

**CITY OF NORWALK  
BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION  
OPEN ITEM REVIEW  
MARCH 16, 2011**

**ATTENDANCE:** Fred Wilms, Chairman; Mayor Richard Moccia,  
Michael Lyons, James Fiegenbaum, Leo Mellow,  
Michael Kolman.

**STAFF:** Thomas Hamilton, Finance Director;  
Robert Barron, Director of Management & Budgets.

**OTHER:** Members of Non-Profit Agencies (as listed below)

Mr. Wilms stated that the first portion of the meeting was an information session, and he thanked those members of Norwalk non-profit agencies for attending.

Mr. Wilms invited the agency representatives to state their name and affiliation and to make any comments regarding the budget requests.

*The following is not verbatim and represents a summary of comments made:*

1. Mr. Paul Blair, representing the Norwalk Senior Center, thanked the Board for their support that stated their program includes Meals on Wheels and makes good use of the funds for the seniors in Norwalk. There no questions asked or comments made by the Committee members.
2. Mr. Louis Schulman, representing Norwalk Transit Authority, thanked the Board for the support that stated their program objectives are an integral part of the new projects and future City Developments. He added that he just returned from Washington and is hopeful for more federal funding from the transportation budget. He added that they have had to cut back on operating budgets and have recently voted to change the health care benefits to save over \$250,000.
3. Ms. Brown, from the Norwalk Emergency Shelter, thanked the Board for the support that stated they have modified their name to the Open Door Shelter and they are known as the Soup Kitchen.

Mayor Moccia added that the Plan to End Homelessness in Norwalk has been sent on, and it should help the City to be eligible for more federal grants that can be steered in the direction of agencies such as the Open Door Shelter.

Mr. Wilms stated that he wanted to back up to a comment on the Senior Center, and noted the article in the newspaper recently about the vandalism at the Senior Center. He added that he is hopeful that the Board can increase the funding to the Center to make up for this loss. Mr. Blair added that there has been a 40% decline in contributions, and there is no excess in their budget. He stated that in effort to maintain programs, each staff member has opted to give up two furlough days per month which adds up to a savings of \$60,000 over the year. He added that this shared sacrifice along with changes in the health insurance to higher deductibles and HSA contribution accounts has helped to offset operating costs.

4. Christy Pope, Representing Christian Community Action thanked the Board for their support and stated the program objectives that funds would provide help to those in transition from homelessness to supportive/permanent housing. There were no questions asked or comments made by the Committee members.

5. David Shockley, City of Norwalk, presented the City Neighborhood Improvement Coordinator Program thanked the Board for their support and stated the program objectives are community service to keep Norwalk beautiful. He highlighted a program called "Reach for the Can" to promote recycling.

Mayor Moccia thanked Mr. Shockley for his efforts and added that this is a program in conjunction with neighborhood programs to keep Norwalk cleaner.

6. Ms. Margaret Suib, stated that she was the attorney serving as the Norwalk Fair Housing Officer and stated that in addition they provide placement services for over 55 households in Norwalk to avoid foreclosures. She added that the housing problems have accelerated due to the lack of jobs and predatory lending. She added that they do partner with FCA and section 8 programs and NEON. She added that the demand is up 75% and this is a one person office, and she engages other agencies and attorneys to represent clients at no cost.

7. Ms. Denise Cesareo, representing Elderhouse, Inc thanked the Board for their support and stated the program objectives as are to provide a drop-in/pick-up program providing care for the elderly and that no one is turned away based on affordability. She added that the hands-on care is provided to the frail person requiring care and family support. She stated that there is an increase in elder abuse as the economy presents a struggle on families, and the number of seniors needing care is on the rise, especially those with Alzheimer's, along with intergenerational needs. There were no questions asked or comments made by the Committee members.

8. Mr. John Slovak, from the Redevelopment Agency thanked the Board for their support and stated the program objectives as are to provide affordable housing that has an impact on many future programs in the City.

Mayor Moccia added that affordable housing is at 11%, much higher than other surrounding cities and towns in the state.

10. Mr. Chip Anderson from the Norwalk Economic Opportunity Now, Inc. (NEON) stated the program funding will provide education, counseling and support services for teen fathers, and those students at risk of dropping out of high school. He added that they partner with the Norwalk Housing Authority, and programs include Head Start and Summer Camps and job referral services that help residents find jobs. He stated that over 400 families are among their clients that are served. There were no further questions asked or comments made by the Committee members.

9. Patricia Marsden-Kish representing Family & Children's Agency, thanked the Board for their support and stated the program objectives target middle school students, and they are partnered with the Norwalk Housing Authority.

11. Barbara Hodgins representing Norwalk Fair Housing Commission stated that their budget has had no increase and it represents salary and benefits for the officer. She added that there is a shortfall due to an increase in health insurance benefits and the Commission will be in the red unless there is an increase in funding. She reminded the Board that this position is a function in honor of court order.

12. Terri McCartney representing the Catholic Charities and AmeriCares programs, stated the program partners with Norwalk Hospital and others to assist families in need.

Mayor Moccia added that these are difficult times and with the increase in foreclosures and families having to decide between buying groceries and paying the mortgage; and we desperately need help from agencies like these to keep our residents from losing their homes.

13. Devon Hunter, representing Norwalk Sexual Assault Counseling Works and Domestic Violence Crisis Center- stated the program objectives and, added that they go above and beyond normal program outreach, serving an average of 60 cases providing support to victims, responding to E.R. calls and Safe House. She added that they partner with Norwalk Hospital and Norwalk Community College and provide education programs in public schools to help children stay safe and prevent risky behaviors especially with internet predators.

Mayor Moccia asked if their organization works with the Brien McMahon Senator's Community Foundation and she replied yes that their program reinforce each other.

Mr. Hamilton stated that Stuart Greenbaum, of Mid-Fairfield Child Guidance, had called to say he could not attend but wanted to thank the Board for their support. He added that funding is used as leverage for matching grants. He stated that these services save the Norwalk Public School district over \$500,000 in out-of-district placements. There were no questions asked or comments made by the Committee members.

Mr. Wilms added that the work by the programs run by these agencies is so important to the social service agencies and it helps to fill the gap to provide necessary services.

Mr. Wilms thanked those members of the non-profit agencies for attending, and said the Board members would take this time to add additional comments on the funding requests.

Mayor Moccia stated that he would recommend full funding as requested by the Senior Center, especially in view of the recent vandalism.

Mr. Lyons stated that on behalf of the Grants Committee these agencies provide an enormous public service and a tremendous bang for the buck in leverage for matching grants.

Mayor Moccia stated that in regards to requests from the Fair Housing attorney, he is aware of this request due to a salary increase, and it should be the same as unions and other City departments where there has been a freeze on salaries. He added that he is open to providing \$1,000 for administrative costs. Mr. Hamilton added that he was in agreement that this should be treated no differently than other City offices.

Mr. Kolman added that he found the comments made by the agency representatives very moving and he would like to see \$50,000 or what the Board determines affordable to be added to the agency contribution amount. He added that the Senior Center, in particular is one that has had difficulty with vandalism and he would like to be able to fully fund their requests.

Mr. Lyons stated that he echoes that sentiment as it relates to AmeriCares, which is one agency that does a great deal to assist those residents in need.

Mr. Wilms stated that this can be left as an open item and they still have time to approve an increase until May.

Mr. Wilms stated that at this time he wanted to call to order the regular portion of the meeting.

### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 p.m. by the Chairman Wilms, who called the roll and announced that the above members were present and there was a quorum.

Mr. Wilms asked Mr. Hamilton to review the Capital Budget recommendation.

### 2011-12 Capital Budget

Mr. Hamilton provided an overview of the Capital Budget, and referred to the documentation as provided in the City's 2011-12 Capital Improvements Projects 2011-12 to 2015-16. He stated that as is listed in the memo to Common Council, the Finance Department has recommended a total capital budget of \$27,774,200. He highlighted the following:

- This budget is \$98,700 more than the amount recommended by the Planning Commission.
- Of the total recommended amount \$1,681,000 will be financed from grants and other non-general fund sources, leaving a balance to be financed and repaid from the general fund of \$26,093,200.
- He added that to put this recommendation in perspective, the amount of governmental activities debt to the City is scheduled to retire in FY 2011-12 is \$15,744,789 so the city's overall level of debt will increase by \$10,348,411 as a result of this recommended capital budget.

He reviewed the items listed in the memo, and highlighted the following additions, changes and deletions:

Police Station Security Cameras: \$30,000 added  
Cemetery Restoration: \$10,000 added  
City IT Projects: (\$20,000) removed  
SONO Garage \$300,000 added  
Maritime Generator (\$100,000) removed  
Watercourse Maintenance: \$250,000 added back  
DPW Fleet Replacement \$308,000 increased  
Keeler Brook Drainage (\$1,000,000) eliminated for this fiscal year.  
Health Department Multi-year Renovation: \$485,730 restored

Mr. Hamilton added that the big project this year is the new Fire Station and a discussion ensued regarding the evaluation of other location options. Mayor Moccia stated that the condition of the sinking foundation and mold throughout the building requires a major renovation. Mr. Hamilton added that in comparison to the Police Station the increase in square footage is a much lower size and a modest enhancement to the building.

Mr. Wilms added that he would like to see an improved state of the City's roads with fully funding the DPW requests.

Mr. Lyons asked if there was anything in the budget that would impact the agency ratings, and Mr. Hamilton replied that he sees nothing in this budget that would have a negative impact on the bond rating.

- \*\* MR. LYONS MOVED TO ACCEPT THE FINANCE DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE THE 2011-12 CAPITAL BUDGET OF \$27,774,200 OF WHICH AN AMOUNT OF \$1,681,000 TO BE FINANCED FROM GRANTS AND OTHER NON-GENERAL FUND SOURCES, LEAVING A BALANCE TO BE FINANCED AND REPAYED FROM THE GENERAL FUND OF \$26,093,200.**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Wilms stated that at this time he would adjourn the meeting and continue with a workshop session to discuss and review other open items.

#### Adjournment

- \*\* MR. FEIGENBAUM MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- \*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marilyn Knox,  
Telesco Secretarial Services