which the audit is required.

In 2025, the City issued Request for Proposal (RFP) #4406 requesting proposals from qualified CPA firms to perform the City's Annual Financial Statement Audit (including the Single Audit of Grants) and to assist in the preparation of the City's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) for the five (5) year period commencing July 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026 (covering audits of Fiscal Years June 30, 2025 through June 30, 2029). Clifton Larson Allen, LLP was selected.

I am submitting for your approval the second year (FY 2026) of the contract at a fee of \$123,600. Account 011310-5253 Accounting and 015725160-330-57 BOE Other Professional Services.

Cc: Barbara C. Smyth, Mayor

1. **COMPENSATION**

A. The Contractor shall be compensated for its professional services and out-of-pocket expenses as follows:

(1) Fiscal Year ending on June 30, 2025: (Work to be performed between May 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026)	\$120,000.00
(2) Fiscal Year ending on June 30, 2026: (Work to be performed between May 1, 2026 and June 30, 2027)	\$ 123,600.00
(3) Fiscal Year ending on June 30, 2027: (Work to be performed between May 1, 2027 and June 30, 2028)	\$127,300.00
(4) Fiscal Year ending on June 30, 2028: (Work to be performed between May 1, 2028 and June 30, 2029)	\$ 131,100.00
(5) Fiscal Year ending on June 30, 2029: (Work to be performed between May 1, 2029 and June 30, 2030)	\$135,000.00

The total amount of compensation to be paid to the Contractor under this Agreement for its five (5) year term shall not exceed the total sum of **SIX HUNDRED THIRTY-SEVEN THOUSAND DOLLARS AND 00/100 CENTS (\$637,000.00)**.

B. Compensation provided under this Agreement constitutes full and complete payment for all costs assumed by the Contractor in performing this Agreement including, but not limited to, salaries; consultant fees; costs of materials and supplies; printing and reproduction; attendance at meetings, consultations and presentations; clerical costs; travel expenses; postage; telephone; and all similar out-of-pocket expenses. No direct costs shall be reimbursed by the City without specific prior written approval of the City prior to their expenditure.

C. The Parties understand that the City, as a municipal government, is dependent upon receiving continued appropriations or budgeted funds to continue this Agreement throughout its intended five (5) year term. Notwithstanding any provisions herein to the contrary, the City may terminate this Agreement at the end of any fiscal period if a sufficient amount of appropriations or budgeted funds are not available for this Agreement. Such termination may be affected by the City giving thirty (30) days written notice that the necessary funding has been denied.

D. For all additional audit services which may be requested by the City in writing and which are not included within the defined Scope of Services set out in the RFP and Contractor's Proposal, the Contractor shall be compensated on a negotiated, hourly fee basis. Notwithstanding the above, the total amounts paid to the Contractor hereunder including such hourly fees plus the regular compensation provided for the Services herein, shall not exceed the maximum amount set out in Article 3 paragraph A above without a written amendment to this

City of Norwalk
FYE 2026 Contingency Statement
MUNIS 019600-5900