

Community Services & Personnel Committee

Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, June 16, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

Via TeleconferenceTo allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoom, and/or the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at www.norwalkct.org/meetings



Members of the public can call in and listen to a meeting. They will not be able to speak or see any of the meeting participants. Each meeting will use a unique Meeting/Webinar ID.



Members of the public who wish to provide "live comments" will need to register in advance and use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the "raise your hand indicator" and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section.



Members of the public who wish to view the meeting, but are not participating, can view a live stream on the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. This stream is delayed by approximately 20 seconds.



Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Lamond Daniels at ldaniels@norwalkct.org to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

MEETING AGENDA

1. Call to order/ roll call
2. Public comments
3. Approval of minutes from meeting held on May 19, 2021
4. Discussion
 - a) Personnel - Discussion on the Summary of the Retirement Incentive Program
 - b) Community Services - General Updates
5. Action Items:
 - a) Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Riling to execute an After School Partnership Extension Agreement with the Norwalk Housing Authority commencing from the end of the Agreement's initial term through June 30, 2023.
6. Adjourn

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, July 21, 2021

cc: Mayor Harry W. Riling
Donna King, City Clerk
Irene Dixon, Assistant City Clerk
Mario Coppola, Corp Counsel

CITY OF NORWALK
COMMUNITY SERVICES & PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
MAY 19, 2021
VIA TELECONFERENCE

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ATTENDANCE: Barbara Smyth, Chair; Gregory Burnett; Dominique Johnson; Thomas Keegan; Diana Revulus; Keenan Roberts; Nicholas Sacchinelli; David Heuvelman (7:07 p.m.)

STAFF: Maria Escalera, Director of Human Services;
Lamond Daniels, Chief of Community Services;
Mary Oster, Early Childhood Coordinator

1. CALL TO ORDER/ ROLL CALL

Ms. Smyth called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and called the Roll as indicated above.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

No members of the public wished to comment this evening.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD ON APRIL 21, 2021

The following corrections were made to the minutes:

Correct the spelling of Ms. Lauricella's name and Mr. Burnett's name.

Page 2: second paragraph, fourth sentence should read: They also discussed "Must meet a quota".

Page 2: third paragraph, first sentence should read: There was much discussion on what this would entail, but they were interested in approving the actual description wording so it could be posted in a timely fashion.

Page 2: third paragraph, second sentence should read: This person would do the finding of grants, develop a system for tracking grants, the administrative work and the departments would write the subject matter for various grants.

**** MR. BURNETT MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS AMENDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

4. DISCUSSION

Updates-Community Services Department, Lamond Daniels

Mr. Daniels acknowledged that over the weekend, the City of Norwalk lost one of its employees who worked for the Community Services Department, through the Library. He expressed his deepest sympathy for their children and family.

Mr. Daniels reported that the Community Services Department continues to support the CT Food Bank food distribution. They moved from Calf Pasture to Veteran's Park for the summer. They are seeing up to 1,000 people each week from 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Covid testing takes place at Veteran's Park in the afternoon.

Mr. Daniels said that Led By Us will be officially launching their Norwalk Speaks Campaign on May 22nd at Ryan Park. In addition, Covid vaccines will be offered at the event.

Mr. Heuvelman joined the meeting at 7:07 p.m.

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Via Teleconference

5. ACTION ITEMS:

- ** MR. BURNETT MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE A PROGRAM SUPPORT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF NORWALK AND CONNECTICUT INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITIES, INC. FOR FUNDING SUPPORT, MONITORING AND REPORTING FOR THE EARLY HEAD START AND HEAD START PROGRAMS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$500,000.**

Ms. Oster reviewed the request. She said the municipal match for the City is \$500,000. She noted that it is important to have a monitoring mechanism for this funding. She added that she worked with Ms. Escalera.

- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

- ** MR. KEEGAN MOVED TO Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute any and all documents necessary to accept and receive Child day care grant funds allocated to the City of Norwalk from the State of Connecticut, Office of early childhood for State Fiscal Year 2021 and 2022**

Ms. Oster reviewed the request and said that they currently receive funding for subsidized toddler and pre-school slots. The State increased the amount making them on par with the School Readiness stream.

Mr. Heuvelman asked how many day cares this funding will serve. Ms. Oster said this increase is only going to cover funding for 40 pre-school slots at Growing Seeds at Ben Franklin.

- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

- ** MS. JOHNSON MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS NECESSARY FOR SHARED SPACE LICENSE AGREEMENTS TO REGIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS SELECTED BY THE COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT TO PROVIDE SERVICES AND ASSIST RESIDENTS IN CITY HALL.**

Mr. Daniels gave a presentation, showing the proposed Norwalk Community Services Resource Hub. He noted that he has the support of Mayor Rilling for this initiative.

Mr. Daniels explained that many services are offered regionally and are located in the greater Stamford and Bridgeport areas. His proposal is to work with the service providers and offer them time and space in Norwalk. He presented the social services regional map. He said that transportation can be expensive and a barrier to people seeking help. He said that he has been working with larger organizations and asked them to come to Norwalk.

Mr. Daniels described the different services such as, workforce development, job training, emergency rental assistants, and self sufficiency programs. He said this initiative is intended to remove barriers, make services accessible, increase awareness of the services and increase engagement.

Ms. Smyth asked Mr. Daniels how he sees this initiative working logistically. Mr. Daniels said that his office will help with promotion and will create a calendar.

Mr. Keegan thanked Mr. Daniels and said this is a great idea and another way to serve the people in the community. He told Mr. Daniels that he has his full support.

Ms. Revolus asked for clarification on the 211 direct support. Mr. Daniels explained that he envisions having dedicated 211 lines in City Hall and with the localized 211 line, the residents will be talking to Norwalk residents. He added that he wants this to be a one stop shop.

Ms. Revolus asked Mr. Daniels if he finds that more services are needed, for example, family navigators. Mr. Daniels explained that they will start with workforce development and emergency rental assistance. He said that needs change over time. Every time someone makes a call, it will be tracked, which provides better information for when they talk to regional providers and lets them know how many requests come in for their services.

Ms. Revolus asked why the location will be called “swing space”. Mr. Daniels said the space will be used by different groups.

Mr. Burnett said this is a great resource for the City. He asked how people will know what services are available at City Hall and when. He noted that several of the clients may have technical difficulties. Mr. Daniels said he is sensitive to that and they plan to utilize the community network, such as the Norwalk Housing Authority and neighborhood groups.

Ms. Johnson said she hears from her constituents who are non-profit leaders asking if there is any leeway for use of the swing space by non-profits. Mr. Daniels said he would love to be a part of that conversation.

Mr. Heuvelman thanked Mr. Daniels for doing things that are outside the box. He asked if this will be enough space. He wants to be sure they can accommodate all of the service providers. Mr. Daniels said that about 10 organizations have been identified. Ms. Revolus said she would like to see Upward Bound come to Norwalk. Mr. Daniels said they are talking about larger programs. He said the goal is to serve constituents in our backyard.

Mr. Burnett asked Mr. Daniels if he thought about setting up this type of program in the community, such as at the Housing Authority rather than have residents travel to City Hall, which could create a barrier. Mr. Daniels said people will tell them where they want to go. He added that there is a liability piece in this too. He said he has those concerns about where and when to offer services.

Ms. Smyth said it feels daunting to go to another city when you rely on public transportation or a ride from someone.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF NORWALK AND FAMILY AND CHILDREN'S AGENCY TO SERVE AS THE MUNICIPAL AGENT FOR THE ELDERLY EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2021 FOR A TWO YEAR TERM IN THE AMOUNT OF \$150,000 YEARLY.**

Mr. Daniels said he wanted to recognize the work of Ms. Laura Epstein, who was a champion for seniors. He said he was excited to carry on her legacy to be sure seniors are not forgotten.

Ms. Escalera reviewed the historical perspective and described what an Agent for the Elderly is. She said the Human Services Department will oversee the new Municipal Agent for The Elderly. The goal is to announce and award the new Municipal Agent for the Elderly in July.

Ms. Escalera explained that a transition plan will be developed so all seniors understand the changes. She noted that this is not a senior center. It is a person who will connect and provide services to seniors in Norwalk.

Ms. Escalera reviewed the three proposals that were submitted and said that the panel selected the Family and Children's Agency. They are a trusted community resource and understand the needs of the community.

Ms. Smyth said this is an attempt to take all services to a high level and provide accountability to the elderly and the City.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Ms. Revolus wished Malcolm X a happy birthday.

6. ADJOURN

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

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 16, 2021

RETIREMENT INCENTIVE PROGRAM SUMMARY

Last fall, the Common Council approved a Retirement Incentive Program for the non-uniformed City employees in the City's defined benefit pension plan. In sum, this Retirement Incentive Program provided that employees in this pension plan who were over 55 years old with 10 or more years of City service could voluntarily retire on October 9, 2020. The City would add 3 additional years of pension credited service to the pension formula, and employees under 62 years of age would not incur any actuarial reductions to their pension.

Of the 91 City employees who were eligible for this Plan, 44 or those employees voluntarily decided to enroll in this Plan and retire on October 9, 2020. Our actuaries projected that the retirement of these 44 employees would add \$648,000 in additional pension and OPEB costs to the City. At that time, we projected that the City would reduce our recurring payroll costs in excess of \$1 million, potentially realizing over \$500,000 in net recurring payroll reductions. To achieve these savings, the City undertook a review of a total of over 90 budgeted positions, which included the 44 positions vacated by the retirement plan and all of the vacant but budgeted positions throughout the City at that time. We then reviewed each of these vacant but budgeted positions with the Chief of each division to determine where payroll savings may be realized through either not filling the position or hiring a new employee at a lower annual salary. We then developed and implemented a plan to achieve these payroll savings.

As of May 1, 2021, approximately 6 months after the Retirement Incentive Plan was implemented, the City has nearly completed the process we implemented to achieve payroll cost reductions. During this period, of the 44 positions vacated as a result of the Retirement Incentive Program, 8 positions have not been filled at all, 27 positions have been filled at a reduced annual salary rate, 3 positions were filled at a similar salary as the retired incumbent, and 6 are currently in recruitment. Of the remaining approximately 46 of the 90 total positions reviewed, 3 full time positions were identified as positions that would not be filled, 15 full time positions have been filled at an entry level salary rate, and there are 11 positions that are actively in the recruitment process or are temporarily not being filled by the various departments. The remaining vacant but budgeted positions are police officer and fire fighter positions that were not subject to the Retirement Incentive Program or our efforts to reduce headcount and control payroll costs.

As of May 1, 2021, we calculate that the impact of these efforts to reduce and control payroll have generated over \$1.3 million in payroll reductions through the defunding of certain positions and hiring replacement employees at reduced salary levels. Additionally, the calculated sequence of the filling of these positions has resulted in over \$1 million in payroll cash savings during this current fiscal year.

We had projected that recurring payroll reductions from this effort were going to be approximately \$525,000 and we have met that target. As we continue to fill some of the remaining 17 positions that are budgeted, we will increase the recurring savings by hiring the replacement employees at a lower rate of pay than the incumbent.

All in all, we have met the objective of using the Retirement Incentive Program as the foundation for our overall efforts to reduce the City's payroll costs this fiscal year and to reduce recurring payroll costs. The

success of this initiative is attributable to the hard work and thoughtful analysis of all of the Chiefs and their direct reports, and the full support of the Mayor and Common Council.



MEMO

TO: Members of the Community Services and Personnel Committee
FROM: Mary Oster, Early Childhood Coordinator
SUBJECT: Extension of the After School Partnership Extension Agreement
DATE: June 1, 2021

The Norwalk Housing Authority (NHA) operates after school programs at NHA sites in Norwalk. Two of those programs located at Meadow Gardens and King-Kennedy do not have a child care license from the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC). It is not practical to license either of these sites due to the size of the space and the steps that would need to be taken to license them.

The NHA is operating the sites as if they were licensed, adhering to all policies and procedures that licensed sites follow. This includes regular monitoring and visits by the City's Early Childhood Coordinator.

The intention is that these 2 sites will move to 98 South Main when that site is available and licensed. Until that time, the After School Partnership Extension Agreement needs to be extended so that the City would continue to retain ultimate responsibility for the management and oversight of the program and for the program staff and the children served.

When 98 South Main is available to them NHA will make the necessary changes and then pursue licensing. When licensed, the programs at King-Kennedy and Meadow Gardens will relocate to the licensed site.

Action to be taken:

- 1. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Riling to execute an After School Partnership Extension Agreement with the Norwalk Housing Authority commencing from the end of the Agreement's initial term through June 30, 2023.**

Norwalk Housing Authority (NHA) 2021 Annual Plan

Retrieved

from: <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:DGwql9mAbcEJ:https://www.norwalkha.org/uploads/files/1147.pdf+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>

Education Programs

The Norwalk Housing Authority Learning Centers (NHALC) are committed to providing NHA students with academic support, enrichment programs, school and career guidance, character building opportunities and educational field trips. NHALC's provide safe, comfortable environments, as well as qualified, dedicated staff that help empower children to reach their highest potential. The long-term goal of the overall NHALC Program is to support, guide and assist NHA students to launch successfully into adulthood. The Norwalk Housing Authority Learning Centers are located at the following locations throughout the city of Norwalk, Connecticut

The NHA Learning Centers are committed to:

- Providing a safe haven and supervision during after-school hours.
- Supporting parents, primarily to provide working parents childcare during the after-school hours.
- Supporting development, including the social and emotional development of the child (providing role models, developing positive self-esteem, promoting strategies for conflict resolution, and promoting respect for diversity)
- Providing enrichment and recreational opportunities; activities that youth would not be exposed to otherwise or activities that are not offered during the school day.
- Providing academic support, including homework assistance, and other activities with the primary aim of improving school outcomes.

The Learning Centers accommodate children with special needs by varying approaches with parent permission. All transportation that is needed for students to participate in NHA enrichment programs or community-based programs is provided by six passenger vans, owned and operated by NHA.

Academic support that the NHALC provides includes homework help, tutoring in reading and math, computer access for research and school projects, and other academic activities. The enrichment support includes Literacy, STEM, Creative Arts, fieldtrips and exposure both within and outside of the learning centers.

Other than interns, all Learning Center staff hold a bachelor's degree and some hold advanced degrees as well. In addition, Learning Centers utilize interns who are current college students working towards their 4-year degree. Our literacy and math staff specialize in these specific areas. NHA Learning Center staff represent NHA by serving on community and state committees, councils and boards: Norwalk ACTS, Norwalk Early Childhood Council, Connecticut Afterschool Network, and National Afterschool Association

NHA Literacy Program

The NHA Literacy Program is incorporated into all five learning centers, King Kennedy, Meadow Gardens, Roodner Court, Colonial Village and 20 West with specific grade level approaches to literacy.

Three Reading Coaches serve three elementary learning centers, and one Literacy Coordinator serves two centers. A structured program delivers consistent, fun, engaging and project-based reading and writing instruction across the centers. The developed curriculum is linked to the common core standard with the hopes of providing a soft link between what students are learning at school and what students are experiencing at our centers.

The Literacy Program embraces the concept of creating life-long readers. The belief is that every student served deserves to have a book in their hands. Reading Coaches help students make sense of the book by providing direct instruction in the form of projects, games, phonics- based activities, read-alouds, shared readings, and independent readings of leveled texts.

The commitment to providing staff with quality professional development remains a focal point for NHA. Reading Coaches continue to receive training from Dr. Margie Gillis with the focus being on phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency