

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION
JUNE 1, 2009**

- ATTENDANCE:** Fred Wilms, Chairman; Leo Mellow; Michael Lyons; Michael Kolman; James Feigenbaum; Mayor Richard Moccia.
- STAFF:** Ellen Wink, City Clerk; Tom Hamilton, Finance Director; Ossie Lewis, Manager of Budgets & Systems.
- OTHERS:** Hal Alvord, Director of Public Works; Chief Dennis McCarthy, Fire Department.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MAY 4, 2009 REGULAR MEETING

The following corrections were made: On page 2, 1st paragraph, 1st sentence, %76,448 was corrected to \$76,448. On page 5, the third motion and discussion were corrected to read as follows and moved to page 3 as the first motion:

**** MR. LYONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE GRANT AGENCY APPROPRIATIONS AS SET FORTH IN THE FISCAL YEAR 2009-2010 OPERATING BUDGET.**

Mr. Wilms and Mr. Mellow recused themselves from discussion and vote on this item.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH FIVE VOTES IN FAVOR.**

**** MR. WILMS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

SPECIAL APPROPRIATIONS

\$8,351 FROM CONTINGENCY TO THE REGISTRAR OF VOTERS TO COVER THE COST OF BALLOT PRINTING FOR THE NOVEMBER 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

This item was withdrawn.

\$23,146 FROM CONTINGENCY TO THE TAX ASSESSOR'S OFFICE FOR OVERTIME ASSOCIATED WITH THE 2008 REVALUATION

Mr. Hamilton reviewed his memo, noting that the City spent \$29,000 in the 2003 revaluation. They have currently spent \$27,000 this year.

Mr. Kolman asked if this was part of an ongoing overtime issue. Mr. Hamilton said it should tail off. This covers through the end of the fiscal year. There is money in next year's budget and he does not anticipate a problem then.

**** MR. WILMS MOVED: RESOLVED, THAT A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$23,146 BE AND THE SAME IS HEREBY TRANSFERRED FROM CONTINGENCY TO THE TAX ASSESSOR'S OFFICE TO COVER THE COST OF OVERTIME ASSOCIATED WITH THE 2008 REVALUATION (ACCOUNT NO. 01-1320-5120).**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE.**

\$273,816 FROM CONTINGENCY TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT TO COVER THE COST OF OVERTIME

Mr. Hamilton said that the total shortfall in overtime is projected at over \$500,000, but there is \$280,000 in a projected salary surplus. There was a 24% decrease in overtime spending in 2007-08, but it has gone up due to vacancies. They are not projecting the police department to be over-budget in overtime this year.

Chief McCarthy said the driver has been the number of vacancies. When they have to hire people, they go to the academy for 14 weeks and they then have to hire employees to work at 1-1/4 time during that period. There have been long time sick leaves, which have now been resolved. The other issue is that sick leave has decreased from 12 days per man to 8 days. The union has also made improvements in this through peer pressure. There are 5 retirements in June. Each replacement comes in at a lower cost for benefits and overtime. In response to a question from the Chairman, Chief McCarthy said he sees a trend toward lower costs.

Mayor Moccia said it is a balancing act and then they have to factor in minimum manning. Hopefully they will be in a better financial position next year.

Mr. Hamilton said over 8 years, the increase in overtime is 16%, which is less than the overall change in wages. Overall, there has been a decent control over overtime.

In response to a question from Mr. Mellow, Chief McCarthy said there is greater overtime in the summer and fall because of vacation time.

**** MR. WILMS MOVED: RESOLVED, THAT A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$273,816 BE AND THE SAME IS HEREBY TRANSFERRED FROM**

CONTINGENCY TO THE FIRE DEPARTMENT TO COVER THE COST OF OVERTIME (ACCOUNT NO. 01-3120-5120).

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE.**

\$297,227 FROM CONTINGENCY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS FOR THE COST OF SALT PURCHASES FOR THE 2008-09 SNOW REMOVAL OPERATIONS

Mr. Hamilton said this was a relatively severe winter with an above-average amount of storms. In addition, the cost of salt has increased substantially over what had been assumed in the budget. This was the second year that they used all salt, no sand, which produces a better result.

Mr. Alvord said they use treated salt if the temperature is below 20 degrees.

Mr. Hamilton said the shortfall in the overtime account is being covered by transfers. Mr. Alvord said every snowstorm occurred after hours, on weekends and on holidays.

**** MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED: RESOLVED, THAT A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$297,227 BE AND THE SAME IS HEREBY TRANSFERRED FROM CONTINGENCY TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS TO COVER THE COST OF SALT PURCHASES FOR THE 2008-09 SNOW REMOVAL OPERATIONS (ACCOUNT NO. 01-4025-5322).**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE.**

Mayor Moccia said that the job that Public Works did this year was wonderful, noting that he had received very few complaints.

\$79,784 FROM CONTINGENCY TO THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PREMIUM ACCOUNT TO COVER THE COST OF AN INCREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS EXPERIENCE

Mr. Hamilton said that the City is essentially self-insured. There are not many employees collecting unemployment insurance, but there are some. They have budgeted \$125,000 in the next year's budget to cover this.

**** MR. WILMS MOVED: RESOLVED, THAT A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$79,784 BE AND THE SAME IS HEREBY TRANSFERRED FROM CONTINGENCY TO THE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PREMIUM ACCOUNT TO COVER THE COST OF AN INCREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT CLAIMS EXPERIENCE (ACCOUNT NO. 01-90-40-5418).**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY BY VOICE VOTE.**

TRANSFER AGENDA

PUBLIC WORKS

\$ 6,484 FROM 01-4025-5333 TO 01-4025-5110
8,380 FROM 01-4025-5333 TO 01-4025-5120
58,601 FROM 01-4021-5110 TO 01-4025-5120
11,048 FROM 01-4079-5246 TO 01-4025-5332
84,493

Mr. Hamilton said that Finance recommends approval.

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

REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

\$12,249 FROM 01-1210-5211 TO 01-41210-532A

Mr. Hamilton said that Finance recommends approval.

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

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Hamilton said they did another bond refunding. The closing is on June 9th. \$18,320,000 is the amount that was left out of the previous bond refunding. This is a 2% net present value. Total savings is \$428,674. \$347,000 will be saved on 2009-10. His recommendation is that it be set aside until they know what state aid will be.

The Chairman inquired about Hartford. Mayor Moccia said they want to cut the aid to the Maritime Center and Stepping Stones and close the courthouse in Norwalk.

Mr. Hamilton said that NMEA has agreed to concessions. That agreement will go to the Common Council next week. Finance will then come back to the Board of Estimate & Taxation to move the money out of contingency.

Mayor Moccia noted that the Zoning Commission held a public hearing on aquifer fees.

Mr. Hamilton said that the real estate conveyance tax continues to be just as lackluster as ever. May was the worst month they have had. The good news is that Mr. Garfunkel said he has seen more people in his office doing the things done before closings. They have collected \$315,000 in recording fees for May, which is better than in the prior few months. Anecdotally, housing prices are down.

The Chairman asked if tax collection rates are really down. Mr. Hamilton said from last year to this year, the tax lien sale drove collections up. There is another sale later this year, maybe in late summer. The collection rate is down 3.37 basis points this year.

The Chairman pointed out the minutes from the Joint Services Study Group. They have met twice and identified 15 areas of duplication between the City and the Board of Education. There seems to be a consensus on ways to save \$60,000 in mail services over two years.

Mr. Hamilton reviewed a story in the N.Y. Times on how much school budgets are increasing, noting the following:

- Greenwich - .8%
- Hartford – flat
- Stamford – 0.3%
- Waterford – 1.8%
- Westport – 0.56%

Mayor Moccia, regarding stimulus funds, said they were allocated \$1,900,000 for roads. The DOT says they won't have the money until 2010 and they are blaming it on Washington. Basically, the state is using most of this money to supplant.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This information was in the members' packets.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Telesco
Telesco Secretarial Services