

**CITY OF NORWALK
FINANCE/CLAIMS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 8, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Greg Burnett, Chair; David Heuvelman, Tom Keegan, John Kydes, Diana Revolus, Nick Sacchinelli

OTHERS: Chitsamay Lam, Comptroller; Lisa Biagiarelli, Tax Collector; Atty. Darin Callahan, Council Member Tom Livingston; Henry Dachowitz, Finance Director, Tom Hamilton, BOE COF, Ralph Valensizi. BOE IT; Michael DePalma, Oak Hill Authority; Albert Bass, Assistant Fire Chief; Joyce Liu, ITS Director; Deputy Police Chief Susan Zecca, Mickey Docimo, Albert Vasquez, Zuriel, RollKall; Hannah Kern, ESO

This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference.
The public was able to listen to this meeting by calling a conference line.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Burnett called the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no one who wished to address the Committee at this time.

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

- **August 12, 2021**

**** MR. HEUVELMAN MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 12, 2021 MEETING.**

The following corrections were noted:

Page 1, under Approval of the Minutes, please change the following from:

**** MOTION TO APPROVE THE CLAIMS AS AMENDED PASSED
UNANIMOUSLY**

To: **** MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED PASSED
UNANIMOUSLY**

Page 2, under the motion to enter Executive Session, please change the following from:

**** MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS AMENDED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

To: **** MOTION TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Page 3, under the item regarding the Firefighters Grant Program, paragraph 1, line 2: please change the following from:

“replace maintenance equipment that is end the end of its life.”

To: “replace maintenance equipment that is at the end of its life.”

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 12, 2021 MEETING AS CORRECTED PASSED WITH FOUR (4) IN FAVOR (HEUVELMAN, KEEGAN, KYDES AND REVOLUS) AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION (SACCHINELLI).**

Claims Committee: receive the monthly Claims Report; review and approve claims as required for Claims Report dated: September 9, 2021

Narrative on Tax Collections dated September 9, 2021 – Receive Report and discuss.

Monthly Tax Collector’s Reports dated August 2021 – Receive Report and discuss.

Ms. Biagiarelli presented her report. The monthly Claims report was for Information only.

Ms. Biagiarelli noted that there were two August reports, one from the prior fiscal year and one for the current year. She said that there was an extended tax grace period last year, so it is not fair to compare the two years. The next billing will be sent out the second week of December. The past collection process went well. Past Due notices, which are legally required to be called Demand Notices, have been sent out.

The auditors examine a 14 month period to compare the reports. She said that the current collection rate was 99.23% and the Department was very pleased with this percentage. This was in spite of the Department being short staffed and dealing with COVID restrictions.

The Tax Sale is scheduled for October 19th and there are 39 properties left of the original 200 delinquent properties. The goal is not to sell the properties, but to compel payment. The sale will be held at City Hall. Registration starts at 3:00 and the sale begins at 5:00 p.m.

Mr. Dachowitz, Finance Director, said that he had compared this year’s collection to the collection rates from two years ago and the City collected 7.35% more this year.

Mr. Heuvelman asked about the staff shortage. Ms. Biagiarelli said that there was an interview scheduled for the coming Monday. She hoped to have the position filled within the next 8 to 10 weeks. Mr. Dachowitz said that two individuals in the Tax Collector's Office had been fired. One position was filled and then the remaining position was posted. There were over 200 applicants.

Mr. Burnett said that he wished to thank Ms. Biagiarelli for her extraordinary efforts in the Department. He asked how a 99.23% rate would compare with surrounding cities.

Ms. Biagiarelli said that she tries to compare Norwalk to the other five cities of the top six Connecticut municipalities. Norwalk always has the highest collection rate of those six cities. There may be smaller towns that have a higher percentage, but among the largest six cities, Norwalk has the highest collection. She listed a number of practices that the Department follows to keep the residents current on their bills. The Tax Sales, wage garnishments and other methods have been supported by the City Administration and Councils.

No vote was required for the items.

8. Receive Oak Hills Authority monthly Financial Statements for July 2021.

Mr. Michael DePalma was present. He said that the revenue was down slightly due to weather and they had finished the month with money in the bank. They will be moving forward with the cart path project. The Authority was able to pay back approximately \$12,000 to the City from Rounds Revenues.

9. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling to execute any and all documents necessary to consent and approve the food and beverage service License Agreement dated March 30, 2021 by and between Oak Hills Park Authority and Dry Dock Smokin' Aces, LLC CONDITIONED UPON said License Agreement being amended to expressly provide the City of Norwalk with the right to terminate the License Agreement without cause upon 90 days advance written notice to Dry Dock Smokin' Aces, LLC, and such additional terms as Corporation Counsel's Office may require.

**** MR. HEUVELMAN MOVED THE ITEM.**

Atty. Callahan and Mr. DePalma were present to answer questions. Atty. Callahan said that they had reviewed the contract between Oak Hill and they wished to add a provision to the proposal.

Mr. Kydes left the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Mr. Heuvelman asked what the term was for the lease. Atty. Callahan said that it was a license and there was a 90 day termination clause, and a five year term, ending December 2026.

Mr. Heuvelman asked Mr. DePalma about the restaurant opening. Mr. DePalma said that the facility work was completed and they were in the process of licensing. He will be checking with Planning the following day.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE ITEM PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

10. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute a contract amendment between City of Norwalk and Advanced Corporate Network, INC., d/b/a Digital Back Office (“ACN”) to authorize the addition of a new location at 1 Park Street, Norwalk, CT with a monthly recurring fee of \$1,536.00 paid for by the Board of Education from expense Account # 2ES28400-430-58.

Mr. Burnett noted that the item had been tabled last month. He then read the following item as it was written into the record at that time:

Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute a contract amendment between City of Norwalk and Advanced Corporate Network, INC., d/b/a Digital Back Office (“ACN”) to authorize the addition of a new location at 1 Park Street, Norwalk, CT. The parties agree to the addition of one 10 GIGE Managed Optimal Ethernet Services at the following service locations: Circuit 1 1) City Hall, 125 East Avenue 2) 1 Park Street with a monthly recurring fee of \$1,536.00 paid for by the Board of Education from expense account #2ES28400-430-58.

**** MS. REVOLUS MOVED THE ITEM.**

Mr. Hamilton, the BOE COF, said that former Mayor Alex Knopp had started the work on high speed, fiber optic cables in 2003 for all the municipal and school buildings. The network has been underwritten by the E-rate program, which provides subsidies for telecommunications, specifically for public libraries and schools. Without the E-rate program, the cost would be several times what it currently is. Digital Back Office was the organization that built the network and the E-rate program requires the use of a leased network.

The amendment is very small because it is just adding on the new location at Park Street. However, they need to have digital access to the metropolitan network.

Mr. Valenzisi, the BOE IT Director, gave a brief overview of the system and its history. The City gets an 80% reimbursement on the cost. The qualifier is that there must be students in the building. This building houses a transitional program and is an extension of the Board of Education. In July of 2022, the cost will be reduced down to approximately \$300 a month. This is following the same process as NECC.

Mr. Burnett asked for clarification on One Park Street. Mr. Valenzisi explained that the BOE has been leasing a portion of the buildings for over a year and they were hoping to use the space for the Family Center.

Mr. Hamilton said that the Human Services Council owns the building and had some space available. The BOE currently have the 18-21 year old students at that location for life skills training. Those students will be moving up to the second floor and the Family Center will

occupy the first floor. This is part of creating one stop shopping for Norwalk BOE families. Currently, registration happens at the individual schools, then parents have to go on to the BOE Health Department, the Transportation program along with Special Education and Language Skills Department. One of the areas of parental frustration is the difficulty in determining where they have to go to register students for services.

Ms. Revolus said that they were supposed to use Briggs for this. They terminated the Briggs program and they abandoned the older students.

Ms. Revolus said that she felt that the services should be handled at Central Office and the schools should have the services available on site.

Mr. Valenzisi said that this was not a program like Briggs but a life skills program. Ms. Revolus said that the closure of Briggs abandoned the students.

Mr. Hamilton reminded everyone that the decision to close Briggs was made four years ago by the BOE. He explained that there were services, but they were all de-centralized, so the parents have to go to multiple offices for Special Education or Language services. There is no more space at City Hall and this will move some staff from City Hall to One Park and centralize registration. Discussion followed.

Mr. Heuvelman asked about the Learning Center that was located behind Briggs. Mr. Hamilton said that the Learning Center and the Central Kitchen were owned by the City.

Mr. Heuvelman asked how many buildings the BOE rents. Mr. Hamilton explained that the bus depot was leased along with 1 Park Street. Mr. Heuvelman asked how many floors were being leased. Mr. Hamilton said that they currently lease one floor, but will be occupying the remaining building other than the HSC offices. Discussion followed about the cost of the rental and the outfitting of the building.

Mr. Heuvelman said that he was concerned about the transparency of the rentals and how it will all work out when the District has to take care of the building when money is tight.

Mr. Hamilton said that this was reviewed by the Board at a June meeting and is available on YouTube.

Mr. Livingston said that the City and the BOE had jointly leased the bus depot, but added that the BOE had not been approved to have a Welcome Center, but had done it any way.

Mr. Hamilton said that the school bus depot was a 25 year lease. This current lease is a one year lease with grant funding.

Mr. Dachowitz said that he was concerned with the use of Capital funding for this. Discussion followed about the use of City owned buildings and the fact that this center would be a short term lease for a program that is expected to operate for a long time. Parental engagement is one of the key State goals.

Mr. Hamilton said that the students would continue to receive the services at the school. Ms. Revolus said that the parents need to know the school and the staff that their child needs to interface with. Mr. Valenzisi pointed out that the testing equipment is not available in all the school buildings. Ms. Revolus suggested that the District should partner with the Carver Center or various other facilities so that the BOE does not end up increasing

**** MR. SACCHINELLI MOVED TO TABLE THE ITEM TO THE OCTOBER MEETING OF THE FINANCE/CLAIMS COMMITTEE.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

11. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute any and all Agreements and other documents with ESO, for the licensing purchase for three years and on-boarding of records management software for the fire department on a sole source procurement basis, for the contract amount not to exceed \$58,665.15 from account # 09221370-5777-C0375.

**** MS. REVOLUS MOVED THE ITEM.**

Asst. Fire Chief Bassett said that the records management system has reached the end of its life and the Department has come to the conclusion that ESO was the best vendor since they took over the original company. Due to this, migrating the records from the original system to ESO should not be a problem. Using another vendor would be more labor intensive.

Ms. Liu, the City of Norwalk IT Director, concurred and introduced Ms. Hannah Kern, who has been working with the Norwalk Fire Department on this program. Ms. Kern said that it would be a seamless migration from the previous system to the new system.

Mr. Heuvelman said that this sounded like a win/win for the Department.

Mr. Burnett asked if there were any examples of data migration. Ms. Kern said that they had migrated over 500 customers from the original Fire House program into ESO.

Asst. Chief Bassett said that over the period of 25 years, some of the data had been entered improperly and this will have to be corrected manually. The current data in on a server at the station and now they will have it on a cloud based server.

Ms. Kern said ESO will never own the data. If the Department should choose to leave the company, the data migration will be free.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

12. Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling, to execute agreement with RollKall Technologies, LLC for project 4083 City of Norwalk Police Department Extra Duty Management System.

**** MR. KEEGAN MOVED THE ITEM.**

Mr. Dachowitz gave a brief overview of the situations where the Police Department would be billing an outside, non-City client. When these situations occur, much of the paperwork must be done manually. An RFP was done and three finalist were interviewed. RollKall was the company selected. The officers can sign up for outside work on their phones and it will reduce the billing work for the Comptroller's Office.

Deputy Police Chief Zecca said that right now there is one employee who is continually making calls to fill the slots.

Mr. Zuriel of RollKall along with the President of RollKall then addressed the Committee. The company is based in Texas but has programs running in 39 states.

Mr. Burnett asked about the cost of the program to the City. Mr. Dachowitz said that RollKall would get 7.5% of the cost. He said that the users will pay 15% and the City will get the 7.5%. There will be some savings in the Personnel Department. He felt that this would be beneficially for the City. The various departments have worked to make the City whole.

Mr. Heuvelman asked if this was a secure cloud based solution. He was told that this was so. Mr. Dachowitz said that there was one of the candidates that was not able to provide the proper security for the data. Ms. Liu gave a brief overview of the security requirements.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. HEUVELMAN MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services