

**CITY OF NORWALK
COMMON COUNCIL AD HOC COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 30, 2018**

ATTENDANCE: Mayor Rilling; John Kydes, Chair; Thomas Livingston;
Doug Hempstead; Nick Sacchinelli; John Igneri

STAFF: Laoise King, Mayor's Assistant
Robert Barron, Finance Director

ROLL CALL

Mr. Kydes called the meeting to order at 8:00PM and called the roll. A quorum was present.

**1. OVERVIEW OF FINANCIAL IMPACT OF THE MAYOR'S PROPOSED
REORGANIZATION.**

Mr. Kydes said that a majority of this committee and the council support the Mayor's goal of improvements and efficiencies of City Hall and want to achieve those efficiencies at little to no cost. He said that there was a good discussion at the last meeting regarding DPW and Parks and Recreation and some of the efficiencies that include improved programming, the use of a DPW Supervisor to be utilized in Parks & Recreation during peak season, improved snow removal for the schools as well as shared equipment between the two departments which will equal improved efficiencies citywide and the possible savings in tree removal and trimming services. Mayor Rilling said there is an organizational chart as proposed and tables or organizations from other communities of similar and larger size which shows that most communities are organized along functional lines and the number of direct reports to the Mayor vary from 8-10 and the table of organization is structured as such will longer lines beneath the Mayor with a span of control that is much more manageable. Ms. King stated the reasons they think there

will be a much better provision of services to residents if we are able to coordinate departments that are performing like services. Mr. Hempstead said he doesn't know if we got a clear answer of costs associated with eliminating the four Parks and Recreation part time/seasonal workers and having fulltime employees picking up the work. Mayor Rilling said that the four part-timers make about \$10,000 a year and with the coordination of the two departments, and they will be able to make much more efficient use of the day workers who work on a regular basis, though assignments, through different things that need to be done, and in some cases result in an hour or two of overtime which is still much more efficient than having four part-timers at \$10,000 a piece.

Mr. Livingston asked for a walk through of the four proposals, Mayor Rilling and Ms. King presented the four proposals as the latest organizational chart presentation and said that:

- Option one separates the recreation function from the parks operations and maintenance function and adds in the tree and grass work that used to be under DPW under public property.
- Option two keeps everything together under DPW and operations, in effect picking up the department and moving it, but also adding the tree responsibility to DPW.
- Option three keeps Recreation and Parks as it exists now, but putting it under Community Services; this would not provide efficiencies.
- Option four is a hybrid suggested by some Council members, combining the functions of a superintendent and a director and keeping it all under Public Works.

Mr. Hempstead asked if in option four there is no longer a Director of Highways. Ms. King said "yes" there still is and this only includes the Parks and Recreation operation side because the DPW side stays the same in all of the options. Mr. Hempstead asked if the current Road Supervisor does nothing but trees and maintenance. Ms. King said primarily. Mr. Hempstead asked if there was any thought process to instead of having

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five different cabinet positions to establish on Chief Operating position that everyone would report to. Mayor Rilling said “no” and that a one to one relationship between the first and second in command is a deterrent to effective communications and one to one relationships at that level is not advised. Mr. Kydes asked what the average cost of benefits is per employee. Mr. Barron said 40%. Mr. Kydes if there is any other cost associated with combining Parks and Recreation and DPW other than what we have seen. Mr. Barron said that each of the scenarios include the salary increases and have underestimated the benefits that will be gained.

Mr. Livingston asked about the economic development function, as the proposal would create a Chief of Community and Economic Development. Mayor Rilling said this would be hiring someone to oversee Code Enforcement, Planning and Zoning, business development and tourism and transportation, traffic and parking. Ms. King said that the Former Economic Development Director Elizabeth Stocker was really doing business development and tourism work, and it’s important to keep those functions, and it could be looked at the reorganization as upgrading the role and taking the old position and expanding it or downgrading it. Mayor Rilling said it’s pretty much the same idea as the state’s Department of Economic and Community Development. Mr. Livingston asked it is too much for one person. Mayor Rilling said not if you have the right person and the department head positions would still be in place and that person would be coordinating efforts in those departments. Mr. Livingston asked if there has yet been a job description created for this position. Mayor Rilling said there is a draft job description. Ms. King said that she and Mr. Birney are in the process of getting the job descriptions to the committee as requested. Mr. Kydes asked if the salary will be the same as it was for the Liz Stockers position. Mr. Barron said the chief will be making \$140,000 a year and the position Ms. Stocker had will be reduced from \$108,300 a year to \$75,000 a year. Mr. Kydes said to attract someone; increasing the salary for such an important position is important. Mr. Livingston said if you want to get a really good person with this portfolio, I think you really need responsible, I think you have to spend the money. Mayor Rilling said we find sometimes we are struggling to attract the right people because of the salary structure in the city of Norwalk, and for example that former Personnel Director Emmet Hibson was making \$130,000 in Norwalk but went to Fairfield, where he is eligible for a \$50,000 bonus for negotiating contracts and he got courted by Fairfield and in essence is making over \$200,000 a year when here he was making \$130,000, plus he has a car there. Mr. Barron said that he has also advertised three times for a new comptroller as Fred Gilden is retiring, and while the \$155,000 salary is competitive the retirement benefits are a deterrent.

Mr. Sacchinelli said that there were some questions regarding stationary language in regard to the state impacting grant funding and some other optimizations that we currently have that we would lose if we change the flows specifically as it relates to

Youth Services. Ms. King said that concern has been raised by multiple people and they have changed it back and Youth Services continues to be with the Juvenile Review Board. Mr. Livingston asked for comments regarding Wednesday's Nancy On Norwalk story about the Fair Housing Officer. Mayor Rilling said the conventional wisdom is to combine like functions and combining the functions of Fair Housing Officer and Fair Rent and making it one position and in some conversations that I have had we have to take a look at that and see whether or not it is violative of the court decree, which would then have us rethink that so that is still under discussion right now. He said that the one thing he wants to make clear is the activity and the function will not be diminished. There is still going to be a fair housing function, a fair rent function, a human relations function. It's just how we best accomplish that. Ms. King said the main point of this is to bring them all together into one office and right now, there are people coming to City Hall, who are some of our most vulnerable residents, who need housing assistance and they don't know where to go and this is an effort to improve the service, to provide more emphasis on it. She said with Human Relations & Fair Rent Department Director Adam Bovilsky leaving to become Norwalk Housing Authority executive director, "there's an opportunity to move people around and still reduce the budgetary impact and have all the functions out of one office. She said she thinks that there is a concern that we are going to get rid of the current Fair Housing Officer and I just want to say that doesn't necessarily need to happen. She said "It's going to be like a one stop shop for people who have an issue with discrimination in housing, or alleged discrimination in housing. If they feel they are treated unfairly they'll know where to go rather than two different separate offices. She said that some reorganization issues are "cans of worms that we don't want to open unless we know that we are going down that road and if the Council is inclined to go with the Mayors recommendation then we will speak to the NAACP as well as the Fair Housing Commission. We have had preliminary conversations with both of them and she thinks are amenable to change.

Mr. Kydes asked how many ordinance changes will need to be made to implement this reorganization. Ms. King said that the Law Department has the list and that she thinks it approximately ten and many are minor changes. Mr. Kydes asked how many of the changes will need to go to the Finance Committee. Mr. Barron said it will only need to go to them if there are any special appropriations that will be required. Mr. Igneri asked what the time line is for the implementation if it is approved by July 1st. Mayor Rilling said everything should be done by September 1st. Ms. King said that one of the concerns that they have and the reason for the time crunch is that some of the positions will need to be hired for and that we have people that are retiring and some of that is held up until we know what direction we are going in but if we wait to finalize this and there is under a year left on the term it will make it that much harder to find anybody to take the positions. Mr. Sacchinelli asked if any alternate efficiencies have been looked into such as tax implications. Ms. King said that will be a part of step two. Mayor Rilling said that

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a lot of different options and models have been looked into and worked with department heads to ask them what efficiencies there are built into the system and once the plan is implemented it will be evaluated to be sure we are taking full advantage of what we have put together, and he will require staff meetings to discuss ways to improve their services and he would also meet with them on a regular basis. Ms. King said by having the cabinet level folks will lead to much efficiency once they are grouped by nature.

2. PERSONNEL DISCUSSION

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Executive session began at 8:35PM.

Executive session ended at PM.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at PM

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd

Telesco Secretarial Services