

**CITY OF NORWALK
FINANCE/CLAIMS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING VIA TELECONFERENCE
DECEMBER 10, 2020**

ATTENDANCE: Gregory Burnett, Chairman; David Heuvelman, John Kydes, Diane Revolus, Nicholas Sacchinelli, Thomas Keegan, George Tsiranides

STAFF: Lisa Biagiarelli, Tax Collector; Henry Dachowitz, Chief Financial Officer, Jessica Casey, Chief of Economic and Community Development, Bill Ireland, Chief Building Official

OTHERS: Mike DePalma, Oak Hills Park Authority; Mr. Craig Smith, Risk Management Counselor

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Mr. Burnett called the roll.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 12, 2020

On Page 4, third paragraph from the bottom. Mr. Dachowitz said the city insert “used the funding” to get the election done smoothly.

On Page 5, item 10 first sentence fiscal year 2021-2020 should be “2021-2022”.

**** MR. REVOLUS MADE A MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED.**

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION (MR. TSIRANIDES).**

5. CLAIMS COMMITTEE

Ms. Biagiarelli said there were no claims in excess of \$10,000 this month. The tax collectors office was taken out a bit by COVID in November. Ms. Biagiarelli said 4 of 7 members got COVID and had to shut the office for a couple of day and thus did not have a spread sheet yet for November. She said current collections for November are 53.3% which is about where we need to be. She added taxpayers had until October 1st to pay instead of August 1 and her office could not send delinquent notices until the end of October. Ms. Biagiarelli said there will be a big influx of cash in December because second installment bills are going out soon with a deadline of January 1 and payable by February 1.

The walk up payment station is opened now from 9-1 and no appointment is needed. She said the office relocated inside and are in the lobby at the first window.

She said they are a planning on having a tax sale in July of 2021 after being cancelled last year. Ms. Biagiarelli said they are doing all the regular tax enforcement. She said they are working hard to keep the collection rate high.

Mr. Dachowitz said the large collection amounts started on June 21st this year and we are up by \$11.2 million over those 20 weeks. He said whatever impact COVID had ware collecting our dollars. He said tax collection is holding up despite COVID and he is quite pleased from a financial point of view and a lot of credit goes to Ms. Biagiarelli's department. Mr. Dachowitz said we are getting the second-half bills into the mail and is hoping they can continue these trends. He said real estate is the most valuable asset in people's lives. He said he feels real estate values are holding up and people will find a way to pay their tax bills.

Mr. Heuvelman asked Ms. Biagiarelli if everyone in her department is doing OK. She said a couple of people are still very sick and they have been driving up to Brookfield with work for one of the workers who is ill. Ms. Biagiarelli said they are all anxious to get back in the office. Mr. Heuvelman said we are thinking of them and said it's pretty phenomenal and is much appreciated.

**6-7. CLAIMS COMMITTEE, NARRATIVE ON TAX COLLECTIONS DATED
DECEMBER 10, 2020, MONTHLY TAX COLLECTOR'S REPORTS DATED
NOVEMBER 2020**

There was nothing to approve for items 6-7.

**8. RECEIVE OAK HILLS AUTHORITY MONTHLY FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS FOR OCTOBER 2020**

Mr. DePalma of Oak Hills made the presentation on revenue. He said Oak Hills is in a good position with a bank balance of about \$400,000. Mr. DePalma said they will be

able to get through the winter in good standing for the next revenue season. He said they were able to payback the city \$44,000 on the debt for the restaurant which is the most they have been able to pay back. Mr. DePalma added the line of credit has a zero balance and in a good position heading into 2021.

Mr. Kydes said Oak Hills benefited from great summer weather and a lack of rain and asked about the season pass for next year. Mr. DePalma said it will be a little different. He said the Authority has to figure out the rates and some of the benefits that come with it.

Mr. Burnett asked about the restaurant regarding the vendor leaving. Mr. DePalma said the lease expired and the Authority is looking to make it more of a revenue generator. He said despite a great season we are operating on tight margins.

**9. AUTHORIZE THE COMMON COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES AND
ADOPTS THE REVISED BUILDING PERMIT FEE SCHEDULE APPROVED
BY THE BUILDING BOARD OF APPEALS AT ITS MARCH 9, 2020 PUBLIC
MEETING**

Mr. Huevelman moved the item.

Ms. Casey said this was discussed in March, but at that time they held back on increasing building fees because of COVID. She said now is the time to bring this forward and enact an increase for January or February 1. She said neighboring communities have slightly higher fees and added Mr. Ireland worked with the Board of Appeals to come up these fees.

Mr. Ireland said this will be the first increase since 2014. He said it will put Norwalk a slightly ahead of communities around us but a bit behind Stamford. He said all fees will increase including building permits, certificate of occupancy and demolition.

Mr. Kydes said we talk about this every year and he realizes Mr. Ireland put a lot of effort into this.

**** THE ITEM WAS APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Burnett said since there is no scheduled Common Council Meeting this month the next meeting will be January 12, 2021.

Mr. Ireland said he would adjust the application to take effect on February 1, 2021.

**10. ACTION REQUESTED – NOVEMBER 2020: AUTHORIZE AN
ADDITIONAL \$20,253 PER YEAR AS A CONTINGENCY IF CLAIM**

FREQUENCY IN ANY ONE YEAR EXCEEDS HISTORICAL AVERAGES FOR AN AUTHORIZED TOTAL OF \$125,000 PER YEAR; AND AUTHORIZE AN ADDITIONAL \$35,759 FOR THE THREE YEAR CONTRACT TERM FOR A TOTAL OF COST OF \$350,000

Mr. Keegan moved the item.

Mr. Smith made the presentation. He said he came before them in the summer for additional funding for workers compensation funding vendor costs. He said he wanted to come back for additional funding in case of injuries that exceed the norm. Mr. Smith said he did not want to risk a temporary shutdown.

Mr. Dachowitz said he and Mr. Smith decided to come before the Committee to ask for a buffer in case the amount goes too high. He said we do not expect to use much of it, but it is there just in case.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY AND WILL BE ADVANCED TO THE NEXT COMMON COUNCIL MEETING ON JANUARY 12TH.**

Mr. Burnett had one last point. He said the joint meeting of the Board of Education and The Finance Committee of the Common Council and was supposed to take place on January 7 and said Board of Education needs addition time to prepare their budget requests. Mr. Burnett said that meeting will now be held January 14 prior to the regular scheduled Finance monthly meeting.

11. ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. SACHINELLI MADE A MOTION TO ADJOURN.
** MOTION WAS GRANTED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

G. Venuto

Telesco Secretarial Services