

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
REGULAR MEETING
VIA TELECONFERENCE
JULY 1, 2024**

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. 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 (Tom Ellis) at (Tellis@norwalkct.gov) with the subject line "Public Comment" to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Ed Camacho, Acting Chair; Mayor Harry Rilling; Kendrick Constant;
Troy Jellerette; Artie Kassimas; Anne Yang

STAFF: Mickey Docimo, Norwalk Police Department;
Thomas Ellis Comptroller; Esther Murillo, Assistant City Clerk;
Jared Schmitt, Chief Financial Officer

OTHERS: Alan Dutton, Oak Hills Park Authority

Mr. Camacho called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Ms. Murillo called the Roll as indicated above.

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

June 3, 2024 – Regular Meeting

**** MR. JELLERETTE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED**
**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MAYOR RILLING)**

2. **SPECIAL APPROPRIATIONS AGENDA** (Section A) None

3. **TRANSFER AGENDA** (Section B)

Mr. Ellis introduced the following transfer agenda. Mr. Docimo reviewed the following transfer requests for the Police Department and said this is their final redistribution of funds for the fiscal year.

**** MR. JELLERETTE MOVED TO APPROVE THE TRANSFER AGENDA AS PRESENTED**

SECTION B

**CITY OF NORWALK TRANSFERS 2023-24
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION**

FISCAL YEAR 2023-24:

POLICE DEPARTMENT:

From		To		Amount
01-3010-5272	Training & Education	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	\$606
01-3022-5292	Boarding Prisoners	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,323
01-3022-5294	Machinery Rental	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	516
01-3022-5822	Chemical Lab	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	19
01-3023-5246	Heating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	400
01-3023-5269	Other Repair	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,905
01-3023-5331	Automotive	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	501
01-3023-5333	Machinery & Eqpt.	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,220
01-3025-5269	Other Repair	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,557
01-3025-5272	Training & Education	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,931
01-3025-5286	Business Expense	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	266
01-3025-5295	Seminar & Conference	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	827
01-3025-5322	Chemical Lab	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	2,868
01-3026-5269	Other Repair	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,397
01-3026-5295	Machinery Rental	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	259
01-3026-5311	Office Supplies	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	11
01-3030-5234	Subscription & Dues	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	635
01-3030-5329	Other Operating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	6
01-3035-5269	Other Repair	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	84
01-3035-5294	Machinery Rental	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	122
01-3036-5328	Educational Supplies	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	378
01-3037-5235	Membership & Dues	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	13
01-3037-5295	Seminar & Conference	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	175
01-3037-5322	Chemical, Lab	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	308
01-3037-5329	Other Operating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	92
01-3037-5393	Photograph	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	375
01-3038-5328	DARE	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	711
01-3042-5272	Training & Education	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	891
01-3042-5286	Business Expense	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,155
01-3050-5329	Other Operating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	582
01-3059-5214	Messenger	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	370
01-3059-5251	Medical, Dental	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	5
01-3059-5269	Other Repair	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	21
01-3059-5298	Other	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	12
01-3059-5323	Food	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	89
01-3059-5324	Household	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	18
01-3059-5329	Other Operating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	2
01-3061-5211	Postage	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	34
01-3061-5221	Printing & Duplicating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	610
01-3061-5294	Machinery Rental	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	216
01-3061-5311	Office Supplies	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,260
01-3061-5329	Other Operating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	246
01-3071-5269	Other Repair	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	2,129
01-3071-5272	Training & Education	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	141
01-3071-5294	Machinery Rental	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	132
01-3071-5329	Other Operating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1
				\$26,420

This transfer is to cover various year-end operating expenses.

Finance recommends approval

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POLICE DEPARTMENT:

From		To		Amount
01-3071-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	01-3010-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	\$40,000
01-3071-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	01-3023-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	4,500
01-3071-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	01-302A-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	12,000
01-3071-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	01-3036-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	15,000
01-3071-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	01-3038-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	5,000
01-3071-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	01-3048-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	90,000
01-3071-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	01-3061-5110	Salary & Wages - Regular	10,000
01-3022-5120	Salary & Wages - Overtime	01-3036-5120	Salary & Wages - Overtime	5,000
01-3022-5120	Salary & Wages - Overtime	01-3037-5120	Salary & Wages - Overtime	15,000
01-3022-5120	Salary & Wages - Overtime	01-302A-5120	Salary & Wages - Overtime	1,000
				\$197,500

This transfer is to cover various account deficits. (Please See attached request).

Finance recommends approval

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mayor Rilling expressed his thanks to Mr. Docimo for keeping such meticulous records.

4. OTHER BUSINESS (Section C)

Mr. Ellis reported that they started the year with \$1.5 million and will finish the year with \$538,000. At the October meeting of the Board of Estimate and Taxation he will submit that the \$538,000 be rolled over into FY25 for on going labor negotiations. He explained that all but the Board of Education contracts are coming up.

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (Section D)

Financial reports

- Tax Collector's Narrative – May 2024
- Tax Collector's Report – May, 2024

Mr. Schmitt highlighted the following report:

As of the end of May 2024, having concluded eleven months of the fiscal year, we collected nearly \$373 million against what is now our \$379 million adjusted levy. The cumulative net adjusted levy remains significantly reduced from the original budgeted levy by more than \$4.1 million, primarily due to credits resulting from stipulated judgments in property tax appeal cases. As of the end of May 2024, our current collection rate was **98.37%**. We also collected **99.01%** of our sewer use levy, more than \$18 million, and **86.63%** of the Industrial Pretreatment Program (IPP) fee billing on behalf of the WPCA.

Compared with the prior fiscal year, we ended May 2024 at exactly the same rate as last year for collection of taxes (0% difference); slightly ahead for sewer use (.32%), and the IPP fee (.05%). We continue to see the effects of transferred payments from prior years taxes to current taxes, in accordance with court stipulated judgments in property tax appeal cases, as noted above. I have addressed this issue in greater detail in prior narratives. Please note that the figures we report are net of refunds and credits.

With regard to prior years' collections, we have collected (net) in excess of \$4 million in past due taxes and interest in this current fiscal year. Our year-to-date collections of back taxes and interest through the end of May 2024 are \$2.2 million more than what we collected during the same time period of the prior fiscal year. This variance is primarily a result of the tax sale endeavor.

Our third-party collection agency continues to bill on our behalf for suspended motor vehicle accounts. We began working with this agency in late 2022. Through the end of April 2024, in conjunction with their efforts, we collected more than \$954,978 in past due motor vehicle taxes and interest due directly to the City, as well as more than \$143,564 in fees due to the agency. The agency's fees are charged in addition to the taxes and interest due to the City and are paid by the taxpayers who owe the past due bills. This has been a successful endeavor, and we will continue to work with the agency going forward.

We continue working on the tax sale, scheduled for Monday, September 9, 2024. Our targeted collection for this sale was approximately (originally) \$4.5 million. We started work on the sale in November 2023, and mailed preliminary letters to owners of about 100 properties. We subsequently added more properties and sent two other sets of letters in early 2024, bringing the total number of properties to approximately 230.

As of this writing, **we have already collected in excess of \$3.5 million, up from \$2.9 million** reported as of the end of April 2024, on sale properties. There are approximately 130 properties remaining in the sale, with approximately \$3.3 million still to be collected, including more than \$410,000 in blight fees. We issued our tax sale demands the third week of May. We expect to file the notices of sale on the land records and to post the properties online by the end of the month, officially commencing the tax sale process.

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The 2024 tax sale will be our 10th sale since 2003. We have collected a cumulative total of more than \$44 million on properties directly included in tax sales; this figure does not include ancillary collections on properties not included in the sales that were nonetheless brought current due to publicity surrounding the sale initiatives.

Usually, 90 – 95% of the properties originally slated for sale are removed from the sale when the back taxes are paid. More effective tax collections and higher current and back collection rates allow the rate makers (Board of Estimate and Taxation) to set lower mill rates, as they will require a smaller allowance for uncollectible taxes. Conversely, lower tax collection rates require higher mill rates to be set, because not everybody pays on time, and the funds nonetheless are being allocated for spending, so the on-time taxpayers make up the difference. Lower mill rates allow for more stable budgeting, contribute to higher bond ratings, and serve as de facto tax relief for every taxpayer.

Our fiscal year ends on June 30, and the new fiscal year begins on July 1, 2024. With regard to the billing of our 2023 grand list, we did not get our billing files to our printer by the last week of May, as we had hoped. This year, our endeavor was complicated by two primary drivers of delay: first, the motor vehicle credits from the June 2023 tax billing of the 2021 grand list that were carried over to this billing; and, the phase in of the 2023 grand list valuations for real estate. There is also compilation of sewer and IPP data, property transfers, property tax relief applications for approximately 1,300+ households that receive city or state property tax relief, and other variables. Further, we are dependent on our software vendor to process the data and provide it to our third-party printing and mailing vendor.

This is our third major billing using our QDS software, following the June 2023 and January 2024 tax billings, and while we are more familiar with the process this year, there are still issues. As of this writing, our motor vehicle bills are at the printer, and we expect to have the motor vehicle bills online and available to be downloaded and paid by the week of June 10. We anticipate sending the real estate and business personal property files to the printer within the next few days.

We will post updates on our website when we know exactly when taxpayers can expect to receive their bills in the mail. The last day on which to pay these bills will be August 1, 2024. I will continue to keep all stakeholders advised of our progress, and am available to respond to any questions, issues or concerns.

Mr. Jellerette asked about the bond sale. Mr. Schmitt explained they had their first meeting with the financial advisor today. The sale is scheduled sometime in mid to late August. Mr. Ellis added that the rates are higher than they were last year, but the market is less volatile.

- Oak Hills Park Financials – May 2024
- Oak Hills Park FY 2021-2025 Budget

Mr. Dutton reported that Oak Hills Park Authority is negotiating with SNEW regarding their water use. They are being treated as a residential user.

- Year-to-date Capital Budget Report – FY 2023-24
- Year-to-date Operating Expenditure Report – FY 2023-24
- Year-to-date Operating Revenue Report – FY 2023-24

Mr. Ellis reported that overall the City is in good shape. Mayor Rilling added that they are looking at what departments want, but did not purchase at the end of the year; however, he is suggesting they put that money aside for contingency. He added that the department heads do a really good job managing their budgets.

- Police Wages FY 2023-24
- Fire Wages FY 2023-24
- Public Works Wages FY 2023-24
- Year-to-date BOE Operating Expenditure Report FY 2023-24
- Year-to-date Budget Expenditure Report by Division

**** MAYOR RILLING MOVED TO ADJOURN**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further discussion, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Norwalk
Board of Estimate and Taxation
Regular Meeting
Via Teleconference
July 1, 2024
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