

**BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION MEETING ACTIONS**

**SPECIAL MEETING  
JULY 9, 2007**

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

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by the Chairman.

\$962,000 FROM INCREASED ESTIMATED REVENUES TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO SUPPLEMENT THE FY 2007-08 OPERATING BUDGET

**\*\* MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED: RESOLVED, THAT A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$962,000 BE AND THE SAME IS HEREBY TRANSFERRED FROM INCREASED ESTIMATED REVENUES TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO SUPPLEMENT THE FY 2007-08 OPERATING BUDGET. (ACCOUNT NO. 01-5050-5050)**

Mr. Hamilton said that the City has received word from the state that they will be receiving more money from the Education cost sharing grant. Finance had said during the budget hearings that additional funds might be forthcoming. The Board of Estimate chose to keep this funding flat in the budget because there was uncertainty as to where this would end up. This amount is better than originally anticipated by Finance. Finance recommends that this amount be appropriated to the Board of Education. This returns the locally funded portion of the Board of Education budget back to a 4-1/2% increase over the 2006-07 budget. This is consistent with his original recommendation. Mr. Hamilton also said because this is coming from ECS funding, it is reasonable to predict that this will be an ongoing funding source, not on a one-time funding source. They expect an increase of approximately \$425,000 in 2008-09.

Mayor Moccia said this Board of Estimate was very wise not to try to predict what the state would do. He appreciates the fact that Board of Education members are present tonight. They want to insure that some of the cuts in programs and personnel will not be as drastic as originally thought. Teachers and programs being the first priority for additional funds is what they are looking for. The goal of Norwalk's legislators was that additional money go to education. Mayor Moccia asked that they continue to monitor their expenses in other areas and try to hold those costs down.

**\*\* MR. LYONS MOVED TO AMEND THE MOTION TO APPROPRIATE \$483,500 TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND \$478,500 TO BE USED FOR TAX REDUCTION.**

Mr. Lyons said he seconded what Mayor Moccia had said about Norwalk's legislative delegation finally getting some respect from Hartford, but they have a way to go. The original budgets from the governor and legislators would have increased Norwalk's taxes. Mr. Cafero and the legislators deserve a pat on the back. The reason for his motion is to recognize that the ECS also includes cost sharing, as well as education. This funding does not have to be spent on education. One of the concepts of this was to be a property tax relief program. Mr. Lyons said that Norwalk, according to his research, was spending \$12,453 per student, which is more than Darien and Wilton spent. Compared with the median family income, Norwalk is spending 21% while other communities in Fairfield County are spending 8% to 9%. Norwalk taxpayers make a much more substantial contribution in terms of the percentage of income spent on education. Using the cs would reduce the impact on Norwalk's taxpayers. The teaching positions in Dr. Corda's top priority and \$30,000 for guidance secretaries came to \$483,500. Mr. Lyons said he appreciates the Mayor's position in terms of recommending the entire appropriation.

Mr. Mellow said the money would be better devoted to education.

Mr. Wells said he was concerned that, if the money was not all given to the schools, it will be harder for the legislators to obtain money again.

Mr. Clark said he appreciates the thoughtfulness with which the Board of Estimate and the Finance Department looked at this. It is a tough situation in that they don't know how the Board of Education will use the money. He said he hopes that they can continue the dialogue they have with the Superintendent and the Board of Education. He would like to align with the Mayor and give the Board of Education the money.

Mr. Feigenbaum said he agreed with Mr. Clark. The shroud of secrecy throughout the budget process has bothered him the most. He said he hopes that the mistrust will lead to more openness next year. Many questions were left unanswered or given smarmy answers. He will support the Mayor's motion but recommends that there is more openness in budget periods going forward.

The Chairman said he would vote against the amendment because he publicly commented that he would pass on the entire appropriation to the Board of Education at the PTO Council meeting, and this year, the budget increase is 3.0% and it was 3.1% last year. He does believe Mr. Lyons raised an important principle that if, in the future, they receive additional windfalls under ACS, they don't all have to go to the Board of Education.

Mayor Moccia said he admires Mr. Lyons' principles. However, he will vote against the amendment. The Board of Education has a fiduciary responsibility to administer their

budget. They need to make sure that programs and teachers are restored, not just this year, but in upcoming years.

**\*\* MR. LYONS' AMENDMENT FAILED WITH 1 VOTE IN FAVOR (MR. LYONS) AND 5 VOTES IN OPPOSITION.**

Mr. Lyons said he was very pleased with the overall budget and that in both years, they have come in under the inflation rate.

The Chairman praised Governor Rell and Representative Cafero for their leadership in obtaining more money for Norwalk, which has been getting shafted. He commended Senator Duff, who voted against his party membership and his committee. The Chairman suggested that the remaining delegation from Norwalk do the same. They should vote as a block on a bipartisan basis. He said he does not like acrimonious confrontations on the budget. He suggested that the Board of Education's Finance Committee meet regularly. His understanding of the Board of Education's budget process this year was that the superintendent made a full presentation to the board in January and it was adopted with minimal change, which he considered to be irregular. It should be vigorously debated and changes made. He supports ongoing meetings with the Council, the Board of Education and the Board of Estimate with ongoing dialogue. He was deeply disappointed by the threats to impact the students first from the superintendent which were not accurate. He strongly disagrees with a budget reconciliation approach that does not touch administration. His other recommendation is that the Board of Education receives a 4%-5% each year and that the Board of Education is mindful of that fact.

Mr. Feigenbaum said that the accountability issue has to be addressed more openly by the Board of Education and the superintendent's office. The sooner it starts, the better off everyone will be.

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED WITH FIVE VOTES IN FAVOR, ONE VOTE IN OPPOSITION (MR. LYONS).**

**\*\* MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Telesco  
Telesco Secretarial Services