

**CITY OF NORWALK
FINANCE/CLAIMS COMMITTEE
JANUARY 12, 2012**

ATTENDANCE: Carvin Hilliard, Chair; Douglas Hempstead; David McCarthy;
Warren Pena; Matthew Miklave (7:42 p.m.)

STAFF: Thomas Hamilton, Finance Director; Fred Gilden, Comptroller;
Al Palumbo, Assistant Tax Collector; Gerald Foley, Purchasing
Agent

Mr. Hilliard called the meeting to order at 7:39 p.m.

**APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING –
December 8, 2011**

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MR. PENA MOVED TO ACCEPT THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:**

**CLAIMS COMMITTEE: RECEIVE THE MONTHLY CLAIMS REPORT; REVIEW AND
APPROVE CLAIMS AS REQUIRED FOR CLAIMS REPORT DATED – January 12, 2012**

Mr. Polumbo explained the process for reviewing and approving claims.

Mr. Miklave joined the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

Mr. Polumbo reported that most of the refunds are for car bills, although there are some refunds for real estate and some could be refunds for duplicate payments.

Mr. Hamilton said that there were no refunds above the \$10,000 threshold established by the Common Council this evening, so no action was required.

**NARRATIVE ON TAX COLLECTIONS DATED JANUARY 12, 2012 – RECEIVE REPORT AND
DISCUSS**

**MONTHLY TAX COLLECTOR'S REPORT DATED JANUARY 12, 2012- RECEIVE REPORT
AND DISCUS**

Mr. Hamilton said that typically Ms. Biagiarelli gives an update of what the Tax Collector's office is working on and the status of their collections. He said that at the end of December, it was difficult to draw a conclusion about the status of the collections, because residents have until February 1st to pay. He said that as one of the 10 largest municipalities in Connecticut, Norwalk has the highest collection rate.

Mr. Polumbo said that the department is always looking at various collection options. Currently they are getting ready to do a tax sale this summer. He explained that residents are sent a number of letters warning them that the cycle is starting again. He said that 39 properties have been brought current.

Mr. McCarthy asked for an explanation of how properties are put on the tax sale list. Mr. Polumbo explained that to get on the list, the property owner must be two years delinquent and/or owe over a certain dollar amount. Mr. McCarthy asked what happens if the property owner does not pay their car tax.

Mr. Polumbo said that they use an alias tax warrant. They are flagged at the DMV and can't register their car. If it is a business, their permits will be held until they are brought current.

Mr. McCarthy asked about people living in Connecticut, but have out of state plates on their cars. Mr. Polumbo said that the Tax Assessor can add them as an unregistered motor vehicle. He added that some states will not register a car that owes delinquent taxes in another state. Mr. Hamilton said that he can follow up with the Tax Assessor and add that to a future agenda.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. MIKLAVE)**

**** MR. MCCARTHY MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, RICHARD A. MOCCIA TO EXECUTE A THREE (3) YEAR MASTER LEASE AGREEMENT FOR OFFICE COPIERS WITH CONNECTICUT BUSINESS SOLUTIONS AND AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ADD OFFICE COPIERS TO THIS MASTER AGREEMENT FOR A TOTAL AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$69,120.00 (Various City Accounts)**

Mr. Hamilton introduced Mr. Foley and said that he has been working on re-bidding the City wide copier services.

Mr. Foley described the bid process and said that the bids were based on their current inventory. He said that he recommended going with Connecticut Business Solutions. He said that they would dovetail the lease with the Board of Education.

Mr. Pena noted that it looked like the City would save 50% over what is currently being spent. Mr. Foley said that CBS is affiliated with Xerox and they are trying to build their market back up. They are putting the equipment in at favorable rates. He said that both Xerox and CBS are Norwalk based companies and have been very responsive. Currently they have a person in City Hall that runs the copy center.

Mr. McCarthy said that he attended the IT meeting and saw the proposal. Mr. Foley said that toner, etc. is included in the charge

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**BRIEFING ON CITY BUDGET PROCESS AND DETERMINE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING
SCHEDULE FOR MAKING OPERATING CAP RECOMMENDATION**

Mr. Hamilton said that for the benefit of the new Councilmembers, he wanted to talk about the budget process. He explained that there are two different budgets – operating and capital.

The operating budget covers the City's ongoing operating expenses, such as salaries, benefits, workers compensation, pension, supplies, materials, utilities, etc. He said that the capital budget is for larger capital improvements that the City is seeking to undertake such as school renovations, paving and the construction of the new fire station.

Mr. Hamilton explained that the capital budget is financed through the issuance of bonds. He explained the Common Council's role in adopting the two budgets as well as the timeline.

Mr. Hempstead noted that if the Common Council raises the cap higher than the Board of Estimate, they would be subject to a referendum. Mr. Hamilton said that they would need a certain number of signatures to qualify for a referendum and for it to be effective; they would have to have a 25% voter turnout. Mr. Miklave asked for clarification, because he said that he has never heard of that referendum. He said that he would like to hear from the Corporation Counsel what the method is to raise the cap and if it would be subject to a referendum, or the circumstances under when it would be subject to a referendum.

Mr. Miklave asked what would be the process by which the Common Council could vote to raise or lower the cap. He asked what the mechanism is that the Charter contemplates to take that action.

Mr. Hempstead said that the Board of Estimate comes in with a recommendation and the Common Council sets the cap by a simple majority. He added that historically, the Board of Estimate has not spent to the cap.

Mr. Hamilton said that the role of the Common Council is different with the capital budget. He said that it is a lengthy process that starts with departmental requests. The Planning Commission will be meeting with each department to review their requests. He said that his recommendations go to everyone involved in the approval process.

Mr. Hamilton said that the Mayor has to make his recommendation by March 15th. He said that it then goes to the Board of Estimate and they set an overall cap on the budget and then it goes to the Common Council. The Planning Committee handles the capital budget.

Mr. Miklave asked if it was true that the Common Council can't appropriate funds unless it is in the department's original request. Mr. Hamilton said that was correct. He added that there is a process where the Mayor can add a project that was not asked for originally.

Mr. Hamilton asked about the Finance Committee schedule. Mr. Miklave asked if they were required to hold a public hearing before setting the cap. Mr. Hamilton said that the Planning Commission holds a public hearing for the capital budget. Mr. Hilliard said that it is important that the committee have input from the community.

The Committee agreed to meet on the following dates:

February 9 – regular meeting where Mr. Hamilton will give a summary of the budget

February 16 – review budget

February 23 – public hearing in the community room or concert hall

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services