

**CITY OF NORWALK
FINANCE/CLAIMS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
VIA TELECONFERENCE
JUNE 8, 2023**

ATTENDANCE: Greg Burnett, Chair; Edwin Camacho, Nora Niedzielski-Eichner, John Kydes,
Jenn McMurrer, Diana Revolus

STAFF: Lisa Biagiarelli, Tax Collector; Alan Dutton, Oak Hills Authority;
Paul Gorman, Deputy Tax Assessor; Henry Dachowitz, Chief Financial Officer;
Joyce Liu, Director IT; Darin Callahan, Corporation Counsel;
Jessica Vonashek (Casey), Chief of Economic and Community Development;
Sharon Conners, Purchasing Agent; David McCarthy, Heritage House;
Norwalk Housing Authority: Adam Bovilsky, Lisa Endo;

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Burnett called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m., and called the roll. He acknowledged the above members in attendance, and stated that a quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Alex Knopp, former Mayor of Norwalk, spoke in support of 3 Belden Avenue. He congratulated Mayor Rilling, the First Taxing District and all of the City Committees involved for bringing this project to fruition. He added the importance of this purchase will enable the expansion and modernization to the Norwalk Public Library.

There were no others in attendance for public participation.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

May 11, 2023 – Regular Meeting

Mr. Burnett noted the following corrections: Page 4, paragraph 3 after Mr. Dachowitz, change option to ‘opinion’; page 6 correct the title of Lunda Asmani to NPS Chief Financial Officer.

- ** MS. NIEDZIELSKI-EICHNER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF MAY 11, 2023 AS AMENDED WITH CORRECTIONS NOTED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED WITH FIVE VOTES IN FAVOR, NONE OPPOSED AND ONE ABSTENTION (MCMURRER).**

City of Norwalk
Finance Claims Committee
June 8, 2023

Claims Committee: Receive the Monthly Claims Report

Review and approve claims as required for Claims Report dated April 14, 2023.

Ms. Biagiarelli reported the reports are for information only as there were no special requests, and nothing that required approvals.

- ** MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO ACCEPT THE CLAIMS REPORT AS SUBMITTED.
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Narrative on Tax Collections dated May 14, 2023 – Receive Report and Discuss.

Ms. Biagiarelli presented the report and referred to the narrative as contained in the agenda packet, with excerpts as follows:

As of the end of May 2023, we had collected in excess of \$359 million against our \$365 million adjusted levy, or 98.37%. We also collected 98.69% of our sewer use levy, an additional \$17.3 million, and 86.58% of the Industrial Pretreatment Program (IPP) fee billing on behalf of the WPCA. Compared with the prior fiscal year (May, 2022) we are slightly behind relative to taxes (-0.87%), slightly ahead relative to sewer use (0.81%); and behind relative to the IPP fee (-6.66%).

For prior years' collections, through the end of May 2023, net collection of more than \$1.7 million since the beginning of this fiscal year on July 1, 2022. \$3.3 million less the first 11 months of the prior fiscal year. The difference is partly attributable to the tax sale held in October. Our third-party collection agency continues to bill on our behalf for past due motor vehicle taxes for which we had no valid address. From December 2022 through May 2023 (six months) we have collected nearly \$666,466 in including more than \$31,000 during May.

We continue to navigate our software conversion that moved our tax assessment and tax collection administrative systems off Munis and onto Quality Data Services LLC (QDS) software earlier this year. We did successfully generate our suspense list and presented it to the Board of Estimate for approval earlier this week. We are working with the Assessor's office, QDS personnel, and our printer to successfully implement our upcoming July 2023 tax billing of the 2022 grand list.

The Board of Estimate and Taxation set the rates for those taxes on May 1, and the WPCA set their rates in March 2023. State law requires us to mail prior to the due date of July 1, and the last day to pay without penalty is August 1.

Mr. Burnett asked if there will be communication to residents about the new tax bills. Ms. Biagiarelli explained that it is on the City website, and there is a notation on the actual bill that is a more user-friendly format similar to other surrounding municipalities.

Monthly Tax Collector's Reports dated March 2023– Receive Report and discuss.

Ms. Biagiarelli referred to the reports and spreadsheets as contained in the agenda packet. There were no further questions.

Receive Oak Hills Authority Monthly Financial Statements for March and April 2023.

Mr. Alan Dutton presented the Oak Hills Authority financial statements as contained in the agenda packet and highlighted revenues and expenses. He spoke of the excellent conditions of the golf course and increase in rounds that has resulted in net gains ahead of projections.

Mr. Burnett asked about the hiring of a general manager, and Mr. Dutton replied they are very close to filing the position that will complete the management plans for the park.

Mr. Camacho asked about the restaurant and Mr. Dutton outlined that the DDSA operator is complying with lease requirements, business is building with increased usage, and he is optimistic for more usage.

Tax Assessor update on the Revaluation process

Mr. Paul Gorman, Deputy Tax Assessor provided an update on the revaluation process with 64% of properties visited that is tracking well in line with expectations.

Mr. Burnett asked what communication efforts are in place to alert homeowners of the upcoming visit to property owners from the Tax Assessor's office. Mr. Gorman reviewed the update on letters and email notices to homeowners has been positive to date

10. Authorize the Mayor Harry W. Rilling to enter into a contact with Safeground Analytics Inc. for review/analysis services in the amount not to exceed \$45,000 Account No. 011321-5258 Tax Assessor Revaluation Other Professional Services.

Mr. Gorman provided an overview of the item and explained how these services will serve to complete the revaluation process.

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM AND TO FORWARD
ON TO THE COMMON COUNCIL MEETING OF JUNE 13, 2023.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

11. RESOLUTION: Requesting for Building Management Department project in the amount of \$1,420,000.00 from the ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) fund. Account: 131310-5796-AFD01 ARPA GENERAL EXPENSE re: Acquisition of 3 Belden Avenue, Norwalk, CT.

Ms. Jessica Vonashek provided the background and history of the project and explained how this will enable the modernization and expansion of the Norwalk Public Library.

Ms. McMurrer asked about the parking from the Eagles lot, and Ms. Vonashek explained there are 30+ spaces that can be utilized for the library, and the acquisition will increase the available parking spaces to meet the needs of library patrons.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner asked how the sale price compares to fair market value. Attorney Callahan explained an independent appraisal was done by Bimini & Associates and was evaluated very favorably with the City.

Ms. Revolus spoke in support of the positive aspects of the purchase and asked if there was opportunity for growth with shared parking with the Business Development Center. Ms. Vonashek replied that they are seeing 5-10 walk-ins and greater participation in training sessions.

It was noted the next steps are review by Planning & Zoning on June 21, then on to the Common Council meeting of June 27, 2023.

**** MR. BURNETT MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM AND FOLLOWING REVIEW BY PLANNING & ZONING ON JUNE 21, TO BE FORWARDED ON TO THE COMMON COUNCIL MEETING OF JUNE 27, 2023.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

12. A. Authorize the Mayor to execute the order form with Bonfire Interactive Ltd. for a three (3) year term, a total amount not to exceed \$47,521.44, annual amount \$15,840.48. Funding available from account 011361-5234.

B. Authorize the Purchasing Department to issue change orders on the contract for a total not to exceed \$4,752.00.

Ms. Sharon Conners, Purchasing Agent presented the item and explained the background of the RFP process for control reporting and the huge efficiencies using this system electronically for evaluated submissions RFQ's and RFP's. Also used for contract reminders and for data tracking, dashboard and system enhancements and cost contained subscriptions.

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM AND TO FORWARD ON TO THE COMMON COUNCIL MEETING OF JUNE 13, 2023.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

13. Authorize the Mayor to entering Five years contract with Cablevision Lightpath LLC as secondary Internet Service Provider annual amount not to exceed \$30,000, for a total not to exceed \$150,000, Account # 011370-5245

Ms. Lu presented the item and following an outage incident explained the resulting need for secondary internet service requirements for the City. She reviewed the background of Lightpath and how they were evaluated this company to meet the growing needs for fiber technology upgrade improvements in the most efficient pricing package.

Mr. Burnett asked about the current back up provider, and Ms. Lu replied that this is redundancy that is the right thing to do as additional back up with the firewall management.

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM AND TO FORWARD ON TO THE COMMON COUNCIL MEETING OF TUESDAY, JUNE 13, 2023.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

14. Authorize the purchasing agent to issue a purchase order to GovConnection LLC, in an amount not to exceed \$394,443.77 for six Cisco distribution switches, twenty-three access switches, and ten uplink modules. Account No. 09231370-5777-C0375.

Ms. Lu presented the item and explained the process for infrastructure upgrade and improvement of access control switches. She reviewed the background of how the internal team determined the core layer of access switches and connection with the distribution to the end-users and how they were evaluated this company for a reliable network.

**** MS. MCMURRER MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM AND TO FORWARD ON TO THE COMMON COUNCIL MEETING OF TUESDAY, JUNE 13, 2023.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Burnett presented an additional item to the agenda that requires 2/3rds vote.

**** MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO ADD THE FOLLOWING TO THE AGENDA:**

Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling to enter into an agreement with the Norwalk Housing Authority for the abatement of real property taxes at a rate of 5% of the aggregate rents collected with respect to Oak Grove Affordable Housing Development for a term of either 1/16 – 16 years from the issuance of certificates of occupancy of the last unit in the project or a term of 18 years from the date when all parties have signed the agreement whichever comes first.

**** THE MOTION TO ADD ITEM TO THE AGENDA PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Vonacheck provided background of the project as part of the City's Plan of Conservation development (an extension to Colonial Village). She spoke of a support letter from Mayor Rilling as an enhancement to the City of Norwalk. She introduced Lisa Endo, project manager of the Norwalk Housing Authority to field comments and questions. She provided the background and overview of the co-managed project with Heritage Housing of Oak Grove affordable housing of 69 residential units and Community Center project for utilization of vacant property with tax credits subsidized rental properties. She introduced David McCarthy of Heritage Housing, who along with Sound Communities, NHA's wholly controlled subsidiary, is co-developing Oak Grove.

Mr. McCarthy added the Heritage Housing's objective in this project is to develop, finance and lease the sixty-nine (69) new units at which point, if desired Ms. Endo described the General Contractor selection criteria utilized by NHA and Heritage Housing. The selection of A. P. properties was recommended.

Mr. Camacho asked why the property was vacant for 70 years. Ms. Endo explained the land has no history of a property hazard, and it was formerly a Community Center. She outlined that the location has central proximity to transportation and to Norwalk Community College and is adjacent to Colonial Village.

Mr. Burnett asked for opportunities for employment. Ms. Endo outlined the strategic plan for Section 3 for low income workers and businesses. She outlined the goal of hiring local workers and section 8 tenants, with women and minority enterprise goals. She noted the projected start date is June 2023 and a construction timeline of 15-18 months has been established.

Ms. Revolus spoke in support of what sounds like a great plan for development. She urged the need to take ownership of this space and maintenance and to recognize the generational standing of the dynamic of the population of Norwalk to be sensitive to a divide.

Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner asked about the issue of construction quality controls and how the units are maintained well without major problems. Mr. McCarthy spoke about the RFPs evaluated and hiring A. P. Construction of Stamford, CT as the General Contractor. He outlined their reputable background of affordable housing developments and the inspections specialized in green building. He added the Maritime Aquarium expansion as one of their completed projects for the City.

Mr. Burnett asked if there were any hurdles in the project development. Ms. Endo replied that there are no known hurdles and she is very excited that the projected is moving along with anticipated start date July 2023 and a construction timeline of 15-18 months has been established.

- ** MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO APPROVE THE OAK GROVE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT AND TO FORWARD ON TO THE COMMON COUNCIL MEETING OF JUNE 13, 2023.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

- ** MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
M. Knox
Telesco Secretarial Services