

**CITY OF NORWALK  
BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES –NOVEMBER 3, 2025  
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE**

**ATTENDEES:** Mayor Harry Rilling, Ed Abrams, Edwin Camacho, Kendrick Constant, Troy Jellerette, Artie Kassimis, Anne Yang.

**STAFF:** Tom Ellis, Jared Schmitt,, Irene Dixon. Irene Dixon.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Abrams called the special meeting of the Board of Estimate and Taxation to order at 6:15 p.m. via Zoom virtual meeting.

**II. ROLL CALL**

Ms. Dixon called the roll. Ms. Dixon noted complete attendance with a quorum of seven members present.

**III. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Special Appropriation Request for Norwalk Public Schools**

Mr. Abrams introduced the sole agenda item and Ms. Dixon read the resolution into the record as a special appropriation request totaling \$200,000 for the City's contribution to the free meals program for Norwalk Public Schools, with funds to be transferred from the general fund balance account to the Norwalk Public School Lunch Fund account.

**\*\*MR. KASSIMIS MOVED TO APPROVE AND DISCUSS THE SPECIAL APPROPRIATION TOTALING \$200,000 FOR THE CITY'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE FREE MEALS PROGRAM FOR NORWALK PUBLIC SCHOOLS. FUNDS TO BE TRANSFERRED FROM THE GENERAL FUND BALANCE ACCOUNT TO THE NORWALK PUBLIC SCHOOL LUNCH FUND ACCOUNT.**

Mr. Schmitt explained that following the adopted budget, an agreement provided additional funding to the Board of Education for needed programs, including restoration of the school nutrition program that had been cut. He noted concerns about the cut and subsequent amendments, stating that the City was requested to contribute \$200,000, with the remaining amount funded by the McCord Foundation via private donation and the Board of Education.

Mayor Harry Rilling commented on prior budget discussions where the Board of Education agreed to cut \$2 million from non-student-facing positions, but \$500,000 of that came from the school free lunch program, which he viewed as disingenuous given the overall budget exceeding \$240 million. He described how Superintendent Dr. Estrella secured outside funding and

requested the City's \$200,000 contribution, emphasizing that funding the program was preferable to sending children to school hungry and expressing strong support for approval.

Ms. Yang inquired about the funding breakdown, confirming it totaled \$475,000 to restore the \$500,000 cut, with \$200,000 from the City, \$200,000 from the McCord Foundation, and \$75,000 from the Board of Education. She asked if the program related to SNAP, and Mayor Harry Rilling clarified it was independent. Ms. Yang raised concerns about food waste observed previously by the late Mr. Greg Burnett, attributing it partly to requirements that students take full meals including milk, salad, bread, entree, and dessert even if unwanted, leading to garbage disposal. She suggested loosening standards to allow selection of individual items like a carton of milk since meals were free.

Mayor Harry Rilling agreed to raise the issue with Norwalk Public Schools. Mr. Camacho expressed concern about age-appropriateness for younger children, such as elementary students, in making meal decisions, though he supported reducing waste at suitable levels. Mr. Abrams noted the point was valid and that a recommendation could be made to Norwalk Public Schools. Ms. Yang requested inclusion in the record or resolution that Norwalk Public Schools examine requirements to eliminate waste, as highlighted by Mr. Burnett. Mr. Camacho questioned the extent of waste claimed, and Mr. Abrams reiterated that a suggestion to explore waste reduction could be made as part of program continuation, though implementation rested with Norwalk Public Schools. Mayor Harry Rilling added that with 20 schools, monitoring would be challenging but a program to curb excess waste could be developed.

Mr. Constant questioned the \$25,000 shortfall from the \$500,000 cut and its potential impact. Mayor Harry Rilling explained the \$75,000 came from a non-student-facing position, and the superintendent deemed \$475,000 sufficient. Mr. Jellerette noted the math did not fully add up to \$500,000. Mr. Schmitt confirmed it was the Board of Education's analysis for adequate nutrition levels. Ms. Yang suggested gathering unused food for donation to pantries. Mayor Harry Rilling committed to discussing monitoring and improvements with the superintendent. Mr. Jellerette supported the program to address hunger and peer pressure but recommended communication to families able to afford meals, offering opportunities for donations or payments, drawing from his own experience. Mr. Abrams noted this as another suggestion to forward.

Mr. Kassimis inquired if the program had been unfunded to that point, potentially leaving children without food. Mr. Schmitt clarified the overall program was about \$7 million and mostly funded, with this portion needed to fully fund it, and there was an approaching deadline.

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**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED. THE RESOLUTION WAS APPROVED.**

#### **IV. ADJOURNMENT**

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

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

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:30 p.m.

**Respectfully Submitted,  
Courtney Baldwin  
Recording Secretary**