

**CITY OF NORWALK
FINANCE/CLAIMS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
AUGUST 9, 2018**

ATTENDANCE: Greg Burnett, Chair; Ernest Dumas, John Igneri, John Kydes, Nick Sacchinelli, Travis Simms (7:05 p.m.)

ABSENT: Douglas Hempstead

OTHERS: Fred Gilden, Comptroller; Reginald Roberts, NHS Principal; Diane Lauricella, Ray Burney, Personnel Director; Bob Barron, Finance Director; Thomas Hamilton, Board of Education Finance Director; Mayor Harry Rilling

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Burnett called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Mr. Burnett called the roll. A quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FOR REGULAR FINANCE COMMITTEE AGENDA

Mr. Reginald Roberts, Norwalk High School Principal, came forward to address the Committee.

Mr. Simms joined the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Mr. Roberts said that there were a number of courtyards spaces that are no longer accessible, the auditorium is leaking and the sound system is inferior, the library is sub-standard. It is not a resource center. The students crowd into the cafeteria for meals. The ROTC room is not adequate.

Mr. Roberts then distributed copies of photos to the members of the Committee. The reason that Mr. Roberts is requesting this is to make the building look better and make the students feel better about themselves.

Ms. Diane Lauricella came forward and said that it was difficult to understand the proposed Personnel schematic that was posted on the City website because it was blurry and illegible. Many people are away on vacation and could not attend.

She said that the Committee would be discussing the cost implications but said that Jefferson also needs improvements. NHS deserves a top shelf learning space, but she asked where the funds would come from. The co-gen plant was installed by the Knopp administrations but the Moccia administration failed to have the proper repairs made on the system so it has been off line for years. The solar panels are not functioning properly which would save significant money, which could be used towards the repairs that Mr. Roberts was asking for. She added that the artificial turf field heats up too much to use before the fall and there are other issues with it. Perhaps it is time to go back to a natural grass field.

Ms. Lauricella then expressed concerns about the Department of Public Works reorganization and said that dumbing down chief positions does not provide a top shelf department. She said that there needs to be some changes in the educational requirements. She reiterated that by dumbing down the staff and the supervision, along with the operating budget, is not a positive thing. The City needs more rigorous requirements for the positions. There were three positions for Recreation and Parks where in the past, it was all one position.

Ms. Lauricella questioned the proposed requirements of five years and suggested it be changed to a minimum of 10 years. The staff needs to be worthy of the salaries. This means that the citizens do not receive the bang for the buck and it is time for the citizens to not just get the low hanging fruit.

**APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING FINANCE
COMMITTEE MEETINGS:**

June 14, 2018

**** MR. KYDES MOVED THE MINUTES OF JUNE 14, 2018.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JUNE 14, 2018 PASSED WITH FIVE (5) IN FAVOR (BURNETT, DUMAS, IGNERI, KYDES, AND SACCHINELLI) AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION (SIMMS).**

July 12, 2018

**** MR. IGNERI MOVED THE MINUTES OF JULY 12, 2018.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF JULY 12, 2018 PASSED WITH THREE (3) IN FAVOR (BURNETT, DUMAS, AND IGNERI) AND THREE (3) ABSTENTION (KYDES, SACCHINELLI AND SIMMS).**

**Claims Committee: receive the monthly Claims report; review and approve claims as required for Claims Report dated:
August 9, 2018**

Narrative on Tax Collections dated August 9, 2018- Receive Report and discuss.

**Monthly Tax Collector's Reports - Receive Reports and discuss:
July 31, 2018**

Mr. Gilden came forward and said that he had received a copy of the Claims Committee report, but not the narrative or the Tax Collections. Mr. Burnett asked Mr. Gilden to be sure that everyone receives copies of the reports when they are submitted.

Discussion and vote on cost implications of the proposed reorganization

Mr. Burney and Mr. Barron came forward. Mr. Burney said that the Ad Hoc Committee that had been formed decided to move almost all the items to the Committees. He said that with the exception of one question, all the information was included in the booklet.

Mr. Burnett said that he would like some clarification on the three new positions. Mr. Burney said that the 3 new positions at the bottom of page 3 were positions that were not currently budgeted. The other ones currently exist and are also listed on that page, as well.

Mr. Igneri asked for clarification on the Department of Public Works Director position. Mr. Burney said that Mr. Chimento is leaving and the Personnel Committee will be reviewing the pay range. The current range is due to expire and the Council will have to approve the new salary range, but it will be determined by who applies for the position and their experience.

Mr. Burnett said that the job title was listed as the "Chief of Operations and Public Works" in one place and "Chief of Public Works and Operations" in another. Mr. Burney said that the correct title was "Chief of Operations and Public Works".

Mr. Burnett asked Mr. Barron had anything to add. Mr. Barron said that he did not have anything to add to the financials.

Mr. Burnett said that the Personnel Committee would be meeting next week to review all the job changes and then the proposal will go to the Ordinance Committee. These numbers are the ones that are available at this time.

**** MR. IGNERI MOVED TO APPROVE THE COST IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED REORGANIZATION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH THREE (3) IN FAVOR (IGNERI, KYDES AND SACCHINELLI) AND TWO (2) ABSTENTIONS (SIMMS, DUMAS).**

RESOLUTION: Approve special capital appropriations totaling \$5.0 million to increase the available funds for the Facilities Master Plan, project 09185010-5777-C0610.

Mr. Barron said that the BET had a three questions that they needed to have answered. They will have a special meeting on the 20th to make a final decision. Mr. Barron said that Mr. Hamilton, the Chief Financial Officer for the Norwalk Public Schools, had explained that the charge for the Committee was to decide if the financials were in order and whether or not this should be moved to the next Council meeting. Everyone is busy doing their review and the Committee is being asked to approve that this go to the full Council. If the BET does not approve the plan, it will not go before the Council.

Mr. Barron said there were some questions about the reimbursement rates on some of the items and a duplicated sound system request on both lists. The BET will have the information on the 20th.

Mr. Thomas Hamilton, the Chief Financial Officer for the Norwalk Public Schools, came forward and said that both Principal Roberts and Mr. Lo were present to answer questions.

The District began to evaluate the facilities two years ago because there had been very little investment in the capital projects for the last 15 years.

There is a shortage of seats due to about 108% enrollment, a backlog of maintenance and the facilities were inadequate and out dated. The original proposal of \$250 million dollars was broken out into a five year plan with \$130 million dollar project and some reimbursement.

This will mean that the Ponus campus will be constructed and renovations for Jefferson. There are also plans for major renovations at Norwalk High School. The original allocation of \$6.5 million was determined not to be sufficient. There are 50 year old fixtures in the building and NHS has been compared to a prison. The goal is to turn the school into a college like campus. The original \$6.5 million has already been allocated. The development of high school pathways is the future direction of education. The culinary pathway is one of the various pathways that will be offered, along with a media pathway.

Mr. Hamilton spoke about the wooden paneling in the hallways and informed the Committee that the wooden panels have PCBs in them. There are bathrooms that have been closed off and need to be replaced. The auditorium also needs a major overhaul.

The cafeterias need to be redesigned to be more welcoming. Learning commons and maker spaces are needed.

There are a number of safety issues also. The stairwells are dark and the funding will include more lighting in the stairwells.

The building needs to be renovated to make the spaces useful for the various programs that the school offers.

Mr. Hamilton said that Senator Duff has been able to get some legislation that would provide up to \$600 thousand dollars for the environmental remediation of the doors and paneling. This means that the City would be responsible for approximately 20% of that project.

It will be important not to repeat the mistakes of the past. After the renovations in 2006, many people felt that the project was not complete and there was still work that needs to be done. The goal is to make the building attractive and something that Norwalk can be proud of.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked if the cafeteria improvements would include the chillers. Mr. Lo said that that contract had been executed and was almost completed.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked about the courtyard renovations and why it would not qualify. Mr. Hamilton said that it was an issue that they would make an argument for because they are not ADA accessible. What the State decides is another thing, but the argument will be made.

Mr. Lo said that when the City made the \$40 million improvements in 2006, it was on the mechanics, which are things that people can not see, such as chillers on the roof or updated wiring. Mr. Lo said that many of the things that they want to do now would only be reimbursed

Mr. Hamilton said that the co-gen plant was not operational for a long period of time, but was brought back on line almost a year ago and has been working since then.

Mr. Dumas spoke about the improvements he felt that the courtyards need.

Mr. Burnett pointed out that this list was still less than the cost of BMHS renovation. Mr. Hamilton said that BMHS was a renovate as new project along with an addition. However this was not done at NHS. Unless NHS was demolished and completely rebuilt, it would not be renovated as new. Mr. Lo said that NHS was a waffle concrete structure while BMHS has a steel infrastructure. The aesthetics of the hallway at NHS does not allow them to hide the mechanics with a dropped ceiling.

Mr. Sacchinelli thanked Mr. Roberts for bringing the photos because he graduated from there 16 years ago.

Mr. Burnett said that he had a question about the \$5 million reduction of funding to Jefferson. Mr. Barron said that he believes this was because they were appropriating an amount for a project that has been delayed. In order to keep the total appropriation as it was presented to the public and the rating agencies. Jefferson will be done, but there are intricate pieces such as swing spaces and other details that are still being determined. When the school project is ready to start, it will be part of the five year capital plan. The appropriation for Jefferson hasn't been made yet because they don't know what the costs will be. Discussion followed.

Mr. Kydes asked if there were any plans to renovate NHS that would provide more reimbursements. Mr. Lo said that the life time of the components were between 20 to 25 years. He explained why it could not be considered a renovation as new. Mr. Kydes asked if there was a broader scope of work that would help. Mr. Hamilton said that there were too many systems that were replaced in 2006 that would not qualify for the renovate as new because they had too many years of useful life left.

Mr. Lo pointed out that once the Ponus project was completed, a portion of the students would be going there. He reminded everyone that the longer the City delays on Jefferson, the more expensive the project will become. But the project is not ready for construction at this time. Mr. Hamilton suggested that this be considered as a 10 year plan. Discussion followed.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked if there were any fund raising efforts. Mr. Hamilton said that there was fund raising projects for the Rowayton cafeteria and there were other projects that were done in a similar manner.

Mr. Igneri pointed out that they were several years into the capital budget. Mr. Hamilton said that he believed they had just started the third year.

Mr. Burnett then read the resolution into the record as follows:

RESOLUTION: Approve special capital appropriations totaling \$5.0 million to increase the available funds for the Facilities Master Plan, project 09185010-5777-C0610.

**** MR. KYDES MOVED THE ITEM.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

RESOLUTION: Approve the reduction of \$5.0 million of appropriations for the Jefferson School, project 09195010-5777-C0618, from \$23.902 million to \$18.902 million.

Mr. Burnett read resolution into the record.

**** MR. IGNERI MOVED THE ITEM.**

Mr. Sacchinelli asked what the \$18.902 remaining and what it would be used for. Mr. Lo said that it was not defined at this time. Mr. Hamilton said that the intention was to renovate as new at Jefferson, but the \$18 million is more than enough to cover the early stages of the project, such as cost estimates. Mr. Barron reminded everyone that the \$18.902 was just permission to spend up to that amount.

Mr. Burnett said that it was refreshing to know that Jefferson was not forgotten, but was still moving forward.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. SACCHINELLI MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services