

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone and/or Zoom, or a recording in the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at norwalkct.gov/meetings.

Members of the public may call in to participate. Callers will not be able to see the meeting participants. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, dial *9 on the phone and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section.

All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda, and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually-explicit language, will be removed. Please find the information using the link above.

Members of the public who wish to provide "live comments" may also use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the "raise your hand indicator" and you will be called by the host of the meeting during the public comment section. All speakers must state their name and address. Comments must be on a topic on the agenda, and are limited to three minutes. Anyone disrupting the orderly conduct of the meeting, including by using threatening, hateful, or sexually-explicit language, will be removed.

Please find the information using the link above. Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be included into the record, they must be submitted by 12:00 p.m. the day of the meeting. Please email Tom Ellis at tellis@norwalkct.gov with the subject line "Public Comment" to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 19, 2025
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

ATTENDANCE: Ed Camacho; Kendrick Constant; Troy Jellerette; Anne Yang

STAFF: Agnes Cawai, Assistant of Management and Budgets; Thomas Ellis, Director of Management and Budgets; Esther Murillo, Assistant City Clerk; Jalin Sead, Fair Housing

OTHERS: Alan Kibbe and Jeff Mangels, Norwalk Harbor Commission; Douglas Stern Probate; Matt Pentz, Transit District; Stephen Ivan, Norwalk Redevelopment Agency

I. CALL TO ORDER

In the Chair's absence, Mr. Camacho called the meeting to order at 6:42 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

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

III. BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION - OPERATING BUDGET REVIEW

Mr. Camacho explained this is a budget review specifically related to grants.

A. Harbor Commission (Grant)

Mr. Ellis shared his screen and explained there is a different format for grant recipients. He explained that the grant recipients receive a grant application and they provide their dollar request.

Mr. Kibbe explained that this year they will increase the number of moorings which are a major source of revenue. They also receive rent income from the WALK Bridge project. They also increased their per foot mooring fee. As a result, they do not need as much from the City this year. Ms. Yang said that in looking at revenues, it looks like the mooring fees went down. Mr. Mangels said their revenue went up and due to a reorganization they did not renew permits for some of the vessels.

Mr. Mangels said they have fixed expenses and they have to inspect moorings by using a certified inspector. He also said they acquired a new drone, that they had to have.

Ms. Yang acknowledged they are one of the few departments that generate revenues; the goal is for them to be self sufficient. Mr. Mangels said they can try to be self sufficient, but they also pay interns. He said they always apply for grants. Ms. Yang said they do an excellent job of managing their budget, but there are a lot of wants vs. needs and they have to make balances.

Mr. Camacho commented that in a \$440 million budget, he did not think \$10,000 would make a difference. Ms. Yang expressed appreciation to the Harbor Management representatives for

reducing their budget request from last year, but requested leaving this as an open item. She added that it speaks well of the department that they came in under last year's allocation. Ms. Yang said every dollar counts. Mr. Camacho said that it will not change what the taxpayers will pay. He agreed to keep this as an open item.

B. Fair Housing Officer (Grant)

Mr. Ellis said Mr. Sead oversees this grant. Last year they requested \$188,000 and this year they are requesting \$185,164. Mr. Sead explained their budget went down because they are hiring an individual at a lower salary tier. The only increase was in fringe benefits because they budgeted for this person to elect benefits at a higher coverage level.

Mr. Sead explained that not filling this position is not an option. It is required under a consent decree. Ms. Yang questioned whether or not this was still needed since it was enacted before the establishment of the CHRO. She questioned funding this position since it is 50 year old. Ms. Yang said that last year she asked if they could go to the State to see if they did not have to abide by a dated 50 year old decree.

Ms. Sead explained that times have not changed and although they have the CHRO, they need to represent the people of Norwalk over various forms of discrimination. He added that people would challenge not funding this position. It is vitally important to the people of Norwalk. He reiterated that times have not changed and there is a lot of discrimination.

Ms. Yang said she understood but other departments request staff for Fair Rent and asked if they could consolidate Fair Housing. Mr. Sead said they would have to go back to court.

Mr. Camacho said this discussion was not something that is in the prevue of the Board of Estimate and Taxation. He said they have to fund this and agreed with Mr. Sead that times have not changed that much. He said Fair Housing does a lot more than ensuring rents are fair. He said they have the consent decree to consider. Ms. Yang suggested that staff on the City side could move into this position.

This item will remain open.

C. Probate Court (Grant)

Mr. Stern said he was here to request \$4,000 for the full year. He said office supplies have gone up. He said all payments are made by the State and the statute requires the City of Norwalk to manage the office. They provide services to Norwalk and Wilton. This funding request fulfills Norwalk's obligation.

Ms. Yang asked if Wilton pays rent for a portion of the office. Mr. Ellis explained they pay around \$9,000 a year. Ms. Yang suggested talking to the City's purchasing people to ease some of the administrative burden. Ms. Ellis will check with the Purchasing Agent to find out if there are options.

Mr. Jellerette asked if there was a revenue line. Mr. Stern explained the revenue belongs to the State; all revenue is controlled by the State. People in Norwalk and Wilton use the court and the fees go to Hartford.

D. Transit District (Grant)

Mr. Ellis introduced the request.

Mr. Pentz said their operations are funded by the State; however, they rely on local support for things the State does not fund. He said funds for operations comes in a month or two late and they would like to build reserves so they do not have to rely on their line of credit.

Ms. Yang pointed out the \$195,000 in interest expenses and asked if they have gone to the state to ask for a faster payment. Mr. Pentz said he has seen an improvement in payments, but it does not help. He said they have gone to the State several times.

Ms. Yang asked Mr. Pentz if they could manage with a grant that went from \$600,000 to \$400,000. He said he would have to understand what the goals were. He said one of their goals is to build reserves so they would not have to rely on their line of credit. He added that he would not advise this reduction.

A discussion took place about borrowing and Mr. Jellerette suggested they need to look at paying for outside funding. Ms. Yang said the City has relationships with local banks. Mr. Jellerette asked how other cities do this. Mr. Pentz explained they have a rainy day fund. Mr. Jellerette asked Mr. Schmitt if he could see if something could be done for them so they are not paying \$196,000 in interest.

This item will remain open.

E. Redevelopment Agency (Grant)

Mr. Ellis introduced the request.

Mr. Ivan said their request was the same as the year before. He said reported grant monies are up from last year. They administer projects on behalf and in coordination with the City.

Ms. Yang asked for a review of the grants and asked if they could be self funded through their grants. Mr. Ivan explained they are not allowed to request administrative fees through most grants. He added they try where they can, but it still creates a gap. They are limited by grant guidelines. He said they are looking for \$500,000 to support \$40 million in grants. He added they are always looking for more grant opportunities. Mr. Jellerette told him to keep up the good work.

Mr. Constant asked why they are slowing down in grant requests. Mr. Ivan said they need to administer the grants they received last year and they only have so much capacity. Ms. Yang asked if there were any risks to the community development block grants. Mr. Ivan said they don't know. They are preparing as best as they can. Everyone is in the dark. He said he will provide follow up information as requested by Ms. Yang.

This item will remain open.

Mr. Ellis said tomorrow night is the Board of Education and open items. Ms. Yang suggested leaving the open items to the public hearing on March 26th. Mr. Constant asked to see the variances between all the departments. Mr. Ellis said he would send that to everyone. Ms. Yang asked for a list of all new positions since 2020.

Mr. Jellerette asked Mr. Schmitt to clarify if they are doing the cap for the operating budget. Mr. Schmitt said the Mayor was going to address that in the near future; the administrative perspective is that it is a recommendation from the Board of Estimate and Taxation to the Common Council.

IV. ADJOURNMENT

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

There was no further discussion, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Norwalk
Board Of Estimate and Taxation
Special Meeting
March 19, 2025
Via Teleconference
Page 5