

ALL COMMON COUNCIL ACTIONS TAKEN AT THIS MEETING TO APPROVE EXPENDITURES AND CONTRACTS OR TO ACCEPT BIDS AND OTHER PROPOSALS REQUIRING THE EXPENDITURE OF CITY FUNDS ARE SUBJECT TO THE AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

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Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Irene Dixon at idxon@norwalkct.org to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m. and led the Assembly in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

I. ROLL CALL

Ms. Dixon called the Roll:

Council at Large:	Mr. Gregory Burnett	Mr. Joshua Goldstein
	Ms. Dominique Johnson	Ms. Nora Niedzielski Eichner
	Ms. Barbara Smyth	

District A:	Ms. Nicol Ayers	Mr. David Heuvelman
District B:	Ms. Darlene Young	Ms. Diana Revolus
District C:	Mr. John Kydes	Ms. Jenn McMurrer
District D:	Ms. Heidi Alterman	Mr. Thomas Keegan
District E:	Mr. Thomas Livingston	Ms. Lisa Shanahan

At Roll Call there were fifteen (15) Council members present. A Quorum was present.

Also present were Mayor Harry Rilling, City Clerk, Irene Dixon and Corporation Counsel, Mario Coppola.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Special Meeting: February 8, 2022

**** MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Regular Meeting: February 8, 2022

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation comments are not verbatim and represent a summarization of statements unless otherwise noted.

Ms. Gloria Niederer spoke in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget and suggested drawing down from the rainy day fund.

Ms. April Waterstrom spoke in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget and suggested drawing down from the rainy day fund.

Ms. Iliana Zuniga urged the Common Council to vote to increase the budget by 5.4% and use rainy day funds.

Mr. Livingston asked if Translator services were available for this meeting. Mayor Rilling said Translators were used for other meetings and they have to get back to using them on a regular basis.

Ms. Laura Garcia spoke in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget.

Ms. Jody Saddler spoke in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget.

Mr. Justin Matley spoke in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget.

Ms. Julie Flemming advocated for adequate funding for the Board of Education.

Ms. Kate McPhee spoke about supporting those in need and said there were people who could not speak because there were no Translators.

Ms. Diane Lauricella offered suggestions for opportunities to find savings in the Board of Education budget. She asked for no increase to the budget. She asked for an increase on the City side to fund a Diversity and Inclusion position. Ms. Lauricella asked the Board of Education and the Superintendent to reduce the staffing in the Central Office.

Ms. Mary Gray spoke in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget, otherwise it would be detrimental to those students who have special needs.

Ms. Julie McNulty asked what is being done to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and spoke in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget.

Ms. Tracy spoke about the lack of funding in athletics.

Ms. Sarah Garcia spoke in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget.

Ms. Melene Jones spoke in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget.

Ms. Claudia Connor spoke in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget.

Mr. Brian Brown spoke in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget and mentioned plummeting school rankings.

Mr. Paul Whelky spoke in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget. He said he noticed that his younger child was not challenged as much as his older child was. He said Norwalk is unfairly burdened and asked the Common Council to put pressure on the legislators to increase their funding to Norwalk.

Ms. Astrid Sisteros spoke in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget.

Mayor Rilling acknowledged the letters he received and Ms. Dixon read the names of the people who submitted letters in support of fully funding the Board of Education's proposed budget. She also acknowledged Mr. Richard Bonefant who submitted a letter regarding Ordinance.

IV. MAYOR

A. RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

RESIGNATIONS:

Mayor Rilling announced the following resignations and thanked Ms. DiMeglio and Ms. McCready Brown for their service.

Frances Di Meglio, Planning and Zoning Commission
Sheri McCready Brown, Board of Estimate and Taxation

APPOINTMENTS:

**** MS. NIEDZIELSKI EICHNER MOVED TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF DANIELLE SANCHICK, ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS, ALTERNATE**

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner spoke in support of the appointment.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MR. KEEGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF MATT MERLUZZI, CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

Mr. Keegan spoke in support of the appointment.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

REAPPOINTMENTS:

- ** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF LAURIE JONES AND JOHN PINTO, HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION**

Ms. Shanahan spoke in support of the reappointments. Mr. Kydes spoke in support of Dr. Pinto's reappointment. Mayor Rilling said he has known Dr. Pinto since high school.

- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

MAYOR'S REMARKS:

Mayor Rilling said a draft of the Efficiency Report for the City of Norwalk and Board of Education is currently being reviewed. He said he was very impressed by the attention to detail in the City's report.

The Governor is lifting the mask mandate on February 28th and Mayor Rilling's team and Dr. Estrella's team will meet to discuss how to proceed.

V. COUNCIL PRESIDENT

A. GENERAL COUNCIL BUSINESS:

B. CONSENT CALENDAR:

Mr. Livingston announced that Mr. Goldstein would be reading this evening's Consent Calendar.

- ** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING CONSENT CALENDAR:**

VI. REPORTS: DEPARTMENTS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

A. CORPORATION COUNSEL

VII. COMMON COUNCIL COMMITTEES

- A. RECREATION, PARKS AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**
1. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH TRIANGLE COMMUNITY CENTER FOR THE USE OF MATHEWS PARK AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS FOR PRIDE IN THE PARK TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY

JUNE 11, 2022 FROM 12:00 PM TO 8:00 PM. SET-UP TO BEGIN AT 6:00 AM WITH TEAR-DOWN AT 9:00PM. APPROXIMATE ATTENDANCE 7,000.

2. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH THE NORWALK SEAPORT ASSOCIATION FOR THE USE OF VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS FOR THE OYSTER FESTIVAL TO BE HELD FROM FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2022 TO SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 11, 2022. SET-UP TO BEGIN ON FRIDAY, AUGUST 19, 2022 WITH TEAR-DOWN NO LATER THAN FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2022. APPROXIMATE ATTENDANCE 40,000.

3. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH THE LEUKEMIA AND LYMPHOMA SOCIETY FOR THE USE OF CALF PASTURE & TAYLOR FARM PARKING LOTS AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDING GROUNDS FOR LLS LIGHT THE NIGHT EVENT TO BE HELD ON SATURDAY OCTOBER 8, 2022 FROM 5:00 PM TO 11:59 PM. SET-UP ON FRIDAY OCTOBER 7, 2022 AT 8:00 AM WITH TEAR-DOWN ON SATURDAY OCTOBER 8, 2022 BY 11:59 PM. APPROXIMATE ATTENDANCE 1,000.

4. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO GENGRAS FORD FOR A 2022 FORD F550 DUMPING RACK BODY TRUCK IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$56349.00, SOLE SOURCE STATE CONTRACT # 19PSX0161, FROM ACCOUNTS 0921-6030-5777-C0486 AND 0922-6030-5777-C0486.

5. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT TO ISSUE A PURCHASE ORDER TO GENGRAS FORD FOR A 2022 F250 WITH SERVICE BODY IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$58,528.90, SOLE SOURCE STATE CONTRACT NUMBER # 19PSX0161, FROM ACCOUNT # 0922-6030-5777-C0486.

C. FINANCE AND CLAIMS COMMITTEE

1. ACCEPT AND APPROVE THE REPORT OF THE CLAIMS COMMITTEE DATED: FEBRUARY 10, 2022

2. FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY: NARRATIVE ON TAX COLLECTIONS DATED: FEBRUARY 10, 2022

3. FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY: MONTHLY TAX COLLECTOR'S REPORT DATED: JANUARY 2022

4. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO UPGRADE WORLDQX SOFTWARE TO SAAS CLOUD-BASED SOLUTION, RECURRING COSTS \$8,571, ONE-TIME MIGRATION FEE \$1,920.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

B. ORDINANCE COMMITTEE

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING REVISIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE FOLLOWING CITY CODE SECTIONS:**

• TEMPORARY PROHIBITION OF ALL CANNABIS ESTABLISHMENTS

Ms. Shanahan reviewed the item and said they will be working with various departments to do outreach on how to proceed.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**** MS. SHANAHAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING REVISIONS/AMENDMENTS TO THE FOLLOWING CITY CODE SECTIONS:**

• CHAPTER 45, ARTICLE IV – OUTDOOR DINING – SECTIONS 45-29, 45-30, 45-31, 45-32, 45-33, AND 45-34.

Due to a potential conflict of interest, Mr. Kydes recused himself from discussing and voting on this item.

Ms. Shanahan reviewed the item and said this has been passed through various City department. She said that she feels this will be a good opportunity for the restaurants.

Mr. Livingston said he wanted to allay some fears since this Ordinance brings the outdoor dining to 11:00 p.m. He said the Noise Ordinance and the Outdoor dining Ordinance are two different things. He said they have been assured by Ms. Vonashek they are very serious about the noise and will do everything to make this work. Ms. Shanahan described the procedures if the Noise Ordinance is not followed.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Mr. Kydes rejoined the meeting.

C. FINANCE AND CLAIMS COMMITTEE

5. RESOLUTION:

**** MR. BURNETT MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:**

WHEREAS, SECTION 1-289 OF THE NORWALK CHARTER REQUIRES THAT A MAJORITY OF THE COMMON COUNCIL VOTE TO ESTABLISH A SPECIFIC SPENDING LIMIT ON LOCALLY EXPENDITURES DURING THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR'S OPERATING BUDGET.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORWALK THAT:

THE MAXIMUM LIMIT ON THE TOTAL APPROPRIATION FOR THE CITY OF NORWALK FOR FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2022 SHALL BE NO MORE THAN \$391,732,046. THIS APPROPRIATION CAP REPRESENTS TOTAL EXPENDITURES OF \$414,117,874 LESS ESTIMATED INTERGOVERNMENTAL GRANTS OF \$22,385,828. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE RESULT OF THIS VOTE AND RESOLUTION, TOGETHER WITH THE ATTACHED 2022-2023 BUDGET GUIDE, BE FORWARDED BY THE CLERK OF THE CITY OF NORWALK TO THE BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION.

Mr. Burnett reviewed the Resolution and said the recommended budget provides a 3.75% increase to the City and a 4.5% increase to the Board of Education. The goal is to keep the tax rolls as low as possible and the plan is to draw down from the Rainy Day fund to provide tax relief to the residents.

Mr. Burnett said that decisions have to be made. The next step in the operating budget flow is for the Board of Estimate and Taxation to conduct meetings with department heads and then hold a public hearing.

**** MS. NIEDZIELSKI EICHNER MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS AMENDED:**

WHEREAS, SECTION 1-289 OF THE NORWALK CHARTER REQUIRES THAT A MAJORITY OF THE COMMON COUNCIL VOTE TO ESTABLISH A SPECIFIC SPENDING LIMIT ON LOCALLY EXPENDITURES DURING THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR'S OPERATING BUDGET.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORWALK THAT:

THE MAXIMUM LIMIT ON THE TOTAL APPROPRIATION FOR THE CITY OF NORWALK FOR FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2022 SHALL BE NO MORE THAN \$393,668,899. THIS APPROPRIATION CAP REPRESENTS TOTAL EXPENDITURES OF \$416,054,727 LESS ESTIMATED INTERGOVERNMENTAL GRANTS OF \$22,385,828. BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT THE RESULT OF THIS VOTE AND RESOLUTION, TOGETHER WITH THE ATTACHED 2022-2023 BUDGET GUIDE, BE FORWARDED BY THE CLERK OF THE CITY OF NORWALK TO THE BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner said that as a Common Council, they can't direct how the Board of Education spends these funds, but this is a way of understanding what the need is in the school system. She said this increase works out to be a 5.4% increase.

Mr. Heuvelman said that by raising the cap, they are giving a bucket to the Board of Education to figure out how it will be allocated.

Ms. McMurrer said that she is pro education and is frustrated with the process. She said she wants the money to go directly to the students and the teachers. If this was a normal year, this would be a big win for the school. The South Norwalk incubator is a good idea, but the City does not own the property. She said they all need to do better as a team. Ms. McMurrer said she looks forward to seeing the efficiency study. She said she is happy to see the increase, but would like to see it go up; this is not us vs. them.

Mr. Livingston thanked all those who wrote their very heartfelt comments. He noted that this is the most difficult part of their job. They need to look at the ability of people to pay. Every increase may hurt people in terms of cost, but they want what is best for the students.

Mr. Livingston noted that on the capital side, the Common Council approved \$200 million over the last few years. On the operations side, it is important to clarify what happened last year. The Common Council did approve an increase for the Board of Education, but it was flat funded by the Board of Estimate and Taxation as is their right. Mr. Livingston said he would support the cap as proposed and not as amended.

Ms. Alterman said she supported the amendment to raise the cap. She said she did not know the total number of e-mails that were submitted and not read on the record. She said it is difficult to get information and pledged to notify people about meetings and expects all Common Council members to do the same. She noted it is their duty to listen to both sides.

Ms. Revolus said that as a parent she understands how his affects the community. She said she stands for people who do not speak, because they may not have computers or have to work. She suggested paying attention to the people who can't afford this. Ms. Revolus said she was not in favor of the amendment. She thanked those who think about people who can't afford this increase. She said there are funds that have been promised, but not allocated. Ms. Revolus said they are all here for Norwalk and want to see what is best for the children. Ms. Revolus thanked those who think of others.

Ms. Smyth said she stands on her record of supporting the schools. Last year she did not support reducing the cap and was disappointed when the Board of Estimate and Taxation zeroed out the Board of Education's request. She said she feels Norwalk has a great school system and great teachers, but his year, we are coming off of a pandemic. Children are struggling, but they have to think about the taxpayers. People are struggling so much, that it can be a choice between feeding their families or paying rent or facing eviction. She acknowledged the homeless students. Ms. Smyth said she would not support the amendment.

Mr. Goldstein said that as one of the few non-parents, it is important to every citizen of Norwalk that the Norwalk public schools are as good as they possibly can be. The 4.5% increase represents over a \$9 million increase, which is very substantive. He said that as a South Norwalk resident, he believes the incubator needs to happen, but it is premature at this time. He said he read every e-mail, but noted there are a lot of needs from families that are struggling and will not support the amendment.

Ms. Alterman reminded parents and caregivers that they relied on the school system to take care of the City.

Ms. Dixon read the amended resolution.

Ms. Johnson asked if a draw down from the Rainy Day fund will be taken to fund this bump. Mayor Rilling explained that the original draw down was \$4 million. When this is sent to the Board of Estimate and Taxation, they decide how to come in under the cap. Common Council members can give their thoughts, but the Board of Estimate and Taxation presents the budget.

**** THE AMENDMENT FAILED WITH FOUR (4) VOTES IN FAVOR (MS. NIEDZIELSKI EICHNER; MS. AYERS; MS. MCMURRER; MS.**

ALTERMAN) AND ELEVEN (11) OPPOSED (MR. BURNETT; MR. GOLDSTEIN; MS. JOHNSON; MS. SMYTH; MR. HEUVELMAN; MS. REVOLUS; MS. YOUNG; MR. KYDES; MR. KEEGAN; MR. LIVINGSTON; MS. SHANAHAN)

The discussion returned to the original motion.

Mr. Kydes thanked Mayor Rilling for supporting the addition of funds for field maintenance. He said the only solution to maintaining the fields was to add two employees.

Mr. Kydes respectfully requests that the Board of Estimate and Taxation fund the addition of two full-time Recreation and Parks employees.

**** MR. KYDES MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION AS AMENDED**

WHEREAS, SECTION 1-289 OF THE NORWALK CHARTER REQUIRES THAT A MAJORITY OF THE COMMON COUNCIL VOTE TO ESTABLISH A SPECIFIC SPENDING LIMIT ON LOCALLY EXPENDITURES DURING THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR'S OPERATING BUDGET.

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Mr. Keegan spoke in support of the amendment. He said the Parks and Recreation Committee, led by Ms. Young has been an advocate for maintaining the fields because it is important for the kids.

Ms. Johnson spoke in support of the amendment and asked for clarification about making requests to the Board of Estimate and Taxation.

Ms. Shanahan said she was familiar with the City's budget and knows they have not added staff in a long time. She said the need for outdoor recreation is important to everyone, especially the children. She said she understands the Common Council can't tell the Board of Estimate and Taxation what to do, but they can make this request.

Ms. Smyth thanked Mr. Kydes for the amendment and said Mayor Rilling committed one additional person to Parks and Recreation. She said she would like to see Mr. Sowers have the opportunity to work with that one additional person and see how that works, because this is another bump in the taxes. She said that she trusted Mr. Sowers to make a lot with a little.

Ms. Young said that for the past several years, she has heard about the need for additional staff for Parks and Recreation. She thanked Mr. Kydes for putting forward this amendment. She noted that they are here to stick to a budget, but they need an extra person for Parks and Recreation.

Mr. Goldstein said that consistency in that rationale is important and said he would be voting no on this amendment.

Mr. Livingston said he was struggling with this. He said he agreed there is a need for an additional person in Parks and Recreation, but this is not consistent.

Mr. Heuvelman said he agreed with Mr. Goldstein and Mr. Livingston.

Mr. Burnett said the original recommended budget was the result of many hours of discussion. He said the Finance team had several hours of discussions with every department. They invested time and effort to present a fair and appropriate budget to ensure there is a minimal tax increase, but to nickel and dime the recommended budget is not appropriate. The Board of Estimate and Taxation will go through another department review where there will be the opportunity to make changes.

Mr. Burnett said the Finance team did a great job in presenting the recommended budget based on their work with each department head. He said he will not support this amendment.

Ms. Alterman said she received some messages that last year an amendment was passed that reduced the cap by \$1 million. She asked who decided that. Mayor Rilling explained that the proposed cap was reduced by \$1 million last year and was passed by the Common Council and then passed on to the Board of Estimate and Taxation. Ms. Alterman said it is confusing to the people who watch to know who did what and when. Mayor Rilling said that the decision made by the Common Council goes to the Board of Estimate and Taxation.

Ms. Young said she completely understood this and if this amendment is not passed, it is the will of the Common Council; however, she said she hoped there is a plan to bring Parks and Recreation staff up to keep the grounds safe and clean for all residents. Ms. Young said she appreciated that there is one position for Parks and Recreation.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH NINE (9) VOTES IN FAVOR (MS. NIEDZIELSKI EICHNER; MS. AYERS; MS. REVOLUS; MS. YOUNG; MR. KYDES; MS. MCMURRER; MS. ALTERMAN; MR. KEEGAN; MS. SHANAHAN) AND SIX (6) OPPOSED (MR. BURNETT; MR. GOLDSTEIN; MS. JOHNSON; MS. SMYTH; MR. HEUVELMAN; MR. LIVINGSTON)**

Ms. Ayers said she was an involved parent and applauded the Finance and Board of Estimate and Taxation teams. She encouraged her colleagues to think several years ahead. She said they were responsible for what they do and how they treat each other. Ms. Ayers said she reads every e-mail and ponders what to do for everybody.

Ms. Ayers told people to be careful about discouraging other from making amendments. They are elected to do difficult things and noted there is a lot more work to do.

Ms. Johnson said this is her third time going through this process and the process is broken. She thanked everyone who reached out and for the speakers. The ECS formula penalizes the City. She urged everyone to advocate for funding for the Reading and Math specialists and to address mental health issues.

Ms. Revolus said she has a child who is a senior in high school and is pregnant. That child will also go into Norwalk Public schools.

Ms. Smyth urged the Central Office to take care of the teachers. They feel under valued and the kids need them. She asked the Central Office to recognize what the teachers go through.

IX. MOTIONS POSTPONED TO A SPECIFIC DATE

There were none this evening.

X. SUSPENSION OF RULES

There were none this evening.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

- ** MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO ADJOURN**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 9:53 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
Irene Dixon, City Clerk