

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
SPECIAL MEETING
JANUARY 3, 2022
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

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

STAFF: Henry Dachowitz, Chief Financial Officer;
Irene Dixon, City Clerk; Tom Ellis, Budget Director;
Alan Lo, Building and Facilities Manager

OTHERS: Lunda Asamani, Chief Financial Officer, Norwalk Public Schools;
Michael DePalma, Oak Hills Park Authority; Dr. Alexandra
Estrella, Superintendent of Schools; Michael Zuba, Milone and
Macbroom

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

Ms. Dixon called the Roll. A Quorum was present.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 6, 2021 – Regular Meeting

**** MR. JELLERETTE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS
PRESENTED**

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. ABRAMS)**

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

3. **TRANSFER AGENDA** (Section B) None

4. **OTHER BUSINESS** (Section C)

**SPECIAL CAPITAL APPROPRIATION FOR THE NEW NORWALK
NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL IN SOUTH NORWALK**

Mr. Camacho reviewed the following two resolutions requesting capital appropriations for a parcel of land in South Norwalk for a new school and for the construction of that new school in South Norwalk.

Mayor Rilling said he was committed to having a neighborhood school in South Norwalk. Dr. Estrella added that this is long overdue. They are close to moving forward to meeting the goal of having a school in South Norwalk

**** MAYOR RILLING MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING
RESOLUTIONS:**

**RESOLUTION – CLOSE OUT OF PROJECT #0918-5010-5777-C0607
(NEW COLUMBUS SCHOOL AT ELY AVENUE AND PROJECT #0919-
5010-5777-C0618 AND PROJECT #0820-5010-5777-C0618 (NORWALK
GLOBAL STUDIES)**

**RESOLUTION: REQUESTING A SPECIAL CAPITAL APPROPRIATION
IN THE AMOUNT OF \$72.0 MILLION TO PURCHASE THE PROPERTY
AND CONSTRUCT A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOL IN SOUTH
NORWALK TO ACCOMMODATE 682 PRE-K TO GRADE FIVE
STUDENTS**

Mr. Zuba gave a presentation that provided details of what the Board of Education wishes to do. He shared his screed and focused on the highlights of the plan. He noted that the South Norwalk children have been bussed to schools throughout Norwalk and building this school will put an end to that and will provide them with an education opportunity within their neighborhood.

Two scenarios were developed (8a and 8b). The South Norwalk neighborhood will be redefined. Under scenario 8b, South Norwalk has a deficit of 170 seats. Part of this

change is to eliminate the forced re-districting. The proposed South Norwalk school will be nearly at 100% capacity.

Mr. Camacho asked if the location has been identified. Dr. Estrella said the location has been identified, but it is not subject to further discussion at this time.

Mr. Frayer asked what will happen with the new Columbus Global Studies Academy, now that they are taking funding away from that project. Dr. Estrella the new South Norwalk School will accommodate the needs of the South Norwalk students. The funds will be used to build a school that will accommodate the South Norwalk students. In addition, they will not be calling the new school the Global Academy, because they want to give the community the opportunity to be part of the process for identifying the theme for the school.

Mr. Frayer asked if the people will be disappointed that they are not going to have the Global Academy. Dr. Estrella said they would not be disappointed. The original focus was that the Global Academy was going to be an internal Baccalaureate program, but the school did not meet the criteria. The Global Academy will be replaced by the South Norwalk School and they will be taking suggestions for that new school.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (Section D)

Financial reports

Mr. Dachowitz introduced Mr. Ellis, who reviewed his background.

• Oak Hills Financial Status – November

Mr. DePalma reviewed Oak Hill's financial status. He noted it is their off season. They approved new rates and the seasonal passes for next year.

Mr. Frayer asked for an update on the "comp" rounds. Mr. DePalma said they are not tracked as booked rounds and this is apparently standard practice and this is how their booking company operates. He said that he can ask their Golf Pro to attend next month's meeting to provide further information.

Mayor Rilling said he would like to see actual costs. Mr. Frayer said it seems like Oak Hills is giving away 100 rounds, but not collecting anything. Mr. Jellerette added that he would like to see clarification. He asked about the cost for the unlimited passes. Mr. DePalma said they reduced the number of available passes from 75 to 50 for all categories.

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Mr. Jellerette asked about the status of the restaurant. Mr. DePalma said they are open for private events, but decided not to open because of the spike in Covid cases. They hope to have a full opening in mid-March or earlier if conditions clear up.

- Year-to-date Capital Budget Report – FY 2021-22
- Year-to-date Operating Expenditure Report – FY 2021-22
- Year-to-date Operating Revenue Report – FY 2021-22
- Police Wages
- Fire Wages
- Public Works Wages
- Year-to-date BOE Operating Expenditure Report – FY 2021-22
- Tax Collector's Narrative – November 2021
- Tax Collector's Report – November 2021

Mr. Dachowitz reviewed the Tax Collector's report included in the back up material. As of the end of November 2021, they collected more than \$191.4 million

Mayor Rilling asked Mr. Dachowitz to mention the pension plans. Mr. Dachowitz explained that the pension plans are 90% funded and the trusts are 100% funded. While he noted that these numbers can change, compared to most municipalities, Norwalk is doing very well.

Mr. Jellerette asked Mayor Rilling if there are any plans to reopen the Norwalk Community College for Covid testing. Mayor Rilling explained, they have only so many staff and there are only 500 kits allocated per day. They did discuss opening another site to split the crowds in two.

Mayor Rilling said they would be distributing self test kits; however, Norwalk did not get as many as anticipated. The City is doing the best it can.

Mr. Frayer noted that the staff and Police working at the Covid test site at Veteran's Park are stretched to the limit. Mayor Rilling said to help with the traffic flow, he instructed the Police to open the gate at 1:00 p.m. when the testing starts at 3:00 p.m. He added that it has been very challenging to the Police.

Mr. Camacho asked if the Police budget will see a shortfall. Mayor Rilling said that it may because of unanticipated overtime. He added that he gives the Police officers a lot

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of credit. Mr. Dachowitz noted that for the current year, this is why they set aside contingency. He added that there are other funding opportunities.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. FRAYER MOVED TO ADJOURN**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services