

**CITY OF NORWALK
FINANCE/CLAIMS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
JULY 11, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Greg, Burnett, Chair; Jim Frayer, Douglas Sutton

OTHERS: Lisa Biagiarelli, Tax Collector, Sharon Conners, Purchasing Agent, Tom Livingston, Mayor's Office; Atty. Matthew Sapienza, Corporation Counsel's Office; Paul Gorman, Tax Assessor; Denise Brown, Oak Hills Authority

CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Burnett called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Council Member Burnett called the roll. A quorum was not present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no one present who wished to address the Committee at this time.

APPROVE THE MINUTES

• June 17, 2024-Special Finance and Claims Committee Meeting

The minutes from the June 17th Special Finance and Claims Committee Meeting were tabled at this time due to a lack of quorum.

Authorize the Mayor to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with the Norwalk Housing Authority ("NHA") regarding the calculation of the NHA's statutory Payments in Lieu of Taxes ("PILOT") for each of the NHA's developments located within the City of Norwalk.

Council Member Burnett noted that since the Committee did not have a quorum, they could not vote on this item, but discussion could take place.

Mr. Livingston, the City's Chief of Staff, greeted the Committee Members and introduced Atty. Sapienza, who was from Corporation Counsel.

Mr. Livingston went on to explain that the information on this long standing issue between the City and the Housing Authority was included in the Committee Members' packets along with a

proposed MOU. In 2016, there was a disagreement about how shelter rent would be calculated. Mr. Livingston gave a brief overview of the definition of shelter rent and a summary of the history of subsidies for the Housing Authority projects.

Mr. Livingston explained that an agreement had been reached to include the subsidy payments for Colonial Village, but would not include the other Housing Authority properties. A second issue involved trash collection for these properties.

The MOU contains an agreement regarding these two items and Mr. Livingston gave a brief overview of the details. This will include the Housing Authority making a one-time payment of \$2,761,340.00 for accrued but unpaid payments up to the end of 2022 and an additional \$518,129.00 for 2023. The fees for 2024 have not been determined at this time.

Council Member Frayer asked about the 2024 payment. Mr. Livingston explained that the cost will vary due to the trash pick-up and the administration does not yet know what those costs will be. Discussion followed about what the costs might be, the details of the agreement and how this might benefit both the City and the Housing Authority residents.

Council Member Burnett thanked Mr. Livingston for emphasizing that this was not a tax abatement, but a PILOT payment. There were no additional comments from the Committee Members.

Council Member Burnett said that because there was no quorum, he would present this to the full Council at the next Council Meeting on July 23rd.

TAX ASSESSOR REPORT.

Mr. Gorman greeted the Committee members and explained that the main thrust at this time of year is answering residents' questions about the motor vehicle taxes. Often when residents no longer own a vehicle, they don't inform the Tax Assessor and end up with a tax bill for that vehicle. Once they complete the process, then the bills are adjusted.

Work continues on renewing exemptions on properties and vehicles from last year. Many of these cases involve elderly residents and Mr. Gorman directs these individuals to OPM to start the process. Mr. Gorman said that this process usually will take up all of July and major portion of August.

Council Member Burnett asked Mr. Gorman to present a report next month showing how many residents are on the program. Mr. Gorman said that he would provide that information for the Committee.

Council Member Frayer asked for clarification on the type of phone calls the office is receiving. Mr. Gorman said that basically most of the calls have to do with vehicles that have been sold or

are no longer registered. Mr. Gorman also gave an overview of how the billing system presents the information to the residents.

CLAIMS COMMITTEE REPORT: JULY 2024.

There were no claims that needed consideration at this time.

NARRATIVE ON TAX COLLECTIONS DATED JULY 2024

MONTHLY TAX COLLECTOR'S REPORTS DATED JUNE 2024

Receive Reports and discuss.

Ms. Biagiarelli greeted the Committee Members. She explained that they did not have any written reports because the Office had not closed out the month of June. At the end of May, they were at 98.37% of the current collections.

She then gave the Committee Member an overview of the recent work:

- The motor vehicle bills went out on June 14th.
- Real Estate and personal property were mailed on June 28th.
- Having the motor vehicle bills go out first has helped reduce the number of people in line waiting to pay their bills.
- The collection rate has remained steady with \$3.5 million to \$6 million dollars being taken in each day.
- In June, \$3.5 million had been collected on the Tax Sale and currently the Department has collected \$4.5 million, which was the original goal.
- Most of the remaining 97 properties involve small amounts.
- At the request of the Blight Officer, some properties were included in the Tax Sale because they involve substantial blight fees.
- Recent changes in the State laws now allow zoning violation fees to be handled in the same manner as blight fees.
- The initial September 9th Tax Sale notice was published in the paper on July 8th and also on July 10th.
- The Tax Sale Boards will be placed in the lobby sometime in the coming week.
- Information on the re-evaluation was included with the real estate bills. Being pro-active worked out well.

Discussion followed about how the 8 oyster beds that are in arrears would be represented on the board. Ms. Biagiarelli said that she would most likely post a picture of the maps.

Council Member Frayer asked for clarification on the tax bill adjustment process. Ms. Biagiarelli explained that the residents have to speak with the Tax Assessor first and then the correct amount is calculated by him. Then they can bring the adjusted bill to the Tax Collector. Many times, the payments have already been made and a refund is needed.

Council Member Burnett asked if they were tracking the number of calls that come into the office. Ms. Biagiarelli said that they had not been doing so and that the process seemed to be working out well.

Ms. Biagiarelli said that as soon as the monthly reports are completed she would be forwarding it to the Chair and requested Council Member Burnett to send it along to the other Committee members. Council Member Burnett said that the next Council Meeting was scheduled for July 23rd and he would make sure it was included in that packet.

**RECEIVED OAK HILLS PARK AUTHORITY MONTHLY
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR :MARCH, APRIL AND MAY 2024
AND FY25 BUDGET DETAIL.**

Ms. Brown greeted the Committee Members and presented her report. She explained that in March and April, the Park was just opening up for the season, so she focused on the May report. The revenues have been trending over budget with a surplus of \$57,000 for the month of May. The expenses also have increased and are currently about \$25,000 over budget due to the need for fertilizers and course maintenance. Currently they are \$32,000 over budget.

Ms. Brown said that the revenue \$193,000 but the expenses were also increased to \$71,000. For the last 11 months, there was approximately \$122,000 surplus over budget. The City has been given \$112,000 in debt payments to date.

She explained that Mr. Dutton was now the new chairman for the Authority. She said that the Board was concerned about the watering situation. There is one well that produces about 50 gallons of water that is used for the greens and the tees. The rest of the water has to be purchased from SNEW and the course is considered a residential property. There is a restriction in place that limit the staff to watering twice a week. Mr. Dutton is working with Mr. Livingston and the Board is working with SNEW to develop an agreement that would allow them to water more frequently. There are no drought restrictions in place right now, but they are being limited because the property is considered to be residential. Discussion followed.

Council Member Burnett asked how the restaurant was doing. Ms. Brown said that they seemed to be doing well and the menu was a light salad/sandwich selection. She said that they had the restaurant cater recent tennis event and it had gone well.

Council Member Sutton said that he had taken some out of town guests there recently and everyone was very pleased. Council Member Frayer agreed.

The 2025 Budget is still being developed and will most likely be approved by the Board at the next meeting.

Council Member Frayer said that Ms. Varel was now on the Board and she is focused more on environmental issues. Ms. Brown said that she had met Ms. Varel a month ago and they had done a nature trail walk along with someone from DEEP. Ms. Varel had many good suggestions. She said that she would be willing to have Ms. Varel work on potential grants. While the trails need some maintenance to keep them passable, the DEEP rep said that they should keep it as organic as possible.

Council Member Burnett asked about the plaque for Art. Ms. Brown replied that the plaque had arrived and is beautiful. It will be mounted on an organic looking stone that is in the tennis area. The target date for the ceremony is around Labor Day. Council Member Burnett said that Art was a great contributor to the City and many people would like to attend to honor him.

PURCHASING AGENT REPORT ON APPROVED CONTRACTS LISTING.

Mr. Burnett said that one of the changes in the Charter had been having the Purchasing Agent review purchases between \$25,000 and \$100,000 and present a quarterly report.

Ms. Conners greeted the Committee members. She explained that the quarters were based on the regular calendar year rather than a fiscal year. She gave a brief overview of the 13 items listed in the report as shown in the report. The total came for \$646,000.35 for this quarter and a grand total of slightly over \$1.1 million.

Discussion followed about the details of tracking these items. Council Member Frayer said that he felt it was a great time saver for the Council Members. Council Member Burnett said that he would share the half year report with the full Council.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SUTTON MOVED TO ADJOURNED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services