CITY OF NORWALK
ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 3, 2025
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL MEETING

ATTENDANCE: Joshua Goldstein; Chair, James Frayer, Barbara Smith, Jalin Sead, , Darlene Young (6:07 p.m.)

STAFF: Sabrina Godeski

OTHER: Lunda Asmani; CFO, BOE, Jarod Schmitt, Brian Lutz;TMP/NPA, Anne Wennerstrand, Steve Kleppin, Robert Penningtron, Ralph Valenzizi, Nora Niedzielski–Eichner, Nicole Eaddy, Jay Habansky, Tom Ellis, Tom Livingston, James Walsh,; Chief of Police. James Travis; Director TMP/NPA, Garrett Bolella; Assistan Director of Transportation Services, Melissa Lepore; Deputy Chief of Police, Gino Gatto; Fire Chief. Edward McCabe; Asst. Chief, Mark Conte; Asst. Chief, Joyce Liu, Stephan Ivan Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Johan Lopez

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Goldstein called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Goldstein called the roll as reflected above. A quorum was present.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Diane Lauricella
21 Little Fox Lane
Ms. Lauricella reiterated her wants versus needs comments from the previous meeting. She said they should consider separate public hearings before the general council meeting. She felt there is still a lot of fat in the budget and changes should be made. Ms. Lauricella then listed her issues and suggestions with Broad River Complex parking. She then requested that the Police and Fire Department not get the funding for the vehicles they are requesting. She went on to discuss prioritization in the budget for other items such as revamping the city website. She also suggested that the special events budget be supported half by the city and half by the Parking Authority. Furthermore, she finished by saying she thought the Parking Authority should be audited.

Ms. Young joined the meeting at 6:07 p.m.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Before moving forward with new business, Mr Goldstein stated he was moving Transportation, Mobility and Parking to the number four spot in the Capital Budget presentation.

A. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute a contract agreement with GL Capasso, Inc., in the amount of $1,735,827 for project NPA2025-01, Repairs and Improvements at the Haviland Parking Garage.
ACCT: 09254095 5777 C03030

** **MR. FRAYER MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM**

Mr. Lutz discussed the repairs needed to the Haviland Parking Garage that were discovered during the 2022 comprehensive assessment. He outlined the essential role played by the structure. He stated after the bidding process, it was determined that G.L. Capazzo was the most competitive and qualified submission. He noted they were approved, and they awarded the contract because they were the lowest bidder and known for high-quality repairs. Mr. Lutz went on to describe the various improvements, both structural and aesthetic. He followed up by saying the funding for the projects is a combination of Capital funds and NPA resources.

** **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling to execute a Temporary Construction Easement/Right of Way Agreement between the City of Norwalk and Nea Liosa, LLC for the construction of sidewalks at 26 Wall Street as part of TMP 2023-2 East Wall Street Landmark Square, Safety, Accessibility, and Streetscape Improvement Project.
ACCT: 0925 3750 5777 C0800

**** MR. SEAD MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.**

Mr. Bolella stated the item before the commission was for the East Wall Street construction project. He noted the project was currently underway. He explained this was a construction agreement with the property owners to access their property to create a Contenuous uniform sidewalk. He stated it was needed for transitions to front doors, grading the sidewalk, and access to the new curb line. He noted that the owner of the 26 Wall Street property will reimburse the city for any new or additional sidewalk needed on private property. Finally, he pointed out that the agreement ensured that all the work would be done by a single contractor.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

C. Review and presentation of the 2025-2026 Capital Budget.

1. Police

Chief Walsh discussed the department requests, which are as follows:

- Cars and vans (eight cars and one prisoner van outfitted to meet state requirements.)
- Crisis response equipment. (replacement for the previous system that is no longer supported because the company went out of business.)
- Gas Pump replacements (replacement for out-of-date pumps and their deteriorating island)

Mr. Frayer wanted clarification on the number of cars being requested. Chief Walsh explained they reduced the number of cars to eight to accommodate the prisoner van, which is a priority. He noted that the cars have a lot of miles on them and need regular maintenance.

2. Fire

Chief Gatto discussed the Fire Department's requests. These are as follows:
Station 4 addition and renovation
Chief Gatto indicated they have been trying since 2024 to add an addition and do renovations that would make it into a two-engine, eight-firefighter station. He stated a truck would be moved from Broad River. He said doing the project would equalize the manpower across three of the busiest stations.

- Ladder truck replacement

Chief Gatto stated this was for a ladder truck currently housed at Broad River. He noted the schedule for engines and trucks which is 12 and 15 years respectively. He explained the lead time of 4 years to build a ladder truck. He said the new truck would have a 100-foot ladder and would be replacing a 1995 65-foot ladder truck.

Mr. Sead wanted to make clear that locking the price in now would prevent the price from going up. Mr. Gatto confirmed Mr. Sead's statement.

- SCBA vehicle compressor

Chief. Gatto noted this was the final phase of a three-year plan to comply with the new NFPA standard. H listed the items which have already been approved and purchased. He explained the request was for the back harness needed to hold all the elements of the breathing apparatus.

- Vehicles for Fire Marshall staff

Chief Gatto outlined the replacement plan for replacing the fleet of Ford Escapes with Ford Rangers. He cited the various reasons for the change. He stated the request would cover the replacement of the remaining two vehicles.

- Generic industrial generator

Chief Gatto stated this was for the apparatus maintenance garage on Fairfield Avenue. H noted the current generator is nearing the end of its life.

- Upgrade EOC media equipment

Chief Gatto noted that all the audiovisual equipment was put in when the station was built in 2013 and needs to be upgraded.

- Building repairs for various stations.

Chief Gatto stated the request was for funding to handle general building repairs.

Mr. Frayer wanted to know if the money given to them last year was used to repair the bathrooms and locker rooms that were in disrepair. Chief Gatto stated the money was placed in the repair fund. Asst. Chief Conte explained the money they were given was not enough to replace necessary items in the building. He noted they were able to make some cosmetic repairs. He said they were going to be replacing the overhead doors. He also listed several other items they're addressing. He pointed out the building was built in 1967 and needs to be completely renovated. Mr. Conte stated the addition will be 30' by 46' and come off the back of the building.

Mr. Frayer was not convinced that station house 4 needed to be renovated. He felt there should be actual numbers to justify the project. Mr. Sead said he understood Mr. Frayer's concerns but sided with Asst. Chief Conte's assessment. He stated if they just keep patching things the situation is going to get worse. He felt they should complete the job because if they keep throwing money at it every year the price to complete it will just continue to go up.

Ms. Smyth added a personal note stating she wouldn't want to wait three minutes for EMS to arrive.
Mr. Frayer insisted he wanted to see statistics and see how they would improve with the renovation. Asst. Chief McCabe and Chief Gatto noted the engine company goes out on roughly 1800 calls per year, leaving no coverage should a second call come in.

3. Information Technology

- Information technology projects.

Ms. Liu discussed the four critical initiatives that align with the PCD code 11.1B. She described the various initiatives and associated requests in detail.

In response to Mr. Frayer's question about coordinating with the BOE, Ms. Liu stated they have a different rate that the city can't take advantage of. She stated no because the needs are different. Mr. Frayer wanted to see more collaboration between departments. Mr. Valenzizi pointed out there was already some collaboration. He also noted that their e-rate reimbursement which is not something that can be shared.
-

4. Transportation, Mobility, and Parking

Mr. Bollela gave his presentation. Before moving forward, he addressed something brought up in the public comments. He stated the parking authorities bond is separate from the city's bond and is paid for 100% by the Parking Authority. Mr. Travis went on to discuss in detail the following items:

- Roadway design and reconstruction.
- Traffic Signal Equipment.
- New sidewalk construction
- Safe routes to school
- Wall Street Corridor improvements.
- Pavement marking and signage.
- West Rocks Road sidewalks
- East Avenue Corridor improvements
- Gregory – 5th Street/Marvin/Calf Pasture
- Isaac/Wall Street Roadway improvements.

Ms. Wenerstrand wanted further clarification on the East Avenue Corridor improvement. Mr. Travis supplied the requested specifics. He indicated that the plan needed additional coordination.

5. Building and Code Enforcement

- Streetscape improvements.

Ms. Godeski described streetscape improvements as all things handled by the Neighborhood Improvement Team. She listed the various projects that are covered by this specific line item,

6. Planning and Zoning

- Land use document scanning.

Mr. Kleppin discussed the following indicating they were keenly interested in the continued funding for document scanning. He stated he hoped the project would be completed in the calendar year. He stated the goal was to have all the historical documents and the online permits accessible to the public from a single portal.

Mr. Goldstein wanted clarification on the timeline of completion. Mr. Kleppin responded by describing how they plan to handle the data in question.

7. Redevelopment

- Pinnacle TOD underground utilities.

Mr. Ivan discussed the area and the equitable improvements the request would cover. He stated during the assessment, they discovered a gap in funding that would prevent them from completing the project. He noted the project would include the undergrounding of utilities and updating the streetscapes to be consistent with city standards

.

8. Board of Education

Mr. Asmani introduced the Board of Education members. He proceeded to give a brief description of each of the following:

- Enhancements to school security

Mr. Asmani described the current technology and listed the five components of the system, including AI technology for monitoring numerous schools and campuses. The request includes ongoing maintenance and replacement of fencing.

- Literary curriculum
- Science and Social Studies Curriculum.

Mr. Asmani indicated the need to purchase new textbooks to be in line with the state curriculum. Mr. Frayer questioned whether there would be other changes in light of the situation on the federal level. Mr. Pennington said at present they hadn’t received any other information about curriculum shifts. He discussed how the science and social studies programs are being handled. He added at present they just don’t know at this time how changes on the federal level will affect the curriculum.

- Band/Stringed instrument replacement

Mr. Pennington discussed the Band and Strings update and how it has benefited the band and orchestra programs. He noted their focus for this year is band equipment in the five middle schools.

- Instructional technology

Mr. Valanzizi provided an over. He explained the need to periodically refresh their hardware. He listed all the items covered under the request.

- Replacement of middle school lockers

Mr. Asmani described the replacement of the middle school lockers. He noted the old lockers are not designed to handle newer textbooks and backpacks, and some are hazardous.

- West Rocks roof repair.

Mr. Asmani described the condition of the two roofs at West Rocks. He stated the request would allow them to patch the roofs until they have a long-term plan. Ms. Niedzielski–Eichner wanted to know why there was a shift from a replacement to just a repair of the roof. Mr. Asmani said not knowing where the school falls on the 25-year plan, they would rather not invest in a full roof repair if there is going to be a bigger project down the line.

- Student technology

Mr. Valanzizi outlined the digital resources required by the students and teachers, which include AI. He discussed the training of the teachers on using AI tools. He also listed other digital research and reference tools that would be made available to students and teachers K-12.

- BOE asbestos abatement program

Mr. Asmani discussed the need for an asbestos abatement at Wolf Pit School.

Ms. Smyth wanted to know the timeframe for the work to be completed. Mr. Asmani wasn't sure but hoped they could complete the abatement during the summer. He said he would email the committee an exact timeline for the work.

In response to Mr. Frayer, Mr. Asmani said the entire school would be done.

- Oil tank replacement

Mr. Asmani listed all the schools they would be doing if their request was approved. Mr. Asmani stated they would be removing the oil tanks altogether.

- Air conditioning program

- School district paving and ADA compliance.

- Capital Repairs and replacements.

Mr. Frayer wanted clarification about the abatement and roof repairs for the HVAC installation. Mr. Asmani said he would get that info to the commission by the end of the meeting.

Ms. Niedzielski–Eichner wondered if it was worth doing repairs on schools that were high on the list for complete overhauls. Mr. Asmani said in the case of West Rocks, there were major issues that needed to be addressed and couldn't wait for a complete overhaul. Ms. Niedzielski–Eichner then asked whether they were thinking about addressing this problem more cost-effectively. She suggested taking advantage of excess capacity in the elementary schools to house middle school students. Mr. Asmani stated there wouldn't be that much excess capacity.

9. Parking Authority

- Parking Garages

Mr. Bolella said the bond request was essential to address needed structural repairs and waterproofing at the Yankee Doodle Garage. He stated the need to stay ahead of the anticipated occupancy growth on Wall Street, maintain smooth parking operations, and prevent disruptions.

10. Chief of Economic and Community Development

- Online permitting and licensing system.

Ms. Godeski provided an overview of the digitization and online permitting process. She stated they're working to create a comprehensive RFP they can use to secure a firm to come on board and implement the system.

Mr. Kleppin noted this project is a comprehensive coordination of all the involved departments.

Mr. Frayer wanted to know how robust the system would be. Ms. Godeski stated that it would be able to take care of all the licensing and permitting for all departments. Anything requiring a permit or license can be run through the system. Mr. Habansky described the processes involved and what would be required of each department. In response to Mr. Frayer, Ms. Godeski said they were projected to have everything up and running by early 2027.

Ms. Niedzielski–Eichner wanted to throw money at this to make it happen faster. Mr. Kleppin said it was not a money issue. In response to Ms. Niedzielski–Eichner, Ms. Godeski stated there will be a customer-facing platform.

11. Arts and Cultural Commission

- Art in Public Places program

Ms. Godeski described it as a recurring ask for the installation of new public art in the city of Norwalk. She stated the request would be specifically for the Underpass that connects West Avenue to Route 1 with the possible incorporation of the Heritage Wall.

12. Business Development & Tourism

- Norwalk special events

Ms. Godeski stated the request would cover the three large events, which are Christmas and Halloween events. She noted, in response to some public comments, that they do have a comprehensive sponsorship package that they send to corporate sponsors and local businesses. She gave an overview of the options in the package. She also stated any money received via sponsorships goes into the general fund. She then listed some of the events they support.

In response to Ms. Smyth, Ms. Godeski clarified the sponsorship program. She reiterated any income from any event goes back into the general fund. Ms. Godeski also answered Ms. Smyth's question about the amount brought in by sponsorships and how much it has increased year to year. She noted the level of sponsorship and the amount brought in has increased each year.

- Small Business Main Street program

Ms. Godeski listed the programs funded by Small Business Main Street.

D. Advance the 2025-2026 Capital Budget to the Common Council for approval with the noted amendments.

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO ADVANCE THE 2025-2026 BUDGET TO THE COMMON COUNCIL.**

Mr. Frayer didn't think certain items should be fully funded which included the $2 million for the baseball fields at Broad River

Mr. Goldstein noted if an item is passed in the capital budget, it is not set in stone as planned. The item would have to come before them again on individual merits. Mr. Goldstein stated he had talked to those involved and there is no set plan to use artificial turf. The fields can be composed in a number of different ways, but the cost of doing so, no matter how it's done, will be the same.

Ms. Smyth clarified further that what they are doing is approving a project that will then go out to bid. She stated they were voting to support and approve a project that has been talked about for years and is important to the community. Mr. Frayer indicated that when this comes up in council he would vote against it because of the amount and how close it brings them to the borrowing limit.

Mr. Frayer then brought up his views about approving money for the BOE to bring the curriculum in line with state mandates. He feels it would be wasted should there be changes on the federal level. Mr. Goldstein reiterated that this was a state mandate that under the law they are required to follow.

Mr. Schmitt gave an overview of the Finance Department's process to arrive at this budget. It included discussing in detail the requests from each department, discussing with the mayor, and going back and requesting the departments to review and reduce their capital budget requests. He wanted it made clear that the departments were given a target number and chose what cuts to make.

Ms. Smyth noted that she recognized the hours of work put into the budget. She stated she supports the budget as it is.

****　THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

V. OLD BUSINESS

No old business was discussed.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

****　MR. FRAYER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
****　THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
China Mayhew
Telesco Secretarial Services