

**ALL COMMON COUNCIL ACTIONS TAKEN AT THIS MEETING TO APPROVE
EXPENDITURES AND CONTRACTS OR TO ACCEPT BIDS AND OTHER
PROPOSALS REQUIRING THE EXPENDITURE OF CITY FUNDS ARE SUBJECT TO
THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS**

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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 read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Irene Dixon at idxon@norwalkct.gov to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and led the Assembly in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Mayor Rilling asked for a Moment of Silence in memory of the two 2019 Norwalk High School graduates who were involved in a head on accident and succumbed to their injuries this weekend. He also asked for a Moment of Silence in memory of Mr. Bobby Miller, stepbrother of Mr. Calvin Murphy. Mr. Miller passed away last weekend.

I. ROLL CALL

Ms. Dixon called the Roll:

**COMMON COUNCIL
NORWALK, CONNECTICUT
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

REGULAR MEETING

FEBRUARY 27, 2024

COUNCIL CHAMBERS AND

Council at Large:	Mr. Gregory Burnett Mr. Johan Lopez Ms. Barbara Smyth	Mr. Joshua Goldstein Ms. Nora Niedzielski Eichner
District A:	Ms. Nicol Ayers	Mr. Jalin Sead
District B:	Mr. Dajuan Wiggins	Ms. Darlene Young
District C:	Ms. Jenn McMurrer	Ms. Melissa Murray
District D:	Ms. Heather Dunn	Mr. Doug Sutton
District E:	Mr. James Frayer	Ms. Lisa Shanahan

At Roll Call there were fifteen (15) Common Councilmembers. A Quorum was present.

Also present were Mayor, Harry Rilling; City Clerk, Irene Dixon and Corporation Counsel, Mario Coppola.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting: February 13, 2024

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED
** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MS. MURRAY)**

Special Meeting: February 13, 2024

The following correction was made to the minutes:

Add Mr. Sutton's name under attendance.

**** MS. YOUNG MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED
** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MS. MURRAY)**

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation comments are not verbatim and represent a summarization of statements unless otherwise noted. Speakers are Norwalk residents unless otherwise noted.

Ms. Lisa Brinton explained she submitted budget recommendations this morning. She addressed the tax increase and shared how she moved from one area in Norwalk to another when her taxes increased significantly. She noted not everyone was able to do that. She said this tax hike is not a surprise, but the math does not work for residents. She said she hoped the members of the Common Council would look for new revenue sources.

Ms. Brinton pointed out that the Board of Education was adding their own legal counsel. She commented on the redistricting ordinance and said if the members of the Common Council vote yes, they were codifying an undemocratic process. She said she hoped they would vote their conscious.

Ms. Diane Lauricella spoke about the budget cap and suggested going back to look for more savings and new revenue sources. She said she has spoken for a number of years about the need for a full time grants person.

Regarding the procedure for sale of City property, Ms. Lauricella said \$50,000 is far too high and should be lowered to \$10,000. Also under the Blight Ordinance, they need to look at the Zoning citation process, because it is not working.

Ms. Lauricella commented on the Board of Estimate and Taxation appointment this evening and said that she is on the record to say that since women in Norwalk make up 50% of the population, she wants Mr. Camacho to step back so the City can find a woman to appoint to the Board of Estimate and Taxation. She noted that Norwalk hired lots of women to run the City, but the City needs to strive for 50% of women on boards and commissions. She asked the members of the Common Council to please reconsider this appointment.

IV. MAYOR

A. RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

RESIGNATIONS: There were no resignations announced this evening.

APPOINTMENTS:

**** MR. FRAYER MOVED TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF EDWIN CAMACHO TO THE BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION**

Mr. Frayer, Mr. Burnett, Mr. Goldstein, Ms. Smyth Ms. Niedzielski Eichner and Ms. Young spoke in support of this appointment. Mayor Rilling also spoke in support.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MS. MCMURRER)**

MAYOR'S REMARKS: Mayor Rilling announced the closing of the East Norwalk train station and road below the tracks due to Walk Bridge construction. The closure will take place from March 11, 2024 to March 31, 2024. This Sunday March 3, the Norwalk Public Library will be celebrating the Chinese New Year. This is the Year of the Dragon. The City is asking for entrepreneurs to submit their business proposals for the Washington Street Entrepreneur Contest. The deadline is Friday, March 29th. The City is hosting an Easter Egg Hunt at Mill Hill Historic Park on Saturday, March 23rd from 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM.

V. COUNCIL PRESIDENT

A. RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

There were no resignations or appointments announced this evening.

B. CONSENT CALENDAR:

Ms. Young announced that Ms. McMurrer would be reading this evening's consent calendar.

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING CONSENT CALENDAR:**

VI.A.1, VII.A.1, VII.A.2, VII.A.3, VII.A.4, VII.B.1, VII.B.2, VII.B.3, VII.B.4, VII.B.5, VII.B.6, VII.B.7A, VII.B.7B, VII.B.8A, VII.B.8B, VII.B.9, VII.C.1, VII.D.1, VII.D.2, VII.D.3, VII.D.4, VII.D.5

VI. REPORTS: DEPARTMENTS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

A. CORPORATION COUNSEL

**1. AUTHORIZATION TO DISCUSSION: SETTLEMENT: SUMMIT HANDLING SYSTEM V. CITY OF NORWALK
EXECUTIVE SESSION**

VII. COMMON COUNCIL COMMITTEES

A. FINANCE & CLAIMS

**1. ACCEPT AND APPROVE THE REPORT OF THE CLAIMS COMMITTEE
DATED: FEBRUARY 2024**

**2. FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY: NARRATIVE ON TAX
COLLECTIONS DATED: FEBRUARY 2024**

**3. FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY: MONTHLY TAX
COLLECTOR'S REPORTS DATED: JANUARY 2024**

**4. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER
TO GOVCONNECTION, INC., IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$109,646.89
FOR THE PURCHASE OF 790 MICROSOFT OFFICE 365 ANNUAL LICENSES.
GOVCONNECTION, INC. IS ON STATE OF CT CONTRACT -# NCPA 01-144
ACCOUNT NO. 011370-574C**

B. RECREATION, PARKS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

1. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH WHITTINGHAM CANCER CENTER OF NORWALK FOR THE USE OF CALF PASTURE BEACH AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS FOR THEIR WHITTINGHAM CANCER CENTER WALK EVENT TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, MAY 11, 2024 FROM 9:00 AM TO 3:00 PM. SET-UP TIME FRIDAY, MAY 10, 2024 FROM 12:00 PM TO 2:00 PM WITH TEAR-DOWN ON SATURDAY, MAY 11, 2024 BY 3:30 PM. APPROXIMATELY 750 PEOPLE.

2. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH TRIANGLE COMMUNITY FOR THE USE OF VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS FOR THEIR PRIDE IN THE PARK EVENT TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 2024 FROM 12:00 PM TO 8:00 PM. SET-UP TIME FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 2024 FROM 8:00 AM TO 12:00 PM WITH TEARDOWN ON SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 2024 BY 9:00 PM. RAIN DATE SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2024. APPROXIMATELY 8,000 PEOPLE.

3. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH NORWALK SEAPORT ASSOCIATION FOR THE USE OF VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS FOR THEIR NORWALK SEAPORT OYSTER FESTIVAL EVENT TO BE HELD FROM FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2024 TO SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2024. SET-UP TIME FROM FRIDAY, AUGUST 16, 2024 AT 8:45 AM WITH TEAR-DOWN BY MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2024 AT 1:30 PM. APPROXIMATELY 40,000 PEOPLE.

4. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH NMMA FOR THE USE OF CALF PASTURE BEACH – TAYLOR FARM AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS FOR THEIR NORWALK BOAT SHOW EVENT TO BE HELD FROM THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 TO SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2024 FROM 7:00 AM TO 10:00 PM EVERY DAY. SET-UP TIME BY MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2024 WITH TEAR-DOWN ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2024 BY 10:00 PM. APPROXIMATELY 10,000 PEOPLE.

5. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH STEPPING STONES MUSEUM FOR THE USE OF MATHEWS PARK AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS FOR THEIR STEPPING STONES MUSEUM KALEIDOSCOPE CIRCUS BALL EVENT TO BE HELD FROM WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26 TO SUNDAY, MARCH 30, 2025 FROM 10:00 AM TO 5:30 PM. SETUP TIME FROM FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 2025 THROUGH TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025, WITH TEAR-DOWN FROM

**MONDAY, MARCH 31 THROUGH WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2025.
APPROXIMATELY 400 PEOPLE.**

6. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO INTELLIGENT MARKING USA INC, DBA TURF TANK, IN THE AMOUNT OF \$59,700.00 FOR THE PURCHASE OF AN AUTONOMOUS FIELD MARKING ROBOT, PROJECT # 4331, FROM ACCOUNT #0923-6030-5777-C0486

7A. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH ID SIGNSYSTEMS, INC FOR PROJECT # 4325, RECREATION AND PARKS SIGNAGE PROJECT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$63,936.00 FROM ACCOUNT # 0923-6030-5799-C0832.

7B. AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR OF RECREATION AND PARKS TO ISSUE CHANGE ORDER TO ID SIGNSYSTEMS, INC. FOR PROJECT # 4325, RECREATION AND PARKS SIGNAGE PROJECT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$9,590.00 FROM ACCOUNT # 0923-6030-5799-C0832.

8A. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO TURF PRODUCTS OF THE SOURCEWELL PURCHASING CONTRACT # 031121-TTC, FOR THE SOLO SOURCE PURCHASE OF THREE (3) TORO WORKMAN GTX ELECTRIC UTILITY CARTS, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$52,042.80 FROM ACCOUNT # 0924-6030-5799-C0846.

8B. AUTHORIZE THE DIRECTOR OF RECREATION AND PARKS TO ISSUE A CHANGE ORDER TO TURF PRODUCTS OFF THE SOURCEWELL PURCHASING CONTRACT # 031121-TTC, FOR THE SOLO SOURCE PURCHASE OF THREE (3) TORO WORKMAN GTX ELECTRIC UTILITY CARTS, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$5,200.00 FROM ACCOUNT # 0924-6030-5799-C0846.

9. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A 5-YEAR OPERATING LICENSE AGREEMENT WITH A 5-YEAR RENEWAL OPTION WITH RIVERBROOK REGIONAL YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION, INC. (YMCA) TO OPERATE RECREATION PROGRAMS WITH APPROXIMATELY 2,000 SQUARE FEET OF DESIGNATED SPACE AT THE PROPOSED NORWALK COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER AT 98 SOUTH MAIN STREET. TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT SHALL BE AS RECOMMENDED BY THE LAND USE AND BUILDING MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE.

C. ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

1. APPROVE REVISIONS TO SECTION 9-3 (CHAPTER 9, ARTICLE I, SECTION 3) – PROCEDURE FOR SALE OF CITY PROPERTY.

D. PUBLIC SAFETY & GENERAL GOVERNMENT

1. AUTHORIZE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER A LEASE AGREEMENT WITH THE OWNERS OF 132 WATER ST LLC FOR FIVE YEARS FOR \$71,200 PER YEAR WITH 3.0% INCREASES IN THE SUBSEQUENT YEARS FOR THE NORWALK POLICE MARINE DIVISION BASE, ITS PUBLIC SAFETY VESSEL AND STORAGE SPACE. ACCOUNT #-013023-5297

2. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS AND AGREEMENTS NECESSARY TO INCREASE THE RECORDS FEES ASSOCIATED WITH THE REQUEST AND RELEASE OF BODY AND DASHBOARD CAMERA VIDEO RECORDINGS TO \$30 PER HOUR OF VIDEO PROVIDED.

3. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE A THREE (3) YEAR AGREEMENT WITH HARTFORD HEALTHCARE MEDICAL GROUP FOR THE 4264R – OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES.

4. AUTHORIZE THE CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER AND/OR DESIGNEE TO ISSUE TWO (2) ONE (1) YEAR CONTRACT EXTENSIONS ON THE HARTFORD HEALTHCARE MEDICAL GROUP CONTRACT.

5. TECHNICAL CORRECTION TO THE NON-UNIT PERSONNEL BENEFITS AND COMPENSATION POLICY/ORDINANCE SALARY SCHEDULE THAT WAS BEFORE THIS SUBCOMMITTEE ON JANUARY 9, 2024. THE INCORRECT VERSION OF THE POLICY WAS ATTACHED AT THAT TIME. WE ARE RESUBMITTING THIS POLICY TO MAKE A TECHNICAL CORRECTION.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

VII. COMMON COUNCIL COMMITTEES

A. FINANCE & CLAIMS

5. RESOLUTION:

**** MR. BURNETT MOVED THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:**

WHEREAS, SECTION 1-289 OF THE NORWALK CHARTER REQUIRES THAT A MAJORITY OF THE COMMON COUNCIL VOTE TO ESTABLISH A SPECIFIC SPENDING LIMIT ON LOCAL EXPENDITURES DURING THE

PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR'S OPERATING BUDGET.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORWALK THAT: THE MAXIMUM LIMIT ON THE TOTAL APPROPRIATION FOR THE CITY OF NORWALK FOR FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2024 SHALL BE NO MORE THAN \$440,611,996. THIS APPROPRIATION CAP REPRESENTS TOTAL EXPENDITURES OF \$467,591,788 LESS ESTIMATED INTERGOVERNMENTAL GRANTS OF \$26,979,792. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE RESULT OF THIS VOTE AND RESOLUTION BE FORWARDED BY THE CLERK OF THE CITY OF NORWALK TO THE BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION.

Mr. Burnett reviewed the Resolution and explained the Common Council was required to set the maximum amount.

Mr. Ellis, Director Management and Budgets shared his screen and gave a presentation explaining how they reached the amounts and the impact on other variables. He noted this is going to be a difficult year. A Board of Estimate and Taxation public hearing will be held on March 20th and the final tax levy set during the first week of May. The tax increase will be 4% - Board of Education; 4% City of Norwalk for an overall increase of 4% with an \$8 million dollar draw down. He noted the biggest increases to the budget this year are the ones they can't control; the pension and contingency.

Mr. Ellis explained the City went through the physical revaluation this year and the grand list increased due to the residential properties. He added that the grand list would have been higher if not for the new apartments.

When asked about the tax abatements, Mayor Rilling said the Tax Assessor would be able to provide that information.

Mr. Ellis highlighted the impact on the average tax bill. He said if the commercial revaluation had gone up, the residents would not be seeing such a huge increase in the residential tax rate.

Mr. Gorman, the Tax Assessor explained the four year phase in.

Ms. McMurrer said she would like to see a scenario where the increase is 4 ½% and 5%. Mr. Ellis said those figures are included in the budget document. He noted the taxes do not go up that much in each scenario.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner said it was admirable they were only spending what they needed to spend, but hopes through conversations they are driven to discuss how they can be more efficient. She said as they push on the departments to be more streamline, she asked if they could spend a little more to hire a grant writer. She urged the departments to think strategically.

Mayor Rilling said those conversations do take place with the department heads. He said they work together to optimize any new expenditures and personnel.

Mr. Sead said they need to think about the impact on the people in Norwalk. He said people who live here can't stay or afford to retire here. He reiterated that they need to think about the impact on the people.

Mr. Frayer noted the increase can be devastating and they need to be careful and create a strategic program together to get the most out of what is there.

Mr. Wiggins said he was thinking about his community and those residents who want to stay. He added that he may be one of the residents in his community who will get kicked out because of the tax increase. He asked about the trade off by raising taxes; he said he does not see the schools getting better and does not see lives getting better. When it comes to people in the Minority community, Norwalk is not the best city. He said people are getting kicked out of the City and he asked how they can get people to stay and live in Norwalk and build equity. Mr. Wiggins said this is tragic and scary. He said that as a community, they need to hear from the people they represent.

Ms. Smyth said this revaluation is financially painful for everyone. She thanked the Mayor, Mr. Burnett, Mr. Coppola and Mr. Ellis. She said she has not doubt they thought about the efficiencies and the impact on the residents. She added that she did not feel comfortable voting without having the opportunity to see the budget.

Ms. Ayers said she wanted to encourage her colleagues to be courageous. They need to be realistic and to understand how these things impact everyone. She said this is not new and said they have to look at the quality of services, not the quantity.

Ms. Ayers emphasized the IT Department and said it is crucial to the City. She said they need cyber security and suggested evaluating where the dollars are going. Ms. Ayers said some things are non negotiable such as safety for all residents. She encouraged everyone to find a common consensus and not act in fear.

Mr. Goldstein said he agreed they need to be fiscally strategic. The revaluation is revealing of the current conditions and national trends, but is not reflective of what the City spends. He said there is not enough affordable housing in Norwalk. A lot of people can't afford to live here, although they work here. It presents a challenge to scrub the budget. He noted that renters pay taxes as part of their rent. Mr. Goldstein said the City has to provide high quality services to the residents.

Ms. McMurrer said she would like to use the term "tidy up" instead of "scrub" in referring to the budget. She said she wants to meet all the residents where they are. She added that everything has gone up in price nationwide.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner said the impact on housing is devastating. She asked if there was a timeline on affordable housing studies. Mayor Rilling said she could get that information tomorrow from Mr. Kleppin and Ms. Vonashek.

Mr. Burnett explained that the Common Council has until March 5th to vote on the operating budget. The Board of Estimate and Taxation will hold a public hearing on March 20th. He said there may be a need for further discussion and review of the materials. Mr. Burnett said that at this point, he would like to request to table this item until March 5, 2024 when a special meeting of the Common Council is called by the Common Council President.

**** MR. BURNETT MOVED TO TABLE THE RESOLUTION TO MARCH 5, 2024
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Ms. Young said she hoped the resident know they are not entering into this budget lightly. She added that the City needs IT staff and a Grants Writer.

C. ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO APPROVE NEW ORDINANCE: ESTABLISHING
AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR THE REAPPORTIONMENT OF COMMON
COUNCIL VOTING DISTRICTS.**

Ms. Shanahan reviewed the item and said they tried to propose a scheme that was not overtly bipartisan. She said this is an advisory committee and they will not determine the new districts.

Attorney Steven Mednick explained that a majority vote of the Common Council will create this committee. He said the intent of this Ordinance is to keep as close to the current district lines. He said the Committee would be made up of three people and no political party will be a majority of the group.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner said she wanted to reemphasize that the structure will ensure the full diversity of the City. The intent is to make the smallest changes.

Ms. Dunn said she disagrees and said this is not a good thing for Norwalk and leaves the door open for corruption.

Ms. Smyth said it is common practice for the Common Council President to make appointments.

Ms. Murray said the Committee did a lot of research and said this is a hybrid structure. She said she feels they did a great job and is proud of what they did.

Ms. Dunn said she finds that the people being put forward are insiders. She asked how they can make sure they have different perspectives.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) VOTE IN OPPOSITION (MS. DUNN) AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. WIGGINS)**

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO APPROVE REVISIONS TO CHAPTER 58A – BLIGHT PREVENTION.**

Ms. Jessica Vonashek, Chief of Economic and Community Development reviewed the item. She noted that the Corporation Counsel's office was very involved and Senator Bob Duff's office was helpful. She said the primary change is with fees associated with blight. She added there is a big difference between the existing ordinance and the proposed ordinance. Ms. Shanahan said this has been a real issue and it is important to address these concerns.

Ms. Young expressed her thanks and said this is a great start to making an impact on the City.

Mr. Coppola said that 10 years ago, the City had no ordinance. Now there are opportunities to work with people to remediate the violations.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner expressed her thanks to Ms. Shanahan for working on this and added that they received feedback through public comment.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

VIII. RESOLUTIONS FROM COMMON COUNCIL

There were no resolutions from Common Council members this evening.

IX. MOTIONS POSTPONED TO A SPECIFIC DATE

There were no motions postponed to a specific date this evening.

X. SUSPENSION OF RULES

There were no suspensions of the rules this evening.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:41 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
Irene Dixon, City Clerk