

**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.**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Moccia called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. and led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

I. ROLL CALL

Ms. Wink called the roll. The following Council Members were present:

Council at Large:	Mr. Richard McQuaid	Mr. Douglas Hempstead
	Mr. Fred Bondi	Mr. John Tobin
	Ms. Joanne Romano	
District A:	Mr. Richard Bonenfant	Mr. David Jaegar
District B:	Mr. Carvin Hilliard	
District C:	Ms. Laurel Lindstrom	Mr. Nicholas Kydes
District D:	Mr. Clyde Mount	Ms. Kelly Straniti
District E:	Mr. Andrew Conroy	Ms. Nora King

Mayor Richard A. Moccia
Attorney Robert Maslan, Corporation Counsel
Ellen Wink, City Clerk
Fourteen members were present; one member was absent (Simms)

II. **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

Regular meeting – February 8, 2011

**** MR. BONDI MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE
FEBRUARY 8, 2011 MEETING AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

A. **RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS**

RESIGNATIONS: None

APPOINTMENTS: Josephine Deupree, Board of Assessment Appeals

**** MR. KYDES MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF
JOSEPHINE DEUPREE TO THE BOARD OF ASSESSMENT APPEALS.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mayor Moccia stated that the purpose of moving the location of tonight's meeting to the Concert Hall was to accommodate the anticipated large attendance by the public and to provide them with an opportunity to comment on the 2011-12 Operating Budget proposed by the Finance Department and the recommended budget cap, which is the maximum limit on total appropriations for the for the upcoming fiscal year.

He stated that at the conclusion of the public comments and following the regular agenda items, the Council members will then have an opportunity to make comments regarding the recommended resolution as to the budget cap. He added that anyone who wishes to speak must sign and include their name, address and affiliation on the sign up sheet, and he stated the Common Council rules of public comments and asked that there be personal attacks made to the Council or public, no calling out, cheering or applause; and that due to the number of people who signed up to speak it was critical to maintain order. He stated the time limit for comments as three minutes, but that he would not cut speakers off but would give them a signal to wrap up and conclude comments as they approached the time limit.

Mayor Moccia asked City Clerk Wink to read the names and for any individuals who signed up to speak to state their name, address or affiliation and for two people to come forward, so that the next person can be ready to speak at the conclusion of the other.

Note: Please refer to the Public Comment addendum to the minutes.

Following comments by 38 individuals, Mayor Moccia called for a five minute recess. The meeting was recessed at 10:00 and resumed back into public session at 10:15 p.m.

IV. MAYOR

Mayor Moccia thanked the audience for their cooperation with limiting the applause and acknowledged the elected officials as it is some tough times for all. He added that there has been some that say it is Board of Education vs. the City, Seniors vs. Taxpayers, Taxpayers vs. Employer. He stated that he sees many signs and the Council should have signs on display for everyone as they represent all the City departments and residents. He explained that setting the cap is a balancing act, and to remember that this is not the final straw as the next step is going to the Board of Estimate and Taxation, and he is hopeful that there are other options, we can still meet with the Board of Education and many of the union officials. He added that as the Mayor, I do not underestimate our school system, I understand that it needs improvement but that can be said about many urban school systems. He added that in reply to many comments made tonight, he is disgraced by comparisons of Norwalk to suburban towns like Wilton and New Canaan and reminded the public that Norwalk is a viable diverse City that is faced with the complex issues and cannot be compared to Darien or Ridgefield.

V. COUNCIL PRESIDENT

A. GENERAL COUNCIL BUSINESS

- ** MR. MCQUAID MOTIONED THE FOLLOWING ITEMS FOR THE
CONSENT CALENDAR: VI.A.1 and 2; VII.A.1 through 7; VII B. 1 through 4.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Note: The following items on consent are listed in bold type:

VI. REPORTS: DEPARTMENTS, BOARD AND COMMISSIONS

A. BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION

FISCAL YEAR 2010-2011:

1. RESOLVED, that a sum not to exceed \$20,000 be and the same is hereby transferred from Increased Estimated Revenues to the Parks and Recreation Department to cover tree removal expenses. (Account No. 01-6031-5298).

2. RESOLVED, that a sum not to exceed \$6,895 be and the same is hereby transferred from Increased Estimated Revenues to the Fire Department to cover expenses associated with the Code Red System. (Account No. 01-3160-5258).

VII. COMMON COUNCIL COMMITTEES

A. RECREATION, PARKS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

1. Approve the use of the grounds at Silvermine School by the YMCA of Norwalk, Inc. for a Summer Day Camp from Monday, June 27, 2011 through Friday, August 19, 2011 from 7:30 AM – 6:00 PM for ages 4-15. Estimated attendance 160-180 children.

2. Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia to enter into an agreement with The Round Hill Highland Game Inc. for their use of Cranbury Park along with the Parking Area at Cranbury School for off site parking, for their Annual Round Hill Highland Games to take place Saturday, July 2, 2011 from 6:00 AM – 8:00 PM. Set-up to take place Friday, July 1, 2011 6:00 AM and tear down no later than 12:00 Noon on Sunday, July 3, 2011. Admission Fees: Adults \$15.00, Seniors \$10.00, Children \$5.00. Estimated attendance 3,000+.

3. Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia to enter into an agreement with Kayak for a Cause Miles Spencer for their use of Calf Pasture Beach, for their Annual “Kayak for a Cause X” to be held Saturday, July 30, 2011 from 8:00 AM – 9:00 PM. Set-up to take place Friday, July 29, 2011 at 12:00 Noon and tear down no later than 12:00 Noon Sunday, July 31, 2011. Estimated attendance 1,500.

CONSENT CALENDAR- Continued

4. Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia to enter into an agreement with the Norwalk Seaport Association for their use of Veteran's Park for the 2011 Oyster Festival to be held Friday, September 9, 2011 from 6:00 PM – 11:00 PM, Saturday, September 10, 2011 from 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM, and Sunday, September 11, 2011 from 11:00 AM – 8:00 PM. Set-up to take place starting Friday, August 26, 2011 with tear down no later than September 23, 2011. Admission Prices: General Admission \$12.00, Seniors 65+ \$10.00, Children (5-12) \$3.00, Children (under 5) Free. Estimated attendance 50,000+.

5. Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia to enter into an agreement with the Child Guidance Center of Mid Fairfield County, Stuart Greenbaum for their use of Calf Pasture Beach for a 1st Annual Norwalk "Bike and Run" to be held Sunday, June 5, 2011 from 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM, with a rain date of Sunday, June 12, 2011. Estimated attendance 200-250.

6. Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia to execute an agreement with Fuss & O'Neil, Inc. for the Project #2993, Athletic field Design Services Nathan Hale Middle School for a sum not to exceed \$57,000. Account #09116030-5777-C0487.

7. **Technical Correction**

Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia to enter into an agreement with the Norwalk Karting Association for the use of Calf Pasture Beach for their Spring & Fall Racing Season.

Spring: March 26, April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, May 7, 15, 21(no rain date), 2011
Fall: October 1(no rain date), October 8(no rain date), October 15, 22, 29, 2011
November 5, 12, 19, 26, 2011 Estimated attendance 100+.

B. FINANCE COMMITTEE

1. Accept and Approve the Report of the Claims Committee dated: February 10, 2011.

2. For Informational Purposes only: Monthly Tax Collector's Report dated: January 31, 2011.

3. For Informational Purposes only: Narrative on Tax Collections dated February 10, 2011

4. Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia, to execute any and all documents necessary to amend Loan Agreements with Oak Hills Park Authority in order to restructure debt service payments to the City of Norwalk in accordance with the Restructuring Plan dated February 4, 2011.

VII. B. 5. Appropriations for the City of Norwalk for Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2011.

Mayor Moccia stated that the next portion of the meeting will be Council member discussion and the public may remain, although further comments or participation will not be permitted. Mr. Kydes then read the following resolution:

Be it resolved by the Common Council of the City of Norwalk that the maximum limit on total appropriations for the City of Norwalk for Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2011, shall be no more than \$273,078,998. This appropriation cap represents total expenditures of \$287,119,594 less estimated intergovernmental grants of \$14,040,596.

Mayor Moccia stated that he would take comments in no particular order and he acknowledged Ms. King who stated that she would like to go to 3.7 along with ask questions of Mr. Hamilton. Mayor Moccia asked Ms. King to clarify what the 3.7 represented and if that was an amendment.

Ms. King asked Mr. Hamilton to provide a summary of the budget recommendation and what a 3.7% increase would represent, and Mr. Hamilton replied that if that was a 3.7% increase for the Education Budget it would represent a total cap of \$275,001,306 and total expenditures of \$289,041,902 less the intergovernmental grants. Ms. King stated that she would like thank those residents who came out in support of the education budget and that as a mother this was truly an emotional past few weeks. She stated that she supports Dr. Marks's recommended budget and although a 3.7% increase does not fully fund the budget, it helps to reach an amount closer to reduce the gap and to give the superintendent more of a playing field. She added that the big catch phrase is there should be some shared sacrifice and this recommended amendment is a good compromise.

Mr. Jaeger stated that he wanted to thank all those who turned out and last week and wanted to acknowledge that these are very hard issues to address. He added that as he stated last week, he is very passionate about the education system in Norwalk and fully supports the Board of Education's requested \$4.7 million increase. He stated that this should not be looked at as an expense but as an investment that will grow the City over time.

Mr. Hilliard stated that the whole country faces economic challenges but we need to be careful not to short change the children in the process. He added that the Board of Education is not just another City Department, it affects the entire City population and if we do not support education, property values will go down and people will move out. He added that you cannot short change the kids as they are our future and it hurts the future value.

Ms. Lindstrom stated that she felt a 3.7% amended cap is a good compromise and it goes a long way to close the gap in support that is needed for education. She asked Mr. Hamilton to clarify the numbers of what the difference from the 4.7 and the 2.4% represented to the average household. Mr. Hamilton replied that it would be an additional increase of \$50 to a median household in the Fourth Taxing District and an additional 2.64% to the mil rate.

Ms. King stated that she would like to amend the budget to raise the cap.

**** MS. KING MOTIONED TO AMEND THE RESOLUTION TO REFLECT A 3.7% INCREASE TO THE EDUCATION BUDGET AND RAISE THE LIMIT ON TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS TO \$276,449,446.**

Mayor Moccia called for a roll call vote.

**** THE MOTION FAILED WITH FOUR VOTES IN FAVOR (HILLIARD, KING, JAEGER, LINDSTROM), TEN OPPOSED (BONDI, CONROY, BONENFANT, HEMPSTEAD, KYDES, MCQUAID, MOUNT, ROMANO, STRANITI, TOBIN) AND NO ABSTENTIONS.**

Mayor Moccia asked for further comments on the resolution as presented.

Ms. Romano stated that we all take education very seriously, and this budget process is a very difficult balancing task. She applauds Dr. Marks for her diligence and for jumping in with both feet, and she respects her open approach and transparency with the budget process. She stated that she does not want to see anything cut that affects the children with reduced programs or teachers, and she personally takes offense to be accused of not caring about children and of being on a witch hunt to cut education. She added that there is a very diligent process of Committee review of the Finance Department recommendation, and she feels that it is fair and ensures that City budgets are spent wisely. She wants the BOE to find the ways, just as all other City Departments have made concessions, to make the budget work without affecting classroom education. She reminded the public that the Council represents all citizens of Norwalk, seniors, those on fixed income, those that have all too often the hard decision to choose to not pay the mortgage in order to feed their families. She feels that the 2.6% cap represents a very fair balance of the complex budget process with necessary adjustments and, although it has caused a great deal of descent; it is in the best interests of Norwalk. She added that the Common Council in no way wants to take anything away from our children, but, seniors on fixed incomes, the unemployed and the underemployed needed to be shielded from higher taxes, and we just can't overtax the people.

Mr. Hempstead stated that we all do care about education, but that what has been evident in all these Committee meetings, the Council has to balance the needs of the entire City, be it DPW, Police, Firefighters. He added that it is hurtful to be accused of not supporting education and he summarized his twenty plus years as an active member in the school community, with family members that are teachers, and he was a president of the Father's Club and is still serving on Boards of Schools in Communities and Human Services Council that are serve the education community. He asked to summarize that he has heard so much about shared sacrifice but that is actually a misnomer to what should be shared responsibility.

Mr. Hempstead added that Governor Malloy's budget also includes a three-cent gas tax increase and a two-cent diesel fuel increase, and at this time when their disposable income has been severely reduced, these tax increases will directly affect those that are poor.

He explained that a major step in what city leaders hope will be a lobbying effort aimed at state lawmakers, is the ECS funding where with a smaller proportion of its education budget coming from state aid, he is ready to take the bus to Hartford to lobby for a greater percentage of ECS funding to come to Norwalk rather than to cites such as West Hartford.

He stated Norwalk has a very diverse population and has consistently, for decades, been shortchanged especially when the percentage of Educational Cost Sharing grants as a percentage of Norwalk's education budget is unfairly allocated to other cities. He added that everyone takes a piece of the pie, and in these uncertain times, he simply cannot pass along further increase to the taxpayers of Norwalk. He stated that there were many comments made tonight that mention it is only a \$60 per year increase, but that is on top of an average of \$500 per month in taxes. He summarized that it takes a village to raise a child, but it takes a prudent City to balance the needs of all taxpayers in an economy where there are under-employed, foreclosures and many diverse needs.

Mr. Bonenfant stated that he will also be supporting the recommendation by the Finance Committee and the resolution for the cap but wanted to state that he has always supported the Norwalk Public Schools. He added that they just put \$9 million in the Capital Budget, and that does not justify being called immoral and someone that hates kids. He stated that we know it is important to support education, but we cannot over tax people, we must protect the taxpayers and at the same time balance the budget and address education.

Mr. Tobin stated that he wanted to echo comments made by the other Council members without repeating them, and he would prefer to lower the cap, but he will vote to support the recommendation by the Finance Committee. He added that he would have preferred no increase at all in the budget, and would support that if he thought there was a majority on the Council for the idea.

Ms. Straniti stated that she won't repeat what other members have said but echoes the comments to support the Finance Department recommended cap. She stated that although all residents don't come out to these meetings, she gets calls all the time, all year long, and is approached by people in the supermarket who tell her to not raise taxes. She said that comments tonight indicate \$100 increase in property taxes is only 18 cents a day, but home values have already plummeted and although they may have not hit bottom, an increase in property taxes along with proposed state tax increases present a hardship for all residents.

Ms. Straniti reviewed some of the proposed tax increases in Governor Malloy's budget that includes a three-cent gas tax increase and a two-cent diesel fuel increase, and at this time when their disposable income has been severely reduced, these tax increases will directly affect those that are poor. She added that in addition to the cigarette tax, there may be tax increases on consumer products and services such as clothing, grooming, pet care, etc. and stated that it all adds up and every penny matters. She stated that she understands what the residents of Norwalk all want is to keep taxes low and we need to make these difficult decisions.

Mr. McQuaid stated that he is in a most difficult situation as an employee of the Norwalk Public Schools and has wrestled with cuts that affect children and his own job being cut through this budget process. He stated that he has asked himself if he should just abstain, walk away due to a conflict, but he chose to remain part of the vote.

He stated that he has been part of the battle to get the cap up from where it was, which had started originally at a zero increase, and he does feel that the BOE and BET can work to find other areas to put programs back and reduce other expenditures that do not directly affect the classrooms. He shared that he was recently in a training program for Intervention Aides, some of the lowest paid employees in the Norwalk Public Schools while the speaker had no clue those in attendance were focused on what they could do to help the decision to eliminate positions. Mr. McQuaid stated that it was not necessary for Dr. Moore to continue to point to the “Remember November” sign, as it was inappropriate and she was being disrespectful during his comments; and he asked that she show him the same courtesy that the Council members showed to her and the other 40 people who spoke tonight. He stated that he will continue to fight for ways to increase the cap and to know that it was zero when he started and a 2.6% increase has come a long way.

Mr. Bondi thanked all that have participated in this process and stated that the charge has been to hold taxes down as residents cannot afford an increase. He hopes for union concessions from the Board of Education and stated that average teacher makes \$81,000 a year, the average administrator makes \$140,000 a year; and that's in Norwalk. He added that Norwalk is in the top three cities with the highest paid teachers in the state of Connecticut. He added that all we're asking for here is to freeze your salary for one year as all other City departments have done—that is fair and shared sacrifice. He stated that he has always supported the schools and has donated much of his time to the City school athletics programs and he personally donates a scholarship each year in his wife's name to Norwalk High School. Mr. Bondi added that it is time to cut salaries, just as every other union including Police and Fire, there is no where else—we are at bare bones budgets, keeping in mind that the City has lost 100 employees. He asked the Board of Education to just do their fair share and go back and renegotiate.

Mr. Conroy stated that he has always supported education and in today's economy, there should be literature on how to do bankruptcy or how to handle losing a home to foreclosure. He would rather support a lower tax or a decrease, or zero increase to the cap, but that would impact education. He added that the average income in his district tends to be higher and some residents would rather support a small tax increase, but we have to think about the risk that is in the 2.6% recommended cap. He explained that there is lots of risk that we won't get the funding for conservation by the state, and you just can't increase taxes. He added that taxes never go down they just keep increasing supportable by normal cost of living, and that one public comment made tonight was very well taken about looking at next year. He stated that, with so many issues with the economy and state funding and increased taxes, we can only handle one year at a time.

Ms. King asked if she could make further comments and stated that too she gets calls all the time from both sides and has been bearing the brunt of questions about the business building projects and why there were no further revenue-generating plans in development. She added that she is a real estate appraiser and speaks to real estate agents all the time who say people will not come to Norwalk because of the education program. She stated that it is troubling that the fact is that the City moves backward and not forward with educational investing. She then asked about the state money targets to be given back to municipalities and how that impacts Norwalk, and stated that. She does have further questions of the Finance Department as a result of the governor's increases and how much revenue that will bring back to the City.

Mr. Hamilton replied that he has not yet had a chance to decipher all the elements of the governor's proposal, that there is no new \$ added to this budget from the additional state sales tax. He highlighted the example of New Haven with the Smilow Cancer Center will get more of a tax break than other cities, and the pilot for manufacturing has not been accounted for and is to be built into the Governor's proposed plan. He added that, again all this is pending legislative approval, and that it is just too soon, and to realize that inter-government revenue increases actually lowers the cap. He cautioned that changes will not be reflected until the proposed changes actually become law and by incorporating proposed changes now reduces future flexibility, and said he feels strongly that it is a mistake to adjust revenues up.

Mr. Kydes stated that there has to be a transparent process of union negotiations with the Board of Education and salary freezes as has been done throughout the City Departments. Mr. Kydes stated that last year during the last budget exercise and again this year that other bargaining units in the city have taken pay freezes. The BOE needs to impose a salary freeze and step increase changes so that a major budget savings would be achieved. Mr. Kydes stated that further scrutiny of the education should be done, and not to cut programs, but to examine salaries. He added that we have to look at the total picture—the other city unions sacrificed, and we had to work together to bridge a gap, and I have to believe it can be done. He asked the Council to remember that over the past two years, most Norwalk unions outside the Education Department have accepted wage freezes of various types, and similar wage restrictions need to occur within the BOE, as the taxpayers cannot afford to pay any more.

Mr. Kydes stated that on behalf of the Finance Committee, he proposes an amendment to the resolution to include the objective to find additional reductions in expenses and additional sources of revenues, along with imploring the BOE and BET to work in best efforts to maintain educational programs.

**** MR. KYDES MOTIONED TO ACCEPT THE RESOLUTION, (AMENDED WITH PARTS IN ITALIC TYPE) AS FOLLOWS:**

WHEREAS, SECTION I-289 OF THE NORWALK CHARTER REQUIRES THAT A MAJORITY OF THE COMMON COUNCIL VOTE TO ESTABLISH A SPECIFIC SPENDING LIMITATION ON LOCALLY FUNDED 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 TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE CITY OF NORWALK FOR FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2011 SHALL BE NO MORE THAN \$273,078,988. THIS APPROPRIATION CAP REPRESENTS TOTAL EXPENDITURES OF \$287,119,594 LESS ESTIMATED INTERGOVERNMENTAL GRANTS OF \$14,040,596M, *WHICH REPRESENTS AN INCREASE OF \$7,015,943 OR 2.64% AS COMPARED TO LAST FISCAL YEAR'S APPROVED APPROPRIATIONS CAP OF \$266,063,055.*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE RESULT OF THIS VOTE AND RESOLUTION, TOGETHER WITH THE ATTACHED 2011-12 BUDGET GUIDE, BE FORWARDED BY THE CLERK OF THE CITY OF NORWALK TO THE BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION.

Mayor Moccia called for a roll call vote.

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH TEN VOTES IN FAVOR, (BONDI, CONROY, BONENFANT, HEMPSTEAD, KYDES, MCQUAID, MOUNT, ROMANO, STRANITI, TOBIN) FOUR OPPOSED (HILLIARD, KING, JAEGER, LINDSTROM), AND NO ABSTENTIONS.**

Mayor Moccia thanked members of the public for attending, and thanked the committee members for their work with this very difficult process. He stated that final process through the Board of Estimate and Taxation is weeks down the road and the objective is to keep property taxes at a minimum. He stated that he disagrees with the statement about Norwalk Public Schools being so bad and people are leaving for other areas, and those towns don't have the same problems as Norwalk has as an urban diverse city. He added that according to census numbers Norwalk is one of the few cities to have stayed the same or even increased in population, and that the graduation rate is still high. He stated that we need to continue to celebrate our diversity and work on overcoming the achievement gap.

IX.	MOTIONS POSTPONED TO A SPECIFIC DATE:	None
X.	SUSPENSION OF RULES:	None
XI.	ADJOURNMENT	

**** MR. BONDI MOTIONED TO ADJOURN.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Knox, Telesco Secretarial Services

Public Comments

Note: Comments by the various speakers are summarized and are not verbatim.

1. **Steve Colarossi**, Plymouth Avenue, stated that he represented the Board of Education, and was accompanied by Jack Chiamonte, Chairman, and Glen Iannaccone, Vice-Chairman. He stated that on behalf of the Board, he wanted to thank the Council and the Finance Committee for all their due diligence with this 2011-12 Operating Budget process, and they greatly appreciate their support. He stated that they appreciate the 2.6 % increase over last year and would work to restrain spending if the council approved the finance director's recommended budget. Mr. Colarossi stated that we will do what we can to make sure student programs are not eliminated, and cuts will not be made to classroom education.

2. **Bruce LeVine Mellion**, 9 Mott Avenue, President of the Norwalk Federation of Teachers, stated that on behalf of the NFT he wanted to thank all those in the audience for their attendance to this meeting and for their support of the increase to the cap. He referred to the handout provided to the Council and the Finance Committee and read the summary as follows:

He added that the change to a Health Savings Account benefit program has saved \$2 million and will continue to save each year over three years, but as a result teachers have incurred more in out-of-pocket costs and in meeting high deductibles. This is another sacrifice that the teachers have had to make. He stated that they understand the economic realities of the day, but there has never been an easy budget cycle in Norwalk, and the coalition with the NFT is not pleased with the recommendation with only a 3.3% increase. The issue at this point is really simple: tax payers -- the citizens of Norwalk -- have to decide what level the Board of Education should be funded. Here we are once again, we have to go up against the Common Council, the Finance Committee and the Board of Estimate and Taxation prior to when the CAP is set. Mr. Mellion added that The NFT contract went into effect five months ago and took months of arbitration with the BET, and he referred to the contract as revenue neutral for three years. He detailed the impact of a one-year hard wage freeze from the 900 members of the Norwalk Federation of teachers, who are scheduled by contract to receive a 1.36-percent raise and an estimated 1.54-percent step increase.

Mr. Mellion read the following message that was read at last week's meeting:

NORWALK FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

The **Norwalk Federation of Teachers** has done the following to address these economic times:

1. We designed and negotiated an HSA health insurance plan for active and retired teachers that saved \$2.4 million during the 2009-10 fiscal year.
2. We agreed to take the HSA plan 8 months earlier than we had to, to effectuate an additional \$1.2 million in savings for a total of \$3.6 million over 18 months and \$7.0 million in savings over 3 years 8 months.
3. We capped or sunset some of the economic provisions in the teachers' contract.
4. We negotiated a very small salary increase for the period 9/1/10 - 8/31/2013, which has a neutral cost impact. This was confirmed by the Norwalk Board of Estimate and Taxation at its November 4, 2009 meeting.

In addition, the **Norwalk Federation of Teachers** has:

1. Changed health insurance carriers several times from TransAmerican to Blue Cross/Blue Shield to Cigna to Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield, each time saving millions of dollars.
2. Changed the health insurance funding platform from fully insured to a PPO to an HSA, again saving millions of dollars.

In addition, the **Norwalk Federation of Teachers** has:

1. Added three professional development days to the teachers contract.
2. Added Wednesday morning meetings for elementary teachers for more collegial collaboration time.
3. Capped or sunset additional contract provisions, saving millions of dollars

In addition, the **NFT** in conjunction with the Coalition of Board of Education unions:

1. Was a major contributor to resolving the reconciliation of the 2010 -11 operating budget with no loss of programs or personnel totaling over \$5.1 million.
2. Proposed a three part plan to save millions of dollars that was never responded to or counter proposed to.

Norwalk teachers spend thousands of dollars on graduate courses, workshops, conferences and seminars to improve their knowledge and instructional practices as well as spending countless hours beyond the contract day in the evening, weekends, school recesses as well as the summer. Norwalk teachers each spend hundreds of dollars out of their own pockets for supplies and materials each school year.

3. **Andrea Light**, 7 Greenwood Place, Norwalk, thanked the Council for keeping the tax increase to a minimum and spoke on behalf of her mother who is retired, a neighbor who is under-employed neighbor, and for those who have lost their home to foreclosure. She stated that it is hard to get by in this economy and an additional tax increase would be an added burden.

4. **Mary Conlin**, 21 Linden Heights, Norwalk, stated that she has spent her entire career as a teacher and urged the Committee to fully fund the education budget. She said she echoes what other speakers have stated that the district is in need of improvement and has been for six years. We have lessons learned that can be put into action to affect over 11,000 students. She added that the future of the community is at stake if the education budget cannot accomplish the initiatives so desperately needed to address the achievement gap, address the mission of achieving the level of quality education for all children. She said education is the single most critical factor that yields the greatest value and increase for property values. She added that she will gladly pay an additional \$60 per year to have this value and to save the school system from failing the children and the City. She urged the board to increase the cap and to begin the vital rebuilding process that Norwalk desperately needs.

5. **Tony Ditrio**, 24 Woodlawn Avenue, Norwalk, introduced himself as Principal of Kendall School and the NASA school administrators union. He stated that he requests that the recommended budget, which represents a 2% tax increase, and a \$120 average tax increase, should be increased to 3% which is only an additional \$60 a year or \$.16 a day. He encouraged the Committee to fully fund the education budget request which represents a much needed increase to keep the programs in place that help close the educational achievement gap as well as move closer to the amount needed to make up for loss stimulus dollars. He said this would show the unions good faith to solve this problem together, and that it does not have to be spent, just to be setting a cap. He understands that there needs to be a better system of accountability, but that does not get results to cut the budgets. He stated that a salary freeze as proposed and suggested by members of the Committee does not cover the gap between the cap and the recommended budget. He added that even if the contract was reopened for these concessions were negotiated, \$1.8 million is all that can come from the cuts and an additional two million is necessary. He urged the Council to move forward and support the new superintendent with the tools to tackle the tasks she was hired to accomplish. He asked the City to stop taking out their frustrations on the students.

6. **Diane Witkowski**, 19 Truman Street, Norwalk, stated she cannot afford any budget increase, but the recommendation seems quite generous in view of the under employed and those living on less social security. This increase is higher than other cities and we should be lucky to have a job. It is the responsibility of Council members to taxpayers and residents to make cuts if necessary. A budget of \$6.9 million is not a reasonable and make hard decisions necessary no matter who it may inconvenience or bother.

7. **Al Raymond**, 19 Truman Street, Norwalk stated he also would like to see no increase and to go with Mr. Hamilton's recommendation, as we cannot afford an increase, we just cannot give more. He said he has had no raise in years, and he supports the process whereby it is the responsibility of Council members to act on behalf of taxpayers and residents to make cuts if necessary without a cut in city services.

8. **Bruce Root**, Aiken Street, Norwalk, stated that he thanks the Council for keeping the tax increase to a minimum, and he acknowledged the hard work of the members as they are damned if they do and damned if they don't. He feels that it is immoral to even consider a tax increase in their economy, and suggested an education fund be set up where parents can donate and a levy can be set on students to make up the shortfall. He added that back in 1983 his daughter informed him that there no math books and workbooks had to be reused as there was no money left for books in the budget. There were dog and puppy shows like this one back then, budgets got raised, and there was still no money for books. He added that he would like to know where the money goes and would like to see it go to the classroom education not administrator salaries.

9. **Julie Burton**, 14 Sunwich Road, Norwalk, stated that she supports the Finance Department's recommendation, and added that it seems that the BOE requested amount is tied to teacher step adjustments and salary increases. She added that she would hope to avoid cuts in educational programs and suggested that they suspend step increases and institute a salary freeze for one year. She added that she agrees that it is the responsibility of Council members to taxpayers and residents to make cuts to ensure minimal tax increases to property tax burden.

10. **Jan Muldowney**, 4 East Avenue, Norwalk, - spoke on behalf of the support of education and said that last week she had made an emotional plea to the Finance Committee. She stated that she had lost both of her parents and especially now in their memory, has followed by example of the pride they had for education. She is saddened and disheartened by the process and is completely frustrated to have to fight for everything and to have to continually try to explain to the City officials that children are our future. She presented copies of letters signed by 93 parents which represents a 21% response and stated that she would have had more parents turn out tonight, but the time of the meeting is late and we need to care for our children. She asked the Council members to please invest in education of our children and stated there is no excess in the budget. She added that teachers cannot teach from a cart and many of them now are in fear of losing their jobs, and this just has to stop. She said that the budget devastation has to end, to please raise the cap to support education.

11. **Mark Bradley**, 29 Yarmouth Road, Norwalk introduced himself as Chairman of the Democratic Town Committee, a resident and taxpayer. He stated that this budget represents a vote against public schools, the City's educators and administrators are the most vital sector of the payroll, and you get what you pay for. He said as evident at last week's public hearing, that residents are willing to give back a little more to invest in education and would

like to see all others tighten their spending to other department to put support into the schools. Underfunding education short changes and degrades property values, and there is a direct correlation. Property taxes may go up \$100 per year, but the value can easily decline by \$100,000 without a strong education system.

He added that we are still feeling the effects of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Cities across the nation are seeing their tax revenues decline and property values decline. If teachers that put their jobs on the line without resource, especially the increasing non-English speaking population, the outcome hurts the City. He asked the Committee to be fair and to at least give Dr. Marks what she is asking for and give her the tools she needs to move the education system forward for the betterment of the City.

12. Carol Andreoli, 23 Sachem Street, Norwalk, stated that many residents are struggling just to make it, and she especially concerned about seniors. She wanted to clear up some misinformation and clarified that the cap does not represent cuts in education but an increase of over 2% when other areas have been cut. The top wage earners in the city are teachers and administrators and this is not a hardship on them if taxes increase, so it is not in the best interests of the students. She added that she would hope to avoid cuts in educational programs and suggested that they suspend step increases and institute a salary freeze for one year. She added that she agrees that it is the responsibility of Council members to taxpayers and residents to make cuts to ensure minimal tax increases to lighten the property tax burden.

13. Bill Nightingale, 17 South Beach Drive, Norwalk stated that the Council's charge is to hold taxes down, and to cut taxes rather than debate the magnitude of the cap increase. He added that it is reasonable to ask BOE to suspend step increases and institute a salary freeze for one year, similar to other departments. He added that he agrees that it is the responsibility of Council members to accept the Finance Department recommended cap without disruption to students.

14. Karen Doyle-Lyons, 83 Soundview Avenue, Norwalk, stated that the Board of Education budget is not being cut; just the amount of the increase is being reduced. She wanted to clear up some misinformation and clarified that the cap does not represent cuts in education but an increase of over 2% when other areas have been cut or at zero, and have many union concessions. She asked parents and teachers to be fiscally responsible rather than dangling little children against the city officials. She suggested that the out of district issues be addressed and rather than rushing to spend every last unspent dollar, money should be returned to education budget. She stated that in May/June there is a huge amount of deliveries, and said that someone should be reviewing how this money is spent. The top wage earners in the city are teachers and administrators and this is not a hardship on them if taxes increase, so it is not in the best interests of the students. She added that she would hope to avoid cuts in educational programs and suggested that the stop using it is for the good of the children and they should institute a salary freeze for one year. She added that she agrees that it is the responsibility of Council members to taxpayers and residents to make cuts to ensure minimal tax increases to lighten the property tax burden.

16. Karen Ham, 83B Soundview Avenue, Norwalk, stated that she was a parent of a sophomore at Brien McMahon and describes the importance of team sports and the athletic edge this program represents. She urged the Council to increase the cap and to begin the vital rebuilding process that Norwalk desperately needs.

17. Lisa Lenskold, 17 Folwell Road and President, PTO Council, stated that she applauds the collaboration by the Board and the Finance Department and everyone involved with the public hearing and the process, but she strongly encourages support of the education budget. She asked to please raise the spending cap and support education, please raise the cap and support our children and their fullest potential, please raise the cap and support Norwalk and its success in the future. She added that an educated child will grow up to become a productive adult, please give them the opportunity to make positive changes in this world. She stated that there have been years of mismanagement of the education budget, but now is the right time to start the rebuilding process. She added that the future of the community is at stake if the education budget cannot accomplish the initiatives so desperately needed to address the achievement gap, address the mission of achieving the level of quality education for all children. She urged the Council to increase the cap and to begin the vital rebuilding process that Norwalk desperately needs.

18. Chris Passamaro, 20 Fairview Avenue, spoke on behalf of the maintaining the education budget and the \$7million increase needed, as opposed to a \$3.4 million shortfall. He addressed the issue where the City Pension Fund is over-funded and rather than making a \$5 million contribution to the Pension Fund, perhaps this can be used to borrow against and make an increase and investment in education. He explained that the Pension Fund is the most over-funded area in the state and perhaps the country, and this needs to be examined as the education of a child is today—that cannot be made up with future borrowings for pensions. He added that there needs to be Assistant Principal, Intervention and Literacy Aides, and all the resources that teachers need to address the achievement gap. He gave data on dollars spent per child compared to pension fund contributions and asked the Board to be fair and equitable with their budget to the school, as education lost cannot be made up—if a child is not reading by third grade, they are not equipped to tackle the education requirements that lie ahead.

19. Reverend Bruce Morris, 17 Sention Avenue, Norwalk, thanked Mayor Moccia and all the council members for their service and stated that it is remarkable that everyone is truly trying to come together. He stated that there is an inaccurate statistic about the ECS funding and he referred to a chart presented to the Council that the funding has actually gone up not down. He added that Norwalk serves a most challengingly diverse population in culture, race, economic and learning needs, and he urged the City officials that Norwalk is a city with many challenges and that unless they realize this and support the education budget the City will suffer and to please reconsider and increase the cap. He stated that they should think about this as a strategic investment to fight the battle of the achievement gap which in Connecticut is the largest in the country.

Mayor Moccia asked to clarify that they were not claiming that the ECS funding has decreased it is the share of allocation to cities where those such as West Hartford receive a disproportionate share because Norwalk is considered a wealthy community.

19. Robert Burgess, 37 Brooklawn Avenue, Norwalk, stated that there is no water in Ryan Park and compared to funding marked for Flax Hill Park, it is unfair that water cannot be provided to the inner city park. He added that he is on a fixed income but he is willing to pay more to support education, rather than go further behind.

Mr. Burgess stressed that we need to education our children, they are our future, and we harm our future by not supporting the schools.

20. **Ivette Ellis**, Principal of Silvermine Elementary School added she is here, once again, to express the same sentiment as prior years, and this year with a devastating 2% decrease on top of a zero increase. She expressed her disappointment that despite the overwhelming majority of residents who spoke out last week in support of education, the Committee was not persuaded to move even slightly. She added that this should not be a power play between city officials and students. The bottom line is that families will flee rather than accept a reduced educational system. She asked why not support education, why create this obstacle for the new superintendent. She stated the message to officials that Norwalk is a city with many challenges and that unless they realize this and support the education budget the City will suffer, to please reconsider and increase the cap.

21. **Aaron Hull**, 3 Meredith Court, Norwalk, stated that everyone understands the climate but if the education system is not supported there is a profound impact. He added that there is a balancing act with supporting the pension fund, but not at the risk of ignoring education and not paying proper attention to other areas. Underfunding the education budget sends a very dangerous message to the community, as the education system is why he moved to Norwalk, like many other people he knows; but they will move and they will need to move if education is not supported. There is a gap, and maybe the gap is \$2Million with a 2% tax increase maybe it is \$4Million if there is a 0% increase. But the unions, BOE must make education the priority and above all a decision to not support this recommended budget and to increase the cap.

22. **Sue Haynie**, 7 Christopher Lane, Norwalk stated that she is a member of the Board of Education and has examined the City budget line by line and it is the most inclusive approach than other years in the past with much improved transparency. She stated that \$9 million is required just to maintain the educational system, but this is the time for reform. She added that the teachers and administrators must work together in a collaborative and cooperative way, the district is in need of improvement and has been for six years, and we have lessons learned that can be put into action to affect over 11,000 students. She concluded by saying that we have the opportunity to affect change for a better future with performance indicators. We need to have a better argument than just support the children.

24. **Kelly Giordano**, 17 Forest Hill Street, Norwalk, stated that she moved to Norwalk rather than Darien or New Canaan because she has faith in the Norwalk community. She added that Fox Run is a wonderful school and her children are thriving. She asked why stop the momentum, why not make education a priority and she asked the Council to do the right thing and to fully fund the education budget. She asked why hire an amazing news Superintendent and not allow her to do her job. She added that she personally has lost her job, but she is still willing to pay more in taxes to support education.

25. **Mark Robinson**, 16 Knob Hill Road identified himself as a parent of children in the Nathan Hale and stated that it is not appropriate for parents to fight the union school system. He told council members not to take my children as a hostage, the way the issue has been framed, you're taking a hostage, and the hostage is our children. He added that the City is in a political battle, sometimes the battle is won by those who care least, and it sounds like you win by not caring. He said that if you pass that budget, not only do you fail your taxpayers, but you fail every student in the district in terms of education and safety. He spoke against the budget cuts and encouraged the Committee not to pass the recommendation and to raise the cap.

26. **Dr. Susan Marks**, Superintendent, Norwalk Public Schools, read her written letter and provided copies to the Council members, as follows: Mr. Mayor, Mr. McQuaid and members of the Common Council, I appreciate the opportunity to come before you tonight to ask for your support for the Norwalk Public Schools. I come to you representing the 11,000 students and their families and our 1800 employees who everyday make a difference to our students. I am grateful that the Norwalk community continues to place a high value on public education even in difficult economic times. Over the last few weeks, the level of engagement of our community, employees and elected officials regarding the 2011-12 Operating Budget has been significant. This is important, because our schools are important to the "brand" of the city of Norwalk. Families move to cities because of the schools when the schools are perceived as being strong and competitive. The Norwalk Public Schools have a great history of providing an outstanding education for its students; however, we need to continue this excellence with investment in our district. The students of our school district need for everyone to be working together to come up with an operating budget that does not reverse our progress. We have begun to close the achievement gap and increase the number of our students taking higher level courses. We cannot take resources away from our students who need the support the most. Throughout this operating budget development process, we have included stakeholders. We are in discussions with our union partners to assist us through this difficult economic environment. However it needs to be noted that even with concessions from our unions that a 2.4% operating budget cap would mean significant reductions that will negatively impact the educational program of our students.

Great organizations are successful because of the people who make up the organization. Great school systems have great employees. We are in the people business. It is well known that students succeed when we have great leaders, great teachers and great support personnel. What keeps great employees going every day is the impact they have on our students. Seeing a student's face light up when they finally learn to read or learn a mathematical concept is why our employees, our administrators, teachers and support personnel make the commitment to serve the public schools.

We cannot have great schools without great people. So how will these potential reductions impact our students? These reductions will impact our students at all levels. We do need administrators in our schools. Our housemasters and assistant principals are instructional leaders who observe teachers and work with all staff to ensure that our all our students are receiving a strong instructional program. Educating our students is complex work.

We have moved far away from a teacher saying “opening up your textbook to page 1, and then go page by page”. Our students have to compete with students from around the world. We need to use technology. We need to provide access to a great deal of information, and we need to make sure our students learn to critically think and solve problems. We need programs, such as School to Career that provides our students with experiences that will help our students direct their careers. We cannot short change our students by reducing positions and programs that support reading, mathematics, guidance, sports and music. Our students have many needs, and our teachers, instructional assistants and school-based administrators must be well trained and have the tools to make sure our students are learning at high levels. I would like to remind everyone tonight that we all must work together to come up with a reasonable Operating Budget for the Norwalk Public Schools.

Over the last 4 years, the percentage of the city’s operating budget that has gone to the school district has actually decreased. Since 2008 through this year, 65 positions have been reduced by the board of education. These positions have included administrators, teachers and support personnel from the central office and the schools. If there was a 2% operating budget for 2011-12, we would need to reduce an additional 50 to 60 positions. Over the last few years, significant reductions have been made to the central office so that reductions would not have to be made to the schools. These reductions have affected the district’s ability to be responsive to our schools, and over the last few years, there have been significant reductions that have impacted the purchase of textbooks, software and instructional materials. These reductions have affected the district’s ability to keep up with innovative and researched based instructional strategies.

Over the last few years, the school district has been in mode of maintaining rather than moving forward. As you consider setting the cap, please remember that students that will be graduating from the Norwalk Public Schools will face a global economy in which most jobs require education or training beyond high school. Nearly every job—including electrician, auto mechanic, and office worker—requires high-tech skills and education after high school. If the trend continues, there will be fewer and fewer jobs available to those who do not have a college diploma. More education means higher life time earnings. College graduates will make more than 2 times the salary than high school graduates. A college education opens the door to more job opportunities, the ability to own a home, and the means to raise a family in comfort. Preparing our students to be college ready is good for business and good for Norwalk. Many in our community are willing to pay higher property taxes if these resources go to the schools. We cannot continue to take away from the school district, because at a certain point this “*tipping point*” cannot be tipped back the other way. Since coming to Norwalk, I have talked about the need to invest in our district. Let’s not forget that this is a budget for and about our children. I would hope that we will all come together to do what is right for our children. They are counting on us.

25. Patrick MacDonald, 10 Silver River Court, stated that he is a student at the Center for Global Studies at Brien McMahon High School. He read his letter to the Council and reminded them that superior education is needed for students to compete in the global economy and he asked them what the city wants for their future.

He asked them not to want a lack-luster education system but one that invests in high standards of learning, to challenge students and provide the rigor that the superintendent has promised. He asked them not to put off when there is a dire need to build a better future and to provide the educational tools that are needed for all students.

27. Suzanne Brown Koroshetz, 21 Ravenwood Road, Norwalk, and Principal of Brien McMahon High School, introduced herself as a parent with a vested interest in the community having children that were 2003 and 2006 graduates of BMHS. She thanked Dr. Marks and the budget committee for all their endless hours and hard work with the budget, and stated that the students will suffer with their education standards if such positions are not maintained. She urged the Committee members to focus on providing appropriate and sustaining educational programs and maintain what past City officials voted for to maintain the standard of education for all children so that students of 2011 can have the same standards as her own children had.

28. Claudia O'Connor, 11 Greenhill Road, stated that she is a teacher at Naramake and member of the Cranbury PTO Board and that people will move out if education is not sustained and given a priority in this City and young people will not move in. She added that Norwalk deserves more and not to short change the BOE budget. She added that the value of every house goes down if the school system goes down, and she encouraged the Committee to fully fund the education budget.

29. Bob Fosina, 206 Ponus Avenue Ext, thanked the Council for holding this hearing. He stated everyone is well aware that this is the third budget crisis year, and it is getting worse with more and more cuts and less stimulus and state funds. He added that he is also a parent and we all want what is best for our children and we have to find ways to work together. He urged the Committee to up the CAP to what is needed to support our new Superintendent with as her vision to create an environment of accountability for the many stakeholders with the Norwalk Public Schools, to establish leadership to raise standards of education, improve the opportunities for professional development for teachers along with open dialogue with administration and the Board of Education. He added that we need to work together and shoulder the burden and share equally with the budget cuts.

30. Reverend Paul Brian Smith, 11 William Street, introduced himself as Pastor of the Church on the Green stated that the community has come together in support education, and is evident by the numbers of those who have spoken in favor of increasing the budget. He stated that many residents of the community are suffering with increased taxes under financial burdensome times, however the message is clear. He urged the Committee to please do the right thing to take care of the children, as they are our future.

31. Mr. Drew Todd, 19 Friendly Road, Norwalk thanked the Committee for holding this public hearing, and stated that he is aware of the shared sacrifice. He stated that he has heard the City cries for the past two years, and the word flat is a good thing. He stated that the school has many great things going on and urged the Board to value those strengths and not change the formula of their success and stated that he wanted to echo comments made at last Thursday's meeting that this budget short changes the future of the City. He added that every part of the puzzle works especially at Wolfpit School.

He stated that there is money in the City and businesses are here and are thriving, but families will move if the education battle is not won to make education a priority. He applauds the collaboration by the Board and the Finance Department and everyone involved with the non-recommended budget, but he strongly encourages examination of alternatives.

32. Mark Bonasera, 11 Fairview Avenue Assistant Principal of West Rocks Middle School stated that he was here tonight to add his voice that the proposed cuts are wrong for Norwalk's students and wrong for this city, will take us all in the wrong direction, hurt our youth, hurt Norwalk's reputation, and our economy as a whole. The proposed cutting of classroom aides on the first grade level, when many students are just beginning to read, will mean a lack of small-group and one-on-one assistance that so many need. It will impede many students' acquisition of reading skills, which is the foundation for all future learning....As part of the 3.32% increase, one assistant principal position is slated to be cut. The loss of an assistant principal at West Rocks would be devastating to the school community. Speaking now to the public, at Ponus Ridge and West Rocks, we serve a most beautifully and challengingly diverse population, diverse in terms of ethnicity, culture, race, family income, and learning needs. Taking away an administrator at West Rocks, and at Ponus Ridge, will destroy that vital level of support. Together, we as a community must do whatever we can to support our schools as we wait for our local, state, and federal economies to rebound. Doing so will protect 11,000 of our young people and our city as a whole.

33. Chuck Goulart, President Norwalk High school Music Program, stated that his group is here tonight in support of the education budget that must be maintained for the future of all children in Norwalk. He added that music is far from extracurricular, university studies show students in a music program do drastically better academically, on sat and act testing, with improved self-esteem and confidence, as well as social skills and a slew of other life lessons. In order to run a school system with all of its own pressure from above to perform, and turnout excellence in education, excellent students and citizens is our end goal. Speaking from a laypersons view, if each and every staff person went to the union reps and told them to implement a pay freeze for this year that would narrow our gap by 1.2 % making it just a little amount and just a little closer, as well as eliminate the long dragged out union fighting, if they are all unified. He added that we all know everyone has to give a little in these difficult times. He urged the Committee to fully fund the budget for education, and not to pass this budget recommendation and to please find other ways for the city to cut items and shift the savings into education budget.

34. **Jim Napoli**, 15 New Street stated that his salary has been cut in half and that the largest asset is his home, which is directly correlated to education system. He asked the Committee why they must steal from the children, which is our future. He added that taxpayers are willing to pay an additional 1 percent to have a better school system. He stated that he has lost both income and home value being in the private sector, but he is willing to pay more in taxes to preserve the education of the City. He said it hurts more when kids fail. He shared a story about his daughter and her reading problems that have improved as a result of support by Literacy Specialists, but that will deteriorate if the budget is not supported.

34. **Napoleone Harris**, 26 Broad River, Norwalk, stated that he is a resident and one of three children who participated in the swim team program at NHS that went on to swim at the college level. She stated costs of the swim programs that are relatively low to and emphasized the co-op swim teams as ones that provide students a path to college swim opportunities, and asked the Board to keep the athletic programs in consideration when approving the budgets to sustain the program. She spoke against the budget cuts and encouraged the Committee not to pass the recommendation and to raise the cap.

35. **Mark Robinson**, 16 Knob Hill Road, Norwalk Pink Cloud Court stated that both he and his wife are life-long residents and chose to stay in Norwalk and added that she has since been president of the Wolfpit PTO. He is concerned about the High Schools with no freshman sports, security problems, and is afraid people will move with what they are faced with in this school system. He urged the Committee to fully fund the budget for education, and not to pass this budget recommendation.

36. **Bob Polselli**, Central Office, NPS IT Director, stated that he was here to show support of the Technology Development position that has been cut from the budget, and he explained that every teacher suffers without this position. He went on to state the importance of technology training for teachers especially in view of upcoming changes to state mandated testing, and he urged fully funding the budget for education.

37. **Monica Arcario**, 21 West Rocks Road, stated she was a citizen than truly appreciates this improved process and it is a good step forward at a dialogue with the stakeholders of the City. She encourages everyone to actually look at the budget, to go on line or go to the libraries, where a copy of the complete budget binder should be available for the public to review. She added that there should be an organizational chart and show that voters and taxpayers should be on top. We still don't know what the budget gap is. But what we DO know is that there are 85,000 people in this town and 4/5 of them are NOT in the school system that would like other areas of the budget to be examined. She suggested that Mr. Hamilton employ a zero-based budget approach, and to look at all departments, especially those that should be decreased in view of a economic downturn that has resulted in fewer building like P&Z. She added that there are also areas in the Capital Budget that should be looked at for savings rather than continually slash the education budget.

38. Melissa Robinson, Co-President of the Wolfpit PTO stated that she is appalled at the devastating cuts in this recommended budget and to have to fight for the future of the City to keep these vital programs is a sad state of affairs. She spoke on behalf of the maintaining the Assistant Principal, Intervention and Literacy Aides and Numeracy Coaches at Wolfpit Elementary School. She added that she is concerned about the High Schools with no freshman sports, security problems, and is afraid people will move with what they are faced with in this school system. She urged the Committee to fully fund the budget for education, and not to pass this budget recommendation.

The Public Hearing portion of the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

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.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Moccia called the meeting to order at 8:00 p.m. and led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

I. ROLL CALL

Ms. Wink called the roll. The following Council Members were present:

Council at Large:	Mr. Richard McQuaid	Mr. Douglas Hempstead
	Mr. Fred Bondi	Mr. John Tobin
	Ms. Joanne Romano	
District A:	Mr. Richard Bonenfant	Mr. David Jaeger
District B:	Mr. Carvin Hilliard	
District C:	Ms. Laurel Lindstrom	Mr. Nicholas Kydes
District D:	Mr. Clyde Mount	Ms. Kelly Straniti
District E:	Mr. Andrew Conroy	Ms. Nora King

Mayor Richard A. Moccia
Attorney Robert Maslan, Corporation Counsel
Ellen Wink, City Clerk
Fourteen members were present; one member was absent (Simms)

II. **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

Regular meeting – February 8, 2011

**** MR. BONDI MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 8, 2011 MEETING AS SUBMITTED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

A. **RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS**

RESIGNATIONS: None

APPOINTMENTS: Josephine Deupree, Board of Assessment Appeals

**** MR. KYDES MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF JOSEPHINE DEUPREE TO THE BOARD OF ASSESSMENT APPEALS.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mayor Moccia stated that the purpose of moving the location of tonight's meeting to the Concert Hall was to accommodate the anticipated large attendance by the public and to provide them with an opportunity to comment on the 2011-12 Operating Budget proposed by the Finance Department and the recommended budget cap, which is the maximum limit on total appropriations for the for the upcoming fiscal year.

He stated that at the conclusion of the public comments and following the regular agenda items, the Council members will then have an opportunity to make comments regarding the recommended resolution as to the budget cap. He added that anyone who wishes to speak must sign and include their name, address and affiliation on the sign up sheet, and he stated the Common Council rules of public comments and asked that there be personal attacks made to the Council or public, no calling out, cheering or applause; and that due to the number of people who signed up to speak it was critical to maintain order. He stated the time limit for comments as three minutes, but that he would not cut speakers off but would give them a signal to wrap up and conclude comments as they approached the time limit.

Mayor Moccia asked City Clerk Wink to read the names and for any individuals who signed up to speak to state their name, address or affiliation and for two people to come forward, so that the next person can be ready to speak at the conclusion of the other.

Note: Please refer to the Public Comment addendum to the minutes.

Following comments by 38 individuals, Mayor Moccia called for a five minute recess. The meeting was recessed at 10:00 and resumed back into public session at 10:15 p.m.

IV. MAYOR

Mayor Moccia thanked the audience for their cooperation with limiting the applause and acknowledged the elected officials as it is some tough times for all. He added that there has been some that say it is Board of Education vs. the City, Seniors vs. Taxpayers, Taxpayers vs. Employer. He stated that he sees many signs and the Council should have signs on display for everyone as they represent all the City departments and residents. He explained that setting the cap is a balancing act, and to remember that this is not the final straw as the next step is going to the Board of Estimate and Taxation, and he is hopeful that there are other options, we can still meet with the Board of Education and many of the union officials. He added that as the Mayor, I do not underestimate our school system, I understand that it needs improvement but that can be said about many urban school systems. He added that in reply to many comments made tonight, he is disgraced by comparisons of Norwalk to suburban towns like Wilton and New Canaan and reminded the public that Norwalk is a viable diverse City that is faced with the complex issues and cannot be compared to Darien or Ridgefield.

V. COUNCIL PRESIDENT

A. GENERAL COUNCIL BUSINESS

- ** MR. MCQUAID MOTIONED THE FOLLOWING ITEMS FOR THE
CONSENT CALENDAR: VI.A.1 and 2; VII.A.1 through 7; VII B. 1 through 4.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Note: The following items on consent are listed in bold type:

VI. REPORTS: DEPARTMENTS, BOARD AND COMMISSIONS

A. BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION

FISCAL YEAR 2010-2011:

1. RESOLVED, that a sum not to exceed \$20,000 be and the same is hereby transferred from Increased Estimated Revenues to the Parks and Recreation Department to cover tree removal expenses. (Account No. 01-6031-5298).

2. RESOLVED, that a sum not to exceed \$6,895 be and the same is hereby transferred from Increased Estimated Revenues to the Fire Department to cover expenses associated with the Code Red System. (Account No. 01-3160-5258).

VII. COMMON COUNCIL COMMITTEES

A. RECREATION, PARKS & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

1. Approve the use of the grounds at Silvermine School by the YMCA of Norwalk, Inc. for a Summer Day Camp from Monday, June 27, 2011 through Friday, August 19, 2011 from 7:30 AM – 6:00 PM for ages 4-15. Estimated attendance 160-180 children.

2. Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia to enter into an agreement with The Round Hill Highland Game Inc. for their use of Cranbury Park along with the Parking Area at Cranbury School for off site parking, for their Annual Round Hill Highland Games to take place Saturday, July 2, 2011 from 6:00 AM – 8:00 PM. Set-up to take place Friday, July 1, 2011 6:00 AM and tear down no later than 12:00 Noon on Sunday, July 3, 2011. Admission Fees: Adults \$15.00, Seniors \$10.00, Children \$5.00. Estimated attendance 3,000+.

3. Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia to enter into an agreement with Kayak for a Cause Miles Spencer for their use of Calf Pasture Beach, for their Annual “Kayak for a Cause X” to be held Saturday, July 30, 2011 from 8:00 AM – 9:00 PM. Set-up to take place Friday, July 29, 2011 at 12:00 Noon and tear down no later than 12:00 Noon Sunday, July 31, 2011. Estimated attendance 1,500.

CONSENT CALENDAR- Continued

4. Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia to enter into an agreement with the Norwalk Seaport Association for their use of Veteran's Park for the 2011 Oyster Festival to be held Friday, September 9, 2011 from 6:00 PM – 11:00 PM, Saturday, September 10, 2011 from 11:00 AM – 11:00 PM, and Sunday, September 11, 2011 from 11:00 AM – 8:00 PM. Set-up to take place starting Friday, August 26, 2011 with tear down no later than September 23, 2011. Admission Prices: General Admission \$12.00, Seniors 65+ \$10.00, Children (5-12) \$3.00, Children (under 5) Free. Estimated attendance 50,000+.

5. Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia to enter into an agreement with the Child Guidance Center of Mid Fairfield County, Stuart Greenbaum for their use of Calf Pasture Beach for a 1st Annual Norwalk "Bike and Run" to be held Sunday, June 5, 2011 from 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM, with a rain date of Sunday, June 12, 2011. Estimated attendance 200-250.

6. Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia to execute an agreement with Fuss & O'Neil, Inc. for the Project #2993, Athletic field Design Services Nathan Hale Middle School for a sum not to exceed \$57,000. Account #09116030-5777-C0487.

7. **Technical Correction**

Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia to enter into an agreement with the Norwalk Karting Association for the use of Calf Pasture Beach for their Spring & Fall Racing Season.

Spring: March 26, April 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, May 7, 15, 21(no rain date), 2011
Fall: October 1(no rain date), October 8(no rain date), October 15, 22, 29, 2011
November 5, 12, 19, 26, 2011 Estimated attendance 100+.

B. FINANCE COMMITTEE

1. Accept and Approve the Report of the Claims Committee dated: February 10, 2011.

2. For Informational Purposes only: Monthly Tax Collector's Report dated: January 31, 2011.

3. For Informational Purposes only: Narrative on Tax Collections dated February 10, 2011

4. Authorize the Mayor, Richard A. Moccia, to execute any and all documents necessary to amend Loan Agreements with Oak Hills Park Authority in order to restructure debt service payments to the City of Norwalk in accordance with the Restructuring Plan dated February 4, 2011.

VII. B. 5. Appropriations for the City of Norwalk for Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2011.

Mayor Moccia stated that the next portion of the meeting will be Council member discussion and the public may remain, although further comments or participation will not be permitted. Mr. Kydes then read the following resolution:

Be it resolved by the Common Council of the City of Norwalk that the maximum limit on total appropriations for the City of Norwalk for Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2011, shall be no more than \$273,078,998. This appropriation cap represents total expenditures of \$287,119,594 less estimated intergovernmental grants of \$14,040,596.

Mayor Moccia stated that he would take comments in no particular order and he acknowledged Ms. King who stated that she would like to go to 3.7 along with ask questions of Mr. Hamilton. Mayor Moccia asked Ms. King to clarify what the 3.7 represented and if that was an amendment.

Ms. King asked Mr. Hamilton to provide a summary of the budget recommendation and what a 3.7% increase would represent, and Mr. Hamilton replied that if that was a 3.7% increase for the Education Budget it would represent a total cap of \$275,001,306 and total expenditures of \$289,041,902 less the intergovernmental grants. Ms. King stated that she would like thank those residents who came out in support of the education budget and that as a mother this was truly an emotional past few weeks. She stated that she supports Dr. Marks's recommended budget and although a 3.7% increase does not fully fund the budget, it helps to reach an amount closer to reduce the gap and to give the superintendent more of a playing field. She added that the big catch phrase is there should be some shared sacrifice and this recommended amendment is a good compromise.

Mr. Jaeger stated that he wanted to thank all those who turned out and last week and wanted to acknowledge that these are very hard issues to address. He added that as he stated last week, he is very passionate about the education system in Norwalk and fully supports the Board of Education's requested \$4.7 million increase. He stated that this should not be looked at as an expense but as an investment that will grow the City over time.

Mr. Hilliard stated that the whole country faces economic challenges but we need to be careful not to short change the children in the process. He added that the Board of Education is not just another City Department, it affects the entire City population and if we do not support education, property values will go down and people will move out. He added that you cannot short change the kids as they are our future and it hurts the future value.

Ms. Lindstrom stated that she felt a 3.7% amended cap is a good compromise and it goes a long way to close the gap in support that is needed for education. She asked Mr. Hamilton to clarify the numbers of what the difference from the 4.7 and the 2.4% represented to the average household. Mr. Hamilton replied that it would be an additional increase of \$50 to a median household in the Fourth Taxing District and an additional 2.64% to the mil rate.

Ms. King stated that she would like to amend the budget to raise the cap.

**** MS. KING MOTIONED TO AMEND THE RESOLUTION TO REFLECT A 3.7% INCREASE TO THE EDUCATION BUDGET AND RAISE THE LIMIT ON TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS TO \$276,449,446.**

Mayor Moccia called for a roll call vote.

**** THE MOTION FAILED WITH FOUR VOTES IN FAVOR (HILLIARD, KING, JAEGER, LINDSTROM), TEN OPPOSED (BONDI, CONROY, BONENFANT, HEMPSTEAD, KYDES, MCQUAID, MOUNT, ROMANO, STRANITI, TOBIN) AND NO ABSTENTIONS.**

Mayor Moccia asked for further comments on the resolution as presented.

Ms. Romano stated that we all take education very seriously, and this budget process is a very difficult balancing task. She applauds Dr. Marks for her diligence and for jumping in with both feet, and she respects her open approach and transparency with the budget process. She stated that she does not want to see anything cut that affects the children with reduced programs or teachers, and she personally takes offense to be accused of not caring about children and of being on a witch hunt to cut education. She added that there is a very diligent process of Committee review of the Finance Department recommendation, and she feels that it is fair and ensures that City budgets are spent wisely. She wants the BOE to find the ways, just as all other City Departments have made concessions, to make the budget work without affecting classroom education. She reminded the public that the Council represents all citizens of Norwalk, seniors, those on fixed income, those that have all too often the hard decision to choose to not pay the mortgage in order to feed their families. She feels that the 2.6% cap represents a very fair balance of the complex budget process with necessary adjustments and, although it has caused a great deal of descent, it is in the best interests of Norwalk. She added that the Common Council in no way wants to take anything away from our children, but, seniors on fixed incomes, the unemployed and the underemployed needed to be shielded from higher taxes, and we just can't overtax the people.

Mr. Hempstead stated that we all do care about education, but that what has been evident in all these Committee meetings, the Council has to balance the needs of the entire City, be it DPW, Police, Firefighters. He added that it is hurtful to be accused of not supporting education and he summarized his twenty plus years as an active member in the school community, with family members that are teachers, and he was a president of the Father's Club and is still serving on Boards of Schools in Communities and Human Services Council that are serve the education community. He asked to summarize that he has heard so much about shared sacrifice but that is actually a misnomer to what should be shared responsibility.

Mr. Hempstead added that Governor Malloy's budget also includes a three-cent gas tax increase and a two-cent diesel fuel increase, and at this time when their disposable income has been severely reduced, these tax increases will directly affect those that are poor.

He explained that a major step in what city leaders hope will be a lobbying effort aimed at state lawmakers, is the ECS funding where with a smaller proportion of its education budget coming from state aid, he is ready to take the bus to Hartford to lobby for a greater percentage of ECS funding to come to Norwalk rather than to cities such as West Hartford.

He stated Norwalk has a very diverse population and has consistently, for decades, been shortchanged especially when the percentage of Educational Cost Sharing grants as a percentage of Norwalk's education budget is unfairly allocated to other cities. He added that everyone takes a piece of the pie, and in these uncertain times, he simply cannot pass along further increase to the taxpayers of Norwalk. He stated that there were many comments made tonight that mention it is only a \$60 per year increase, but that is on top of an average of \$500 per month in taxes. He summarized that it takes a village to raise a child, but it takes a prudent City to balance the needs of all taxpayers in an economy where there are under-employed, foreclosures and many diverse needs.

Mr. Bonenfant stated that he will also be supporting the recommendation by the Finance Committee and the resolution for the cap but wanted to state that he has always supported the Norwalk Public Schools. He added that they just put \$9 million in the Capital Budget, and that does not justify being called immoral and someone that hates kids. He stated that we know it is important to support education, but we cannot over tax people, we must protect the taxpayers and at the same time balance the budget and address education.

Mr. Tobin stated that he wanted to echo comments made by the other Council members without repeating them, and he would prefer to lower the cap, but he will vote to support the recommendation by the Finance Committee. He added that he would have preferred no increase at all in the budget, and would support that if he thought there was a majority on the Council for the idea.

Ms. Straniti stated that she won't repeat what other members have said but echoes the comments to support the Finance Department recommended cap. She stated that although all residents don't come out to these meetings, she gets calls all the time, all year long, and is approached by people in the supermarket who tell her to not raise taxes. She said that comments tonight indicate \$100 increase in property taxes is only 18 cents a day, but home values have already plummeted and although they may have not hit bottom, an increase in property taxes along with proposed state tax increases present a hardship for all residents.

Let's just look at the proposed state budget - direct impact - and not even get into what the federal budget impacts may be on us. state budget proposals: elimination of the property tax credit, increase on income tax, increase on gasoline tax, increase on sales tax, increase on hotel tax, increase on car rental tax, new taxes for - manicures, hair cuts, carwashes, getting your dog bathed, all clothing now possibly taxable, not just clothing over \$50. that's just to name a few -and let me not forget, a possible reinstating of the tolls on our highways so some may say it's "only a hundred dollar increase or a few hundred dollars" if you increase the cap. add that to all the other increases we are facing and tell me how many of us will still be able to afford to live in this state, let alone Norwalk.

Mr. McQuaid stated that he is in a most difficult situation as an employee of the Norwalk Public Schools and has wrestled with cuts that affect children and his own job being cut through this budget process. He stated that he has asked himself if he should just abstain, walk away due to a conflict, but he chose to remain part of the vote. He stated that he has been part of the battle to get the cap up from where it was, which had started originally at a zero increase, and he does feel that the BOE and BET can work to find other areas to put programs back and reduce other expenditures that do not directly affect the classrooms. He shared that he was recently in a training program for Intervention Aides, some of the lowest paid employees in the Norwalk Public Schools, while the speaker had no clue those in attendance were focused on what they could do to help the decision to eliminate positions. He added that this is one small area where he could work on to help save expenses.

Mr. McQuaid stated “I understand, Dr. Moore, don’t keep pointing to the sign “Remember November”. Please, I respect you, please respect me. I do remember November. Hopefully it is another month that I will be helping children at Naramake School. I’m sorry, but please don’t do that to me, I wouldn’t do that to you because I respect you as a Principal and as a person. Thank you. I know, but, you know what, you are a principal and you are someone that is at the leadership, and there is no need to point to that sign. I’ve seen the sign. I am sorry. I am speaking from my heart, and I’m still going to fight for this budget and am going to still fight for increases in programs. You will see me doing that. I have given you my word. Mr. Hempstead has given his word, and that that is where I am going with it. We have to start somewhere. It was zero when it started, and it is not zero today, and it will not be in five weeks when it comes back to us. Thank you.”

Mr. Bondi thanked all that have participated in this process and stated that the charge has been to hold taxes down as residents cannot afford an increase. He hopes for union concessions from the Board of Education and stated that average teacher makes \$81,000 a year, the average administrator makes \$140,000 a year; and that's in Norwalk. He added that Norwalk is in the top three cities with the highest paid teachers in the state of Connecticut. He added that all we're asking for here is to freeze your salary for one year as all other City departments have done—that is fair and shared sacrifice. He stated that he has always supported the schools and has donated much of his time to the City school athletics programs and he personally donates a scholarship each year in his wife’s name to Norwalk High School. Mr. Bondi added that it is time to cut salaries, just as every other union including Police and Fire, there is no where else—we are at bare bones budgets, keeping in mind that the City has lost 100 employees. He asked the Board of Education to just do their fair share and go back and renegotiate.

Mr. Conroy stated that he has always supported education and in today’s economy, there should be literature on how to do bankruptcy or how to handle losing a home to foreclosure. He would rather support a lower tax or a decrease, or zero increase to the cap, but that would impact education. He added that the average income in his district tends to be higher and some residents would rather support a small tax increase, but we have to think about the risk that is in the 2.6% recommended cap. He explained that there is lots of risk that we won’t get the funding for conservation by the state, and you just can’t increase taxes.

He added that taxes never go down they just keep increasing supportable by normal cost of living, and that one public comment made tonight was very well taken about looking at next year. He stated that, with so many issues with the economy and state funding and increased taxes, we can only handle one year at a time.

Ms. King asked if she could make further comments and stated that too she gets calls all the time from both sides and has been bearing the brunt of questions about the business building projects and why there were no further revenue-generating plans in development. She added that she is a real estate appraiser and speaks to real estate agents all the time who say people will not come to Norwalk because of the education program. She stated that it is troubling that the fact is that the City moves backward and not forward with educational investing. She then asked about the state money targets to be given back to municipalities and how that impacts Norwalk, and stated that. She does have further questions of the Finance Department as a result of the governor's increases and how much revenue that will bring back to the City.

Mr. Hamilton replied that he has not yet had a chance to decipher all the elements of the governor's proposal, that there is no new \$ added to this budget from the additional state sales tax. He highlighted the example of New Haven with the Smilow Cancer Center will get more of a tax break than other cities, and the pilot for manufacturing has not been accounted for and is to be built into the Governor's proposed plan. He added that, again all this is pending legislative approval, and that it is just too soon, and to realize that inter-government revenue increases actually lowers the cap. He cautioned that changes will not be reflected until the proposed changes actually become law and by incorporating proposed changes now reduces future flexibility, and said he feels strongly that it is a mistake to adjust revenues up.

Mr. Kydes stated that there has to be a transparent process of union negotiations with the Board of Education and salary freezes as has been done throughout the City Departments. Mr. Kydes stated that last year during the last budget exercise and again this year that other bargaining units in the city have taken pay freezes. The BOE needs to impose a salary freeze and step increase changes so that a major budget savings would be achieved. Mr. Kydes stated that further scrutiny of the education should be done, and not to cut programs, but to examine salaries. He added that we have to look at the total picture—the other city unions sacrificed, and we had to work together to bridge a gap, and I have to believe it can be done. He asked the Council to remember that over the past two years, most Norwalk unions outside the Education Department have accepted wage freezes of various types, and similar wage restrictions need to occur within the BOE, as the taxpayers cannot afford to pay any more.

Mr. Kydes stated that on behalf of the Finance Committee, he proposes an amendment to the resolution to include the objective to find additional reductions in expenses and additional sources of revenues, along with imploring the BOE and BET to work in best efforts to maintain educational programs.

**** MR. KYDES MOTIONED TO ACCEPT THE RESOLUTION, (AMENDED WITH PARTS IN ITALIC TYPE) AS FOLLOWS:**

WHEREAS, SECTION I-289 OF THE NORWALK CHARTER REQUIRES THAT A MAJORITY OF THE COMMON COUNCIL VOTE TO ESTABLISH A SPECIFIC SPENDING LIMITATION ON LOCALLY FUNDED 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 TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE CITY OF NORWALK FOR FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2011 SHALL BE NO MORE THAN \$273,078,988. THIS APPROPRIATION CAP REPRESENTS TOTAL EXPENDITURES OF \$287,119,594 LESS ESTIMATED INTERGOVERNMENTAL GRANTS OF \$14,040,596M, *WHICH REPRESENTS AN INCREASE OF \$7,015,943 OR 2.64% AS COMPARED TO LAST FISCAL YEAR'S APPROVED APPROPRIATIONS CAP OF \$266,063,055.*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE RESULT OF THIS VOTE AND RESOLUTION, TOGETHER WITH THE ATTACHED 2011-12 BUDGET GUIDE, BE FORWARDED BY THE CLERK OF THE CITY OF NORWALK TO THE BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION.

Mayor Moccia called for a roll call vote.

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH TEN VOTES IN FAVOR, (BONDI, CONROY, BONENFANT, HEMPSTEAD, KYDES, MCQUAID, MOUNT, ROMANO, STRANITI, TOBIN) FOUR OPPOSED (HILLIARD, KING, JAEGER, LINDSTROM), AND NO ABSTENTIONS.**

Mayor Moccia thanked members of the public for attending, and thanked the committee members for their work with this very difficult process. He stated that final process through the Board of Estimate and Taxation is weeks down the road and the objective is to keep property taxes at a minimum. He stated that he disagrees with the statement about Norwalk Public Schools being so bad and people are leaving for other areas, and those towns don't have the same problems as Norwalk has as an urban diverse city. He added that according to census numbers Norwalk is one of the few cities to have stayed the same or even increased in population, and that the graduation rate is still high. He stated that we need to continue to celebrate our diversity and work on overcoming the achievement gap.

IX.	MOTIONS POSTPONED TO A SPECIFIC DATE:	None
X.	SUSPENSION OF RULES:	None
XI.	ADJOURNMENT	

** MR. BONDI MOTIONED TO ADJOURN.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marilyn Knox, Telesco Secretarial Services

Note: Public Comments are summarized on the following addendum pages 11-22

Public Comments

Note: Comments by the various speakers are summarized and are not verbatim.

1. **Steve Colarossi**, Plymouth Avenue, stated that he represented the Board of Education, and was accompanied by Jack Chiaramonte, Chairman, and Glen Iannaccone, Vice-Chairman. He stated that on behalf of the Board, he wanted to thank the Council and the Finance Committee for all their due diligence with this 2011-12 Operating Budget process, and they greatly appreciate their support. He stated that they appreciate the 2.6 % increase over last year and would work to restrain spending if the council approved the finance director's recommended budget. Mr. Colarossi stated that we will do what we can to make sure student programs are not eliminated, and cuts will not be made to classroom education.

2. **Bruce LeVine Mellion**, 9 Mott Avenue, President of the Norwalk Federation of Teachers, stated that on behalf of the NFT he wanted to thank all those in the audience for their attendance to this meeting and for their support of the increase to the cap. He referred to the handout provided to the Council and the Finance Committee and stated that the change to a Health Savings Account benefit program has saved \$2 million and will continue to save each year over three years, but as a result teachers have incurred more in out-of-pocket costs and in meeting high deductibles. This is another sacrifice that the teachers have had to make. He stated that they understand the economic realities of the day, but there has never been an easy budget cycle in Norwalk, and the coalition with the NFT is not pleased with the recommendation with only a 3.3% increase. The issue at this point is really simple: tax payers -- the citizens of Norwalk -- have to decide what level the Board of Education should be funded. Here we are once again, we have to go up against the Common Council, the Finance Committee and the Board of Estimate and Taxation prior to when the CAP is set. Mr. Mellion added that The NFT contract went into effect five months ago and took months of arbitration with the BET, and he referred to the contract as revenue neutral for three years. He detailed the impact of a one-year hard wage freeze from the 900 members of the Norwalk Federation of teachers, who are scheduled by contract to receive a 1.36-percent raise and an estimated 1.54-percent step increase.

Mr. Mellion read the following message that was read at last week's meeting:

NORWALK FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

The **Norwalk Federation of Teachers** has done the following to address these economic times:

1. We designed and negotiated an HSA health insurance plan for active and retired teachers that saved \$2.4 million during the 2009-10 fiscal year.
2. We agreed to take the HSA plan 8 months earlier than we had to, to effectuate an additional \$1.2 million in savings for a total of \$3.6 million over 18 months and \$7.0 million in savings over 3 years 8 months.
3. We capped or sunset some of the economic provisions in the teachers' contract.
4. We negotiated a very small salary increase for the period 9/1/10 - 8/31/2013, which has a neutral cost impact. This was confirmed by the Norwalk Board of Estimate and Taxation at its November 4, 2009 meeting.

In addition, the **Norwalk Federation of Teachers** has:

1. Changed health insurance carriers several times from TransAmerican to Blue Cross/Blue Shield to Cigna to Anthem Blue Cross/Blue Shield, each time saving millions of dollars.
2. Changed the health insurance funding platform from fully insured to a PPO to an HSA, again saving millions of dollars.

In addition, the **Norwalk Federation of Teachers** has:

1. Added three professional development days to the teachers contract.
2. Added Wednesday morning meetings for elementary teachers for more collegial collaboration time.
3. Capped or sunset additional contract provisions, saving millions of dollars

In addition, the **NFT** in conjunction with the Coalition of Board of Education unions:

1. Was a major contributor to resolving the reconciliation of the 2010 -11 operating budget with no loss of programs or personnel totaling over \$5.1 million.
2. Proposed a three part plan to save millions of dollars that was never responded to or counter proposed to.

Norwalk teachers spend thousands of dollars on graduate courses, workshops, conferences and seminars to improve their knowledge and instructional practices as well as spending countless hours beyond the contract day in the evening, weekends, school recesses as well as the summer. Norwalk teachers each spend hundreds of dollars out of their own pockets for supplies and materials each school year.

3. Andrea Light, 7 Greenwood Place, Norwalk. Thank you for keeping the tax increase to an absolute minimum. On behalf of my mom, a senior Norwalk homeowner whose retirement income has been adversely affected over the last decade and her social security benefits have been frozen over the last few years. I thank you on behalf of my under-employed neighbor, who along with his wife are doing what they can do to keep their home and their daughter in the school system she loves. I know of two families that have lost their home to foreclosures and two more are in the midst of losing their home. It is hard enough to get by in this economy, let alone tax increase “adds salt to the wounds.”

4. Mary Conlin, 21 Linden Heights, Norwalk, stated that she has spent her entire career as an educator in the Norwalk School system and urged the Committee to fully fund the education budget. I am glad to see that there is more attention to the speeches and not the side conversations. The Board of Education budget should be fully funded. The Norwalk School system has been identified as a district in need of improvement by the State. No miracle will change this. It cannot be changed by anything less than the skeleton budget requested by the Board of Education and Dr. Marks. We have diverse needs and different needs that did not exist 30 years ago. We need to ensure all students insure that all students receive the necessary services the necessary achievement from not achieving AYP to one of excellence. In the past 4 years my property value has diminished \$150,000. I believe in Norwalk as a community and will work tirelessly to meet the needs of children. Raise the Cap!

5. Tony Ditrio, 24 Woodlawn Avenue, Norwalk, introduced himself as Principal of Kendall School and the NASA school administrators. I would respectfully respect that you adopt a cap that would result in an 3% increase in taxes for 2011-2012. This cap would allow the BET to fund the Board of Education at around a 3.67% increase. It would show the union good faith in truly solving this dilemma together. Something has to give a cap of 3% would certainly send a message to the unions that you want to solve this together. Keep in mind that a cap is just a cap. Keep the process alive. The concerns that some say we don't deserve more funding because we haven't produced the desired results as a Board of Education. We are not all satisfied by our results, we all need to do better and we are working hard to that end. We need a better system of accountability some would argue that in the past we asked for more and they either didn't need it or didn't get the results with it. I have been with this district for 42 years. We have a new superintendent, we have a new beginning now is not the time to slash a budget. We need to move forward and then you can hold us accountable for the results. Withholding funds is not going to make us better taking your frustrations out on the students is unwise and unfair.

6. Diane Witkowsky, 19 Truman Street, Norwalk, stated she cannot afford any budget increase, but the recommendation seems quite generous in view of the under employed and those living on less social security. This increase is higher than other cities and we should be lucky to have a job. It is the responsibility of City leaders to taxpayers and residents to keep budgets and spending as low as possible and make cuts if necessary. Sacrifices are to be made by everyone, not just certain groups of people. A \$6.9 million increase is not a

reasonable request at this time and is too much of a burden for the taxpayers to carry at this time. This is not Wall Street its Main Street. This council and city government needs to take the responsibility to make the hard choices and hard decisions necessary no matter who it may inconvenience or bother.

7. **Al Raymond**, 19 Truman Street, Norwalk stated he also would like to see no increase and to go with Mr. Hamilton's recommendation, as we cannot afford an increase, we just cannot give more. He said he has had no raise in years, and he supports the process whereby it is the responsibility of Council members to act on behalf of taxpayers and residents to make cuts if necessary without a cut in city services.

8. **Bruce Root**, Aiken Street, Norwalk, stated that he thanks the Council for keeping the tax increase to a minimum, and he acknowledged the hard work of the members as they are damned if they do and damned if they don't. He feels that it is immoral to even consider a tax increase at this time, I myself is out of work and lots of people I know are not making it. I would like to make 2 suggestions, and suggested an education fund be set up where parents would like to contribute and make donations, hold what we are paying for our taxes and have this fund that parents can pay into and if that does not cover the expenses then the other alternative is to have a levy, levy a fee on every child in public schools, \$500.00, \$1,000.00 like a use tax that way you can pay them whatever they want. He added that back in 1983 his daughter informed him that there no math books and workbooks had to be reused as there was no money left for books in the budget. The parents running up like rabid dogs And they got I am not sure how many millions of dollars increased. It happened again in 4th grade and the superintendent got raises, teachers got raises and the principals got raises. And that is the dog and pony show of Norwalk education.

9. **Julie Burton**, 14 Sunwich Road, Norwalk, stated that she supports the Finance Department's recommendation that the budget cap be set at \$287 million, this is an increase of about \$6 million from last years budget. I was hoping for a lower or no increase but if this is the best we can do, so be it. I understand that the schools are unhappy with their recommended increase of \$3.6 million they say they need another \$3.3 million for a total of almost \$7 million. Given the state of our economy and the high levels of unemployment of find this request astonishing especially for the most people paying for this increase have had no increase in their wages and may have had a decrease. It appears that the amount differences can be tied to step increases and the raises that many school employees feel they are entitled. They would rather see some of their co-workers laid off, then give up one year's increase. I do not want to see critical employees laid off or important programs cut off if that can be avoided. The best solution is that they suspend step increases and institute a salary freeze for one year. She added that she agrees that it is the responsibility of Council members to taxpayers and residents to make cuts to ensure minimal tax increases to property tax burden.

10. Jan Muldowney, 44 East Avenue, Norwalk, Co-President of Tracey School PTO - We have been challenged to fill the auditorium it is very difficult, from our perspective, to keep coming out in numbers. So as a show, I have 93 parent responses to over 450 letters sent. Some are here to show their support as public speaking is not something a lot of people enjoy, some are home because of sick children that need to be tended to, vacations that were planned. In our history at Tracey 93 letters out of 450 letters is a record response. Please raise the cap, it is for our legacy, it is for our children and for our city. And for those who speak about hard times and sacrifice, my husband has been unemployed, we have been applying for health care and have been denied it is very frustrating we are worried financially too but we also believe investing in our children. Thank you.

11. Mark Bradley, 29 Yarmouth Road, Chairman of the Democratic Town Committee. This is not simply a vote on the City of Norwalk's annual budget, it is a vote on whether or not we support a strong public school system in our City. A vote for this proposed budget is a vote against our public schools. There are a lot of talk about unions, board of education employees, these are our City's educators, administrators, people that work for our children everyday. He said he could buy a 1985 Yugo GV or a 2011 Ford Hybrid, you get what you pay for. I am going to get a lot farther with that Ford than I am that Yugo. What if we all tighten our belts and give it to the education system and fully fund our schools. It is about making the right choices for our city and its future by underfunding our schools we are short changing our children by not increasing this cap we are degrading our school system and in turn our property values, if we do not have strong public schools in this city, everyone is going to see their home ownership go down as a direct correlation bad schools, lower home value. So \$150.00 more in taxes that is the choice we have to make, a simple hold the line approach is a short side approach that we cannot afford. Please vote down this budget tonight. If you cannot stomach the full 4.25% increase consider what Dr. Marks is asking for we put her in charge, we have given her our trust.

12. Carol Andreoli, 23 Sachem Street, Norwalk. This Council is charged with the daunting task of setting a cap on the budget that will affect the property owners for the entire City of Norwalk. I am pro education, children are our future. Concerned with families that want best for their children but due to the economy are struggling just to keep their homes. I am concerned with seniors who are on fixed incomes who have not seen a cost of living increase in their social security in over 2 years, concerned with the young people that want to move into our community but cannot afford to do so. Great deal of misleading information has been put forth regarding cuts in the Board of Education budget. There are no cuts in the budget drafted by the finance director and approved by the common council finance committee last week. The Board of Education would receive a 2.4% increase. It is not the 4.7% increase they are seeking but it is not a cut in the budget. The Hour reported that the City budget director claims the school unions could generate \$3.2 million in savings if they were to freeze their hard wages and step increases. Step increases account for \$1.4 million, step increases range from 2% and go as high as 12% for 8 and 9 year teachers with Masters Degrees. 32 of the top 50 wage earners in 2010 with salaries as high as \$170,000 to a minimum \$132,000 are from the Board of Education. I guess an increase in their property taxes would not be a hardship, it will be for many others. In the best interests of the teachers

union to consider a salary freeze to help make up the additional 2.3% they are seeking in their budget.

13. Bill Nightingale, 17 South Beach Drive, Norwalk. Thanks to the Board of Estimate and Taxation and the Finance department for crafting an operating budget that adheres to fiscal prudence in these difficult times. Private households have no choice but to reduce budgets when incomes are down and one would think that our government for the people, by the people would operate by the same standard. Income reduction has been the reality for many Norwalk residents. Many contractors, mortgage brokers, realtors, etc. are experiencing reduced salaries compared to 3 years ago. That in addition, our retirement savings taking a hit with market volatility. One might think that it is reasonable to ask for a cut into government expenditures but we are here tonight to debate the scale of the increase in expenditures for the city in our schools. I believe in an excellent school system, I have two kids in the Norwalk Schools. We also want our teachers to share our values and commitment to improvement in our community and today that means curtailing our spending to match our lower income. It is reasonable to ask our teachers to forgo salary increases for one year not a pay cut, not job cuts, not furlough days, not cuts in pension pays just to forgo a salary increase for one year that so many in the community that have done. He added that he agrees that it is the responsibility of Council members to accept the Finance Department recommended cap without disruption to students.

14. Karen Doyle-Lyons, 58 Spring Hill Avenue.

Would like to make a point that Board of Education operating budget is not being cut, it is only the requested increase to the BOE budget being reduced to 2.4 million from 4.7. Many departments have increased their budgets minimal or zero percent. All tried to watch every penny spent of taxpayer's money. City unions have stepped up and made concessions, and now look to Board of Education to do the same. Parents and teachers must be responsible adults and stop dangling children in order to force administration to increase budget to what they feel would be acceptable. It's time we look to the many students who attend Norwalk schools but live out of town. We see a lot of that in voter registration at schools, where they can't complete cards because they don't live in Norwalk. Many pay taxes for education even though we don't have kids in schools, and we don't mind. We do ask that it be used wisely. Children are our future. As each dollar of every department is spent and when possible monies are returned to the general fund at the end of year, it's upsetting that there's such an amount of deliveries to the Board of Ed in May and June using all funds that are available before end of year is over. Does anyone review the Board of Ed year end expenditures? They would see how much they are. According to the paper, anyone over age of 40 didn't have assistant principals or extra staff in their schools, their parents paid for music lessons. Yes some services must be cut. Stated she had grandchildren at Ponus, but had to remove all three because of lack of education and responsibility.

16. Karen Ham, Karen Ham: 83 Soundview Avenue

Parent of a sophomore at Brien McMahon, supports all programs and represents members of co-op swim teams not able to attend. Self employed single parent and taxpayer that has had fair share of financial struggles. Willing to pay more in taxes to avoid cuts and improve education system that will affect daughter and peers. This will help improve value of one single asset, her home. Concern is if programs get cut it will have broad reaching impact on students and families financially. All programs benefit students, they enhance achievement and self-esteem. Child increases chance to receive scholarship by participating in sports. Please consider cap decision and how it can affect students, our future leaders.

17. Lisa Lenskold, 17 Folwell Road and President, PTO Council, Parent of two at Naramake. Since last week she has received phone calls from concerned parents. They're concerned about their home value, future of students, and if they should they move out of Norwalk. The cost of raising a family in norwalk is not enough to outweigh underperforming schools. Received phone calls from city officials concerned about loss of programs. Thanks for reaching out. Need to place value on commitment to children and community. Hopes after budget cycle is over they can stand together and show parents that working together is the best solution, and show families that staying in norwalk and rebuilding is worth the sacrifices.

18. Chris Passamaro, 20 Fairview Avenue: Was also at February 17th meeting, feels like no one heard anything there. As a parent, resident and teacher – what will we lose here? Two assistant principals in middle school, housemaster, all 1st grade aids. This will affect his 5 year old son. This is a cut. People are losing jobs, staff. As a resident his home is his biggest asset. Can't afford tax increase, can't sell home right now in this market. Please increase tax a little bit, \$6200 a year, yes it's a burden for all but a poor school system is the quickest way to lose home. He works with teachers who live in Clinton, Bridgeport, Stamford. It's not their responsibility to fix norwalk, it's ours. It's a Norwalk resident's issue. As a teacher, there were six murders in norwalk last year and crime rate skyrocketed. As a high school teacher we are the front line to dealing with that. Every one of those, with the exception of one murder, directly impacted students at high school level. To say this is not a cut is incorrect. Spent forty dollars at CVS on notebooks because schools don't have any because of budget freeze. Everybody has to pay and help. \$6200 a year in taxes for a better school system and to save the value of homes is okay, because problems aren't going away.

19. Reverend Bruce Morris, 17 Sention Avenue, Norwalk: Tonight speaking as a taxpayer and Board of Ed employee and state representative. There's a statistic that's inaccurate. Heard that the reason for all this is because the State of Connecticut has funded City of Norwalk less dollars for education over ten years. He heard this over and over, and it's troublesome. The Governor added more money to education budget than any Governor ever had. During that year we were slated to receive two million dollars. At that point the budget had not been voted on, but the Common Council set a cap for two million less. The reality is both caucuses had to fight to get an additional one million dollars. We're only slated to get \$400,000. Because we weren't allowed extra money, we're the only city in the state that didn't get a chance to advance education. Has a graph, sat down with Mr. Hamilton and

asked for trend for the last ten years. In 2002 it was eight million. It's ten million now. It's not gone down, We've gone up. School district fund in 2002 was 1.4 million, its nearly 3 now. The Federal Government tried to fill the gap, and state is still prepared to fill gap because jobs are crucial, property value, everything is tied to education. If Federal government did their part and state is doing theirs, think about this as a strategic investment to make sure our city is poised for the future. This is an investment in education. The state of Connecticut has the highest achievement gap in the country. Think about how we contribute to that statistic, we need to be forward thinking.

Mayor Moccia asked to clarify that the resolution the Council passed was not so much that we hadn't received an ECS funding increase, the main complaint was we haven't received a fair share. We appreciate the extra money but would like a fair basis as the sixth largest city.

19. Robert Burgess, 37 Brooklawn Avenue, Norwalk, There are two parks in South Norwalk without water, every other park the city pays for water. The Second Taxing district sent a letter to the Mayor requesting the water be hooked up, but there's been no written reply yet. Flax Hill Park is being mentioned in the budget but no one knows where it is. If that's the case, that money should go to Ryan Park because it's heavily used. Would cost \$5,500 maybe. Stated that if all the other parks have water, he's sure the City wants to be fair minded. He's a senior and living off fixed income but if it comes to educating our future he'd rather dig in his pocket for more. We're doing nothing about the achievement gap. By not giving more to the Board of Ed we're harming the future of norwalk. Educate kids and make a better Norwalk.

Mayor Moccia commented that Mr. Mocciae has put money in for pipes to Ryan Park in the capital budget, but he's not sure about Flax Hill.

20. Ivette Ellis, 83 Upper Shad Rd: Principal of Silvermine Elementary School: Last week she listened to the public's comments, and was surprised that all but one was in support of the cap raise. She was more surprised that two hours of public comments and a full auditorium didn't persuade the Council to move from 2.4 percent. There shouldn't be a power play between the school and the city. There's a bottom line to all decisions she makes, and that line is what's best for the children. Cutting the budget further is a detriment to the education system, and will cause families to flee rather than move to Norwalk. Is this best for the children? She respectfully asks that at some point those who don't support the request from the Board of Education please explain why they don't support the increase so we can provide a quality education. She participated in the new superintendent process last year and felt that we hired the cream of crop, and she still feels that way. Dr. Marks accepted a tremendous challenge. Work with Dr. Marks to achieve her vision by becoming the town everyone wants to live in.

21. Aaron Hull, 3 Meredith Court, Norwalk: Moved here from the Midwest. What happened there - constituents refused to raise taxes, schools suffered and people left, towns

died. Our schools are our advertising for potential residents. He moved in 2003 and chose Norwalk over Stamford, Bridgeport and Fairfield in part because of the schools. Lack of investment will lead to disappointment, in efficiency, poor service and ultimately exodus. Will this be our legacy?

22. Sue Haynie, 7 Christopher Lane, Norwalk: Has two children in schools and is a member of the Board of Education. She read the budget book line by line. The budget review under Dr. Marks was inclusive and transparent. We need to expand on that and provide robust, quickly accessible info. We need to organize public workshops, arrange parent teacher question and answer sessions. A well informed community is empowered. We need to work together. Norwalk schools needs nine million dollars just to maintain what we have with no staff cuts but not one new program either. Close to 90% of nine million dollars is targeted to raises and benefit increases. Any funding less than nine million requires cuts somewhere. We have no choice, we have to make this a time of reform. If the Board of Education requests a 6% increase when inflation increases by 1% we need to expect the city will ask us to explain. Next year we need to have performance indicators that will track efficiency of programs and positions. Need to focus on student improvement, achievement and responsible budgets. Humbly ask to consider Dr. Marks' request of 3.32% to the best of our abilities.

23. Kelly Giordano, 17 Forest Hill Street, Norwalk: Moved to Norwalk seven years ago because of water, neighborhoods, night life, etc. The number one reason most of her friends talk about moving or have their house on the market is because of the school system. Now other friends moving from New York City choose to move to other towns for their supposed better school systems. She loves Norwalk and wants people to move here and stay. Her son is in kindergarten at Fox Run, and she's happy with his education. She won't move and is proud of and has faith in our school system. The schools have made immense progress since she moved here seven years ago. Why stop the momentum now? She's disappointed in the leadership for thinking educating youth and youth activities are not a priority. People are willing to pay higher taxes. Why would we hire an amazing new superintendent and not allow her to do her job? Please put kids first and increase our home values. Education is the number one thing, for the taxes she pays her kids should be getting the best. Norwalk is capable of having the better school system other towns boast about. She added that she personally lost her job 2.5 years ago and was two months pregnant at the time so she knows firsthand. She is still willing to pay a tax increase to support education.

24. Mark Robinson, 16 Knob Hill Road, Norwalk: Has two kids in school so he's tried to understand this all. It appears we've lost one source of revenue. The contribution to pension is fixed. We hired a new superintendent. She's tried to put together a fair and accurate budget. It's not appropriate to ask the new superintendent to break contracts with employees. We all resist fighting higher taxes. So the idea is to cut back on steps and percentages. Will we have some budget problem next year and be back to the same thing? Also, we're taking the children hostage if we vote for a lower budget. In a political battle sometimes the battle is won by those who care the least. It's disconcerting. He's concerned that we only win by getting the other person to back down and we win by not caring.

25. Dr. Susan Marks, Superintendent, Norwalk Public Schools, read her written letter and provided copies to the Council members, as follows: Mr. Mayor, Mr. McQuaid and members of the Common Council, I appreciate the opportunity to come before you tonight to ask for your support for the Norwalk Public Schools. I come to you representing the 11,000 students and their families and our 1800 employees who everyday make a difference to our students. I am grateful that the Norwalk community continues to place a high value on public education even in difficult economic times. Over the last few weeks, the level of engagement shows everyone how caring and committed we are to the students of Norwalk. This is important, because our schools are important to the “brand” of the city of Norwalk. Families move to cities because of the schools. When I came here I pledged to work with everyone. The Norwalk Public Schools have a great history of providing an outstanding education for its students; however, we need to continue this excellence with investment in our district. The students of our school district need for everyone to be working together to come up with an operating budget that does not reverse our progress. We have begun to close the achievement gap and increase the number of our students taking higher level courses. This will make a difference to students. Throughout this operating budget development process, we have included stakeholders. We are in discussions with our union partners to assist us through this difficult economic environment. However it needs to be noted that even with concessions from our unions that a 2.4% operating budget cap would mean significant reductions that will negatively impact the educational program of our students.

We cannot have great schools without great people. So how will these potential reductions impact our students? These reductions will impact our students at all levels. We do need administrators in our schools. Our housemasters and assistant principals are instructional leaders who observe teachers and work with all staff to ensure that our all our students are receiving a strong instructional program. Educating our students is complex work.

We have moved far away from just opening a textbook or not needing support from instructional leaders. Our students have to compete with students from around the world. We need to use technology. We need to provide access to a great deal of information, and we need to make sure our students learn to critically think and solve problems. We need programs, such as School to Career that provides our students with experiences that will help our students direct their careers. We cannot short change our students by reducing positions and programs that support reading, mathematics, guidance, sports and music. Our students have many needs, and our teachers, instructional assistants and school-based administrators must be well trained and have the tools to make sure our students are learning at high levels. I would like to remind everyone tonight that we all must work together to come up with a reasonable Operating Budget for the Norwalk Public Schools.

Over the last 4 years, the percentage of the city’s operating budget that has gone to the school district has actually decreased. Since 2008 through this year, 65 positions have been reduced by the board of education. These positions have included administrators, teachers and support personnel from the central office and the schools. With a 2.4 percent cap, we would

need to reduce an additional 50 to 60 positions. Over the last few years, significant reductions have been made to the central office so that reductions would not have to be made to the schools. These reductions have affected the district's ability to be responsive to our schools, and over the last few years, there have been significant reductions that have impacted the purchase of textbooks, software and instructional materials. Many teachers, administrators, and support personnel were born and raised in Norwalk. They love this city and I love this city, and I've only been here seven months, but it's a great place to work and raise children, but need to provide an outstanding school district.

Over the last few years, the school district has been in mode of maintaining rather than moving forward. As you consider setting the cap, please remember that students that will be graduating from the Norwalk Public Schools will face a global economy in which most jobs require education or training beyond high school. Nearly every job requires high-tech skills and education after high school. If the trend continues, there will be fewer and fewer jobs available to those who do not have a college diploma. More education means higher life time earnings. College graduates will make more than 2 times the salary than high school graduates. A college education opens the door to more job opportunities, the ability to own a home, and the means to raise a family in comfort. Preparing our students to be college ready is good for business and good for Norwalk. Many in our community are willing to pay higher property taxes if these resources go to the schools. We cannot continue to take away from the school district, because at a certain point this "*tipping point*" cannot be tipped back the other way. Since coming to Norwalk, I have talked about the need to invest in our district. Let's not forget that this is a budget for and about our children. I would hope that we will all come together to do what is right for our children. They are counting on us.

26. Patrick MacDonald, 10 Silver River Court: Has heard a lot of people, especially politicians talk about how proud they are to have gone through the Norwalk Public School system. Every day students feel the pressure of competition that global economy entails. Every day students feel the consequences of not being prepared. Students have heard same thing over and over, 'It's about the children, we're here for our children.' But students of Norwalk Public Schools will not be convinced Norwalk is committed to their future until they are given the skills they need to compete in a global economy. City officials must ask themselves what sort of Norwalk they'd like for the future. Do they really want to condemn students to a lackluster school system and further debilitate them? When times are better Norwalk can invest in schools, but city officials can't put off the dire need for investment. Students have fallen too far behind. City must remember if we can build a better public school system we can build a better Norwalk and a brighter future.

27. Suzanne Brown Koroshetz, 27 Ravenwood Road, Norwalk, and Principal of Brien McMahon High School: She's proud to be a taxpayer in norwalk. Her parents are seniors concerned about land values. As schools go, the house values go. Dr Marks already outlined cuts that will negatively affect children. Why would anyone recommend a position that sends the city backwards? Please support the superintendent and her strong vision.

28. Claudia O'Connor, 11 Greenhill Road, stated that and member of the Silvermine PTO Board. She has lived all over the world with her children and they chose Norwalk. We cannot afford to lose our assistant principals, dual language programs. Her son is at West Rocks, this is not a political issue, affiliation is irrelevant, education is not a political issue it's a moral imperative.

29. Bob Fosina, 206 Ponus Avenue. The AM reading academy implemented by Dr. Nelson helped my daughter and other students score very high on the CMT scores. I also pointed out the economic hardships that everyone is facing. I even detailed pretty exclusively what it was like in a public sector and what I felt financially. And with all that I am in support of raising the cap which would involve raising taxes. A gentleman that no longer has school aged children implored the Committee to do what was right for Norwalk Public Schools so he could retain his property value. Less desirable school system equals low market value. Other towns don't have the challenges we do. I challenge the committee to empower Dr. Susan Marks our newly appointed Superintendent. For Dr. Marks, to execute her vision of rigor, relationships, relevance and results. The Committee must give her a fighting chance for success. As you all know, she will only be measured for her results. In 3 years, no one will remember this meeting but will look at the results over the past 3 years. I challenge the Committee to close this gap and fund the schools at the 4.7% level. We are willing to pay a little more in taxes, it translate between 5 to 10 dollars a month and in conjunction with some short term city wide freezes would close the gap. Let's avoid repeating from the 1980's and do what is right, raise the cap, increase my taxes and freeze city wide for the next year or two so we can close the gap.

30. Reverend Paul Brian Smith, 9 William Street, introduced himself as Pastor of the First Congregational Church on the Green it was actually my church that started the schools in Norwalk back in 1651. This is the opposite perspective of what I have on Sundays, looking up at you is rather intimidating. It reminds me of what the Hebrew prophets must've done when the spoke to someone in power. One of the earliest speakers said that it is immoral to raise taxes and I think that the person does not use the same definition for the word immoral like the rest of us do. I have a jar on my nightstand and when I come home at the end of the day, I reach in my pocket and I take out the loose change and I drop it in the jar. Over the course of the year, several hundred dollars ends up in that jar. Tonight we are talking about a school budget and a possible tax increase that figures about 17 cents a day. Let me say that again, less than what I take out of my pocket on a daily basis would allow us to fully fund the education for our city students. To not do that is my definition of immoral. When we talk about the students that are effected, by the way I am a father of a freshmen at BMHS, not raising the cap will disproportionate the poor and minorities and just like the profits who have gone before me that is the concern I bring.. For as long as there have been people to stand up to speak for what is right, there has been a call for those in the society to not only to look their own interests who I have seen about 5 people do, but instead to look for the benefit of the community. So I encourage you, as you look at the budget, I urge you to reject what was decided last week to cut the budget by not increasing it with the rate of inflation, to cut positions, to cut the education of our city I encourage you to reject that and

instead take the courageous and even the moral stance to fund the education that our children so richly need.

31. Mr. Drew Todd, 19 Friendly Road, Norwalk We have heard all the stereotypes “your going to Norwalk..ewww” “oh there schools are not good, its this, its that” Well here we are, my son goes to Wolfpit, he absolutely loves going to school. He is bright, he has a great future ahead of him, the staff, the teachers, they are very good, I have met a lot of them and have become very involved and I am the Board of Education representative for the PTO, I run 4 fundraisers, one on March 4, family night, come down, there is just so many positive things going on, the stereotypes, its just what it is, stereotypes, half of them are not even true, no none of them are true. This is a great city, I come from Long Island, but you know what, the school system in Long Island is always supported. We need to support our children, we need to raise the cap. Norwalk’s tag line is a city that is on the move, does anyone want to move backwards, let’s move forward, let’s continue funding our schools, support Dr. Marks, she is wonderful, I have spoken to a majority of you on the Council, I have gotten to meet some of you, all the parents, educators, administrators that came out last Thursday was amazing. What a united community we are, growing, united and we are going to be an educated community. Support the schools and raise the cap.

32. Melissa Ginndurco, 1 Walter Avenue. I just wanted to say that it is important to maintain our budget without decreases because we cannot afford to harm our children and their educational futures. People move to Norwalk because they want a suburban community and city advancements. We need to ensure we don’t become tied up in the negative, I will keep it simple, I am an early childhood educator, if you take away 2, you are back to 0 if you start at 2, but if you take away 2 more, you are in the negative. You now need 4 more to get back to the beginning then to make advancements you need 2 more to go on top of that so then you area at 6, the cost is in the people, materials and the cost is in student growth. You can either make us a golden city or you can make us a bronze city by maintaining what we need. Thank you.

33. Mark Bonasera, 11 Fairview Avenue Assistant Principal of West Rocks Middle School . I would like to speak on when the cap is set some of the cuts that will trickle down that I can speak to directly. I have two daughters, one of them attends Tracey School she has a wonderful teacher and a wonderful school aide in the room and I know the population of Tracey and I know the population of Tracey and I know how many students are economically disadvantaged I know how many are accessing English in one way or another, in either learning to read or making that jump to reading to learn that is so important that happens around 3rd or 4th grade and I am very concerned at the prospect of one of the trickle down will be a loss of school aides in 1st grade classrooms. That is very alarming to me and unacceptable. I am also, proud assistant principal of West Rocks Middle School and with my colleague assistant principal Joseph DeVellis and Principal Dr. Moore, if this budget goes into place, or that one of us won’t be here, knowing what we do, what we offer to students, the attention that we pay to curriculum to improve instruction at West Rocks, if you cut 1/3 of that, there will be a major affect on the students and the same goes for Ponus. We have portable classrooms that are due to be removed, if you remove those based on those trickle

down affects, there is no room at West Rocks to put our 2 Spanish teachers who cannot be on a cart, they cannot travel around with their materials they have to run a foreign language classroom. We are slated to lose a counselor, music teacher. I have been at West Rocks for 2 years and I cannot on one hand how many fundraisers we've had, we sell cookie dough, magazines, we've sold more things that I can count and that points to one basic fact, we are bare bones, we have no library budget, we are working to add on to things that are just not there in the budget. We are not fat cats. I just want to say that I agree on what was said earlier so that economically disadvantaged students, EOL students, students accessing English in one way or another will be hurt significantly by these cuts. I read, I believe last Friday, in the Hour that education adds no revenue to the City because there is no overtime that pays into the budget. Education adds immeasurable human capital and is part of the social contract and I hope you will consider raising the cap.

34. Chuck Goulart, 11 Daphe Drive. I took it upon myself to download the capital budget and read it all 250 pages of it. And in doing that, trying to figure out what looks right or not right to my uneducated eyes and I realized that I have a daughter at Nathan Hale Middle School and the outstanding job that Bob McCain has done making it a spotlight school a new England school and how the other schools are modeling after Nathan Hale and I think about my son who is at Columbus Magnet school and the 12 years that I've spent working the Young Astronaut program and all the hard work and dedication that I've seen at that school and every other school in the City. Presently I am the current President for the Norwalk High marching Band and all the fundraisers and as a matter of fact I was just at West Rocks Middle School sewing costumes so our girls don't have to incur that added expense. I am perplexed on how we can come up here and the numbers we come up, ever increasing and still seem like it falls on deaf ears at times. You have to spend money to make money, it is an investment not an expense to invest it into the city would be to invest it into the city. I look at all the things that was spent in the capital budget of the \$50,000 for park benches and the Plant A Tree program, widening of West Avenue and all the different monies that have gone into the city and I am not begrudging any of them they are great ideas and it makes Norwalk a more attractive place to live. But, what is more important, the foundation of education that makes it attractive for families to come into which in turn will in turn return us back more money in revenue which will give us more money to increase the budget or plant a trees or have a park bench for nobody to sit on. I am just concerned that our education is taking a backseat to the beautification of Norwalk and not to the strength of Norwalk.

35. Napoleone Harris, 26 Broad Street, Norwalk. The proud Pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church. I just want to say, "a underfunded educational system is a poor education system and poor education systems birth criminals incubated by the limited opportunities that come from the poverty imposed by lack of education. I have seen this happen in my hometown of Cleveland, Ohio. Which continually cut their educational spending until the wonderful year of 2005, the city of New Orleans was underwater yet we still managed to be the poorer city in the Country, google it, these are the facts. Poor educational systems send wonderful cities down the drain, we cannot be one of those cities where we cut and overlook our own future by cutting the voiceless future of the students we cannot be a society that disregard our children merely to balance our budgets. Lastly, this is a matter of democracy, please don't

get it twisted this makes it a second week in a row that I have heard the constituents raise concern to the people who we took to the polls and we elected to look out for our best interest to act on behalf of the city we have come to you voiced our concerns, made our point, this seems like it might be the second week were our voices are overlooked this is an issue of democracy and justice. I stand as a disenfranchised member of our society, it is easy to tell I am an African American not a lot of us in here its because we don't have the faith in the democracy. I am asking that you prove to me, to the folks that look like me that America is not Libya where the people we put in to protect us, and shoot us down in the street and I know that seems real graphic and everything but to cut the future of our students, to eat our youth that way is murder in the same right. Thank you."

36. Bob Polselli, Director of Technology for Norwalk Schools and I do not live in Norwalk. I would like to thank the Common Council for your support in the Board of Education Capital funding and I respect the decision that you have to make this evening. However, I would like to speak on behalf of the teachers and the students in the district because it is critical that they receive the technology literacy that other towns in the U.S. receive. I support Dr. Marks and her vision and as well as administrative, teachers and staff. It is a different world that we live in today. I travelled to China 3 years ago and sat in classrooms with 85 students. Those are the students that will be competing our students for jobs and the push for technology is at the forefront in other countries. I would just ask that you consider the request that Dr. Marks and the Board of Education is making so that we can prepare our students to compete in this global society.

37. Scott Kimmich, 186 Gillies Lane, I am a 31 year old resident of Norwalk and a senior citizen and I have 1 grandchild in the schools here. John F. Kennedy said that he would put a man on the moon and he did, let's put our school district above Wilton and New Canaan's, we can do it we can dedicate out time to do that. Diversified kids need to be up to par, the small cap is worth it.

38. Monica Arcario (& Karen Hall), 28 Fairfield Terrace, stated she was a life long resident and former student of Norwalk Public Schools. She stated that she understands about elderly and their financial limitations, but she also knows that many of them, included here mother, would gladly pay a bit more in taxes to keep the school system properly funded. She stated that as mentioned tonight teachers should take a pay freeze is wrong as they stay late and come in early and use their own money to subsidize the classrooms; and actually this budget represents a pay cut for them. 80% of her graduating class does not live in Norwalk anymore. The reason is that other states have a better education. We expect children to work hard and succeed. She urged the Committee to fully fund the budget for education, and not to pass this budget cap.

The Public Hearing portion of the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.