

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
PUBLIC HEARING
MARCH 22, 2017**

ATTENDANCE: Greg Burnett, Chair; Mayor Harry Rilling, James Feigenbaum; Edward Camacho;

STAFF: Robert Barron, Finance Director; Donna King, City Clerk; Lunda Asmani; Director of Management and Budgets

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Burnett called the meeting to order at 6:31 p. m.

ROLL CALL

City Clerk King called the roll. A quorum was present.

PUBLIC HEARING

Board of Estimate & Taxation Proposed Tentative Operating Budget Fiscal Year 2017-2018

Mr. Burnett stated that the Board of Estimate and Taxation has reviewed the Finance Director's recommendation and each of the department's requests for the upcoming Budget Year. Tonight we would like to hear from members of the public before voting on a tentative budget recommendations. That vote will take place on April 3, 2017. He stated that our goal is to take taxes as low as possible by appropriating funds as necessary to maintain and improve services to our residents while maintaining an appropriate fund balance which supports the city's AAA bond rating. He stated that presently, the BET recommendation generates a mill rate tax increase of only 1.8%.

Mayor Rilling thanked the members of the BET for helping the city to move forward while keeping taxes as low as possible. Mayor Rilling thanked the department heads in attendance for the work they do. He stated that they are professional, work hard and work within their budgets. They are judicious in their spending and every year all are at or below budget.

Mayor Rilling stated that the Board of Education is implementing a very well thought out strategic plan. He stated it is in our best interest to work with the Board of Education to provide a world class education that closes the achievement gap. He stated that will help our children move forward, compete in the global economy, and have people want to move to Norwalk. He stated that our school system is absolutely remarkable. The teachers, the staff, are dedicated professionals. We should be proud of what we have, but things can always get better.

Mayor Rilling stated that we have a projected mill rate increase of 1.8%. The owner of a median home in the 4th taxing district would find their tax bill increase by 32 cents per day. He stated that that is a good

investment to give teachers and staff the tools they need to serve the community. He stated that having said that, we are still uneasy with what cuts may come out of Hartford. He stated we are not sure what cuts may be made. There may be challenges ahead.

Mr. Mike Lyons came forward to state that there has been tremendous cooperation with the Board of Education from the Mayor, Finance Director and Planning Commission. He thanked the Board of Estimate and Taxation for their help in building the school system this year.

Ms. Barbara Meyer-Mitchell came forward. She stated that she wanted the Board members to pretend that there are 2,500 smiling parents standing behind her and they are all nodding their heads in agreement with her. She said thank you for listening to us, and for investing in the dream of excellence for education in Norwalk.

Ms. Diane Lauricella stated that she would like the Board members to use a microscope or magnifying glass to look for bang for the buck when reviewing the department budgets. She stated that we have a lot of senior staff that have been here a long time. They have earned the right to be here and earned upgrades to their salaries.

Ms. Lauricella stated that she is pleased that we have a new Personnel Director. She stated that she has had difficulty getting a response from the Personnel Chair. She stated that she wants information to be made available on how to make complaints. She stated that she has great concerns with the Health Departments' lack of concern when it comes to hazardous waste issues, and toxic waste dumps that are actively leaching.

Ms. Lauricella stated that the City Noise Ordinance is unworkable and the Department of Health needs to make efforts to help the Ordinance Committee with noise complaints. The Health Department should have more bang for the buck when it comes to environmental issues. Ms. Lauricella stated that she is pleased with the change of the Planning and Zoning Department Head.

Ms. Lauricella stated she is pleased with the \$1,500,000 in future savings in the Board of Education Budget that is the result of putting solar panels on 2 of 19 schools in the City. A comprehensive review would have shown that solar panels could have been installed at more schools.

Mr. Jeffry Spahr came forward. He said thank you for putting in time and effort into your thankless job. He stated that he knows all of the board members take their job seriously. He stated that there is an air of professionalism as you walk through City Hall. The commitment he sees from all of the department heads is amazing.

Mr. Burnett closed the public hearing at 6:54 p. m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Blaney
Telesco Secretarial Services

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Page 2 of 2