

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
SPECIAL MEETING
VIA TELECONFERENCE
MARCH 28, 2023**

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Members of the public who wish to view the meeting, but are not participating, can view a live stream on the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. This stream is delayed by approximately 20 seconds. Please find the information using the link above. The meeting recording and minutes will be posted on the City of Norwalk website within seven (7) days after the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Ed Abrams, Chair; Mayor Harry Rilling; James Frayer; Troy Jellerette; Artie Kassimis; Anne Yang; Kendrick Constant (6:36 p.m.)

STAFF: Irene Dixon, City Clerk; Thomas Ellis, Director of Budgets and Management

Mr. Abrams called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

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

1. SET THE CAPITAL BUDGET CAP FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024

Ms. Dixon read the following:

RESOLUTION: NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION OF THE CITY OF NORWALK THAT:

THE CAPITAL BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024, WHICH WILL BE TRANSMITTED ON APRIL 3, 2023, HAS A TOTAL OF \$49,640,145 LESS \$1,199,453 IN REVENUE RESULTING IN AN AMOUNT OF \$48,440,692 TO BE

BONDED.

CITY AND NORWALK PUBLIC SCHOOLS TOTAL IS \$36,540,692

**ENTERPRISE FUNDS (WPCA AND PARKING AUTHORITY) TOTAL IS
\$11,900,000**

**** MR. KASSIMIS MOVED TO SET THE CAPITAL BUDGET CAP FOR FISCAL
YEAR 2023-2024**

Mr. Ellis explained that the Enterprise Funds are self-funded and not included in the threshold for the bonding agencies.

Mr. Constant joined the meeting at 6:36 p.m.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

2. BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION VOTE ON FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024
TENTATIVE OPERATING BUDGET

Mr. Abrams explained that the Board of Estimate and Taxation has been through the numbers multiple times. The numbers from Finance are final.

Mr. Ellis shared his screen. This budget does not include the \$1 million approved by the Common Council and is below the Mayor's proposed budget. The budget is 2.29% over the FY23 approved budget with a 4.00% increase for the Board of Education and a 0.40% increase for the City of Norwalk.

**** MR. JELLERETTE MOVED TO APPROVE THE FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024
TENTATIVE OPERATING BUDGET**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MS YANG MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 6:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi, Telesco Secretarial Services

City Of Norwalk
Board Of Estimate And Taxation
Special Meeting
Via Teleconference
March 28, 2023
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Ellis, Tom

From: Diane Lauricella <dlauricella24@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 28, 2023 4:35 PM
To: Abrams, Ed; Kassimis, A; Constant, Kendrick; Frayer, J; Jellerette, T;
ayang@cadwynpoint.com
Cc: Dachowitz, Henry; Ellis, Tom; Rilling, Harry; Burnett, Greg; Young, Darlene
Subject: TONIGHT Board of Estimate Operating Budget Deliberations 2023

CAUTION: EXTERNAL Email: Don't open links or attachments from untrusted senders

Mr. Abrams and the BET

Before you render your decision about the Capital Budget Cap and the Tentative Operating Budget, please review the email that I sent below regarding several methods to reduce the expenses of our City while also increasing revenue through much more robust Grant and Enforcement programs.

Again, I believe that you should doubt the sincerity of both the BOE, NPS and even the City when it comes to searching for savings. By leaving out the ideas that I have been speaking about for years, the City does not appear to be sincere.

I am a member of the CTGBC (CT Green Business Council) and the Ad-Hoc CT Energy Network. I am also an environmental management professional. I have offered credible third-party referrals and information about these matters to the BOE, NPS, and the City for years.

We should be optimizing the use of renewable energy to reduce our electricity, heating, and fuel bills. For example, we should be drastically reducing our Eversource, 2nd, and 3rd Taxing District electric bills by making electricity and by reforming a narrow-minded policy about where and when solar panels can be used. This is but ONE of the energy measures the City has not adopted, there are more.

Why not literally cut all departments' electricity expenditure requests across the Board by at least 1/3 - 1/2 and tell them to plan and implement greater energy efficiency and leased solar programs at all schools, select parks, and the former landfill? Other towns in CT and across the US have done this and experienced great savings.

We have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars a year due to the wrong-headed energy policies. No matter what you will be told, the BOE and the City have not responded to several of my attempts to meet with them in an effort to reduce their energy expenses, sometimes literally either attacking me in public (former BOE Facilities Chair Mike Barbis shouted at me at a public forum about my opinion about the need for more solar use at the Ponus Middle School expansion design and Planning and Zoning Chairman Lou Schulman insulting me when I mentioned the lack of solar infrastructure during this year's Capital Budget public hearing) or just never responding when I tried to help them understand how to reduce their energy costs (Dr. Estrella, the Mayor and select BOE and Council members).

I believe that this rude behavior must stop.

I would be happy to speak to you after tonight's meeting about my ideas.

Regards

Diane Lauricella
203-858-1537

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Diane Lauricella <dlauricella24@yahoo.com>

To: Henry Dachowitz <hdachowitz@norwalkct.org>; tellis@norwalkct.org <tellis@norwalkct.org>

Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 at 05:35:12 PM EDT

Subject: Board of Estimate Operating Budget Public Hearing: 2023 Fw: EV Use in Police Fleets Westport/ Police Article

Edward Abrams
Chairman, Board of Estimate and Taxation (BET)
Members of the BET
Staff to the BET

Thank you for your service.

I believe that the following suggestions include some of the "earth-shattering" ideas that you may need to review and go back to the drawing board for more factual information after the public hearing tonight. The savings and revenue resources are HUGE if taken seriously.

I would like the following Nancy on Norwalk article (Link below) that I wrote be made part of the public hearing record and considered seriously before you vote on the Operating Budget. I have mentioned much of this in previous years with little attention. This year many of you state the urgency of our Budget challenges so that may require that you refrain from dismissing the value of the suggestions.

Year after year, the City does not appear to be willing to "go big" to address the policy and practices that would make these ideas about utility savings, creating our own electricity, and increasing grant outcomes a reality. I am not saying that the City is making little progress, but I am stating that they are not optimizing our opportunities quickly enough, are losing grant funding to more proactive towns, and are missing several important solutions.

You will be told otherwise by certain staff and officials but please just see the actual numbers, by building, of the electric bills. You are being misinformed by powerful people that have their agenda set up. It is also important to compare and contrast what some other towns are doing. I have recommended several more advanced towns and free energy assistance opportunities to the City to little avail.

There are too many Grants we do not apply for. The opportunities to enforce laws that make Norwalk's quality of life could yield additional funding for additional staff.

Policy changes needed now: While I appreciate that you are trying to ascertain small cuts in the Operating budget, you are still missing the "forest for the trees" and an opportunity to recommend and insist that important policies and practices be changed.

Besides the Expense reduction opportunities related to energy and heating, etc., the City can gain funds through Fulltime Grant Manager/Writer, More vigorous enforcement, and staff and officials training events.

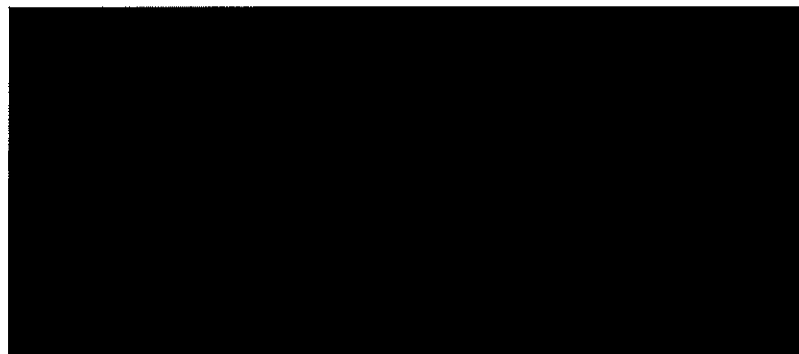
Please also refer to my second reference, by scrolling down to the bottom of this email, an email link that I sent last budget cycle in 2022 about hybrid and electric vehicles purchased by the Westport Police Department. These cars are capital budget purchases, but they are "fueled" by the Operating Budget. This suggestion has been made by me and others for years as well.

I recently observed the BET 3/20 Operating Budget Review session recording where the matter of Police and Fire Department fuel and heating costs were brought up. The heating costs could be reduced if our energy policies changed and modernized. The email speaks for itself as the Town of Westport has saved money with their police cars.

For several years, I and others have asked that the City departments only purchase or lease hybrid or electric vehicles.

While the City recently has begun using hybrid vehicles, they still resist the use of additional hybrid and electric vehicles and light-duty trucks and ALWAYS have many reasons why they cannot utilize more of them.

What if residents reviewed the whole Operating Budget and spoke at tonight's BET public hearing?



What if residents reviewed the whole Operating Budget and spoke at tonig...

What if...residents reviewed the entire Operating Budget in order to see if they were getting what they've paid fo...

Westport Police Cars:

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Keegan, Tom <tkeegan@norwalkct.org>
To: Diane Lauricella <dlauricella24@yahoo.com>; McMurrer, Jenn <JMcMurrer@norwalkct.org>
Cc: Alterman, Heidi <HAlterman@norwalkct.org>; Ayers, Nicol <NAyers@norwalkct.org>; Goldstein, Josh <JGoldstein@norwalkct.org>; Dominique Johnson <DJohnson@norwalkct.org>; Révolus, Diana <DRevolus@norwalkct.org>
Sent: Thursday, January 27, 2022 at 07:01:14 PM EST
Subject: Re: EV Use in Police Fleets Westport/ Police Article

Thanks Diane .Tom

[Get Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Diane Lauricella <dlauricella24@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 27, 2022 6:59:12 PM
To: McMurrer, Jenn <JMcMurrer@norwalkct.org>
Cc: Alterman, Heidi <HAlterman@norwalkct.org>; Ayers, Nicol <NAyers@norwalkct.org>; Goldstein, Josh <JGoldstein@norwalkct.org>; Dominique Johnson <DJohnson@norwalkct.org>; Keegan, Tom <TKeegan@norwalkct.org>; Révolus, Diana <DRevolus@norwalkct.org>
Subject: EV Use in Police Fleets Westport/ Police Article

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Dear Chair McMurrer and Committee

Just saw this agenda.

FYI Please consider tabling this item until you review the Westport police Dept. and other Departments who purchase EV , not Hybrids.

<https://evclubct.com/tesla-police-vehicle-saves-westport-tens-of-thousands-of-dollars/>

Sincerely

Diane Lauricella

203-858-1537

Ellis, Tom

From: Barbara Meyer-Mitchell <Barbara@Meyer-Mitchell.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 28, 2023 2:40 PM
To: Alterman, Heidi; Ayers, Nicol; Burnett, Greg; Camacho, Edwin; Goldstein, Josh; Heuvelman, David; Kydes, John; Livingston, Thomas P.; McMurrer, Jenn; Meek, Bryan; Niedzielski-Eichner, Nora; Révolus, Diana; Rilling, Harry; Shanahan, Lisa; Smyth, Barbara; Council Young; Abrams, Ed; Constant, Kendrick; Frayer, J; Jellerette, T; Kassimis, A; Rilling, Harry;ayang@cadwynpoint.com; Board
Cc: Dachowitz, Henry; Rilling, Harry; King, Laoise; Ellis, Tom; Lo, Alan; Giuliano, Jim; Estrella, Alexandra; Faioes, Sandra; Hodel, Bill; Norwalk PTOC
Subject: Public Comment for 3/28 Special BET Meeting: Norwalk School Construction Fund Planning for 2023-2048

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Good afternoon Members of the Common Council, Board of Education and Board of Taxation,

I am writing today to request that the Board of Education, Common Council and Board of Estimate and Taxation begin the important work of planning how to execute the necessary repairs and construction in Norwalk Public Schools. Professional estimates place the necessary repairs and construction at somewhere between \$429,000,000 and \$495,000,000.

We are deeply fortunate that our legislative team were able to pass House Bill 5506 in May of 2022. This legislation gives us a 60% reimbursement rate on our necessary renovations over the next 25 years. It also gives us an 80% reimbursement for the new Norwalk High School construction. So we have a golden opportunity to finally develop a proactive plan to address the 45 year neglect of our school buildings.

City of Norwalk CFO Henry Dachowitz has been clear that our bonding capacity is limited and our indebtedness is high. We need to protect our AAA bond rating to ensure Norwalk can continue to secure low interest rates for decades to come. But we cannot protect the bond rating at the expense of the quality of life of our community. We need to take proactive action to put in place the funds necessary to take advantage of the 60% reimbursement rate before it times out.

Norwalk should follow Stamford's lead and create a fund for School Facility Construction and Repair and dedicate some percentage tax increase to that purpose. For example, Stamford chose 1%, in order to prepare for what they need for \$1.5 billion in repairs. The fund should be generated by a slight mill rate increase, and can be accelerated and augmented by moving funds from the "rainy day" unallocated general fund when it is above the policy of 15% of annual expenditures.

If we take the low estimate of the needs in the buildings, \$429 million, then Norwalk's 40% funding need would be \$171,600,000 over 25 years. That is \$6,864,000 annually for 25 years, which I believe is about .45 mill rate increase at our current Grand List. It might be even lower following the revaluation in eight months.

This would eliminate paying interest on bonds, as well as lowering the debt service line in the Operating budget going forward as old bonds are paid off. That leaves further bonding available to us to focus on flood mitigation and paving and parks, and to consider working on the environmental mitigation of Manresa Island. This would also protect our AAA bond rating and show the rating agencies that we have a professionally guided plan to invest proactively in our schools without increasing indebtedness.

Ellis, Tom

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We need a true plan to execute these repairs during the 25-year window of 60% reimbursement rate, and the time to do that is now.

Here are the articles upon which this thinking is based:

<https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/norwalkstamford-to-get-60-state-reimbursement-on-school-construction-projects/>

<https://www.stamfordadvocate.com/news/article/Stamford-Norwalk-gain-big-in-17166181.php>

<http://www.senatedems.ct.gov/duff-news/4393-duff-220512#sthash.5ggQzyvj.dpbs>

<https://www.thehour.com/news/article/Study-Norwalk-schools-need-at-least-429M-worth-16124089.php>

<https://www.ctinsider.com/news/thehour/article/Norwalk-finance-chief-warns-city-could-lose-AAA-16829650.php?t=09ad223352>

<https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/norwalk-efficiency-study-released-a-book-hopefully-not-a-door-stop/>

<https://ctexaminer.com/2022/11/06/1-5-billion-school-construction-plan-has-board-of-finance-board-of-ed-at-odds-in-stamford/>

Thank you for your consideration of this suggestion and your willingness to serve,
Barbara Meyer-Mitchell
10 Allen Road

--

Barbara Meyer-Mitchell
Barbara@Meyer-Mitchell.com



CITY OF NORWALK
Henry M. Dachowitz
Chief Financial Officer
hdachowitz@norwalkct.org

Mobile: 516-728-4991
Office: 203-854-7870
125 East Avenue, PO BOX 5125
Norwalk, CT 06856-5125

MEMORANDUM

To: Greg Burnett, Chairman, Finance Committee
From: Henry M. Dachowitz, CFO
Date: April 4, 2023
Subject: Auditing Services – FY23 (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023)

Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S. Sections 7-396 and 4-232) require the appointing authority of any municipality, audited agency or non-profit agency to file with the Secretary of the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management (OPM) the name of the independent auditor designated to conduct the audit. The notification must be made at least thirty days before the end of the fiscal period of the entity for which the audit is required.

In 2020, the City recently issued Request for Proposal (RFP) #3987 requesting proposals from qualified CPA firms to perform the City's annual Financial Statement Audit (including the Single Audit of Grants) and to assist in the preparation of the City's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) for the five (5) year period commencing July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2025 (covering audits of Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2020 through FYE June 30, 2024). Clifton Larson Allen, LLP (formerly Blum, Shapiro & Company) was selected. I am submitting for your approval the fourth year (FY23) of the contract at a fee of \$101,000.

Cc: Harry W. Rilling, Mayor