CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION
BUDGET REVIEW
VIA TELECONFERENCE
MARCH 8, 2022

ATTENDANCE: Edwin Camacho, Chair; Mayor Harry Rilling, Ed Abrams, James Frayer, Troy Jellerette.

STAFF: Henry Dachowitz, Chief Financial Officer; Al Palumbo, Assistant Tax Collector; William Ford, Tax Assessor; Chitsamay Lam, Comptroller; Tom Ellis, Director Management & Budgets; Lisa Biagiarelli, Tax Collector (7pm); Joyce Liu, Director Information Technology

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Camacho called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. He noted that this was a continuation of the Departmental Budget Reviews from recent meetings of last week and yesterday.

Departmental Operating Budget Review

A. Chief Financial Officer

Mr. Dachowitz came forward to field any questions from the Committee members. Mayor Rilling asked about the amount in a ‘Training’ line item. Mr. Dachowitz explained this is for MUNIS training and provided the rationale that training is essential both for utilizing MUNIS most efficiently but in retaining employees. There was discussion on the value of training and Mr. Dachowitz noted that the amount represents no change over prior years’ business expenses.

Mr. Abrams asked about underruns and if this was reflected in the budget assumptions. Mr. Dachowitz replied that this was accurate, and accurate projections are reflected in the numbers.

B. Tax Assessor & Revaluation

Mr. William For came forward to answer questions. Mr. Camacho asked about upcoming audits for Personal Property. Mr. Ford replied that this is very year, is revenue generating. He explained the process of outsourcing to a local CPA firm to audit firms to include utility companies with a relatively small sample of the 3,000 City accounts.

During to the next item review, Mayor Rilling asked to go back to re-evaluation cost budgeting. Mr. Ford explained the audit crosses over fiscal years and although costs are budgeted in 2022-23 revenue is reflected in 2023-24 fiscal year. He added that there are contracted services based on an RFP for a company to provide the best services and pricing for the City.

C. Tax Collector

Mr. Al Palumbo came forward to explain that the Tax Collector would be joining the meeting late, but he is able to address questions on the budget. Mr. Camacho asked about $54,000 budgeted for Tax Sale expenses, and Mr. Palumbo explained this expense is the same as the Tax Assessor fiscal year cross-over as outlined for the Re-evaluation. He noted that this will be the first sale since pre-COVID with expenses for title searches hit as July 2023 expenses, yet the revenue actually hits 2024.

Mr. Camacho asked to go back to Tax Assessor regarding Conference Fees. Mr. Ford answered that prior to COVID there was $5,000 budgeted for Conferences, which again addresses a key priority to provide proper employee training.

D. Accounting & Treasury

Ms. Lam gave an overview of the objectives of the budget and the roles of the City and BOE Accounting Office where there are clerks that cover both Board of Education Payroll and Accounts Payable. She added that with the amount of transactions involved the department needs an Accounts Payable Supervisor and a part-time data entry person.

E. Management & Budgets

Mr. Ellis outlined the staffing needs for an Executive Assistant to replace a part-time position. He noted that he hopes to have the position filled by July 1.

Mr. Camacho noted that Purchasing was covered last week regarding filling a vacancy.

F. Information Technology

Ms. Liu spoke about the need for a part-time position to help with invoices and vendor management. She outlined that tech support is provided to the Library after hours and weekends to use centralize ticketing system and support is needed for fifteen hours per week.

Mayor Rilling reported that in response to the directive to cut .5 from departments, Fire, Police and Operations have cut so far. He explained that reductions are difficult due to COVID limitations, year-end actual spending and any resulting surplus, but there should be a re-examination to come up with savings. Mayor Rilling added that this would amount to an approximate savings of $420,000.

Mr. Frayer asked to look at conference fees to determine what is actually needed for in-person attendance as opposed to virtual or on-line training options. He explained that best practices in budgeting are to go back and look again for cost savings. Mr. Dachowitz replied that he agrees with refining spending plans, and he will look again at needs assessment.

Mr. Camacho reported that the next meeting for deliberations on the budget would be Monday for a Public Hearing followed by forwarding on to Common Council for March 23. He confirmed that this is in line with the calendar sequence and timetable for the budget approval process.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
M. Knox
Telesco Secretarial Services