

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
SPECIAL MEETING
VIA TELECONFERENCE
AUGUST 21, 2023**

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ATTENDANCE: Ed Abrams, Chair; Mayor Harry Rilling; Constant Kendrick;
Troy Jellerette; Artie Kassimis; Anne Yang

STAFF: Mario Coppola, Corporation Counsel; Irene Dixon, City Clerk; Thomas Ellis, Director Management and Budgets; Alan Lo, Building and Facilities Manager

Mr. Abrams called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Ms. Dixon called the Roll as indicated above. A Quorum was present.

Item 1:

Ms. Dixon read the following:

RESOLUTION: Requesting a special capital appropriation in the amount of \$2,900,000 for the Norwalk Public Schools for the acquisition of 6 properties abutting the proposed South Norwalk School and other project related purposes.

Mr. Lo shared his screen and presented the site plan. He explained that the site is approximately eleven acres. The upper portion of the property is not accessible, and the plan is to use the lower portion of the property for parent drop off.

Mr. Lo described the six properties the City wishes to acquire to provide open space and additional parking for the school.

The project will go out to bid in six months with construction starting in the spring. He described how the current incubator school students will arrive at the new school.

Mr. Lo explained the request for \$2.9 million from the residual funds from the Jefferson Elementary School project. He said that two separate appraisals of the properties were done and the \$2.9 million will cover the cost of acquisition. They will be coming back to the Board of Estimate and Taxation for more funds for the development of the site and for relocation costs.

Mr. Abrams asked about additional costs. Mr. Lo explained that the final cost is unknown and will take a couple of months to work out. He added that they are very respectful of the property owners regarding making friendly purchases.

Mr. Jellerette asked if the Jefferson Elementary School project was complete and about the eminent domain process. Mr. Lo explained that the Jefferson Elementary School project was completed a year ago. Mr. Coppola described the eminent domain process.

In response to Ms. Yang's question, Mr. Lo described the property owners. She said she reviewed the assessed value of the properties. Mr. Coppola explained that the assessed value of the properties has gone up since the last assessment in 2018 and reflect the market value from five years ago. He explained that two independent appraisals of the property were conducted, and they came in between \$2.5 and \$2.9 million. The request for \$2.9 million is based on the appraisals they received. He added that if they pursue eminent domain, they are required to have two separate appraisals.

Ms. Yang asked about the anticipated relocation costs. Mr. Coppola said it was difficult to know the full scope of those fees at this time. The City will work with the property owners to provide them with time to relocate after the properties are acquired.

Mr. Coppola explained that the City desires to acquire property at 11 Belden Avenue, where they have been renting a portion of the parking lot for the past several years for parking at the Library. The current lease expires at the end of this month. He said they have been in negotiations with the property owner but have not been able to settle on a price.

Mr. Jellerette said he was surprised to see the parking acquisition on the agenda and was not thrilled about this. Mayor Rilling said the City has been negotiating this property for a while. Mr. Coppola added that the City is in the process of obtaining two appraisals. Mr. Jellerette asked about the property owner. Mr. Coppola said the property owner is an entity owned by Jason Milligan. Mr. Jellerette asked if they looked at eminent domain for this property. Mr. Coppola said that ultimately, there will be a vote by the Common Council authorizing them to proceed with acquiring the property. Once they have authorization to take the property by eminent domain, they can work with the property owner in a good faith negotiation.

Mr. Jellerette asked if the price he read in the newspaper for the property was accurate. Mr. Coppola said he did not give a statement to the newspaper.

Mr. Jellerette went back to the school properties and asked if they need to purchase all six properties. Mr. Coppola said they plan to acquire all six properties and if they are not able to do that then they will proceed with eminent domain. Mr. Jellerette asked if all six properties will be subject to environmental reports. Mr. Lo said they would need to access the properties to conduct those tests.

Mr. Jellerette said he was not happy with the Library request. Mr. Coppola said they could separate the votes.

Item 2:

1. ACTION REQUESTED:

**** MR. ABRAMS MOVED THE FOLLOWING REQUEST**

A. RECOMMEND THE ALLOCATION OF \$2,900,000.00 IN SPECIAL CAPITAL APPROPRIATION FUNDS TO THE NORWALK PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOR THE ACQUISITION OF 6 PROPERTIES ABUTTING THE PROPOSED SOUTH NORWALK SCHOOL AS IDENTIFIED HEREIN THIS MEMO.

B. RECOMMEND THE REDUCTION OF \$2,900,000 FROM FREE BALANCE IN THE JEFFERSON SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT – CAPITAL BUDGET ACCOUNT # 0919-205010 5777 C0619

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

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2. ACTION REQUESTED:

**** MR. ABRAMS MOVED THE FOLLOWING REQUEST**

A. REVISE THE PROJECT DESCRIPTION FOR CAPITAL BUDGET ACCOUNT # 092-06210 5777 C0662.

CURRENT: FUNDING FOR BUILDING PROGRAMMING PHASE WITH DESIGN OPTIONS PROPOSED: FUNDING FOR BUILDING PROGRAMMING PHASE WITH DESIGN OPTIONS AND PROPERTY ACQUISITION

THIS PROJECT WAS APPROVED IN FYE 2020 WITH A BUDGET OF \$450,000, NO ACTUALS TO DATE.

B. REVISE THE PROJECT DESCRIPTION FOR CAPITAL BUDGET ACCOUNT # 092-16210 5777 C0662.

CURRENT: BELDEN AVE LIBRARY EXPANSION – ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES PROPOSED: BELDEN AVE LIBRARY EXPANSION – ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES AND PROPERTY ACQUISITION

This project was approved in FYE 2021 with a budget of \$1,570,000, no actuals to date.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) VOTE IN OPPOSITION (MR. JELLERETTE)**

**** MAYOR RILLING MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services