

**CITY OF NORWALK
FINANCE/CLAIMS COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 20, 2025**

ATTENDANCE: Greg, Burnett, Chair; Heather Dunn, Jim Frayer, Johan Lopez, Douglas Sutton, Anne Wennerstrand

OTHERS: Lisa Biagiarelli, Tax Collector, Jared Schmitt, CFO; David Hopp, BOE IT; Paul Gorman, Tax Assessor; Joyce Liu, IT Director; Tom Ellis, Alan Lo, Land Use and Building Management; Matt Pentz, Norwalk Transit Authority

I. CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Burnett called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Council Member Burnett called the roll. A quorum was present.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Public Hearing Meeting: 02-13-25

**** COUNCIL MEMBER DUNN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 13, 2025 PUBLIC HEARING.**

The following correction was noted:

Page 1, **HEADER** and **FOOTER** – Please change “**BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION**” to “**FINANCE/CLAIMS COMMITTEE**”

Page 1, **OTHER:** please move “Anne Wennerstrand” to the ATTENDANCE listing.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 13, 2025 PUBLIC HEARING AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Special Meeting: 02-13-25

**** COUNCIL MEMBE LOPEZ MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 13, 2025 SPECIAL MEETING.**

The following corrections were noted:

City of Norwalk
Finance/Claims Committee
Special Meeting
March 20, 2025

Page 1, **OTHER**, please correct the spelling of “Lunda Asmami” to “Lunda Asmani”

Page 5 – 2nd paragraph, line 2, please change “Grant List” to “Grand List”.

Page 7 – paragraph 1, line 1: please change “the processing system” to “the operating system”

Page 8 – under **B. Fiscal Year 2025** – paragraph 1, line 1: please change “the capital budget” to “the operating budget”

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 13, 2025 SPECIAL MEETING AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public who wished to address the Committee.

V. REPORTS

• Claims Committee Report dated March 2025

Ms. Biagiarelli said that the Claims would be requiring a vote and the department was able to work on refunds. She reviewed the details of the refunds

**** COUNCIL MEMBER WENNERSTRAND MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 2025 CLAIMS COMMITTEE REPORT**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

• Narrative on Tax Collections dated March 2025

• Monthly Tax Collector's Reports dated February 2025

Ms. Biagiarelli said that there were four properties that were not redeemed, so the properties were turned over to the new owners on March 11, 2025. These properties will be handled by Stamford court. Ms. Biagiarelli said that the department does these Tax Sales every two years in an effort to prevent the amount of taxes increasing to a very high level.

Council Member Wennerstrand said that in Ms. Biagiarelli’s narrative report, she noted that she had worked at the City of Norwalk for 25 years. Council Member Wennerstrand congratulated Ms. Biagiarelli. Ms. Biagiarelli explained that she was at a conference and said that Norwalk has an excellent reputation. Many other towns would like to set up similar systems.

D. Oak Hills Park Authority Monthly Financial Statements for January 2025

Council Member Burnett said that this item would be tabled to the April meeting.

• **Tax Assessor Report and Resolution:**

Council Member Burnett read the following item into the record:

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the City of Norwalk, acting through its Tax Assessor, makes an assessment of property taxes on motor vehicles on October 1 of each year in accordance with Sections 12-40 et. seq. of the Connecticut General Statutes;

WHEREAS, for assessment years commencing on or after October 1, 2024, any municipality may, by vote of its legislative body elect to apply the modified schedule of depreciation under Section 12-63(b)(7)(B) of the Connecticut General Statutes;

WHEREAS, the Common Council is the legislative body of the City of Norwalk;

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Common Council of the City of Norwalk hereby elects to apply the modified schedule of depreciation under Section 12-63(b)(7)(B) of the Connecticut General Statutes as amended and in effect on the date of this resolution commencing from the October 1, 2024 Grand List.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER DUNN MOVED THE ITEM.**

Mr. Schmitt greeted the Committee and then gave a brief overview of the proposed change that the State Legislature offered an alternative to the taxing schedule. This resolution needs to be presented to the Common Council. Mr. Schmitt said that it was generally agreed that this was a good option.

Council Member Wennerstrand asked for clarification on how the finances would be arranged. Mr. Schmitt reviewed the methodology and noted that there would be an adjustment of the mill rate.

Council Member Lopez asked what were the assumptions that would have to be considered would be included in this. He also wished to know if there were any projections. Mr. Gorman gave a brief overview of the process and said that he would be willing to create some projections.

Council Member Burnett asked if the taxes on cars would go up or down. Mr. Schmitt said that the taxes would go down, but not as much as they had hoped. Discussion about the details followed.

Council Member Burnett asked if they would be able to change back to the current scale in future years. Mr. Gorman said that he did not anticipate the City wanting to change back and

noted that there was a 20 year depreciation scale. Council Member Burnett said that he wished to know what their options were.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Gorman then updated the Committee on the recent Board of Assessment Appeals cases. There were 155 appellants, 24 of which were commercial properties that were over \$2 million dollars in value, so the Board of Assessment Appeals will be passing on those. Those owners can go directly to Superior Court if they chose to do so if they wish to sue the City. There were 131 other appellants of which 113 were residential real estate; 8 of which were commercial properties under \$2 million in value; 4 motor vehicles and 6 personal property appeals.

He said that while he had expected more appeals, there were more appeals than the normal second year for tax increases. He updated the Committee on the elderly and disabled tax relief and updated the Committee on the details of the MSRP claims.

The Assistant Assessor started on March 3rd and is undergoing training now.

Council Member Burnett asked how the checks on cars registered in Norwalk was going. Mr. Gorman said that it was going well but the company was a bit behind schedule on the first sweep because of illness and bad weather.

• Update on the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Operating Budget process

Mr. Schmitt said that the process was moving forward and all the City side of the budget has been reviewed. There will be a meeting later regarding the BOE and said that there were some open items. Mr. Ellis said that the BOE was the largest Operating line in the Budget. The BET Public Hearing will be on the 26th, next Wednesday night. On Tuesday, April 8th, the Council will set the budget cap. Discussion followed.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to consider at this time.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Special Capital Appropriation Relating to School HVAC Grant Projects:

1. Approve the allocation of \$4,981,378.00 in Special Capital Appropriation funds for interim funding of the State's 60% share of the project costs in compliance with State HVAC grant requirements for Brien McMahon High School HVAC Improvement project.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SUTTON MOVED THE ITEM.**

Mr. Lo greeted the Committee and gave a brief history of the project. He noted that the reimbursement rate was set at 60%. The State approved all six projects last May. The bid is out for the construction managers. He gave the details. This is a request for the City to cover the State's share. Mr. Schmitt said that they would not need to borrow to fund this project. This request gives the City the authority to spend the State money and it is a pro forma formality.

Council Member Wennerstrand asked for clarification on the interim funding. Mr. Schmitt reviewed the details with the Committee. They may go out to bond in August for the entire balance. The Council has already approved this.

Council Member Burnett asked if the 5% that the State withholds includes interest. Mr. Lo said that there was no interest involved.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

2. Approve the allocation of \$1,996,352.00 in Special Capital Appropriation funds for interim funding of the State's 60% share of the project costs in compliance with State HVAC grant requirements for Brookside Elementary School HVAC Improvement project.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LOPEZ MOVED THE ITEM.**

There was no additional information or questions regarding this item.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. Approve the allocation of \$2,475,127.00 in Special Capital Appropriation funds for interim funding of the State's 60% share of the project costs in compliance with State HVAC grant requirements for Marvin Elementary School HVAC Improvement project.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER WENNERSTRAND MOVED THE ITEM.**

There was no additional information or questions regarding this item.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

4. Approve the allocation of \$1,815,319.00 in Special Capital Appropriation funds for interim funding of the State's 60% share of the project costs in compliance with State HVAC grant requirements for Silvermine Elementary School HVAC Improvement project.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SUTTON MOVED THE ITEM.**

There was no additional information or questions regarding this item.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

5. Approve the allocation of \$6,395,171.00 in Special Capital Appropriation funds for interim funding of the State's 60% share of the project costs in compliance with State HVAC grant requirements for Rowayton Elementary School HVAC Improvement project.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LOPEZ MOVED THE ITEM.**

There was no additional information or questions regarding this item.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

6. Approve the allocation of \$3,877,126.00 in Special Capital Appropriation funds for interim funding of the State's 60% share of the project costs in compliance with State HVAC grant requirements for Naramake Elementary School HVAC Improvement project.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER WENNERSTRAND MOVED THE ITEM.**

There was no additional information or questions regarding this item.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

These items will be presented to the full Council on March 25th.

B. Authorized the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to enter into a three (3)-year purchase agreement with Softchoice Corporation, Inc. for SQL and Windows Server Maintenance. The annual amount shall not exceed \$19,844.13, with a total amount not to exceed \$59,532.39. Account # 011370-574C, City IT Cybersecurity.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SUTTON MOVED THE ITEM.**

Ms. Liu greeted the Committee. Ms. Liu said that this was a renewal for the IT infrastructure. Microsoft has migrated to an annual subscription. The City is opting for the multi-year agreement to provide stability over the course of the contract.

Council Member Burnett asked if the BOE was using the same maintenance platform. Ms. Liu said that the City has a different operating environment and are basically separate entities. Mr. Hopp said that there were two different licensing processes

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

This item will be presented to the full Council on March 25th.

C. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to submit an application to the State of Connecticut for grant funds provided under the State of Connecticut's Local Capital Improvement Fund for Local Capital Improvement Program (\$859,498.31 – 2025 Grant)

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LOPEZ MOVED THE ITEM.**

Mr. Schmitt greeted the Committee and noted that this was the annual LoCIP grant. It is a formal grant. Cities can use the funds for different things and Norwalk uses this for their paving program. Council Member Burnett asked if it was consistent over the years. Mr. Schmitt said it was.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

This item will be presented to the full Council on March 25th.

D. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling to execute the Grant Assignment Certification, SFY 2026 assigning State of Connecticut 13b-38bb Elderly and Disabled Demand Responsive Municipal Grant Program apportioned funds to operation of transportation services coordinating entity, Norwalk Transit District. City match \$390,000 account 012010- 5A0620.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LOPEZ MOVED THE ITEM.**

Mr. Pentz from the Norwalk Transit Authority greeted the Committee. He said that this was a State matching program for the elderly and disabled population. The Transit Authority is just the pass through entity. If the Council approve this, and the Mayor signs off on it, he can move the program forward.

Council Member Lopez asked if the amount changes. Mr. Pentz said that every few years, they review the population. He has not seen the amount change over the last few years.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

This item will be presented to the full Council on March 25th.

E. Authorize the Purchasing Agent to issue a purchase order to CTL Corporation. for the supply of 300 Chromebooks, for an amount not to exceed \$136,800.00 account 09255010-5777-C0112.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER WENNERSTRAND MOVED THE ITEM.**

Mr. David Hopp, BOE IT Department, greeted the Committee. He explained that three years ago, the students received a Chromebook with WIFI capability. This would be for a refresh.

Council Member Burnett asked what they do with the old Chromebooks. Mr. Hopp said that often they will give the older ones to the lower grades and the ones that are no longer operatable are used for parts.

Council Member Lopez asked if this request would be repeated again in four years. Mr. Hopp said that due to wear and tear, they need to keep refreshing the Chromebooks.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

This item will be presented to the full Council on March 25th.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER SUTTON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services