

**CITY OF NORWALK
FINANCE CLAIMS COMMITTEE
APRIL 12, 2012**

ATTENDANCE: Carvin Hilliard, Chair; David McCarthy; Warren Pena;
John Igneri (7:32 p.m.); Matthew Miklave (7:34 p.m.)

STAFF: Thomas Hamilton, Finance Director; Lisa Biagiarelli, Tax
Collector; Michael Stuart, Tax Assessor; Robert Baron, Budget
Director; Karen DeVecchio, IT Director; Gerald Foley,
Purchasing Agent; Hal Alvord, Director, DPW;
Lisa Burns, Operations Manager; Kathryn Hebert, Administrative
Services Manager, Frederic Gilden, Comptroller

OTHERS: Bruce Kimmel, Common Council

Mr. Hilliard called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and announced that a quorum was not present.

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

Ms. Biagiarelli reported that there were no claims above the established threshold.

Mr. Igneri joined the meeting at 7:32 p.m. and a quorum was now present.

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

**NARRATIVE ON TAX COLLECTIONS DATED APRIL 12, 2012- RECEIVE
REPORT AND DISCUSS.**

**MONTHLY TAX COLLECTOR'S REPORT DATED MARCH 31, 2012 -
RECEIVE REPORTS AND DISCUSS.**

Ms. Biagiarelli reviewed her narrative and spreadsheet. She explained that they are on track at nearly 98% of the current tax levy. She said that they filed fewer liens than they did last year. Ms. Biagiarelli reported that they have collected nearly \$2 million on properties that were scheduled to be included in the July tax sale. She said that they are going to continue using the existing criteria for properties to be included in the tax sale.

Ms. Biagiarelli said that starting on Monday, the office will begin their participation in the Department of Motor Vehicles Registration Extension Pilot Program. She described the program.

Mr. Miklave joined the meeting at 7:34 p.m.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MR. MCCARTHY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING: MARCH 8, 2012 AS SUBMITTED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

REPRESENTATIVES FROM JAFFEHOLDEN WILL PRESENT THEIR PROPOSAL AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO THE AUDIO, VISUAL, AND PRESENTATION CAPABILITIES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL CHAMBERS

Ms. DelVecchio said that the IT Committee was asked to make improvements to the audio/video design in the Common Council Chambers. She introduced David and Alex Jaffe. She said that they were asked to focus on four items:

- Inadequate audio system intelligibility
- Low volume levels to combat feedback
- Inconvenient video presentation viewing methods as well as non-user friendly controls
- Vote tabulation also in question, electronic methods would be explored

Mr. Jaffe reviewed their recommendation and said that all of the equipment is non-proprietary and can be purchased off the shelf. He said that there would be a 30-day bid process and installation will take 45 days.

Mr. Hamilton explained that this was an informational session. Mr. Pena said that he sees the need for some technology upgrades. Mr. Miklave said that he was not enthusiastic with the electronic voting system for \$30 - \$40,000.

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

NORWALK AND THE OAK HILLS PARK AUTHORITY TO RESTRUCTURE ITS EXISTING DEBT TO THE CITY.

Mr. Baron said that this is a new proposed debt restructuring. He reviewed the proposed debt repayment schedule and said that he adjusted the payment date to September to follow the golf season. A five year payoff plan was developed to pay off the three significant notes.

AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, RICHARD A. MOCCIA, TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO SECURE THE REPAYMENT OF A LOAN IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$150,000 FROM THE CITY OF NORWALK TO THE OAK HILLS PARK AUTHORITY FOR ITS FISCAL YEAR 2012-13 CAPITAL REQUEST.

Mr. Baron explained that not enough rounds of golf had been played, and as a result there was not enough money to maintain the golf course. He said that this was keeping the golfers away.

AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, RICHARD A. MOCCIA TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO GUARANTEE THE LEASE BETWEEN OAK HILLS PARK AUTHORITY AND PNC EQUIPMENT FINANCE LLC FOR OAK HILLS PARK AUTHORITY'S NEW FLEET OF BEVERAGE AND GOLF CARTS FOR A TERM NOT TO EXCEED FIVE YEARS AND A TOTAL VALUE OF \$240,000

Mr. Baron said that another reason golfers were staying away from Oak Hills was that the golf carts were not maintained. He said that they received competitive pricing in response to the RFP. He said that the City is being asked to be the co-lessee for the carts. Mr. Baron said that the new carts are necessary to keep the golfer going to the golf course.

Mr. Miklave said that he supports what is being done with Oak Hills and added that it is a gem. He asked if the Common Council has the right to stop capital projects. Mr. Baron said that the Oak Hills Authority has the right to do capital repairs, but if they exceed \$5,000 they have to go before the Board of Estimate and Taxation. Mr. Hamilton said that the Board of Estimate and Taxation has been reviewing their finances on a monthly basis for multiple years. Mr. Miklave said that the threshold level of \$5,000 makes sense.

Mr. Pena said that this is making him a little nervous because they did not make enough last year to sustain the operation. He asked what changed that will give them enough revenue to afford the payments.

A representative from Oak Hills explained that their revenue was down last year due to the weather; there were 90 rain days. He said that the condition of the course and that it was not marketed correctly. He said that the employee benefits were renegotiated and they went through the budget line by line and eliminated unnecessary expanses. In addition, they increased prices and created a Marketing Committee.

Mr. Pena said that he understood that a lot of money was invested in the restaurant. The representative from Oak Hills said that the restaurant was not anticipated to be a revenue producer. Mr. Baron said that Oak Hills gets \$100,000 from the restaurant, but it is run as a banquet facility instead of a burger/beer type of restaurant. He said that it was not

open when the golf course was open and they have decided to change vendors. The restaurant will now be open when the golf course is open and will be user friendly. Mr. Pena asked why the restaurant was not making money. Mr. Mount said that the Oak Hills Authority did not want to be restaurateurs. Mr. Kimmel said that he did not consider weather a factor and did not think all golf courses in the north east were in this shape. He said that he agreed that they have to use a concession and feels that can make or break then. He said that people would play golf and go someplace else to go, or then stopped going to Oak Hills completely.

Mr. Miklave said that he loves Oak Hills and that probably in the past the restaurant was not a partner with the golf experience.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MR. MCCARTHY MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, RICHARD A. MOCCIA, TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO SECURE THE REPAYMENT OF A LOAN IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$400,000 FROM THE CITY OF NORWALK TO THE SIXTH TAXING DISTRICT FOR THE RENOVATION OF THE ROWAYTON COMMUNITY CENTER. – PHASE II IN THE FY 2012-2013 CAPITAL BUDGET (\$400,000)**

Mr. Hamilton explained the item. He said that this is an historical structure located in the Sixth Taxing district. He said that this is similar to the lease agreement that was approved a year ago for Phase I.

Mr. Igneri explained that the renovation project. Mr. McCarthy asked about Phase III. Mr. Igneri said that he was not sure, but there will be a charette.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MR. PENA MOVED THAT THE COMMON COUNCIL HEREBY DELEGATES TO THE MAYOR OR DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, SUBJECT TO THE APPROVAL OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMON COUNCIL, THE MAJORITY LEADER OF THE COMMON COUNCIL, THE MINORITY LEADER OF THE COMMON COUNCIL, AND THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL, OR ANY TWO OF THEM (THE “COMMITTEE”), THE AUTHORITY TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE PROCUREMENT OF ELECTRICITY FROM NOBLES AMERICA, FOR A TERM NOT TO EXCEED TWO (2) YEARS, COMMENCING JANUARY 1, 2014 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2015. ACCOUNTS VARIOUS.**

Mr. Foley explained that the City of Norwalk is contracted with Nobles America through December 2013. He is requesting an extension of the agreement for an

additional two years. He said that the thought is to stay ahead of the market and then go out for another RFP for the year beyond that. He said that as soon as the market goes up the cost of commodities will increase. He is trying to mitigate the costs and felt that this was an extremely good opportunity. Mr. Pena commended Mr. Foley for being proactive.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

DISCUSSION OF OCTOBER 1, 2013 REVALUATION

Mr. Michael Stewart explained that the 2013 Revaluation is state mandated. He said that the next date is October 1, 2013 and it is an attempt to equalize all of the properties and be sure that everyone is paying their fair share based on their property. He said that it is not based on the Assessor's opinion of the value of the property.

Mr. Stewart described how the value of a property is valued according to market metrics. He said that the RFP process began in 2011. He said that the RFP gave the vendor the opportunity to provide the cost to do a full revaluation or an updated revaluation. On March 29th, they received five responses. A small committee was formed to review the responses and interview three candidates. Almost unanimously all of the information pointed to one vendor who has the experience, technology and employees. The number one candidate has 121 towns in Connecticut as their clients. Mr. Stewart said that he will present more documentation in the next month or so. He said that they are fortunate to have the opportunity to do a full revaluation for around \$1 million and bring themselves to a new level of technology. He said that he would like feedback of what they should be considering.

Mr. McCarthy asked for a comparison between a full revaluation and an update. Mr. Stewart said that the State passed legislation diminishing the scope of what they were looking for. In a full revaluation, they make the attempt to examine each property in the City.

Mr. Igneri asked Mr. Stewart if he thought about using the person they used last time. Mr. Stewart said that person responded but was not considered.

Mr. Kimmel said that he was concerned about the credibility issue. He said that he has heard from residents that commercial properties were low balled. He asked if there are certain times when you want to do a full and not a partial revaluation and if there is a difference in the outcome. Mr. Stewart said that you want to do an update when you do a full inspection and have confidence that the data is correct.

Mr. Stewart said that if the price for an update and a full revaluation is similar, he would recommend doing a full revaluation in this cycle. Mr. Kimmel said that after 4-5 years of a depressed economy, people are not making changes to their homes and does not see a reason for a full revaluation if there is a large difference in cost.

Mr. Igneri asked if the firm that is being considered has credibility. Mr. Stewart said that they do 121 towns in Connecticut. Mr. Hamilton added that they just completed a revaluation in New York City.

Mr. Pena asked about the process for the remainder of the calendar year. Mr. Stewart said that he will provide documentation for approval at the next meeting. He said that he is ahead of where he planned to be. He described the process and said that an appropriation will have to be in place before the City signs the contract. Once the vendor has the contract, they will be ready to start. He said that the information will be posted on the City website.

Mr. Stewart said that if a full revaluation is conducted, all property owners will get a notice. The vendor will break the City into neighborhoods and go street by street. He described the revaluation process for commercial properties. He said that the vendor will be provided with a list of neighborhood associations. The final revaluation will be completed by November 2012 and notices will be sent to property owners in February 2014.

**** MR. MCCARTHY MOVED TO APPROVE FY 2012-13 WPCA OPERATING BUDGET.**

Ms. Burns reported that the operating budget was approved by the WPCA Authority and the Board of Estimate and Taxation. She said that there was a modest rate increase. Ms. Burns explained the Industrial Pretreatment Surcharge and said that it is mostly for restaurants. Mr. McCarthy asked about the fund balance. Mr. Hamilton said that in this operation, unexpected things can and do happen.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MR. IGNERI MOVED TO APPROVE FY 2012-13 PARKING AUTHORITY BUDGET**

Ms. Hebert explained that the Parking Authority approved the budget in March. She reviewed the revenues and expenses and said that the revenues are expected to increase 2.16%.

Mr. Miklave asked why parking ticket revenue has decreased. Ms. Hebert said that is mostly due to higher compliance. Mr. Miklave said that he was concerned about overcrowding at the East Norwalk Rail Road parking lot. Mr. McCarthy asked if people are paying by cell. Ms. Hebert said that people love it and say it is very easy to use.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MR. MCCARTHY MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, RICHARD A. MOCCIA, TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT FOR GRANT FUNDS PROVIDED UNDER THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT'S LOCAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUND FOR 2012 LOCAL CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (\$625,905 – 2011**

Mr. Hamilton explained that this is an annual authorization that is needed to apply for capital improvement funds. He said that the funding is now available.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MR. PENA MOVED TO ADJOURN
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services