

**CITY OF NORWALK
FINANCE/CLAIMS COMMITTEE
FEBRUARY 11, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: Bruce Kimmel, Chair; John Igneri; Tom Livingston;
Shannon O'Toole Giandurco; Nicholas Sacchinelli; Travis Simms;
Douglas Hempstead (7:17 p.m.)

STAFF: Robert Barron, Finance Director; Lisa Biagiarelli, Tax Collector;
Frederic Gildea, Comptroller

Mr. Kimmel called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. A quorum was present.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public present this evening.

**3. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING: JANUARY 14, 2016.**

** MR. KIMMEL MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS WRITTEN
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

**4. CLAIMS COMMITTEE: RECEIVE THE MONTHLY CLAIMS REPORT;
REVIEW AND APPROVE CLAIMS AS REQUIRED FOR CLAIMS REPORT
DATED: FEBRUARY 2, 2016**

Ms. Biagiarelli explained that there were no special request claims this evening.

**5. NARRATIVE ON TAX COLLECTIONS DATED FEBRUARY 11, 2016-
RECEIVE REPORT AND DISCUSS.**

**6. MONTHLY TAX COLLECTOR'S REPORTS- RECEIVE REPORTS AND
DISCUSS: JANUARY 31, 2016**

Ms. Biagiarelli reviewed her written report dated February 11, 2016. She said that the tax collection period did not end until the first week of January so they will not know where they stand until the end of the month; however, they are where they need to be.

Ms. Biagiarelli said that they have been working on the tax sale and preliminary letters were sent out in November. The criteria will be finalized later this month and the list published in March. In addition, they are working on business properties in cooperation with the Health Department.

There are on-going issues with the Department of Motor Vehicles; Governor Malloy proposed doing away with the current system of denying vehicle registrations or renewals to taxpayers who owe local property taxes or parking tickets. Ms. Biagiarelli said that the Connecticut Tax Collector's Association are going to come out against this proposal because they rely on the stop as a collection tool.

Mr. Hempstead joined the meeting at 7:17 p.m.

8. RECEIVE OAK HILLS AUTHORITY MONTHLY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR DECEMBER 31,2015.

The Committee members did not have any questions about the monthly financial statements.

7. DISCUSSION OF 2016-2017 OPERATING BUDGET AND CAP.

Mr. Kimmel explained that there was a \$600,000 gap between what the Finance Director recommended and the Board of Education requested, but that everyone involved has been in communication and came up with a program to bridge that gap. He said that the Board of Estimate and Taxation will make the final decision. The City is committed to fully funding the Board of Education's request, while minimizing the impact to the taxpayers.

Mr. Barron provided an overview of the 2016-2017 operating budget and showed the impact by district. He noted that the Common Council recommends a gap, but sometimes communicates recommendations to the Board of Estimate and Taxation, the appropriating body.

Mr. Kimmel said that they have to look at an efficient way to minimize the burden on the taxpayers. He said that the Common Council will vote on the resolution at their second meeting in February.

Mr. Barron called attention to the budget message in the budget book and said that it gives an economic overview. He noted that this is the lowest recommended budget in over 10 years. He said that he did not show an increase in government revenues because of the loss of PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) money. Mr. Kimmel said that the loss is not a done deal. There is a need for incentives for non-profits to come into the state.

Mr. Kimmel asked about the re-valuation and said that he would like to know the percentage of homes that were sent a post card or called and not one got into the home. Mr. Barron said that he will research the question and get back to Mr. Kimmel.

Mr. Kimmel asked Mr. Barron for the schedule of the Board of Estimate and Taxation hearings.

Mr. Hempstead asked about the three new positions being requested and asked if they went through the Personnel Committee. Mr. Barron explained that Mayor Rilling requested funding for the Assistant to the Mayor position. It was a position in the past.

Mr. Barron said that Mr. Gilden is requesting funding for an accountant position. He said that his responsibilities have increased and the sheer volume of work justifies this position.

The third position is for the assistant JRB (Juvenile Review Board) position to go from part time to full time. The position intercedes in some cases and can prevent these cases from getting into the court system and having serious consequences.

Mr. Kimmel asked about funding the budget director's position. Mr. Barron said that he will suspend recruitment and begin again in April.

Mr. Hempstead said that it was odd that they were funding positions that have not yet been vetted by the Personnel Committee. Mr. Barron said that no hiring will take place until they go through the vetting process. He said that even the approval of the budget does not permit hiring without proper vetting.

Mr. Kimmel suggested that Mr. Barron provide copies of the job descriptions to the Committee members and recommended that they attend the Board of Estimate meeting. Mr. Barron said nothing will happen without Common Council approval, but if they do not do it this way, they will need to do a special appropriation during the year.

Mr. Hempstead said that the issue is that three new positions are being proposed, but they are looking to cut \$300,00 from the budget. Mr. Hempstead also said that he thought that things would have been handled differently regarding the recent re-valuation and said that he would like to know the value of what they found. Mr. Barron said that the City is required to do a valuation of the properties in the City every five years. He said that only additions or subtractions are done during intervening years.

Mr. Hempstead asked for a sliding scale for the PILOT program. He said that the State just condemned three houses on East Avenue and assumes the City will lose the tax revenue. Mr. Barron will get a history of the PILOT payments.

Ms. O'Toole Giandurco asked for a break out of the positions. Mr. Gilden explained that he took over a lot of Board of Education responsibilities which increased his workload. Mr. Sacchinelli asked if the responsibilities could be absorbed by a temp. Mr. Gilden said that there is a good amount of training involved and this is a full time position.

Mr. Kimmel said that at past two meetings of the Audit Committee one of their primary concerns was the Finance Department is small for a city of this size. He said that the Audit Committee met a few weeks ago and they are pleased with the way the City is run

but expressed concern that they are down one person. He said that he would like the Finance/Claims Committee to discuss the audit at their March meeting.

Mr. Barron said that Mr. Gilden is one of the best controllers he has ever encountered in the State; he is so good, that if he ever left, he would have to hire three people to cover what he does. He is a valuable asset and trusts him when he says he needs another accountant

Mr. Livingston asked if the overall budget convers the current understanding with the Board of Education, specifically Special Education. Mr. Barron said that there is money in the insurance fund. He recommends that the Board of Education draw down on their surplus.

Mr. Igneri said that GGP hopes to have shovels in the ground in May and asked Mr. Barron if permit fees are considered in the budget. Mr. Barron said that Mr. Ireland is spot on track regarding permit fees. He noted that there will also be an increase in conveyance fees. He said that before the end of the budget cycle, he will ask Mr. Ireland for an update.

Mr. Hempstead asked if there will be a draw down on the fund balance. Mr. Barron said that in the five years he has been here, they only used it once because they have a very conservative budget practice.

Mr. Kimmel said that the public hearing on the operating budget will take place next week. The Common Council will vote on the cap on February 23rd. He said that he would like to discuss the audit and asked if the auditing firm could come out to answer questions. Mr. Barron said that the auditing firm said that the insurance fund is at a level where it is over funded and recommended drawing it down.

Mr. Barron talked about liability insurances that the City pays on behalf of the Board of Education and said that it may be time to give it back to them.

Mr. Kimmel thanked Mr. Barron and Mr. Gilden.

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

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

Finance Claims Committee
February 11, 2016
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