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**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
PUBLIC HEARING
COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBERS AND VIA TELECONFERENCE
MARCH 22, 2023**

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

STAFF: Henry Dachowitz, Chief Financial Officer; Irene Dixon, City Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Abrams called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

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

Mayor Rilling made opening remarks. He noted that this was the most challenging years since he took office. He said that every speaker was listened to and every correspondence was read.

Mr. Abrams explained that all written comments have been reviewed. He added that the Board's job this evening was to listen and not react to comments.

Interpretive services were available in Haitian Creole and Spanish.

**BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION PUBLIC HEARING ON THE FY 2023-24
OPERATING BUDGET**

Public participation comments are not verbatim and represent a summarization of statements unless otherwise noted. Speakers are Norwalk residents unless otherwise noted.

Ms. Diane Lauricella thanked the Board for holding a hybrid meeting. She said she sent an e-mail and wrote a letter that was published in Nancy on Norwalk. She asked that the letter be included as part of the record.

Ms. Lauricella asked the Board to refrain from voting this evening, because there is a lot more that needs to be discussed. She noted that Norwalk is losing grant funding to other towns. She spoke about the need for energy cost savings and said if the City had optimized the use of solar energy 10 years ago, there would have been a savings to the tax payers. Parents and the Board of Education need to be funded, but they need to be more sincere about cost savings in such areas as recycling and trash.

Ms. Lauricella said the City needs a full time Grants team and they should be housed in the Finance Department. She asked for changes to bring expenses down and revenues up. She said enforcement is needed.

Mr. Bryan Meek spoke about the cost of education and the debt service. He said the cost to build the school buildings is going to cannibalize other projects the City needs to do. He said the Finance Director's introduction to the capital budget was very sobering. He asked everyone to walk through the existing Norwalk High School and ask themselves if it is worth knocking down and delaying other projects such as the South Norwalk School. He noted that the Tracey School gym and said it looks the same way it did 70 years ago and areas are being held together with duct tape.

Mr. Meek said they can not afford to go for luxuries when they need necessities. In looking at the annual report during the 2000s, there were 11,000 school children with 1,300 staff; however, they now have almost 2,000 staff for the same number of school children, despite outsourcing janitorial and lunch room staff.

Ms. Adriana Romero advocated for the school budget. She said the reason for additional school staff is due to offering support for the students. She asked as the Board goes through the numbers, they take into consideration that every number is one of the children.

There were no other members of the public who wished to comment.

A recess was called at 6:55 p.m.
The meeting resumed at 7:03 p.m.

Mayor Riling said this has been the most difficult budget season. They are being faced with a huge increase from the schools and he has heard from residents who cannot afford a tax increase.

He said that he and his staff will meet with Dr. Estrella tomorrow to discuss how they can get more funding for the schools, without increasing the mill rate.

**** MR. JELLERETTE MOVED TO DELAY THE VOTE ON THE FY 2023-24
OPERATING BUDGET UNTIL AFTER THE MEETING
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

Ellis, Tom

From: Mary Noonan <marynoonanrealestate@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 10:20 PM
To: Abrams, Ed; Constant, Kendrick; Frayer, J; Jellerette, T; Kassimis, A; Rilling, Harry; ayang@cadwynpoint.com; Ellis, Tom
Subject: Honor the budget cap

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

To whom it may concern
Honor the budget cap set by the common council. Our children are depending on that money!

Mary Noonan
9 Heritage Hill Road
Norwalk
Sent from my iPhone

Ellis, Tom

From: ana tabachneck <serelle21@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 21, 2023 10:56 PM
To: Abrams, Ed; Constant, Kendrick; Frayer, J; Jellerette, T; Kassimis, A; Rilling, Harry; ayang@cadwynpoint.com; Ellis, Tom
Subject: Please fund the BOE

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Don't cut the extra million the Cc added to the mayors proposed budget. I don't have the thumb energy to write all the reasons why. You know why.

Ana tabachneck
4 gilbert st

Sent from my iPhone

Ellis, Tom

From: Ed Abrams <abrams981@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 8:21 AM
To: Ellis, Tom
Subject: Fwd: <https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/norwalk-bet-looks-to-keep-tax-levy-below-councils-cap/>

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For the record.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: jkbedol1951 <jkbedol1951@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Mar 22, 2023 at 7:48 AM
Subject: <https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/norwalk-bet-looks-to-keep-tax-levy-below-councils-cap/>
To: <ABRAMS981@gmail.com>

Mr. Abrams:

"Lovers of budget setting, like lovers of sausage....."

Much appreciation for your efforts to hold the line on the forthcoming city budget. While many would disagree with me, I have always viewed the city as a business, with its component departments as operating divisions. Just as any business must serve its stockholders, a city must remain mindful of the burden being imposed on its taxpayers. We understand that the needs of Norwalk are quite different than those of its surrounding towns; that said, however, the local tax burden in Norwalk is spiraling beyond the ability of many to cope. Hopefully, this reality is being impressed upon the B of E and other department heads throughout the city.

Norwalk is a special place. It's character will certainly change if fiscal discipline is not imposed.

Respectfully,

Joel

Joel K. Bedol

37 Naromake Avenue
Norwalk, Connecticut 06854
828.406.4600
jkbedol1951@gmail.com

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Ellis, Tom

From: Ed Abrams <abrams981@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 10:34 AM
To: Ellis, Tom
Subject: Fwd: BOE Comment for Funding

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

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Michelle Tiani <michelletiani@gmail.com>
Date: Wed, Mar 22, 2023 at 10:22 AM
Subject: BOE Comment for Funding
To: <ABRAMS981@gmail.com>, <KENDRICKCONSTANT27@gmail.com>, <JPFRAYER@sbcglobal.net>, <TROY8261@gmail.com>, <AKASSIMIS@hotmail.com>, <HRILLING@norwalkct.org>, <ayang@cadwynpoint.com>

To whom it may concern,

I wanted to express my concern in making sure the BOE keeps their 1 million extra dollars that was given to them in addition to their percentage and nothing additional gets taken away from the budget. Our children are our future, if you need to cut numbers please find another area to do so, thank you.

Michelle Tiani

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Thanks.

Ed Abrams

Ellis, Tom

From: Sarah McIntee <sarahrmcintee@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 11:12 AM
To: Ellis, Tom
Cc: Abrams, Ed; Constant, Kendrick; Frayer, J; Jellerette, T; Kassimis, A; Rilling, Harry; ayang@cadwynpoint.com
Subject: Fund NPS

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

Good Morning,

I am submitting these comments to you via email because there is a high likelihood that I will be unable to attend tonight's meeting in person. I work in NYC and am in my office in the city today making it nearly impossible to be home in time to attend in person. However, I wanted to use this email as an opportunity to strongly advocate for our schools and properly funding them.

I watched the recent meeting from March 20, 2023 and was immediately concerned by the comments made by several members of the BET, including Mayor Harry Rilling, Ed Abrams and Jim Frayer. I find it alarming that once again, the BET is taking it upon themselves to undercut the intention of Council and remove (at a minimum) the additional \$1 million dollars that the council allotted for education and to attempt to make our schools whole. As I mentioned in comments to the Council - this is a problem of our own making. In fact, it was the BET who made the decision to reverse a 2 percent increase two years ago and flat fund our schools. This decision was not only short sighted by incredibly detrimental to the schools. It forced NPS to use federally mandated funds designed to help our children recover from the trauma of COVID and make up any learning loss on things that otherwise should have been funded by the operating budget generally. This includes basic things like salaries for social workers and counselors. These positions were previously funded in the general operating budget but had to be moved given very significant and serious restrictions placed by both Federal and state government on how funds could be used.

Today, we risk losing counselors and social workers, sports, music, and other extracurricular programs that allow NPS to push out well rounded and challenged students. Students who can enter the world, find success, and then hopefully choose to come back and live and work in Norwalk when it is time to raise their own families. However, if these programs are lost, if critical positions like learning interventionists are lost, there will be an immediate negative impact on those who need it the most. We can not continue to rob Peter to pay Paul.

Families of means won't be the ones impacted, in fact they'll be the ones who list their houses and move to a surrounding community. It will be the children who already struggle for any number of reasons losing out on the single most important thing that break any cycle of poverty - an education. The U.S. Department of Labor regularly issues statistics on the difference in income one can earn when they have a high school education vs. a college education. It amounts to hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not millions over the course of a lifetime. Without an education, we continue to set these children back, we continue to limit their opportunity, and we continue a cycle of poverty that we struggle with today.

I understand that raising taxes is a hard decision, but I also understand that we can not continue on the current trajectory. The schools are underfunded, the city is underfunded, basic services that used to be provided are no longer offered. The only way to make change in this city and improve the quality of life for all of our residents is to find a way to support the schools and other city services financially. And that means higher taxes. I, for one, would gladly pay an extra amount of money in taxes if it meant my children got a well rounded and strong education. And I am not alone in that belief.

As a taxpayer, a parent, a member of my school's SGC, and an active member of this community, I can guarantee you that should you continue this road of underfunding the schools, you will see repercussions. Crime will increase, child poverty will increase, the city will decline in reputation and people will not want to move here and raise families here. Please do the right thing, right the wrong decisions made by this very committee two years ago and make the schools whole. It is the only answer.

Sarah McIntee

6 Susan Court

Ellis, Tom

From: Sarah LeMieux <mommasarah@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 12:32 PM
To: Abrams, Ed; Constant, Kendrick; Frayer, J; Jellerette, T; Kassimis, A; Rilling, Harry; ayang@cadwynpoint.com; Ellis, Tom; dachowitzh@norwalkct.org
Cc: Shirah
Subject: NPS budget comments

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Dear Mayor Rilling and Members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation,

I'll be as brief as I can, as I'm sure you're reading through many comments from constituents and stakeholders.

I have been engaged in trying to improve Norwalk Public Schools since 2012, when I first began volunteering at Tracey. Since then, I have served on the governance councils at both CMS and West Rocks, and a term on the Board of Education from 2017-2021, including service as both Vice Chair and Chair. When my family moved here, NPS was in a state of dysfunction and crisis, and had a terrible reputation, to the point where I was extremely hesitant to send my oldest daughter here. A combination of cuts to staff and services and terrible relationships both within the BoE and between the BoE and the city resulted in a working environment that could not keep a superintendent -- we went through an absurd and embarrassing revolving door period before the board hired Steven Adamowski in 2015.

Working with Mayor Rilling and a new board, Dr. Adamowski was able to make it understood that in order to improve and stabilize the school system, we needed to invest, both in the short term and the long term. Those investments have paid off, resulting in significant, measurable improvements -- to which I can personally attest, but you can also take a look at the data yourselves. Eight years of measurable improvement are now at stake, and I am disappointed, both as a property owner and taxpayer, and as someone who has invested years of my own unpaid time in the school system. Good schools have an enormous impact on property values, as well as a cascading effect on everything about a city's finances, including the stability and vitality of the businesses that choose to operate here based on our city's reputation.

There is a narrative framing around Dr. Estrella and her administration that is inaccurate, and if I were a cynical person, I might imagine that it was intentionally so to justify cuts and not have to raise taxes in an election year. I'm not a cynical person, and so I will give the benefit of the doubt to everyone involved in this process. Nevertheless: Dr. Estrella and her administration are not overly focused on "woke" priorities, and you can see that reflected in the budget book. Central office is leaner than it was under Dr. Adamowski; we spend less per pupil than every surrounding district to which we are compared. Moreover, no other district in our DRG flat-funded their school system during the pandemic, and that is the main driver of this year's proportionally larger ask. Dr. Estrella and her administration are focused on delivering the best possible instruction to the 12,000 or so students in the system, which is our city's moral and legal obligation. From both a pedagogical and a budgetary standpoint, all the instructional support services (and personnel) that are seen as "extras" are not extras, but strategic choices to make instruction maximally effective. As chair, I gladly agreed to the joint audit of NPS and city finances, and the results of that audit reflect the above as well.

I would be more than happy to have a conversation with any of you to answer questions or offer any other information I can give, based on my perspective and time served here. Fundamentally, I ask you to prioritize preserving and sustaining the investments we have all made in our schools over the past eight years -- not to do so will create a cycle of dysfunction that will take another eight years to remediate.

Thank you,

Sarah LeMieux

--

Sarah LeMieux

<http://www.sarahlemieux.com>

Ellis, Tom

From: Barbara Meyer-Mitchell <Barbara@Meyer-Mitchell.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 2:12 PM
To: BRAMS981@GMAIL.COM; Constant, Kendrick; Frayer, J; Jellerette, T; Kassimis, A; Rilling, Harry; ayang@cadwynpoint.com; Ellis, Tom
Cc: Dachowitz, Henry; King, Laoise; Board; Norwalk PTOC
Subject: Public Comment for the BET Public Hearing tonight at 6:30pm

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Members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation,

Thank you for your volunteer service to protect the financial health of the City of Norwalk. Please consider working towards a more modern and robust manner of budgeting for the City of Norwalk and Norwalk Public Schools.

1. Listen to the professional staff when they articulate a need.
2. Pay attention to the recommendations of the Efficiency Study
3. Stop relying on a Contingency fund for the City until you consider allowing a Contingency fund for the Board of Education.
4. Stop playing games with vacancies, and staff appropriately to conduct business in line with best practice. We need to budget for all necessary city and school positions.
5. Stop expecting staff to keep absorbing rising labor/benefit/utility costs in their existing budgets. Most departments are operating efficiently, and we may jeopardize services because we want to cut 0.16% from the budget.
6. Treat the NPS Administration and BOE with respect as you would any other department head in the city, and hold space for them to discuss their budget with you reasonably.
7. Continue to “right-size” Norwalk’s tax rate to be more in line with comparable cities.

1.) **Needs:** Professional staff for both the City and Norwalk Public Schools have articulated some very important needs in this budget cycle. For example, on the city side there is a clear need for better cybersecurity. A breach in 2018 cost \$900,000, and five years later we still have not taken action to address the risk. The efficiency study clearly prioritized this position, and it stands to save us money in the long run. The need for both deputy zoning inspector and blight enforcement officer is clear, and your professional staff has articulated that it is likely these positions will pay for themselves through fines and improved property values.

Similarly, the Board of Education has studied the need for more support of students, teachers and families. I include the history below, in case you are newer to the BET or not aware of this historical context.

Counseling:

In 2018-19 a committee was created to study how counseling and social work could be improved, as there were many complaints from families that their needs were not met. In addition, it was clear to the administration and the board that oversight of these critical roles was lacking. The committee was comprised of students, parents, teachers, counselors, principals, non-profit partners and former board member Julie Corbett who is an education consultant. They met for a half a year, and working with the consultant developed a very strong report and call to action to reform the support services to our students. Important to note is that while the city can add one

position in one building to achieve a program goal, the Board must add one at every building in the comparable level. So, adding counseling services at the elementary level requires adding 13 FTE positions, perhaps more depending on the need in the building. Yes, those are new positions to our system, and we KNEW we needed them before the pandemic. These were positions planned for and discussed starting in 2018.

This is the report: https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/NPS-school-counseling-redesign-committee-report-20191001_02074977.pdf

In order to ensure that these staff members were properly managed, the District hired Jim Martinez to develop these new supports. https://www.norwalkps.org/532202_3?articleID=78545

This piece interviewed counselors across the district about their work: https://norwalkps.org/540240_3?articleID=124782

When families experience trauma, the adults in the household are often least able to help themselves or their children. These supports are vital to help keep kids on track, whatever the world throws at them. In addition, without appropriate staffing IEPs are not in legal compliance, which opens the district up to legal costs and expensive outplacements. I can attest to IEP goals not being met because staff was handling violence, suicidal ideation, school avoidance, and so much more. This is not fair to students, families, or our hard-working staff who are drowning in the emotional needs in the buildings.

Special Education

Norwalk received multiple failing reports regarding our special education in the past decades.

In 2021 when Mr. Dachowitz raised concerns about increased FTE positions, the district developed this response: https://www.norwalkps.org/532202_3?articleID=783672

“Special Education: Historically, our community has had significant concerns about the delivery of special education services in Norwalk. To adequately serve our students with disabilities, we committed to adding special education services and building capabilities in-house, reducing our reliance on outside contracted services and out-of-district tuition. We do not believe that it is appropriate for Norwalk to bus children to out-of-district private schools, at a cost of \$150,000 or more per student.

This was a planned, strategic action item, supported by initial funding provided by the Special Education Development Fund. Although it required the district to add staff, this has clearly produced overall financial savings, and revamped a special education program that had been the subject of three highly critical CREC reports in the past.”

Here are some further articles and reports to help illustrate the wasted time for a decade while the city and board did not work together to address the special education failures in our schools:

2008 CREC report: <http://redapplesnorwalk.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/crecreport1.pdf>

<https://www.thehour.com/norwalk/article/Cambridge-Report-findings-on-Norwalk-schools-8253342.php>

"We got a great sense of urgency with this (report)," said Bishop-Pullan. "I understand the need to be thoughtful, but I expect some of this needs to be done quickly." Spoiler alert, it did not get better in 2008.

<https://www.thehour.com/norwalk/article/CREC-report-to-Norwalk-Board-of-Ed-cites-problems-8268586.php>

“Among suggestions, CREC officials listed the need to more actively locate and hire enough special education teachers and appropriate specialists. They acknowledged that locating these professionals is difficult for every district but they said it was necessary for Norwalk to streamline its hiring procedures and even seek out new graduates. You cannot go two months without speech and language specialists, board members were told by McDonald.”

In 2012 CREC reported that Norwalk was both under-identifying students with special needs, and severely underspending on special education staffing compared to both our DRG and the state averages. Administrators and teachers were saying behind closed doors that they didn’t have the funds to provide appropriate services.

Their hands were tied and they could not grant IEPs because they couldn't afford to service them. That is **ILLEGAL**, as Special Education is PROTECTED BY IDEA.

2012 CREC Presentation http://redapplesnorwalk.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/CREC-2012-POWER-POINT_PRESENTED-TO-BOE-FEB-5-2013.pdf

“A June memorandum signed by Board of Education Chairperson [Mike Lyons](#) and Norwalk Mayor [Harry Rilling](#) states that the city will pay \$1.1 million and the board \$1.3 million to account for the first two years of funding. The board and city will come back together in the future to determine the best way to come up with the third year's \$1.2 million.”

The overall goal with the changes is to decrease the number of outplaced students and decrease the number of paraprofessionals or aides by providing more and better quality services in-house.

That, school officials say, would offer a better education to the special education kids living in the district and save the district money in the long-run — from slowly easing away from the high costs associated with outplacing special needs students who can't get the services they need within the district.”

<https://www.ctpost.com/news/article/For-special-needs-students-it-s-spend-now-9517702.php>

By 2017 the district was starting to realize budget savings by providing in house programs. However, it was clear that many of the salaries for the programs would need to continue on the operating budget as the SPED turnaround money was faded out in 2019.

“The city invested \$2.3 million to fund two years of Special Education program development to reduce outplacements, with an expected third year of funding. Program development was a major component of the CREC report, Goorevitch observed, commenting, “The analogy is you can't build a plane while you are flying it, you need to develop it first.”

<https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/goorevitch-outlines-progress-in-norwalk-special-education-efforts/>

Compare that history to this review of NPS Special Education Delivery in 2021 to understand how far we have come:

<https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/special-education-is-not-a-place-consultants-advise-norwalk-public-schools/>

“A trio of Special Education consultants has lauded Norwalk Public Schools for the work done to improve the SpEd department, and laid out a thoughtful, detailed analysis of how to keep the ball rolling.

“I will say that a lot of the times we're called in to look at special ed services in a school district, it's because of a major problem a lawsuit a class action lawsuit or something...big going wrong. And some districts call us in just because they want to improve and that's what happened here,” [Lauren Katzman, Ed. D.](#), said at Tuesday's Board of Education meeting.

The conversation that followed alluded to legal issues and touched on the problems that have brought Edward Fergus, Ph.D. to town for an extensive “Equity in Education” effort.

“Your Black and African American numbers are high,” Katzman said. “And you knew that from the Dr. Fergus's work. You have an overrepresentation of students with disabilities in Norwalk, who are Black, African American, and you have an underrepresentation of students who are Asian.”

Katzman, executive director of the Urban Special Education Leadership Collaborative (Urban Collaborative), gave Norwalk Public Schools high marks for reforming its SpEd efforts following a series of damning reports. The so-called CREC (Capitol Region Education Council) reports inspired a \$3 million Transitional Special Education Fund to support the reforms efforts from 2016 to 2019.

It's “incredible” that Norwalk Public Schools achieved 97% of the goals laid out by the CREC, [Jennifer Baribeau, Ph.D.](#) said.

“We cannot give enough credit to your Special Education team for getting these systems in place. It is not easy work to do. They spent a lot of time on this, there was a lot of evidence to back that those recommendations from the CREC report have been fully implemented,” Baribeau said.

“The budget has been stabilized, out-of-district placements have been reduced significantly ...funding that traditionally goes out-of-district to pay for those schools actually has come back into the district to create some really strong programming,” she said. There’s City funding to create programs and a literacy clinic, hire an audiologist, and purchase assistive technology. “Really, I haven’t heard of any district that’s doing work like that. So really want to give a shout out to your current team for doing these things, recognizing that the budget needed to be stabilized and then using that funding to really create those programs and districts.”

As for what’s not quite done, “It has been very hard, not just in Norwalk but in districts all over the country, to fill speech and language positions, special education teaching positions. What your team has done is they have created partnerships with universities, they’ve created pathways within the district for staff to be licensed,” Baribeau said.

Even so, Baribeau said, “We think as far as the CREC report goes, it’s time for you guys to celebrate this work. It’s time for you to, I would say, put CREC behind you,” she said. “You guys have built the foundation, the technical systems are in place, it’s really time to think about shifting to that adaptive mindset to support the district in moving forward to the next level.”

Academic Rigor

The former Superintendent and BOE identified that our High School students were spending a lot of time in Study Halls because we didn’t have enough teachers to appropriately fill their schedules with academics. Positions were added so that students could be learning while in school. The Board also identified that they wanted to raise SAT scores, have more students graduate with AP credits, and raise the graduation rate. In addition, Mr. Kimmel hoped we might be able to have some National Merit recognition if we could support our students.

<https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/opinion-a-remarkable-change-in-norwalk-high-schools/>

In 2019 there was cause for celebration with statistics that really started to show the tide was turning in Norwalk:

<https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/norwalk-touts-academic-success-in-2019-grads-college-acceptances/>

“The overall NPS graduation rate for 2018 was higher than the State for the fourth year in a row,” the release said. “This ranking positions NPS as first in our District Reference Group (DRG), which compares NPS with other districts with similar socioeconomic status across the state. Increasing Norwalk’s graduation rate is part of the overall district objectives to implement the right strategies, systems and supports to ensure that all students leave Grade 12 ready for future academic or work success.”

In 2021, NPS shared this in response to allegations from Mr. Dachowitz regarding some of the same issues he is bringing up this year. **“High School Study Halls and Full Classes.** To address full classes and intolerable circumstances that had high school students sitting in two or even three study halls per day, NPS added high school teachers across the district. High schools teachers were also added to make sure schools had enough classes to expand high school graduation requirements to 26 credits, so that Norwalk could comply with more rigorous graduation standards.” https://www.norwalkps.org/532202_3?articleID=78367

The strategy to increase FTE HS teachers paid off in our first National Merit announcements in 2021 & 2022:

<https://www.thehour.com/news/article/Norwalk-high-school-senior-named-National-Merit-15961069.php> He is the only Norwalk student in the past several years to qualify for the scholarship.

<https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/three-norwalk-seniors-named-national-merit-scholarship-semifinalists/>
“Three students from Norwalk are candidates to earn National Merit Scholarships”

Academic rigor doesn’t just happen. You have to invest in teachers, curriculum materials, and a safe learning environment for kids to learn. Norwalk’s children do as well or better than our surrounding communities when given the proper opportunities to do so. When NPS expanded the Gifted and Talented program our students dominated at Invention Convention, Odyssey of the Mind and History Day.

<https://www.thehour.com/news/article/Norwalk-student-s-invention-of-The-Huski-wins-17250699.php>

<https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/columbus-magnet-school-student-skye-martin-named-a-national-invention-convention-winner/>

<https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/norwalk-student-inventors-move-on-to-compete-at-national-convention-this-summer/>

<https://www.thehour.com/news/article/Norwalk-raises-the-bar-on-National-History-16010246.php>

<https://news.hamlethub.com/norwalk/neighbors/47222-norwalk-students-rank-sixth-in-nation-at-national-history-day-contest>

<https://myemail.constantcontact.com/Norwalk-Public-Schools-News---Information---April-22--2021.html?soid=1128953580370&aid=1jsTLEZrYCK>

Immigration and Multi Lingual Learners (previously ESL & ELL)

Norwalk has experienced a large increase in students who arrive with little or no English language skills. Some also have experienced trauma. When my eldest started Kindergarten the NPS policy was that these students would catch up to their peers by 5th grade with no intervention through immersion. However, the law is clear: “Whenever it is ascertained that there are in any public school within a local or regional school district twenty or more eligible students classified as dominant in any one language other than English, the board of education of such district shall provide a program of bilingual education for such eligible students for the school year next following”. (Sec. 10-17f, https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_164.htm#sec_10-17f) So, NPS has increased staffing to support these students as required by law.

2019: “The cost to contend with the influx of English Language Learner (ELL) students enrolling in the city’s public schools could cost nearly \$2 million.

Superintendent of Schools Steven J. Adamowski said the district is requesting a \$1.2 million special appropriation from the city that would pay for services from Nov. 1 to the end of the school year, and would need an additional \$600,000 that would come out of next year’s budget.

“I might point out that there is federal and state law requiring us to offer each and every one of these services,” Adamowski said during Tuesday’s Board of Education meeting. “So this is not a choice, it’s rather something that we must do.”

The district now has more than 2,050 ELL students, up 13 percent year-over-year and 59 percent since 2013, the point just before students began arriving in large numbers from Central America.

The money will help pay for two bilingual social workers, necessary because many of the new arrivals have experienced trauma, as well as additional supports for ELL and general education teachers.”

ESL classes in many schools in the district are at or over capacity, putting stress on teachers and staff, according to Norwalk Federation of Teachers President Mary Yordon.

“The NFT, teachers generally, have been working with the district to make adjustments to caseloads, to make adjustments to school classroom maximum sizes,” Yordon said during public comment of the meeting. “There remains a deep concern about the high needs of our students, about the large class sizes, about increased graduation requirements.”

<https://www.thehour.com/news/article/Migrant-students-to-cost-Norwalk-schools-nearly-14540529.php>

“In the fall, Superintendent of Schools Steven J. Adamowski announced a large influx of students in recent months put pressure on Norwalk’s social services, educators and facilities, requiring quick action by the Board of Education and the city, which recently provided additional funding to the schools.

“We had to expand our existing services,” Adamowski said at a Tuesday meeting of the Board of Education, at which the district’s past, present and future support for ELLs was a topic. “But the focus of tonight’s workshop is to talk about a restructuring of the services we offer.”

“Since 2013, the district has seen a spike in the number of ELLs to just under 1,000. In the past year alone, Norwalk has seen an influx of more than 300 students, according to data presented at the meeting by Norwalk Public Schools ELL Instruction Specialist Helene Becker.”

<https://www.thehour.com/news/article/Norwalk-schools-shift-strategy-as-student-14881638.php>

I hope these articles and reports help to explain the history of new FTE positions on the Norwalk Public Schools Operating budgets, and helps you to believe our professional staff when they tell you what their staffing needs are. Norwalk has come a long way in the last decade, and we need to support our employees to keep the progress going.

2.) **Pay attention to the Efficiency Study.**

Staffing Levels: “Exhibit 1-2 shows that, with the exception of Santa Barbara, it appears that Norwalk and the City of Danbury exceed the resident per full-time employee ratio—meaning that the City employs fewer full-time staff than most of its peers in relationship to the total population.”

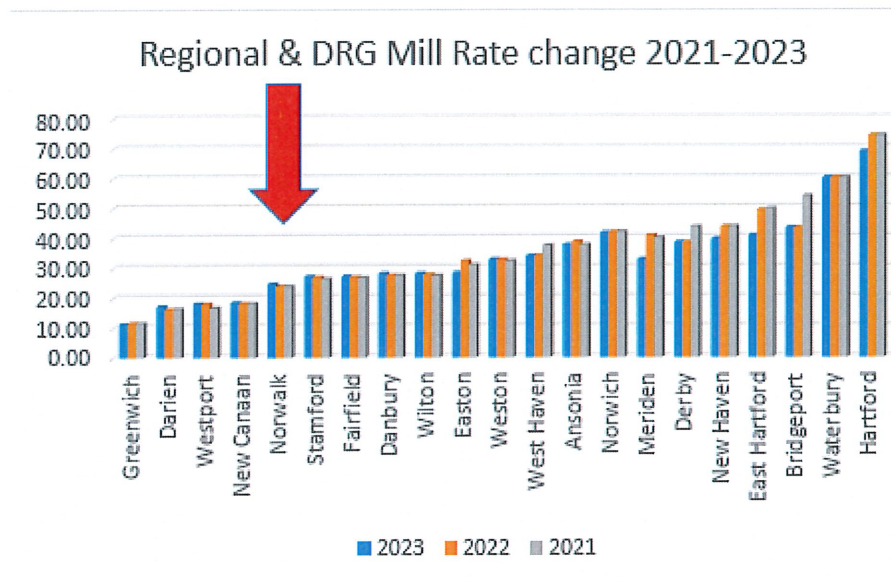
The efficiency study shows that Norwalk has fewer employees per resident than comparable cities.

Exhibit 1-2
Full-Time Employee to Population Ratio
2021

City	Population†	Full-Time Employees	Residents per Full-Time Employee
Norwalk, CT	91,184	661.00	137.9
Newton, MA	88,923	943.97	94.2
Lynchburg, VA	79,009	1325.60	59.6
Nashua, NH	91,322	824.00	110.8
Cranston, RI	82,934	637.00	130.2
Longmont, CO	98,885	982.00	100.7
Framingham, MA	72,362	736.41	98.3
Santa Barbara, CA	88,665	927.00	95.6
Stamford, CT	135,470	1046.00	129.5
New Haven, CT	134,023	1573.00	85.2
Waterbury, CT	114,403	1372.00	83.4
Danbury, CT	86,518	554.00	156.2
Average (w/o Norwalk)	97,501	992.82	104.0

Source: Compiled by Evergreen, January 2022.

The efficiency study also identified that "Norwalk's tax rate appears lower than its peers." This seems consistent with my data regionally as well, see below of near neighbors and our DRG (District Reference Group).



“Information Technology One of the greatest challenges to improving the City’s efficiency is the current state of its technology resources. The lack of resources, staffing and citywide planning for technology is negatively impacting every department, program and function in the City. Evergreen recommends that the City hire a Chief Information Officer (CIO) to oversee all technology planning and operations for the City, fill existing vacancies

and staff the department to meet the City needs and conduct a comprehensive needs assessment before implementing a Citywide Technology Master Plan and upgrading or implementing new systems.”

It was heartening to hear some discussion about the use of overtime in the City of Norwalk. The efficiency study recommends “implementing a plan to reduce General Fund overtime for both Fire and Police”, so that would be a good place for the Mayor to focus his attention.

Facility Repairs, Replacements, and Renovations

The Efficiency study recommendations: “Based on a March 2021 Facility Assessment, a long-term investment over the next 20 years of \$429-495 million is needed for various repairs, replacements and renovations. In Connecticut, school facilities are owned by the City but the State provides some funding for facility construction and renovation. The City nor NPS have begun to address the issue. Evergreen recommends that both entities assess NPS campuses to jointly prioritize needs and research funding options.” ...“eliminating the \$400,000 limit in City ordinance §30-15.1 for capital construction projects and require the City and NPS coordinate to identify the best division of work based on available resources; incorporating the facilities maintenance recommendations from facilities and other studies into the maintenance work schedule; contracting for facilities maintenance services for all NPS buildings;”

In comparison, Stamford has created a fund and dedicated a 1% increase in taxes to be ready to embark on the \$1.5 billion in repairs needed to their schools. We have a documented need for \$500M in capital work in our schools, and should consider a similar intentional investment, especially given the 60% reimbursement rate we enjoy for the next two decades. The time to invest is now.

<https://ctexaminer.com/2023/03/17/stamford-officials-pore-over-budget-books-for-savings-await-decision-on-state-funding/?fbclid=IwAR34hxUQOTY29e1EXrAfBoP2ZsTqo6RE3qsbKCUK-QIAIhxTpzRDGqoKGjs>

3) Stop relying on a Contingency fund for the City until you consider allowing a Contingency fund for the Board of Education.

During the March 20th BET discussion I lost track of the number of times Henry Dachowitz, Tom Ellis or members of the BET deferred discussion on line items and said they would fund the position or cost out of their \$1.5 million dollar Contingency Fund. The Board of Education has no such “slush fund” to cover their unknown expenses. Their only recourse is to go to the City for a Special Appropriation as was done 4 years ago to address a large influx of MLL students. The City allocated its Contingency Fund a 12.7% increase this year – ironically the exact percentage of the increase requested by the BOE for its Operating Budget.

4) Stop playing games with vacancies, and staff appropriately to conduct business in line with best practice. Of course we need to budget for all necessary city and school positions. Norwalk needs to be honest with ourselves regarding the cost of doing business in the 21st century. Stop pretending that saving on a half a year’s salary doesn’t cost us the full year salary the next year. Stop being “penny wise pound foolish, and invest in internal controls that will save us money over the long run.

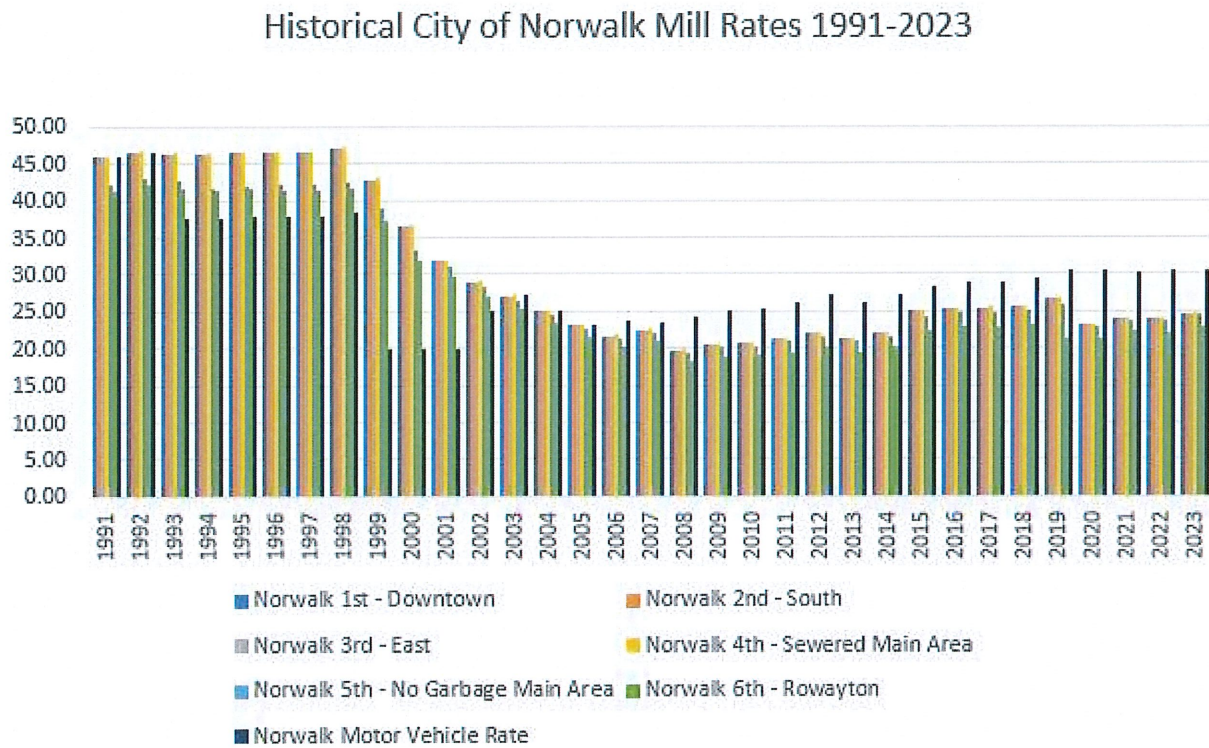
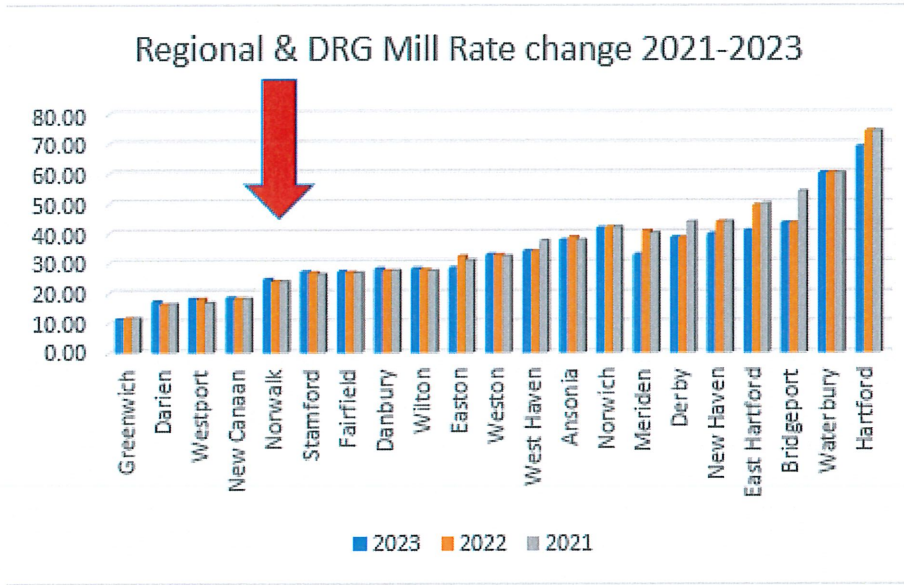
5) Stop expecting staff to keep absorbing rising labor/benefit/utility costs in their budgets. Most departments are operating efficiently, and we may jeopardize services because we want to cut 0.16% from the budget. Be honest with the taxpayers that costs have gone up, and tax accordingly. Otherwise, we will find ourselves in this “Groundhog Day” scenario year after year, scrapping for resources.

6) Treat the NPS Administration and BOE with respect, and hold space for them to discuss their budget with you reasonably.

When the Chair of the BET asks “Will it be productive to have Lunda part of the conversation or are we at the point where we’re just going to have to provide a number and tell the BOE to manage to it”, it shows a lack of

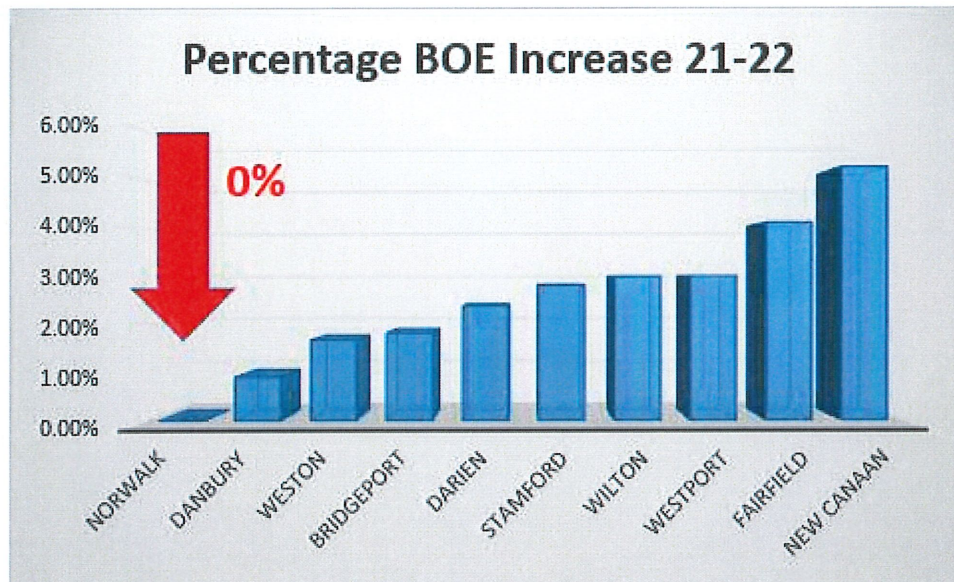
respect afforded to one of the most important functions of our local government. Other department heads were invited to address line items with the members of the BET during the deliberations, why would NPS/BOE be treated so differently. The City NEEDS to follow the Efficiency Study recommendation to hold quarterly joint meetings with NPS/BOE, to help address this uneven relationship.

7) Continue to “right-size” Norwalk’s tax rate to be more in line with comparable cities.



	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	
Norwalk 1st - Downtown	46.28	46.48	46.45	46.44	47.03	42.75	36.53	3
Norwalk 2nd - South	46.28	46.48	46.45	46.44	47.03	42.75	36.53	3
Norwalk 3rd - East	46.28	46.48	46.45	46.44	47.03	42.75	36.53	3
Norwalk 4th - Sewered Main Area	46.47	46.67	46.65	46.64	47.24	42.91	36.67	3
Norwalk 5th - No Garbage Main Area	41.70	42.01	42.12	42.16	42.47	38.97	33.36	3
Norwalk 6th - Rowayton	41.51	41.59	41.28	41.41	41.55	37.18	32.00	2
Norwalk Motor Vehicle Rate	37.58	37.82	37.83	37.86	38.38	20.00	20.00	2

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	
Norwalk 1st - Downtown	20.742	21.331	22.142	21.331	22.142	25.041	25.371	25.4
Norwalk 2nd - South	20.742	21.331	22.142	21.331	22.142	25.041	25.371	25.4
Norwalk 3rd - East	20.742	21.331	22.142	21.331	22.142	25.041	25.371	25.4
Norwalk 4th - Sewered Main Area	20.795	21.377	22.187	21.377	22.187	25.100	25.430	25.5
Norwalk 5th - No Garbage Main Area	20.304	20.889	21.682	20.889	21.682	24.328	24.710	24.7
Norwalk 6th - Rowayton	19.022	19.483	20.157	19.483	20.157	22.425	22.852	22.9
Norwalk Motor Vehicle Rate	25.448	26.186	27.365	26.186	27.365	28.241	28.805	28.9



City General Fund Balance

For appropriated funds, the Board of Education only manages the fund balance for the Grant Fund and School Lunch Fund. The General Fund is part of the City General Fund balance. Municipalities in Connecticut are fiscally dependent on their respective cities/towns. As a result, the BOE General Fund does not carry a fund balance. The City General Fund Balance as of June 30, 2022 was \$83.5 million.

Fiscal Year	City Original Budget	City Revised Budget	City Actual	Added to City Fund General Balance	Comments
2021-22	188,169,682	189,058,974	176,660,241	4,824,562	FY22 City Audit Book Page 32
2020-21	177,214,173	183,327,573	176,481,579	5,493,680	FY21 City Audit Book Page 17
2019-20	144,673,617	144,776,477	144,720,895	(836,449)	FY20 City Audit Book Page 17
2018-19	146,829,924	146,517,045	142,167,154	12,793,893	FY19 City Audit Book Page 16
2017-18	142,905,261	142,208,073	140,519,050	5,621,671	FY18 City Audit Book Page 18
2016-17	141,392,082	142,926,731	142,802,287	4,506,174	FY17 City Audit Book Page 16
2015-16	156,001,752	156,462,609	153,979,122	6,305,972	FY16 City Audit Book Page 16

Thank you for your consideration of these points as you do your due diligence this week.

Best regards,
Barbara Meyer-Mitchell
10 Allen Road

--
Barbara Meyer-Mitchell
Barbara@Meyer-Mitchell.com

Ellis, Tom

From: Diane Lauricella <dlauricella24@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 5:35 PM
To: Dachowitz, Henry; Ellis, Tom
Subject: Board of Estimate Operating Budget Public Hearing: 2023 Fw: EV Use in Police Fleets Westport/ Police Article

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

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

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

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

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

[nancyonnorwalk.com/what-if-residents-reviewed-the-whole-operating-budget-and-spoke-at-tonights-bet-public-hearing](https://www.nancyonnorwalk.com/what-if-residents-reviewed-the-whole-operating-budget-and-spoke-at-tonights-bet-public-hearing)

By Diane Lauricella

What if...residents reviewed the entire Operating Budget in order to see if they were getting what they've paid for? Speak at the Board of Estimate and Taxation's (BET) Operating Budget Public Hearing tonight at 6:30 pm! Held at City Hall Council Chambers (3rd Floor) or on Zoom norwalkct.org/1913/meeting-notice.

Here we are, the Spring Equinox brings more than milder weather, spring blooms and longer days...it also brings the final months of Budget deliberations.

In a nutshell, the Operating Budget reviews the Department requests in a line item fashion with the exception of an overall number from the Board of Education. This includes Expenses and Revenue. Did you know that the Operating Budget includes the salaries of all staff from each department as well as the funds used to hire consultants and lawyers? Are we getting the return on investment we hoped for? Often we do, sometimes we do not.

You can comment on what expenses you think should be cut, added and ideas to help find those savings or additional expenses.

Here are some examples:

Operating Budget Expense Item: Electricity:

For example, the City and Board of Education's utility bills have gone up as much as your household. I believe that if we had a much more aggressive renewable energy policy and used much more solar power with ground-mounted panels, roof-mounted panels, and solar carport/ canopies on many of our acres of public property, we would save HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS each year. Like many other towns have already achieved. Is the Board of Education and the City really sincere about cutting expenses when they have hardly ANY renewable energy systems in operation?

Operating Budget Expense Item: Training:

Could additional training improve some services? What do you think?

Operating Budget Expense Item: Planning and Zoning Enforcement Staff:

Right now, it appears that the badly-needed additional enforcement staff has been cut from the operating budget. The BET and Mayor needs to hear from you if your neighborhood has suffered from noise, odor, dust, dumping, wetlands filling, illegal parking and dangerous home overcrowding.

Operating Budget Revenue and Expense Item: Grants.

Currently, the City collectively misses out on millions of dollars in grant awards due to lack of dedicated, full-time staff. Norwalk does not have a full-time Grant Writer/Manager, only a part-time person. Individual department staff tries their best, but were originally hired to do other specific jobs and are being used too much for grant-



Send signed letters to
Nancy@NancyOnNorwalk.com, with a
suggested headline.

writing instead of just assisting a Grants professional with technical language. These competitive grants are often difficult to find, obtain and submit progress reports to funders. It requires a full-time professional Grants team whose success would pay for itself. A City the size of Norwalk needs a full-time Grants Writer/Manager, and it may be more effective and efficient if the Finance Department manages the program, not the Mayor's Office.

You can also write to the Finance Department's Budget Director and ask that they give a copy to each member of the Board of Estimate and the Mayor, Council President before the Wednesday 6:30 pm hearing.

Please consider speaking and writing about the Operating Budget. It is an important part of the fabric of our community and the BET needs to hear from you!

In the future, what if the City held a series of community chats about the Capital and Operating Budgets so that we better understood about how our dollars are managed?

Diane Lauricella

One comment

Niz Judia March 22, 2023 at 9:31 am

thank you Diana for this well written and thought-out article!

Leave a Reply

Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *

*

*

You may use these HTML (HyperText Markup Language) tags and attributes: `<a href="" title=""> <abbr title=""> <acronym title=""> <b> <blockquote cite=""> <cite> <code> <del datetime=""> <em> <i> <q cite=""> <s> <strike> <strong>`

Ellis, Tom

From: Erica DePalma <depalmae@norwalkps.org>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 5:42 PM
To: brams981@gmail.com; Kassimis, A; Constant, Kendrick; Frayer, J; Jellerette, T; ayang@cadwynpoint.com; Ellis, Tom; Rilling, Harry
Cc: board; Estrella, Alexandra
Subject: Public comment and advocacy for Public School Funding

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Dear members of the BET,

Thank you for your service. As a member of our BOE, I appreciate your volunteer time on behalf of our community.

Being part of our BOE has truly been an enlightening experience and I'd like to highlight that while Grant funding infused critical resources into our District, those resources were critical long before the pandemic. It was truly a publicly unspoken and underlying issue that our district did not have an SRBI program in place. Upon being sworn in, what I consistently heard from staff was that NPS's late identification, intervention, and inability to implement specialized services with fidelity was largely due to Norwalk not having robust Scientific Research based Intervention, as well as Specialized Improvement teachers to address identified children before they required expensive tier 3 special education services. In many instances, as a district, we were identifying children after grade 3 when the window for closing the gap narrows significantly. A third-party audit provided the roadmap for addressing these systemic issues and the programs now in place have proven effective, but we need your support in continuing this work and improving the outcome of our students.

It's important to put emphasis on the fact that we're combatting BOTH learning loss and mental health struggles stemming from the pandemic. There is no denying the public health impact this disease had, but as you know, it also caused economic stressors and isolation...a mental health crisis has quickly spread throughout the country and as a result, we have children with significant anxiety struggles, and others that have felt overstimulated and socially anxious post lock down.

Having served on several Boards, for both profit and non-profit organizations, I was prepared for this role. What I wasn't emotionally prepared for was the number of crisis calls I'm now privy to on a weekly basis. As a nation and as a community, we have a gap to close – a learning gap and a social skills gap and we cannot do so until our children feel safe, fed and supported by adults and that those adults ensure them access to their education through specialized staff and health professionals with expertise in supporting complex learning profiles.

I'd like to close by commenting that while I appreciate suggestions that mental health should be addressed by families or consolidated under city services, that as a nation what we learned from COVID is the importance of having a "lead agency" with accountability for students' outcomes. The consequences of fragmenting these services were exposed in COVID. We've learned that for "wrap around" services to be most effective, they need to be delivered in an orchestrated approach with a child's educational team. As a nation and as a community, we need to fail forward and holistically support and fund our students' needs so they can access their education.

Thank you.

Erica DePalma

110 Perry Avenue

District D BOE

Ellis, Tom

From: April & Kirk Wennerstrom <1oxyokelane@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 22, 2023 5:45 PM
To: Rilling, Harry; Ellis, Tom; Abrams, Ed; Constant, Kendrick; Frayer, J; Jellerette, T; Kassimis, A
Subject: Norwalk Public Schools Funding

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Sirs;

I respectfully request my letter be kept as a public comment on the matter of increased funding for Norwalk Public Schools.

As a Norwalk taxpayer and resident for over 17 years, I humbly request that the Board of Estimate and Taxation keep the recommendations of the Common Council to fund our schools and honor the operating budget cap set by the Council.

Though in the past, our community received (temporary) federal COVID-19 funds to help support our schools, those funds were just a portion of the assistance needed. It is time for our city to invest in families and children to help accommodate the loss of federal dollars in order to support our children's academic, social, and emotional needs post-COVID.

As I stated in a recent public meeting, Oscar Wilde once said that a "fool is someone who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing." Why is it that our city only puts a price on our students' heads, rather than on the value of their education? Why is it that they remain shortchanged year after year to get the funding needed to increase their access to education?

Won't you secure the investment needed to ensure equitable learning and resources for the students in Norwalk and fight for the future of your community to offer the appropriate funding for students?

Sincerely,

April Wennerstrom

District D / Ox Yoke Lane

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
RELATING TO AGENDA ITEMS ONLY
3 MINUTE MAXIMUM PLEASE

DET

PLEASE PRINT MEETING OF: Public Hearing DATE: March 22, 2023

NAME	ADDRESS
1. Diane Laricella	21 Little Fox Lane 06850
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