

# CITY OF NORWALK FINANCE & CLAIMS COMMITTEE

04-13-26 Special Joint Meeting of Finance and Claims Committee and Board of Estimate and Taxation Meeting

## APRIL 13, 2026 BY ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone and/or Zoom, or a recording in the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at [norwalkct.gov/meetings](http://norwalkct.gov/meetings).



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



Members of the public who wish to provide "live comments" may also use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the "raise your hand indicator" and you will be called by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda, and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually-explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.



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

### I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Frayer called the meeting to order at 6:30p.m.

### II. ROLL CALL

Assistant City Clerk Esther Murillo called the Roll for Finance/Claims Committee: James Frayer, Nicole Eaddy, Richard Dellinger, Johan Lopez, Brian Bailey, Dajuan Wiggins, Broderick Sawyer (6:35p.m.)

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Assistant City Clerk Esther Murillo called the Roll for the Board of Estimate and Taxation: Mayor Barbara C. Smyth, Artie Kassimis, Kendrick Constant, Anne Yange, Troy Jellerette, Joseph Andrasko

At Roll Call, both the Finance & Claims Committee and the Board of Estimate and Taxation had a quorum.

**FINANCE:** James Frayer, Chair; Nicole Eaddy, Richard Dellinger, Johan Lopez, Dajuan Wiggins, Brian Bailey, Broderick Sawyer (6:35p.m.)

**BET:** Mayor Smyth, Ed Abrams, Artie Kassimis, Kendrick Constant, Anne Yange, Troy Jellerette, Joseph Andrasko

**STAFF:** Jared Schmitt, Finance Director, Tom Ellis; Management & Budgets Director; Esther Murillo, Assistant City Clerk

**OTHERS:** Councilmember Anne Wennerstrand, Councilmember Jan Degenshein

Mayor Barbara C. Smyth made a few comments. She thanked Chair Frayer and Chair Abrams stating this is a joint meeting that is new to the charter. She said as they get close to finalizing the budget, she had a few points that she wanted to touch on. This has been a very challenging budget year due to some items that have been out of their control, such as the high increase in health costs, the six (6) collective bargaining agreements all hitting at once, and the revaluation phase in. The BET requested that the city departments try to cut 10% overall. They took that exercise very seriously. She said without risking public safety and removing much-needed services, they were not able to meet that 10% cut across the board. However, they were able to find areas to reduce spending. Mayor Smyth will be presenting that request at the BET meeting on Wednesday night. She said they will continue throughout the year to look at other areas and ways they can cut back financially and be more efficient. She is in support of the 4.9% increase to the Board of Education that the city council approved. She said it is really easy to look back and point fingers at the variety of things that put them in the position they were in last year. She feels that the most important job is to heal the community while being fiscally responsible as much as they can. To do that, it is important to look forward and not backward. After many conversations she had with Dr. Estrella and Mr. Asmani, as well as taking part in board of education meetings, hearing from board members, staff, parents and students, as well as the really important points made by members of the city council, she feels it is in the best interest of the schools and the community to give the board of education the 4.9%. This will keep the services they currently have in place and continue to support the students and staff and hopefully heal some of what's transpired in the past. She thanked everyone for their support of the proposed projects and pointed out that there was one item accidentally omitted, which was the funding for the ADA compliance. ADA compliance is very important and a priority of hers. She wants to reassure everyone that funding will be

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taken care of through a special appropriation. Mayor Smyth stated she will go into further detail regarding her updated recommendations on the operating budget at the BET meeting on Wednesday night. She thanked everyone for the time.

### **III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Diane Lauricella said she is very pleased the charter change included this joint meeting and extended the time so they can do more research. She thanked the staff, council and the mayor's office for looking at the budget but feels they need to go back to the drawing board on a few items related to municipal waste and energy costs. She would like them to go back and additional cut 10%, if not 20%, across the board of the municipal waste amounts, to lift/step up the recycling rates no matter what you have been told at DPW meetings. She said they can do better with an optimized program. They are still lacking creative, robust recycling education. They need to reduce those costs. They are not properly recycling right. They shouldn't get the money unless there is more effort. Electricity costs should be cut by 10%, if not 20%, across the board, for the city and board of ed, electric and natural gas costs. She said if they had a more cogent and robust renewable energy policy, they would cut by hundreds of thousands a year. Increase creative revenue by having a full-time grant writer out of the finance office and not the mayor's office. Business donations and having creative revenue with more enforcement of zoning, health and recycling, and you will find it reduces costs. The Redevelopment Agency is not doing the many things they have in the past. She was outraged to learn that Brian Bidoli was allowed to be in Germany and work full-time. She asked them to cut the Redevelopment Agency funds by half and reallocate them to the Planning and Zoning Department and ECD. She said duplicative services, BOE, IT, waste and recycling can combine with the city and grants and that would reduce costs.

Chair Frayer closed public participation at 6:41p.m.

### **IV. REPORTS**

#### **A. BET TO REVIEW STATUS OF FY 27 BUDGET WITH MEMBERS OF THE FINANCE & CLAIMS COMMITTEE (PER CHARTER SECTION 10-6 (C) )**

Mr. Abrams stated as the Board of Estimate and Taxation, they are still going through deliberations with the city and the board of education as it relates to the FY2027 operating budget. They did present a challenge to all the departments to look at a 10% reduction to see what we could find to reduce the tax burden on the citizens of Norwalk. They are eager to see the mayor's revised proposal on Wednesday of this week at their

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upcoming meeting to determine how significant the reductions in operating expenses will be. He echoed the point, as they look to reduce operating expenses, they are not looking to put any critical services at risk, any of the areas that are critical to the growth of the city of Norwalk at risk. However, they are looking to ensure that they can minimize, as best possible, the tax burden imposed on the citizens of Norwalk through the budget that has been presented. He stated they will be reviewing that proposal in greater detail on the 15<sup>th</sup>. They will then meet on the 20<sup>th</sup> to present additional ideas for budget reduction, if any exist, and then to approve the overall budget for the charter recommendations.

Mr. Schmitt gave a brief overview of the budget process, challenges and the tax increases. There will be no tax sale next year as part of the budget. He went over the mayor's original proposal and the new proposal that will include the acceptance of city council's cap on the board of education to 4.9%. He said the BET did a comprehensive job meeting with chiefs of departments to determine if there are any potential issues and maybe some areas for savings while not compromising essential services. They will provide more details on Wednesday as they try to keep taxes low and reduce the mill rate.

Mr. Abrams stated they appreciate the mayor's recommendation as it relates to the board of education's funding and the city council's recommendation. At this point in their deliberations, they are not ready to make a declarative statement, one way or another, as it relates to any part of the budget. This is not intended to create public concern but simply a statement that they are continuing to go through their deliberations and, until they do so, they are not ready to make a declarative statement on any aspect of the operating budget at this time.

Mr. Jellerette asked for the blended rate. The blended rate is 7.94%.

There were no further questions.

## V. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Lopez moved to adjourn  
Motion passed unanimously

Mr. Kassimis moved to adjourn  
Motion passed unanimously

The meeting adjourned at 6:50p.m.

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