

BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION MEETING ACTIONS

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION
MARCH 31, 2008**

ATTENDANCE: Fred Wilms, Chairman; Mayor Richard Moccia; Leo Mellow; Stuart Wells; James Feigenbaum; Michael Lyons; James Clark.

STAFF: Thomas Hamilton, Finance Director; Ossie Lewis, Manager of Budgets & Systems; Mary Roman, City Clerk.

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by the Chairman.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MARCH 3, 2008 REGULAR MEETING

**** MR. LYONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS DISTRIBUTED.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

SPECIAL APPROPRIATIONS AGENDA

There were no special appropriations.

TRANSFER AGENDA

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

\$4,004 From 01-0600-5140 (Part-time wages) to 01-0600-5120 (Overtime wages)
5,001 From 01-0600-5255 (IT services) to 01-0600-5120 (Overtime wages)
\$9,005

Mr. Hamilton noted that this transfer is to cover an anticipated deficit in overtime wages due to special projects, including .

Mr. Clark asked if the Board of Education was also upgrading to Active directly. Ms. DelVecchio, IT Director, said this is being done as two projects. The Board of Education did this upgrade over the summer. They used the same vendor that the City will use as a consulting vendor.

**** MR. WILMS MOVED TO APPROVE THE TRANSFER AS LISTED ABOVE.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OTHER BUSINESS

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE TENTATIVE OPERATING BUDGET FOR FY2008-09 TO BE FORWARDED TO THE COMMON COUNCIL

Mr. Hamilton said that tonight culminates the approval of the tentative operating budget, which is then forwarded to the Common Council, which must determine if it is within the cap they set earlier. This budget is below the cap set by the Common Council. The Council must receive it. They can amend the cap lower and send it back to the Board of Estimate and Taxation. The recommended budget is \$917 under the cap set by the Council. The Board had identified \$427,000 in additional reductions and/or revenue enhancements. \$482,697 is what Finance has identified, including the refinancing of some City bonds, which saved 2.05% or \$326,976. The deal was a savings of \$15,780 for 2008-09 or \$181,168. They made a number of other minor changes in departments, including giving up a half-year position in Personnel, for a reduction in staff, small amounts in Human Relations, Purchasing, Corporation Counsel's office, \$15,000 from the Health Department in condemnation and relocation accounts, the Police Department, Recreation & Parks, the Library, the Historical Commission, Debt Service, members' benefits, etc., for a total of \$361,000 from expenses and an increase on the revenue side of \$101,000 from parking violations, parking lot rental, housing code reimbursements, etc. The overall budget will be \$273,672,012, an increase of 4.32%. The 4th district mill rate increase is 3.77%.

Mayor Moccia said all Board members have been talking about the position of the Zoning Enforcement Officer. He will support adding this position and the funding for this position.

**** MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED TO ADD \$63,385 FOR THE POSITION OF ZONING ENFORCEMENT OFFICER, INCLUDING BENEFITS.**

The Chairman said the addition of this position would still be within the cap. Mr. Hamilton said this increases the budget by 4.34%. The 4th district rate would be 3.80% and the total budget would be \$273,735,397.

Mr. Wells asked about the GIS Systems Analyst position. Mr. Hamilton said that the total cost for this position would be \$81,241.

Mr. Clark said this position (Zoning Enforcement Officers) has also been discussed in the various neighborhoods and he fully supports it. The position of the GIS Systems Analyst brings efficiencies to many departments.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** MR. CLARK MOVED TO ADD THE POSITION OF A GIS SYSTEMS ANALYST AT A COST OF \$81,241.**

Mayor Moccia said that they can look into revenues as they move into the year. Parks & Recreation gave up two positions and a truck. Everyone has contributed. At this time, he would like to hold the line and revisit this during the year. They also have to see if they are off on income estimates, and they will especially have to look at Parks & Recreation, which has suffered over the years.

Mr. Wells suggested tabling this decision until the next meeting, when they have more information. The Chairman said they are cutting muscle and bone, not fat. This can be revisited at any time. Mr. Lyons said that the Zoning Enforcement Officer position is most important. The next priority is the GIS Systems Analyst. He agrees with Mayor Moccia that they should hold off a bit.

Mr. Clark said he wished there was the same scrutiny on the Board of Education side as there is on the City side. He suggested they reduce the line item to the Board of Education in the amount of the GIS Systems Analyst.

Mayor Moccia said they have until July to do further analysis without playing off the Board of Education against the City. He said he also has concerns.

**** MR. CLARK MOVED TO TABLE THE ADDITION OF THE POSITION OF GIS SYSTEMS ANALYST TO THE NEXT MEETING.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mayor Moccia noted that Hartford receives \$241,500,000 in State aid; Bridgeport receives \$194,900,000; Waterbury receives \$137,500,000 and Norwalk only receives \$14,500,000. There is something wrong! West Hartford receives \$5,500,000 more than Norwalk and they are a suburb. Something must be done to equalize aid for an urban center.

**** MR. WILMS MOVED TO ADOPT THE TENTATIVE BUDGET WITH THE ADDITION OF THE POSITION OF THE ZONING ENFORCEMENT OFFICER.**

Mr. Clark inquired about proposed increases. Mr. Hamilton said that the Board of Education budget is increasing significantly greater on a percentage basis than the City budget. The \$962,000 additional appropriation from last year needs to be factored in. Our position is that it is reasonable to say that that account should be adjusted. The starting budget for the Board of Education has an increase of 4%. Their original budget was a 4.7% increase. In addition, there are direct education-related expenses in the City budget, particularly debt service, pension costs, etc. The real increase is 5.7%, including these, and 2.2% for the City.

Mayor Moccia said there are other hidden costs in the City side, such as plowing schools, etc. The legislature should allow the Board of Education to be dealt with on a line by line basis. He spoke of the fine work done by the Finance Department thanked the department heads for cooperating to lower their budgets. He also noted the fine work done by the Board of Estimate.

Mr. Feigenbaum said that the past Board of Education was disgraceful in their responsibility to the taxpayers. They should be embarrassed by what is going on.

Mr. Lyons said he hoped that the Board of Education was now going to seriously address the issue of getting a Finance Director to review their budget on a line by line basis. There is a shift in the City's tax resources away from the City to the schools over the past decades. In 1991-92, the schools took 43% as compared to 54% this year. This can only go on for so long. This balance will have to be redressed. The Board of Education is not willing to take this seriously.

Mr. Wells said that the Board of Education needs a Finance Director.

The Chairman said this budget falls within the Council cap. The average tax increase is consistent with what they have done in the past three years. They will come in below the rate of inflation. They looked hard at the revenues. Investment income dropped significantly. They reduced building permit fees, etc. Hopefully the economy will not do worse, but it will have to be monitored carefully. He liked that this budget provides for more police and fire officers and adds the Zoning Enforcement officer. The Chairman commended the Mayor for voluntarily defunding the position of Assistant Mayor. He also appreciated the hiring freeze. The Board of Education budget is within the 4% to 5% range and consistent with the resolution this Board passed a few years ago. He commended them for coming in with a more reasonable request this year. There were improvements in their budget report and they have committees that are starting to meet. However, they have a long way to go to exercise their fiduciary responsibility. He said he blames the Board of Education for problems, not the Superintendent. The Superintendent said he would consider consolidating the Board of Education Purchasing Department with that of the City, which he really appreciated. This would generate cost savings which would enhance the Board of Education. He looks at City finances in 5 ways:

1. City
2. Board of Education
3. Tax rate growth
4. Aid from Hartford
5. Redevelopment project

The Chairman said he echoed what Mayor Moccia said and he said he enjoyed working with everyone on the Board as well as Mr. Hamilton and the Finance Department.

Mayor Moccia noted that Mrs. Roman had won five more medals and set a record.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE FY-2008-09 PROPOSED PARKING AUTHORITY BUDGET/RECEIVE THE FY 2008-09 WPCA BUDGET

** MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED TO TABLE TO THE NEXT MEETING.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

** MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Telesco
Telesco Secretarial Services

