

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE
AND
TAXATION
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 1, 2014**

ATTENDANCE: James Clark, Chair; Erik Anderson; Gregory Burnett;
Edwin Camacho; Ann Yang Dwyer

STAFF: Thomas Hamilton, Finance Director; Robert Barron, Director
Management & Budgets; Donna King, City Clerk;
Richard Rudl, Norwalk Public Schools, Chief Financial Officer

Mr. Clark called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

November 3, 2014 – Regular Meeting

The following corrections were made to the minutes of November 3, 2014:

Page 1: Edmond Camacho, should be corrected to Edwin Camacho

Page 3: first paragraph, last sentence should be corrected to – Ms. Yang Dwyer said that the City needs to make sure that the base remains attractive for people to remain in Norwalk or those who can afford it will move to neighboring towns like Darien.

- ** **MR. ANDERSON MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED**
- ** **MR. CAMACHO SECONDED**
- ** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

SPECIAL APPROPRIATIONS AGENDA

- ** **MAYOR RILLING MOVED THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:**

RESOLVED THAT A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$11,232 BE AND THE SAME IS HEREBY TRANSFERRED FROM INCREASED REVENUES TO THE POLICE DEPARTMENT TO COVER OVERTIME REIMBURSEMENTS.

ACCOUNT #01-3035-5120

Mr. Barron explained that this transfer allows them to increase the overtime budget for the police Department from reimbursement received from the Federal Drug Enforcement Agency. This reimbursement was from an extended joint effort from July to October, 2014.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MAYOR RILLING MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:**

RESOLVED, THAT A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$90,000 BE AND THE SAME IS HEREBY TRANSFERRED FROM FUND BALANCE TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO SUPPORT SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Barron explained that this transfer reduces the Fund Balance by \$90,000. The Board of Education is asking for \$90,000 to support social and emotional programs for two organizations that provide in-school and after-school services.

Our Kids in Crisis Teen Talk Program will receive \$40,000 and the Child Guidance Center will receive \$50,000. The Child Guidance Center estimates that its program will save the City \$775,500 in out of district costs.

Mr. Anderson asked about the \$40,000 in funding that the Our Kids in Crisis Teen Talk Program lost. Mr. Rudl said that he believes they were being funded by the United Way and they reduced that funding.

Mr. Rudl explained that there are well over 100 students involved and the cost ranges \$60,000 to \$150,000 per child, depending upon their disability. Mr. Hamilton said that the request for \$50,000 is for an existing program that had their funding reduced. Mayor Rilling said that the Child Guidance Center is the only facility in the area of this nature.

Mr. Hamilton said that the staff at the Child Guidance Center is highly trained with specialties in this area. Mr. Barron said that every body's funding has been cut back, but it will impact City costs, if they are not able to service these children.

Mr. Anderson asked if the children are receiving services elsewhere. Mayor Rilling said that they are referred to the Child Guidance Center, but now that their funding has been cut, there are two choices – keep them in operation or the City will have to service the children. Mr. Anderson asked about the program provided by the Child Guidance Center. Mayor Rilling said that they provide in-patient level mental health care on an out-patient basis.

Mr. Hamilton said that they are trying to expand their fund raising capability, by increasing their Board, but in the interim, they are coming to the City for funding. Mr. Clark said that Dr. Rivera's e-mail stated that this is a onetime use. Mr. Anderson asked if this will be built into the 2015-2016 budget. Mr. Rudl said that nothing has been finalized.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION**

TRANSFER AGENDA

**** MR. ANDERSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING TRANSFER:**

**Fiscal Year 2014-2015
Corporation Counsel**

From		To	Amount	
01-0300-5110	Salary & Wages – Regular	01-0300-5130	Salary & Wages – Temp	\$58,000

This transfer is to cover wages for a temporary Corporation counsel's position in the Law Department.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

OTHER BUSINESS

**** MAYOR RILLING MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION, AUTHORIZING A SPECIAL CAPITAL APPROPRIATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$800,000 TO FUND THE CONSOLIDATION AND CLASSROOM CONVERSION AT ROOSEVELT SCHOOL TO ESTABLISH A PRE-K CENTER AT THIS BUILDING**

Mr. Hamilton explained that this item is for Phase I of the plan to consolidate and convert classrooms at the Roosevelt School to establish a Pre-K center. This plan allows the Board of Education to bring out of district students back into the district.

Mr. Hamilton said that Mr. Lo has been working diligently to bring this project to fruition. The Board of Ed plans to open the Center in September 2015. He said that included in the meeting packet is the report of the Educational Specifications Committee and a report prepared by the architect, Silver Petrucelli.

Mr. Hamilton said that there may or may not be State reimbursement. If there is a reimbursement, it will be after the fact; the reimbursement is about 32% of eligible

expenses. The building has not had any interior renovations for a number of years. The Board of Education needs to go in and renovate the classrooms. This is a fairly significant project, which has been broken down into phases. What is being proposed is to go forward with phase I. Mr. Hamilton said that he understands that they are not asking for a special appropriation for phases II and III.

Mr. Hamilton recommended using the available surplus in the capital projects fund and to leave the surplus in the operating fund so that it is available for future use by the City. This gives the City more flexibility to leave the surplus intact.

Mr. Rudl explained that currently there are eight classrooms spread out over the City with 50% Special Education students in each classroom. The recommendation is to consolidate the classrooms, so they can focus on the students. The cost for Special Education has grown. By consolidating the resources, they can better focus on the needs of the children. In addition, by bringing services in house, he feels they will be able to bring the students back into the district and provide a continuum of services.

Mr. Barron asked if there is room for additional classrooms. Mr. Rudl said that the focus is on the existing classrooms and providing a continuum of services. Mr. Clark said that it was not clear which option was being used. Mr. Barron said that most of the items are in both options. Mr. Barron said that \$1.6 million will give them a child care facility with eight classrooms. Mayor Rilling said that his project was approved by the Board of Education.

Mr. Clark asked why Dr. Rivera was not here this evening. Mr. Rudl said that he had a scheduling conflict.

Mr. Anderson asked if they will have significant resources in Special Education in phase I. Mr. Rudl said that the Special Education teachers and Aids will come in from other schools.

Ms. Yang Dwyer asked if they will need to expand at some time and feels that the demand could be higher. She asked how someone qualifies for this Pre-K program. Mr. Rudl said that there is a charge for non-Special Education students. Mr. Hamilton explained that the district is obligated to provide services to Special Education students – ages three and four. Mr. Rudl said that there are about 70 students in-district and 120 out of district students. The cost is \$60,000 to \$150,000 per student, depending upon the severity of their disability. He said that the tuition for non-Special Education students is based on a sliding scale.

Ms. Yang Dwyer asked if it would be better to take the 120 students and bring them all back into the district. Mr. Rudl said that the burden is on the district to provide the program. It is up to the parent. The students can't be isolated; the model is 50% Special

Education and 50% non-Special Education.

Mr. Anderson said that he wants to see the students come back into the district, but said what is missing, is how to bring them in. He also asked how long the process takes. Mr. Rudl said that the shortest amount it could take would be immediately. Mr. Hamilton said that part of Dr. Rivera's notion is to get the students in Pre-K, so that they are less likely to leave the district. Ms. Yang Dwyer said that she feels that a parent would theoretically want to have their child located in a newly renovated facility.

Mr. Burnett asked if this is the best option to put money into an old building. He asked if they looked at other options and asked about the possibility of building a new building to attract parents. Mr. Rudl said that they primarily looked at existing buildings; new construction would be significantly more expensive.

Mayor Rilling said that Mr. Burnett brought up a good point. Ms. Yang Dwyer said that there is a sports field at the location and suggested that a pre-fab building could be placed there. She said that is not that expensive and would be new and nice. She said that to take a site like Allen Road and spend a couple of million dollars, they will have a new attractive facility and may be able to bring in more Special Education students. Mr. Anderson asked if the Allen Road facility will be attractive enough for people to stay. Ms. Yang Dwyer said that there is not a lot of parking at that site.

Mayor Rilling said that the sports field at Allen Road is in use six to seven months a year and is used for baseball by hundreds of kids.

Ms. Yang Dwyer suggested moving the Pre-K to the 96/7 location. Mayor Rilling said that the developers have their plans in place.

Mr. Camacho said that this project is doable, the money is available and there is a need for this.

Mr. Anderson said that his reservation is that Dr. Rivera will not be at the helm of this project and he does not know why they need to move this forward with the uncertainty of leadership. He said that this is a large sum of taxpayer money. Mr. Anderson said that this is a fantastic program and it has to be executed perfectly. He said that he is not against this program, but this is about a long term vision.

Mr. Rudl said that this project was cited in two reports and approved by the Board of Education. Mr. Anderson asked why it did not move forward before. Mr. Rudl said that it was because they had an interim superintendent for 10 months.

Ms. Yang Dwyer said that it makes sense to move forward with this.

Mayor Rilling said that he had the same concerns and asked if this is a vision that will be shared by the new superintendent. He said that this project will be overseen by Mr. Lo and by Mr. Rudl. The plan is in place. Mr. Anderson said that he is not suggesting that this is going to be dropped. He asked about the immediate savings. Mr. Rudl said that they will see a savings of \$300,000 in the next budget cycle.

Mr. Clark said that they are the stewards of the City's money and said that he is grateful for the savings achieved by the Board of Education.

Mayor Rilling said that during the last budget cycle, the Board of Education was cooperative and feels that should be taken into consideration. Mr. Clark said that he was happy to return the maximum amount because the communication process was robust.

Mr. Camacho said that even the \$1.3 million that was potentially available to the Board of Education was due to Dr. Rivera's vision. He said that the dynamics might have changed with his leaving and that is something they have to deal with going forward.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH FOUR (4) VOTES IN FAVOR (MAYOR RILLING, MR. CLARK, MR. CAMACHO AND MS. YANG DWYER) AND TWO (2) VOTES IN OPPOSITION (MR. ANDERSON AND MR. BURNETT)**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Oak Hills Financial Status – October 2014

Mr. Barron reported that Oak Hills reported that they had a good November and have a plan for the winter months. He said that he will provide an update in June. Mr. Barron said that there was no mention of debt forgiveness.

Mr. Barron said that last year they made it through the winter, but this year's numbers are worse than last year.

Status of Contingency – FY 2014-2015

Financial Reports

- Year to Date Capital Budget Report – FY 2015-2015
- Year to Date Operating budget Report – FY 2014-2015
- Year to Date BOE Operating Budget Report – FY 2014-2015
- Tax Collector's Narrative – October 2014
- Tax Collector's Report – October 2014

- Key Revenue Report – YTD

Salary Accounts

- Fire Overtime
- Dispatch Overtime
- Police Overtime

Mr. Barron distributed and reviewed the key revenue drivers. Mayor Rilling asked about the operating budget. Mr. Barron said that the perennial issue is overtime and he had some concerns about overtime in the Police Department. He also had some Public Works wage concerns. He said that they may be short in the regular wage account for Public Works by about \$40,000. Depending upon the winter, they may have a short fall in overtime. Bulky waste and street sweeping may increase the budget. If we have a light winter, there may be funds to cover those areas.

Mr. Hamilton explained that Police overtime is running high and the regular wage is running light. There are a few vacancies which drives the overtime.

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

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services