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**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
SPECIAL MEETING
VIA TELECONFERENCE
MARCH 11, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Ed Abrams; Mayor Harry Rilling; Edwin Camacho; Kendrick Constant; Troy Jellerette; Artie Kassimis; Anne Yang

STAFF: Lisa Biagiarelli, Tax Collector; Sharon Conners, Purchasing Agent; Irene Dixon, City Clerk; Thomas Ellis, Director of Management and Budgets; Paul Gorman, Tax Assessor; Chitsamay Lam, Comptroller; Joyce Liu, IT Director; Thomas Livingston, Chief of Staff

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

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

Mr. Abrams reiterated that the job of the Board is to understand and validate the departmental spending and not get into the operational details of the department.

Mr. Abrams asked Mayor Rilling if he had any opening remarks. Mayor Rilling said this is the team that helps the City get through their budgets and they've done a remarkable job.

Mr. Ellis shared his screen.

1. BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION – BUDGET DELIBERATIONS:

CFO

Mr. Ellis reviewed the main budget drivers and explained the 9 ½% increase and said that it is primarily due to the auditing and accounting services. He discussed the increase associated with the art time grants writer. He said the grants generated cover the salary of his position. Mr. Livingston added that the grant writer and the team brought in \$7.2 million.

Mayor Rilling said each department has people who understand the grant process.

Miss Yang asked if the salary for the chief financial officer's position is competitive. Mayor Rilling said the salary is competitive and they are in the process of interviewing candidates.

Tax Assessor & Revaluation

Mr. Gorman was present to review the budget and answer questions. He explained that most of the increases are in the wages and salary line. He also discussed the increase in the printing line. Mr. Abrams suggested leaving printing as an open item. Mr. Gorman reviewed the revaluation costs and said they may be able to reduce their request, but they won't know by how much until the Board of Assessment appeals have been completed. This item will remain as an open item.

Mr. Constant asked for clarification on the wages and salary line. Mr. Gorman explained that they had vacancies that were filled by part time staff. Mr. Ellis said it is the practice to fully fund a full time position. This item will go on the open item list.

Tax Collector

Ms. Biagiarelli was present to review the budget and answer questions. Mayor Rilling asked about the issues with the software system. Ms. Biagiarelli said the issues have not been resolved and they impact the process in the office. Mr. Ellis said the Tax Assessor has a portion of the software in his budget.

Mr. Abrams said he would like to understand the cost difference between MUNIS and the new software license. Ms. Liu explained there is a big price difference between MUNIS and QDS and described the services that are provided by QDS.

Accounting & Treasury

Ms. Lam was present to review the budget and answer questions. She explained the upgrade to the time and attendance software. She also discussed the budget for training and education. Mayor Rilling said he likes to see departments send their people for training. Ms. Yang said there is a corresponding increase of \$100,000. Ms. Lam explained cost is for training on the ERP system. This item will be kept as an open item.

Management & Budgets

Mr. Ellis explained that their overall increase is at 7%; their big increase is for seminar and conference fees. They are guided by the CFOA and they hold an annual conference. Mayor Rilling noted that the 7% increase comes to \$26,000 and that is not a large increase.

Mr. Abrams asked about the printing costs. Mr. Ellis noted the requirements to provide printed documents are less and less every year.

Purchasing & Central Services

Ms. Conners was present to review the budget and answer questions. She said the biggest change was in postage. She reviewed the requests for memberships and advertisements.

Under Essential Services, Ms. Conners said they use professional services related to the mail room services. These services are at a contracted rate. She added that the team processes all of the absentee ballots, which may result in overtime costs this year due to this being an election year.

Ms. Conner discussed the costs related to posting notices. She added that each department posts a different size notice. She said she would have to find out from the Legal Department what they are legally required to advertise.

Information Technology

Ms. Liu was present to review the budget and answer questions. She reviewed the costs associated with the telephone system, IT software and cyber security. Mr. Kassimis asked if every telephone was needed. Ms. Liu explained they did an audit and traced every single phone to be sure they were being used. Regarding IT software, Ms. Liu said they will try to work with the vendors to negotiate a multi-year agreement.

Ms. Liu described the items associated with cyber security. She said they work with the State to help evaluate the system.

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Ms. Yang told Ms. Liu that given her department is responsible for a lot of the infrastructure they do a great job for the amount of spending they do.

Mr. Jellerette expressed his appreciation to Ms. Liu for her careful evaluation of competitive offers in the future.

Ms. Conners described the Frontier telephone charges that Central Services pays and said they also have cable services in the buildings.

GIS

Ms. Liu explained that GIS services fall under the IT Department. She explained they are using professional services to upgrade the GIS services.

Mayor Rilling expressed his appreciation to Ms. Liu and said he knows cyber security is extremely important to the members of the Common Council.

Ms. Liu explained that the IT Department is undergoing a major infrastructure upgrade and they may have to ask for additional funding based on suggestions from the vendor.

On behalf of the Board of Estimate and Taxation Mr. Abrams expressed his gratitude to Mr. Ellis and all of the departments heads.

Mr. Abrams invited Mayor Rilling to make closing remarks. Mayor Rilling expressed his thanks to the members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation and noted this is a very challenging year. He said the Finance team did a remarkable job and stepped up when they lost the Chief Financial Officer.

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi

Telesco Secretarial Services