

**FINANCE AND CLAIMS COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL MEETING
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2024
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL TELECONFERENCE**

ATTENDANCE: Greg Burnett; Chair, Heather Dunn, James Frayer, Johan Lopez,
Douglas Sutton, Dajuan Wiggins, Sr.

STAFF: Chitsamay Lam

OTHER: Lisa Biagiarelli; Tax Collector, Denise Brown, Jared Schmitt, Jessica
Vonashek, Joyce Liu, Paul Gorman

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Burnett called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Burnett called the roll as reflected above, A quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Diane Lauricella
21 Little Fox Lane

Ms. Lauricella requested an amendment to the minutes stating she said number 6 Butler Street not number 10 Butler Street.

Ms. Lauricella made a second request for the list of ARPA expenditures. She stated she had not received any answers to questions she put forward at the August, 8th meeting.

Ms. Lauricella noted she was pleased that the charter revision allowed the public to weigh in before the budget letter goes out. She stated she heard there would be a public meeting. She told the commission it should be advertised widely via a press conference and social media.

Mr. Burnett requested Ms. Lauricelli email him with her questions and he would forward them to the proper individuals.

**APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETINGS:**

August 8, 2025- Regular Finance and Claims Committee Meeting

**** MS. DUNN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES**

Mr. Barnett stated the words “there was a quorum present, should be listed under roll call. He also noted that 10 Butler Street had to be changed to 6 Butler Street as pointed out by Ms. Lauricella.

**** MR. BURNETT MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS
AMENDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH 5 AYES AND ONE ABSTENTION (MR.
WIGGINS).**

TAX ASSESSOR REPORT

Mr. Gorman, opened by talking about the upcoming Board of Assessment appeals for motor vehicles. He discussed state amendments that will change how cars are valued as of October 1, 2024. He also noted that there was legislation passed to exempt the dwellings of permanent and disabled veterans. She stated there would be a training class on September 26, 2024.

Mr. Gorman stated they were working on the Grand List. He noted the challenges as a result of the new laws. Lastly, he stated he was working with the Corporation Council Department to put together an interactive spreadsheet to track the 2023 Grand list reevaluation.

Mr. Frayer inquired about the status of the appeals and when the information would be available. Mr. Gorman indicated the document should be available at the end of the following week. He noted what the document would include. Mr. Schmidt described the document that would be sent as part of a new system they were using.

Mr. Wiggins requested more information on the car taxes. Mr. Schmidt clarified the new evaluation methods and how they would be implemented.

Mr. Burnett wanted to know how it would affect the taxpayer. Mr. Schmidt stated they currently lacked all the information to assess at this time. Mr. Burnett wanted to know if or when the taxpayers would be informed about the tax changes.

Mr. Schmidt explained to Mr. Wiggins that this was a state statute.

Mr. Schmidt explained to Ms. Dunn that the tax applied to both private and commercial vehicles, but stated he would double-check.

Mr. Burnett stressed the importance of communicating with the taxpayers about these changes.

CLAIMS COMMITTEE REPORT: SEPTEMBER 2024

Ms. Biagiarelli presented the claims report. She stated all items were for less than \$10,000 and would not require a vote.

NARRATIVE ON TAX COLLECTIONS DATED SEPTEMBER 2024 – RECEIVE REPORT AND DISCUSS.

Ms. Biagiarelli presented the narrative on tax collections. She explained how the auditors arrived at the numbers. She discussed the outcome of the tax sale. She noted if all goes through they will collect just under \$6.6 million. She pointed out that if bidders decided to back out they would offer the property to the next highest bidder. Ms. Biagiarelli made clear they don't turn a profit on the sales. She explained the process outlining property redemption and what happens after the sale.

Mr. Burnett thanked Ms. Biagiarelli for all her work. He requested she present the report to the full council at the September 24th meeting.

MONTHLY TAX COLLECTOR'S REPORTS DATED AUGUST 2024 – RECEIVE REPORT AND DISCUSS.

There was no discussion on this item.

RECEIVED OAK HILLS PARK AUTHORITY MONTHLY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR JUNE AND JULY 2024.

Ms. Brown presented the financial statements for June. She stated that it has been a very good year.

In response to Mr. Burnett, Ms Brown explained why the course income exceeded the annual budget. She noted the quality of the course has attracted no resident golfers. She also pointed out. They were using an outside company and implementing their marketing techniques to help with promotion.

Ms. Brown provided Mr. Frayer with an update on the restaurant. She then discussed the capital expenses. She stated they would be starting the first phase of the bunker project. She explained the process and said the course would remain open.

Ms. Brown then presented the report for July. She also mentioned the dedication for Art Goldblatt would be on Saturday, October 5th at 12:00 at the Oak Hills Tennis Center.

AUTHORIZE

Authorize the purchasing agent to issue a purchase order to GovConnection, Inc, in an amount not to exceed \$385,223.54 for Network Distribution and Access Switches. Account No. 0925 1370 5777 C0375 City Technology.

**** MR. LOPEZ MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE ISSUE OF A PURCHASE ORDER TO GOVCONNECTION, INC.**

Ms. Liu discussed the upgrading of the city of Norwalk's outdated network infrastructure. She stated they had reached the final stage. She noted the purchase of network hardware was being funded by ARPA the rest will be funded by the IT Department's Capital request. She pointed out that not using a third-party vendor for installation is saving the city money. Ms. Liu indicated they were hoping to complete the installations by the end of June, followed by three months of testing, then wrapping up the project by the end of September. She noted from that point on the system would be managed in-house.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Burnett stated the item would be moved to the full council Tuesday, September 24th for final review and approval.

REQUESTING

A Special Capital Appropriation in the amount of \$100,000 for the purchase of a replacement boat for the Harbormaster to manage and oversee the operation of the Norwalk Harbor, Norwalk Islands and a portion of the Long Island Sound and authorize the issue of bonds, notes or temporary notes in an amount not to exceed \$100,000 to finance said appropriation.

**** MR. FRAYER MOVED TO APPROVE THE SPECIAL CAPITAL APPROPRIATION.**

Mr. Schmidt explained the special Capital Appropriation. Mr. Schmidt discussed the request for the reallocation of ARPA funds including the use of \$100,000 toward a replacement boat for the harbor master. He indicated there was going to be an additional source of funding bringing the total to \$200,000. He explained the extra funding would come from repurposing \$100,000 currently approved for the Arts and Cultural Plan. Mr. Schmidt explained the first item was for the Special Appropriation and the second was to de authorize \$100,000 in bonds from the Arts and Cultural Plan.

Mr. Frayer was curious about the specifications of the boat being purchased. Ms. Vonashek responded that the Harbor Master and Assistant Harbor Masters were consulted about what they felt they needed. It was determined the specifications and flexibility of the new craft would best serve the needs of the Harbor Master.

Mr. Frayer questioned the need for a landing craft. Ms. Vonashek noted that the current boat was purchased 20 years ago and is now outdated. She stated decisions made then were not necessarily decisions they would make today. Mr. Frayer noted the absence of a crane. Ms. Vonashek countered that they were trying not to spec out a boat with similar functionality as the recently funded police boat. She emphasized trying to keep within a \$200,000 budget and making sure the vessels complement each other.

In response to Mr. Frayer's inquiries about the second item, Ms. Vonashek described where the actual funding was coming from. She stated if the items were approved they could revise the estimate and address some of Mr. Frayer's concerns.

Mr. Burnett addressed Br. Wiggins questions about how they were going to vote. Mr. Burnett explained what they would be voting on. Mr. Burnett explained they were voting on passing this request along to the full council. Ms. Vonashek said she would coordinate any documents and meetings with the Harbor Master and the assistants before the October 24th meeting.

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH 5 AYES AND ONE ABSTENTION (MR. FRAYER)**

Mr. Burnett stated the item would be moved to the full council on Tuesday, September 24th for final approval.

REQUESTING

A reduction in the amount of \$100,000 to the appropriation in account # 0925-3760-5777-C0704 (Arts & Culture Plan. Deauthorizes bonds in the amount of \$100,000.

**** MS. DUNN MOVED TO APPROVE THE REQUEST.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

RESOLUTION

Approve ARPA transfer request in the following amounts, and in conformance with Common Council Approval of items 2a and 2b on the October 24, 2023 Agenda:

FROM:

BUSINESS COVID ASSISTANCE	133710-5796-AEC05	\$85,000
ADMINISTRATOR FOR ARP	133710-5796-AEC14	\$32,517

TO:

MOBILITY SIDEWALK & BIKE	133710-5796-AEC02	\$117,517

**** MR. SUTTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION**

Mr. Schmidt explained the line item transfers were the reallocation of ARPA funding.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Burnett stated the item would be moved to the full council on Tuesday, September 24th for final approval.

REVIEW OF OPERATING BUDGET CALENDAR FY 2025-26

Mr. Schmidt explained the review of the operating budget., He stated they used the previous year's charter as guidance. He noted the major difference was the addition to allowing public input at the beginning of the process. He stated they were trying to bring everything into line so both the operating budget and capital budget could be discussed at the same meeting.

Mr. Burnett noted they had done this last year. He noted the only difference was the inclusion of public input in the capital budget.

Mr. Frayer asked if there would be a presentation of what the needs were. He wanted to know if they would coordinate with the BOE. Mr. Schmidt said he has been in contact with the BOE and they have come up with a four-piece process. He described those members of the public he thought the process would attract. Mr. Frayer wanted guidelines for the public input.

In answer to Mr. Frayer's question, Mr. Burnett described how the process involved public hearings.

REVIEW OF CAPITAL BUDGET CALENDAR FY 2025-26

There were no comments or questions relating to the operating capital.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** MS. DUNN MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
China Mayhew
Telesco Secretarial Services