

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION
SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 2, 2025**

ATTENDANCE: Ed Abrams, Chair; Mayor Harry Rilling; Atty. E. Camacho; Kendrick Constant, Troy Jellerette, Artie Kassimis (6:31 p.m.); Anne Yang (6:32 p.m.)

OTHERS: Jared Schmitt, CFO; Tom Ellis, Finance; Irene Dixon, City Clerk

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Dixon called the roll. A quorum was present.

Mr. Abrams stated that Mr. Kassimis had joined the meeting at 6:31 p.m.

Mayor Rilling said that the staff had received a great deal of public comment, particularly about the music programs being cut in the elementary schools. He said that both he and Dr. Estrella were working to try to secure these programs. He said that the Performing Arts were an important component of the curriculum. Last year, the City allocated \$150,000 for band instruments and had allocated more funding for band instruments this year.

Ms. Yang joined the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

• May 5, 2025 Regular Meeting

**** MR. KASSIMIS MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 5, 2025 REGULAR MEETING.**

The following corrections were noted:

Bottom of page 3, last line, please correct the following from: “largest request” to “largest request”

Page 4, paragraph 2, please change the following from: “last place any changed could have been made.” To “last place any changes could have been made.”

Page 4, under Other business – Section C, paragraph 3, line 2: please change :

“The most recent completed audit for Norwalk was 2023” to

“The most recent completed audit for Norwalk was 2024”.

Page 5, paragraph 7, line 1: please change the following from:

“Mr. Abrams said that it was heartening to know that they were already on a okay path.”

To: “Mr. Abrams said that it was heartening to know that they were already on an okay path.”

Page 5, paragraph 8, line 2: please change “necessarily that the City is going out to market.”

To: “necessarily that the City is going out for the full amount to the market.”

Page 5, paragraph 9, please change the following from: “Mr. Abrams noted that this figure is above what the BET made but is in line with what the Common Council ultimately recommended and approved.”

To: “Mr. Abrams noted that this figure is above what the BET recommended but is in line with what the Common Council ultimately recommended and approved.”

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 5, 2025 REGULAR MEETING AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. SPECIAL APPROPRIATION AGENDA

There were no special appropriations to consider at this time.

V. TRANSFER AGENDA

A. Transfers

**** MR. KASSIMIS MOVED THE TRANSFERS**

Ms. D’Amore greeted the Board and gave an overview of the transfer request to cover vaccines.

Mr. Jellerette asked if there were any increase in measles cases. Ms. D’Amore said that there were no reported cases in Connecticut.

Mr. Docimo greeted the Board and gave an overview of the Police transfer request and answered the Board Members’ questions about the line items.

HEALTH DEPARTMENT:

<u>From</u>		<u>To</u>		<u>Amount</u>
01-2011-5245	Telephone	01-2070-5322	Chemical, Lab, Med. Supplies	3,000
01-2020-5281	Mileage	01-2070-5322	Chemical, Lab, Med. Supplies	2,000
01-2050-5140	Wages & Salary – P/T	01-2070-5322	Chemical, Lab, Med. Supplies	1,000
01-2070-5251	Medical, Dental, Vet.	01-2070-5322	Chemical, Lab, Med. Supplies	400
				\$6,400

This transfer is to cover additional funds for vaccines for the month of June.

Finance recommends approval.

POLICE DEPT.:

<u>From</u>		<u>To</u>		<u>Amount</u>
01-3072-5241	Electric	01-3071-5245	Telephone	\$420
01-3072-5245	Telephone	01-3071-5245	Telephone	6,144
				\$6,564

This transfer is to cover ongoing end of year account balances and place funds where they are needed to pay bills.

Finance recommends approval.

POLICE DEPARTMENT:

<u>From</u>		<u>To</u>		<u>Amount</u>
01-3010-5233	Subscription & Dues	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	\$76
01-3010-5235	Membership & Dues	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	90
01-3010-5272	Training & Education	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	139
01-3010-5281	Mileage	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	187
01-3022-5292	Boarding Prisoners	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,470
01-3022-5294	Machinery & Equipment	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,000
01-3022-5322	Chemical, Lab, Medical	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	2,452
01-3023-5251	Medical, Dental, Lab	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	52
01-3023-5326	Clothing	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	117
01-3023-5333	Machinery	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	303
01-3024-5235	Membership & Dues	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	875
01-3024-5286	Business Expense	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,400
01-3024-5329	Other Operating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	2,157
01-3025-5235	Membership & Dues	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	20
01-3025-5269	Other Repair	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,511
				\$11,848

This transfer is to cover ongoing end of year account balances and place funds where they are needed to pay bills.

POLICE DEPARTMENT:

From		To		Amount
01-3025-5286	Business Expense	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	\$121
01-3025-5294	Machinery & Equipment	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	894
01-3025-5322	Chemical, Lab, Medical	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,716
01-3025-5326	Clothing	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	24
01-3025-5329	Other Operating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	62
01-3026-5221	Printing & Duplicating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	89
01-3026-5237	Advertising	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	64
01-3026-5269	Other Repair	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	2,547
01-3026-5311	Office Supplies	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	84
01-3026-5333	Machinery & Equipment	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,643
01-3026-5314	Awards	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	12
01-3030-5235	Membership & Dues	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	2,365
01-3030-5386	Business Expense	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	34
01-3030-5329	Other Operating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	113
01-3035-5269	Other Repair	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	4,000
				\$13,768

This transfer is to cover ongoing end of year account balances and place funds where they are needed to pay bills.

Finance recommends approval.

POLICE DEPARTMENT:

From		To		Amount
01-3035-5329	Other Operating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	\$1,697
01-3036-5235	Membership & Dues	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	747
01-3036-5272	Training & Education	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,354
01-3036-5328	Educational	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	500
01-3036-5329	Other Operating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,605
01-3038-5295	Seminar & Conferences	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	110
01-3038-5329	Educational	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	1,440
01-3040-5237	Advertising	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	589
01-3040-5251	Medical, Dental, Lab	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	4,142
01-3042-5235	Membership & Dues	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	330
01-3042-5269	Other Operating	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	767
01-3042-5286	Business Expenses	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	23
01-3042-5298	Other	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	16,754
01-3042-5311	Office Supplies	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	27
01-3049-5235	Membership & Dues	01-3022-5329	Other Operating Expenses	70
				\$30,155

This transfer is to cover ongoing end of year account balances and place funds where they are needed to pay bills.

Finance recommends approval.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Section C

1. Contingency Tracker

Mr. Ellis presented the Contingency Tracker report as presented in the Board information packet.

Mayor Rilling announced that the Police and Fire Contracts had just been approved by the Council. Mr. Schmitt said that there would be a meeting to discuss the changes that were approved by the Council at their last meeting. Discussion followed about the changes to move the contract expirations dates onto different cycles so they expire at different times.

2. NPS School Construction - Monthly Project Update - May 2025

The update report was included in the Board Members' packets. The following emails about the schools were received.

 Outlook

Public Comment

From Christina Rothstein <christinarothstein@gmail.com>

Date Mon 06/02/2025 11:58 AM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from christinarothstein@gmail.com. [Learn why this email is suspicious](#)

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Public emails
submitted for
BET record
6/2/25

Hello, my name is Christina Rothstein and I am a resident and homeowner in Norwalk, I have two children who attend Wolfpit Integrated Arts Elementary School. We are completely devastated by the now-tangible impacts of the ineptitude of our community leadership to solve the NPS budget crisis. Laying off teachers during a nationwide teacher shortage is incredibly irresponsible, eliminating music, band and orchestra from our elementary schools will negatively impact our community for years to come. I understand as a taxpayer that we must be responsible with our money, but the council also must figure out a long-term solution to funding our schools FULLY and meeting the needs of our high-needs student population. It's time to reprioritize the families and children who live here, your constituents, over irresponsible growth and tax abatements for developers. Any extra funds that are available to dedicate toward this educational emergency must be designated for our music programs and our teachers. Thank you for your consideration. Our children are depending on you.

-Christina Rothstein

Public Comment

From Ana A <ana.a.afloarei@gmail.com>

Date Mon 06/02/2025 11:58 AM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from ana.a.afloarei@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Hello, and thank you for considering my public comment.

My name is Ana. I've had the unique honor of being both a Wolfpit parent, and working with the teachers of Wolfpit, whose jobs are now at risk. As we all know, Wolfpit is an integrated arts magnet, exposing children to general music theory, to strings, to performing arts. When I worked in preschool at Wolfpit, my students attend music, strings, dance, art, and physical education. Imagine that kids as young as two listening to all forms of music, learning notes, exposed to all different instruments, and given the opportunity to hold violins and bows. Mrs. Sheils is our strings teacher. I know from speaking with her that she spent a lot of time crafting lesson plans for such young kids. She told me that if her class inspired just one child in preschool to take up strings, it would be an accomplishment. She made string interactive, fun, and educational. The kids' faces lit up when they finally worked their way up to holding a real violin.

Sean Conway is our music teacher. I've been a Wolfpit parent so long that I recall a time before Mr. Conway. And, I remember when he officially started teaching music at Wolfpit. An employee at the school made a comment about how he embodies the Wolfpit spirit, and I couldn't agree more. He's creative and has a way with connecting with the students. It makes parents proud to have him at our school. Students are happy and excited to attend his class. But they're also learning so much! My kids come home talking about Ella Fitzgerald and different brass instruments. And that's not including all the work he does for our school play. Wolfpit is known for their annual plays. This year the kids put on The Lion King, possibly one of our more complicated shows, in terms of music. Many songs are in Swahili and Mr. Conway spent countless hours teaching the kids the songs, making sure they got the pronunciation just right, ensuring they kids understood what the songs are about.

It feels like music is under attack in Norwalk Public Schools. I keep hearing rumors that the band program is going to be eliminated for elementary schools. And that's part of the problem: there is no transparency. I shouldn't be hearing rumors. Instead, I expect a clear plan, so parents know what to expect.

Our Star Wars loving band teacher, Liz Lockhart, works so hard with our band students. She is patient and allows each child the space to find the right instrument for them. Even my daughter started with the clarinet to drums. And then Ms. Lockhart works tirelessly to ensure the students are prepared for the

many, many shows and concerts. We have the winter concert, the strong concert, Wolfpit Day. That's just to name a few of the many times Wolfpit band performs, preparing them for a long school career, performing in middle school and high school.

Mrs. Sheils, Mr. Conway, and Ms. Lockhard are all very important music teachers, working in tandem to expose music to the arts in various ways. Mr. Conway and Ms. Lockhart take our 3rd grade students on a field trip to New York City, to visit and PLAY at Carnegie Hall. Kids in 3rd grade go to Carnegie Hall! And Mrs. Sheils brings her 4th and 5th grade strings students to play. Imagine the rush, the excitement, the confidence this builds in our community!

My understanding is that physical education and dance will be combined. While both PE and dance are physically challenging, there is no comparing or combining the two. Dance is an art. My son got up on stage this year and tap danced! It's something I never thought I'd see. Thank you, Ms. V! Young girls beg their parents to get dance lessons with Ms. V. at our annual auction. Leave PE with Mr. Armatage in the gym (or outside on nice days), and keep dance in the dance room. There is no combining dance with sports.

I spoke about my experience at the school, having worked there myself. On those two-hour early dismissal days, teachers stay to their usual time and attend professional development meetings. You may know that Wolfpit is a HOTS school. HOTS stands for Higher Order Thinking School. This is an integrated arts program that seeks to help our teachers enrich the lives of students through creative collaboration. It's a very special program to be a part of, as a parent, as a student, and definitely as a teacher, learning creative teaching skills.

My understanding is that Mrs. Sheil's position, Mr. Conway's job, Ms. Lockhart's band program, Mr. Armitage's job COMBINED with Ms. V's, and even Mr. Scott Santaniello's assistant principal position will be taken over by someone with more seniority. Will that person have the necessary arts background and understanding of the distinct qualities that make Wolfpit such a special school? Will they have had HOTS PD? Will they understand the culture of our school? Or will they just have been working longer than the teachers I've mentioned?

And let me be clear: Wolfpit is an integrated arts magnet. ALL FORMS OF ART BELONG AT OUR SCHOOL! Our teachers were chosen because they are uniquely qualified and trained to be a Wolfpit teacher! Our students shouldn't have to share teachers or an assistant principal with another school. There's no combining PE and dance.

I urge Superintendent Estrella and the Norwalk Board of Education to reconsider these budget cuts. Each Wolfpit teacher matters to the students, to the parents, and to our community. Our students deserve better than this.

Thank you,
Ana

PUBLIC COMMENT for tonight

From Elyse Williams <elyse.g.williams@gmail.com>

Date Mon 06/02/2025 11:25 AM

To Ellis, Tom <TEllis@norwalkct.gov>

You don't often get email from elyse.g.williams@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear Members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation,

We write to you with deep concern about the approved 2025–2026 budget and its potentially devastating impact on Wolfpit Integrated Arts School—where our daughter is currently in first grade, and where we hope our son will begin in 2026-2027.

We chose Wolfpit because of its focus on the arts and the remarkable educators who bring that mission to life. The programs and teachers have exceeded our expectations, and our daughter is thriving because of their dedication. The proposed cuts threaten to unravel much of what makes this school so special.

Most notably, we are at risk of losing Mr. Sean Conway, Wolfpit's general education music teacher. His passion and talent have had a visible effect on students, fostering creativity and confidence. He is a beloved presence at every school event, and losing him would be a serious blow to the school community. He is also heavily involved in our integration arts programming such as the play which around 30% of our students participated in.

Additionally, the reassignment of our vice principal, Mr. Scott Santaniello—who has been a tireless advocate for arts education—could further destabilize the school's leadership. Alongside this, we are facing the elimination of band, larger class sizes due to teacher reductions, the loss of our school counselor, loss of two teachers, and potential further job losses due to RIF.

We understand the financial pressures, but preserving Wolfpit as an Integrated Arts school is essential. It means continuing robust music and arts programs and retaining the staff who make them impactful. These programs are not extras—they are central to our children's development.

We urge you to do everything in your power to secure additional operational funding beyond capital expenditures. The future of our children—and the unique educational experience Wolfpit provides—depends on it.

We will continue to advocate at the Board of Education level. But if the Superintendent will not act, we ask you to stand up for Wolfpit, its students, and the extraordinary educators behind its success.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Elyse & Geoff Williams

VII. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A. Financial Reports

City of Norwalk
Board of Estimate & Taxation
Budget Review
June 2, 2025

1. Oak Hills Park Authority Monthly Financial Statements for April 2025

Mr. Dutton, the Oak Hills Chair, greeted the Board Members and presented his report. He said that January, February and March had not been very strong, but April was very good. The restaurant has been open Thursdays thru Sundays. The budget has been completed for the upcoming year. He reminded everyone that they were about to start Phase II of their bunker project. It is also time to replace the golf carts. The discussion moved to the scheduling of private events at the restaurant vs. being open for golfers.

2. Narrative on Tax Collections dated April 2025

3. Monthly Tax Collector's Reports dated April 2025

4. Year-to-date Capital Budget Report - FY 2024-2025

5. Year-to-date Operating Expenditure Report - FY 2024-2025

6. Year-to-date Operating Revenue Report - FY 2024-2025

7. Police Wages - FY 2024-2025

8. Fire Wages - FY 2024-2025

9. Public Works Wages - FY 2024-2025

10. Year-to-date BOE Operating Expenditure Report - FY 2024-2025

Mr. Ellis said that the remaining reports were all for information. He felt that the City was in very good shape.

Mayor Rilling said that he felt that the City was in very good financial shape and felt that the contract negotiations were fair and equitable.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. KASSIMIS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

S. L. Soltes

Telesco Secretarial Services