

BOARD OF ESTIMATE & TAXATION MEETING ACTIONS

MAY 7, 2007

ATTENDANCE: Fred Wilms, Chairman; Mayor Richard Moccia; James Clark; Michael Lyons; Stuart Wells.

STAFF: Mary Roman, City Clerk; Thomas Hamilton, Director of Finance; Ossie Lewis, Manager of Budgets & Systems.

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. by the Chairman.

ADOPTION OF THE FINAL FY 2007-08 OPERATING BUDGET & SET TAX RATES

** MR. LYONS MOVED TO SEPARATE APPROVAL OF GRANTS AND VOTE ON THEM FIRST.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Chairman recused himself from this item and left the room. Mr. Lyons chaired this portion of the meeting.

** MR. LYONS MOVED TO APPROVE GRANT AGENCY APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$3,227,763.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Chairman returned to the meeting.

** MR. LYONS MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUDGET AS PRESENTED.

** MR. WELLS MOVED TO AMEND BT TAKING \$500,000 LESS FROM FUND BALANCE.

Mr. Wells said since there are extra revenues, that would give them \$500,000 to use for infrastructure items. They can consider how to use these funds in the future.

Mr. Hamilton said that would raise the tax rate to approximately 4.3%.

Mayor Moccia said he would oppose this amendment for the reason stated by Mr. Hamilton. Between operating and capital, they have \$3,100,000 for flood problems. \$1,300,000 is allocated for the Lockwood Lane and Buckingham areas, where they cannot spend more than that this year. There is \$500,000 committed for cleaning the storm drains. The state may also have money available with a match from the city. He

and State Representative Perone will be meeting with the state. After all of the discussions they have had, this is a reasonable tax increase the citizens of Norwalk can live with. They have made commitments and this budget is where it should be.

Mr. Lyons asked Mr. Hamilton if \$3,000,000 was an arbitrary number, and Mr. Hamilton responded that it is part of a long-term plan. Mr. Lyons said because it is a planned-out strategy, he would prefer to stick with it. He was sympathetic with the intention of using the money but there is a contingency account in this year's budget with money available for things that come up.

The Chairman said they should stick with the original proposal. Mr. Wells' proposal is well-intentioned but there are timing issues. There are other possibilities to shift money to cover specific needs.

Mr. Clark said he appreciated Mr. Wells' intentions but he is thinking of those people on fixed incomes for whom it is important to keep the tax increase low. They will continue to be responsive to problems as they arise.

**** THE AMENDMENT FAILED WITH 1 VOTE IN FAVOR (WELLS) AND 4 VOTES IN OPPOSITION.**

Discussion took place on the original motion.

Mr. Lyons said that Finance and this Board did a thorough job this year. One of the priorities has to be to keep in mind the people who pay the bills. Bringing in a budget that essentially matches the inflation rate is pretty good. This is a very responsible budget.

Mr. Wells said that the budget as a whole is within the cap set by the Common Council.

The Chairman said he was pleased that the tax increase came in at 3.8%, including revaluation. They have stood strong for the taxpayers over the past two years. They have been responsive to significant needs as well. He commended the Mayor, noting that he has voluntarily offered to defund the position of Assistant to the Mayor. He said he was disappointed with the approach of the Board of Education. Unlike the Mayor, their approach is that they cannot cut a penny from the top. There were indirect areas that don't include the children, but their approach was to hit the students. They have a finance committee but there is no evidence that they have ever met. He was disappointed that one board member said he could not find a penny that could be cut from the superintendent's budget. In Stamford, the board of education is asking teachers and classroom aides for advice on where to cut the budget. There is an issue of accountability and transparency. The additional \$5,000,000 they will be given is generous and they should look for savings outside of the classroom.

Mayor Moccia said everyone has tried very diligently. He said he believed that the board of education had good intentions but there is a difference in philosophy. It is not a political game; it is an effort to insure that not one program is cut for the students. A

\$5,200,000 increase is not a cut, no matter how it is presented. The rest of the city's total increase in spending is 2%-3% for all other departments in an effort to hold expenses down. There are areas in administration, consultants, etc., that can be looked at. The Board of Education received a \$5,200,000 increase.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MARCH 28, 2007 PUBLIC HEARING

** MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED APPROVAL.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

APRIL 2, 2007 SPECIAL MEETING

The following corrections were made: On page 3, 2nd paragraph, 2nd sentence "easy" was corrected to "hard". In the 3rd paragraph, 1st sentence, "Chairman" was corrected to "Mayor".

** MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

APRIL 9, 2007 REGULAR MEETING

** MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED APPROVAL.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

SPECIAL APPROPRIATIONS AGENDA

\$189,498 FROM CONTINGENCY TO VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS FOR CONTRACT SETTLEMENT OF THE NMEA UNION

Mr. Hamilton said that the City has a new agreement with NMEA. It is a two-year contract. There are increases in the prescription and office visit and emergency room co-pays, etc. There are modifications to the vision plan and hearing aid coverage is provided.

** MR. WELLS MOVED RESOLVED, THAT A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$189,498 BE AND THE SAME IS HEREBY TRANSFERRED FROM CONTINGENCY TO VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS TO PAY FOR CONTRACT SETTLEMENT OF THE NORWALK MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION (NMEA) UNION.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

\$177,330 FROM CONTINGENCY TO THE VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS TO PAY FOR CONTRACT SETTLEMENT FOR THE LOCAL 2405 UNION

Mr. Hamilton reviewed, noting that this is a 3-year contract. There is new language regarding retirees' health insurance. New hires will pay 2/3rds of the cost of retirees' health insurance when they retire. In addition, contributions are required of new hires and current employees into a retirees' trust. There are also increases in premium cost sharing and co-pays.

Mayor Moccia said employees will pay a larger share of health care contracts. Mr. Lyons said that was critically important.

**** MR. WELLS MOVED RESOLVED, THAT A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$177,330 BE AND THE SAME IS HEREBY TRANSFERRED FROM CONTINGENCY TO THE VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS TO PAY FOR CONTRACT SETTLEMENT FOR THE LOCAL 2405 UNION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

TRANSFER AGENDA

LIBRARY

01-6200-5110 (Regular wages) 01-6200-5777 (Construction) \$ 33,006
01-6200-5246 (Heating Fuel) 01-6200-5777 (Construction) 4.000
. \$ 37,006

01-6200-5241 (Electric) 01-6200-5267 (Plumbing, Htg. & Elect. Svcs.) \$5,905

**** MR. CLARK MOVED APPROVAL.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

01-3055-5266 (Buildings) 01-4072-5244 (Natural Gas) \$ 58,309

This transfer will be used to cover a current deficit of (\$20,809) in the account and the projected cost of \$37,500 up to June 30, 2007. The natural gas meter at this location produced erroneous readings for the past two fiscal years. As a result, the Fiscal YeF 2006-07 allocation for this line was understated. Yankee Gas replaced the meter in November 2006, and a recent bill received in March 2007 appears to reflect actual usage. This transfer should be adequate to cover the cost of the utility for the remainder of the fiscal year.

Finance recommends approval.

From

To

Amount

01-4021-5110 01-4021-5110 01-4021-5110 01-4025-5110 01-4025-5110

(Regular Wages) (Regular Wages) (Regular Wages) Regular Wages)
(Regular Wages)

01-4021-5120 01-4021-5130 01-4027-5110 01-4028-5120 01-4030-5120

(Overtime Wages) (Temporary Wages)
. (Regular W ages) (Overtime Wages) (Overtime Wages)

\$ 52,651 58,115 74,413 34,682 28.583 \$248,440

These transfers are required to cover both existing deficits and projected expenditures for the remainder of the fiscal year.

** MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED APPROVAL.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. RESOLUTION, making Appropriations aggregating \$12,223,000 for the 2007-08 Capital Budget and authorizing the issuance of \$8,831,000 General Obligation Bonds of the City to meet certain appropriations in the 2007-08 Capital Budget.

Mr. Hamilton said this authorizes the City to issue bonds for the portion of the Capital budget they expect to issue bonds on.

** MR. CLARK MOVED APPROVAL.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

2. RESOLUTION, with respect to the close-out of Bond Projects and reducing the authorized and unissued amounts for such projects. The authorized and unissued bond amounts for the projects are hereby reduced in accordance with Schedule A (attached). The aggregate amount of such reductions totals \$10,525,109.

Mr. Hamilton said this is for older capital projects that generally are complete. This mostly relates to school projects that received State grants.

** MR. CLARK MOVED APPROVAL.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. RESOLUTION, to increase the Capital Budget authorization by \$1,921,101 in anticipation of State School Construction Fund for the Ponus Ridge School Alteration Project. (project Account No. 0904-5010-5799-B0317).

Mr. Hamilton said that this resolution and the next one are underway and when appropriated, did not include state reimbursements.

** MR. WELLS MOVED APPROVAL.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. RESOLUTION, to increase the Capital Budget authorization by \$1,933,867 in anticipation of State School Construction Fund for the Nathan Hale Middle School Project. (project Account No. 0907-5010-5799-B0316).

** MR. CLARK MOVED APPROVAL.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. RESOLUTION, authorizing the close-out of the balance of an existing capital project relating to facade improvements to the Concession Building at Calf Pasture Beach. (project Account Nos. 0900-6030-5777-CO069; 0901-6030-5777-CO069 and 0902-6030-5777-CO069)

** MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED APPROVAL.

Mr. Hamilton said this building was renovated largely by Stew Leonards and it is not high priority to do any more work. Mr. Moccia anticipates that these funds will be reallocated for another project. The next resolution is the special appropriation for rehabilitation, which is a higher priority project.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. RESOLUTION, appropriating \$279,932 to fund the rehabilitation of the restroom facilities at Calf Pasture Beach. (project Account No. 0907-6030-5777-C0292).

** MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED APPROVAL.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. RESOLUTION, authorizing the close-out of a capital project in the amount of \$26,000 for bathroom Refurbishment at the Norwalk Library. (Project Account No. 0907-6210-5777-C0402)

8. RESOLUTION, appropriating \$26,000 for a Special Appropriation for the Renovation of the Main Entrance. (project Account No. 0907-6210-5777-C0400).

** MAYOR MOCCIA MOVED TO APPROVE BOTH RESOLUTIONS.
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Chairman said that he has enjoyed working with all of the Board members.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Telesco
Telesco Secretarial Services

