

BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION MEETING ACTIONS

**BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION AND
FINANCE CLAIMS COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING ON
THE RECOMMENDED (TENTATIVE) OPERATING BUDGET
FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005-2006**

MARCH 2, 2005

ATTENDANCE: Mayor Alex Knopp; Gregory Burnett; Timothy Buzzee; James Clark; Ron Coley; Tanya Court; Board of Estimate & Taxation

Bruce Kimmel, Chairman, Finance Claim Committee

STAFF: Tom Hamilton, Finance Director

Mayor Knopp opened the public hearing at 7:30 p.m. and welcomed the members of the public. He announced that the Board of Estimate & Taxation voted on Monday to adopt a tentative budget. He explained the next steps in the budget process.

Mayor Knopp recognized members of the Board of Education and the Common Council. He said that the department heads were invited to attend the public hearing to answer any questions by the public.

The members of the Board of Estimate & Taxation and the Finance Claims Committee introduced themselves.

Mr. Hamilton summarized the budget. He noted that there are some extraordinary, one-time expenses relative to the City's budget such as the new police station and the re-opening of the South Norwalk Library.

Mr. Hamilton said that the impact on individual property owners will vary due to revaluation. He said that the budget that was requested would have resulted in a 9% tax increase.

Mayor Knopp said that a large number of department heads were here and asked if any members of the public had questions for them, as opposed to expressing an opinion.

Mayor Knopp asked the department heads to stand and asked Mr. Greene and Mr. Alvord to remain; the others were excused.

A member of the public who did not identify herself asked Mr. Alvord if it would be to the taxpayers advantage to repair the vehicles that were requested by the DPW. Mr. Alvord said that the vehicles were 25 years old.

Mr. Alvord said that the Chairman of the DPW Committee has planned to be here to speak, but was unable to do so and submitted a letter.

Ms. Diane Lauricella asked Mr. Alvord if the department will be able to operate and function properly with the drastic cuts in staff. Mr. Alvord said that he has not heard about cuts. He said that he received the recommended budget yesterday that is approximately \$60,000 below his requests. At the recommended budget amount they will have no changes to the services that are currently being provided.

A member of the public who did not identify himself asked Mr. Alvord about the recommendation to join the Department of Public Works and the Department of Recreation and Parks. Mr. Alvord explained that they do not have enough highway people, and the job descriptions for the two departments are essentially the same. The DPW's heaviest load is in the winter, while the Parks and Rec's biggest load is in the spring and summer. If the two entities were combined, they could trade their resources and do a better job with snow removal and park maintenance.

Ms. Lauricella asked Mr. Greene about the request by the Conservation Commission for an additional person. She said that it appears that the request was removed. Ms. Lauricella said that Norwalk is drastically under staffed. She asked why the position was cut and also asked if funds were available for consultants for special projects.

Mr. Greene said that the position will not be available until next year and that there are very limited funds for consultants.

Ms. Mohan Tracey, Chair of the Norwalk Public Library requested \$15,000 to provide increases to be added to the part time wage account at the Library.

Mr. Stanley Seigel, Norwalk Library Board of Directors requested funding for a full time Young Adult Librarian Activities Coordinator.

Mr. Charles McMullen, Norwalk Library requested \$15,000 to provide increases to part time employees of the Library.

Mr. Lee Levy, Norwalk Library, requested funding for janitorial and maintenance services at the Library.

Ms. Brenda Anderson requested funding for Youth Services.

Dr. Corda, Superintendent of Schools requested an increase to the Board of Education's budget of 5% or \$550,000.

Mr. Bruce Mellion, Norwalk Federation of Teachers spoke in support of the Board of Education's budget request.

Ms. Donna Revell, Norwalk Federation of Education Personnel spoke in favor of the Board of Education's budget request.

Ms. Patricia McCormack, Vice President of Norwalk Federation of Education Personnel spoke in favor of the Board of Education's budget request.

Ms. Cindy Woodcock, Secretary of the Norwalk Federation of Education Personnel spoke in support of the Board of Education's budget request.

Ms. Karen Doyle Lyons, Registrar of Voters requested \$3,000 for a new voting machine. She submitted a letter to the members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation and the Finance Claims Committee from the Secretary of State regarding purchasing the voting machine.

Ms. Leah Wink and Ms. Rebecca Schwartz spoke in favor of funding the Youth Services program.

Mr. David Davidson spoke against the Board of Education's budget request. He urged the Board to reduce the budget by \$900,000. Mr. Davidson also requested funding for the position of the Delinquent Tax Collector.

Ms. Denise Nelson spoke in support of the Norwalk Youth Services program.

Mr. Dave Malange requested that the City fully fund the Norwalk Youth Services program.

Mayor Knopp said that concludes everyone who signed up to speak. He asked if anyone else wished to speak.

Mr. Danny Crumbine suggested that any City employee earning a salary of \$60,000 or above be required to write a description of their job and duties and include if they have a City vehicle. He suggested that this information should be posted on the City's website. He also suggested that every City contract for \$5,000 or more be placed on the website and that all out of state travel be curtailed, except to New York.

Ms. Mavis requested that there be teaching teachers.

Ms. Diane Lauricella spoke in support of raising Water Pollution Control fees. She also said that until they have personnel evaluations, it is hard to assure citizens that they are getting a bang for their buck. She said that she intends to have a conversation with Mayor Knopp and the members of the Common Council about this.

Ms. Lauricella said that this administration inherited a very poor personnel evaluation system. She said that she would like to see money put into deserving departments.

Mayor Knopp thanked everyone for coming and closed the public hearing at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

