

**CITY OF NORWALK
FINANCE/CLAIMS COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 13, 2012.**

ATTENDANCE: Carvin Hilliard, Chair; John Igneri, David McCarthy, Douglas Hempstead, Matthew Miklave (7:36 p.m.)

STAFF: Thomas Hamilton, Finance Director; Fred Gilden, Comptroller; Lisa Biagiarelli, Tax Collector

OTHERS: Council Member Bruce Kimmel (7:36 p.m.); Council Member David Watts (7:55 p.m.)

CALL TO ORDER.

Mr. Hilliard called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. A quorum was present.

**APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FOLLOWING FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES:**

October 11, 2012

October 17, 2012

**** MR. MCCARTHY MOVE TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 11, 2012 AND OCTOBER 17, 2012 AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF OCTOBER 11, 2012 AND OCTOBER 17, 2012 AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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

November 8, 2012

December 13, 2012

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MONTHLY CLAIMS REPORT FOR NOVEMBER 8, 2012 AND DECEMBER 13, 2012**

**** THE MOTION TO ACCEPT THE MONTHLY CLAIMS REPORT FOR NOVEMBER 8, 2012 AND DECEMBER 13, 2012 PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

NARRATIVE ON TAX COLLECTION DATED DECEMBER 13, 2012 - RECEIVE REPORT AND DISCUSS.

MONTHLY TAX COLLECTION'S REPORT DATED OCTOBER 31, 2012 & NOVEMBER 30 2012 - RECEIVE REPORTS AND DISCUSS.

Ms. Biagiarelli stated that the tax bills were mailed out and February 1st will be the last day to pay. There is only one month left for the bidders to redeem the properties. She said that she will be sending out a reminder letter about that. Enforcement activities are underway.

Ms. Biagiarelli said that Sandy had not impacted her department at all. Mr. Hempstead asked what would happen to the various properties that were destroyed like Ascension Beach. Mr. Hamilton stated that there were 23 homes that had been informed by the City or the Health Department that they had serious issues.

Mr. Kimmel joined the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

Mr. Hamilton said that he would check with the Tax Assessor about how a situation like this would be handled.

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO ACCEPT NARRATIVE ON TAX COLLECTION DATED DECEMBER 13, 2012 AND MONTHLY TAX COLLECTION'S REPORT DATED OCTOBER 31, 2012 & NOVEMBER 30 2012**

**** THE MOTION TO ACCEPT NARRATIVE ON TAX COLLECTION DATED DECEMBER 13, 2012 AND MONTHLY TAX COLLECTION'S REPORT DATED OCTOBER 31, 2012 & NOVEMBER 30 2012 PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

RECEIVE BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION APPROPRIATION FROM DECEMBER 3, 2012.

RESOLVED, that a sum not to exceed \$75,000 be and the same is hereby transferred from Contingency to the Historical Commission to cover the rent payment to the Norwalk Museum Partnership until 06/312013. (Account No.: 016300-5620)

Mr. Hamilton explained that there were two special appropriations that went to the BET for approval and are now on their way to the Council.

The first one is a contingency request for the \$75,000 for rent payment. Originally, it was assumed that it would take six months to move the collection to another location. Mr. Hamilton then reviewed various details associated with this. He said that by having an outside group manage the City owned property, the City would avoid issues such as overtime, night time meetings, and other problems.

Mr. Miklave joined the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Mr. Kimmel said that he had attended a number of the meetings on this issue. He said that by having more signage and working on letting the public know what is available at Lockwood House the residents would have more access to the materials. The public will be able to access the materials from their website.

Mr. Watts joined the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Mr. Miklave asked for clarification on the arrangement regarding the disposition of the archives, and the artifacts currently housed at the Museum. Mr. Hamilton then reviewed the details with him. Mr. Miklave asked about the fact that an outside group would be in charge of the care of the artifacts. Mr. Hamilton said that a 501(c)3 would have the opportunity to raise funding and would be able to operate more efficiently. Discussion followed.

Mr. Miklave said that Mr. Hamilton had expressly stated that avoiding pension, obligations, overtime requirements, and other issues should never be part of the decisions. Mr. Hamilton said that if he suggested that if the intention to avoid unionization was part of this, he misspoke. He said that this was not the motivation of the city for the decision. The motivation was financial and the City was looking for a solution for the problem. He said that the City has worked closely with all the City bargaining groups.

Mr. Watts said that the savings in terms of the overall budget was insufficient. He said that this could be interpreted as another privatization move. He said that organized labor was the key to the middle class. The elimination of a union position should be carefully considered. Norwalk has a rich history and the City should invest in good paying jobs. It will be important for the City to be serious about saving money. Mr. Watts said that if the City could afford a new vehicle for the Mayor, then funding for the Museum shouldn't be cut.

Mr. McCarthy asked for a point of order on this. Mr. Hilliard agreed and said that the committee needed to focus the issues about the Museum, not about the mayor's car. Mr. Miklave asked for a point of order and said that he would like to know the reason why Mr. Watts was ruled out of order. Mr. Hilliard reiterated his reasoning. Mr. Watts said that he wanted to have the record reflect that his point was that a union employee lost their position when this decision was made. Mr. Kimmel pointed out that the union issues were never discussed in the Museum meetings and that Mr. Hamilton has simply been answering some questions with facts.

Mr. Hilliard repeated that the Committee should limit themselves to the agenda. He added that the Finance meetings have not been toxic or confrontational in the past.

Mr. Miklave said that he did not find anything that Mr. Watts said objectionable and was trying to understand what was out of order. He said that one of the reasons to transfer the control of the Museum to a 501(c)3 to a private organization to save money from the union costs. He said that doing this was unlawful if it plays any part of the motivation and gave an example about Boeing. Mr. Hilliard said that he agreed with Mr. Miklave on principal.

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION:**

RESOLVED, THAT A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$75,000 BE AND THE SAME IS HEREBY TRANSFERRED FROM CONTINGENCY TO THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION TO COVER THE RENT PAYMENT TO THE NORWALK MUSEUM PARTNERSHIP UNTIL 06/312013. (ACCOUNT No.: 016300-5620)

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH THREE IN FAVOR (IGNERI, HEMPSTEAD, AND HILLIARD) AND ONE OPPOSED (MIKLAVE).**

Resolved, that a sum not to exceed \$725,00 be and the same is hereby transferred from Fund Balance to various accounts for emergency response and debris removal expenses related to Hurricane Sandy (Account No.: Various)

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED THE ITEM.**

Mr. Hempstead asked if the Finance Department had prioritized the list. Mr. Hamilton replied that they had and he would like to share that list with the Committee. The request deals with debris removal. A list of the various amounts was included in the information packet. The costs includes the Fire Department, Police Department, Code Enforcement, and opening the shelter at Brien McMahon among others. It is expected that FEMA will reimburse 75% of the costs based on their requirements. A portion of the benefits costs will also be reimbursed. City crews and some outside contractors were also included. The funds will be coming from the Fund Balance until the FEMA reimbursement is received.

Mr. Hamilton then distributed a document to the Committee members. Mr. Miklave asked about the debris removal and wished to confirm that the costs associated with that was absolutely necessary. Mr. Hamilton confirmed that this was so.

Mr. Hamilton said that Recreation and Parks took the largest amount of damage. The pier, the seawall and jetty had been damaged during Irene and Sandy finished the pier off and severely damaged the jetty and seawall. The FEMA reimbursement on the seawall, jetty and pier will not end up reimbursing the City at 75%, but closer to 29%. Mr. Hamilton then gave an overview of the details associated with FEMA decision.

Mr. Hamilton said that the pier had suffered major damage in 1985, 2002, 2005, 2007 and in 2011. He then said that a policy decision had to be made regarding whether or not the City would replace the pier. If FEMA only reimburses the City 25% that will mean that the City would have to supply \$800,000 from the budget.

Mr. McCarthy left the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Mr. Watts asked where the funding would come from. Mr. Hamilton said that it would come from the Fund Balance. Mr. Watts asked for clarification on the difference between using the Fund Balance to repair the pier and not using the Fund Balance for the School District. Mr. Hamilton said that the \$725,000 was not for the fishing pier at all, it was for the emergency response. If the decision is made to repair the fishing pier, it would be allocated under the Capital appropriation. The \$800,000 would most likely be bonded out.

Mr. Watts asked what the impact on the Fund Balance would be for the AAA rating. Mr. Hamilton said that the reason the Fund Balance was allocated was to deal with the storm damage. Mr. Watts said that he would be uncomfortable with funding for the pier when there was such major financial issues with the Board of Education. Mr. Hamilton said that the \$800,000 would be a Capital Budget item and that it would be competing with other items in the Capital Budget. It would not affect the Operating Budget.

Mr. Igneri said that based on his experience, FEMA has already started cutting checks to victims. Mr. Hamilton said that the City's FEMA funding is routed through the State and that may have been why some of the funding for the damage for Irene were delayed.

Mr. Miklave asked how much money was allocated in last year for the seawall and the pier. Mr. Hamilton gave approximate figures. Mr. Miklave pointed out that the seawall costs would be about \$600,000. He then asked if the pier repair funds from last year could be directed towards this year's seawall repairs. Discussion followed about this.

Mr. Kimmel said that the entire area of Emergency Preparedness was prominent. He pointed out that there had been a number of times in the past few years when city residents have been without heat and light. Emergency Management has become important and possibly having multiple shelters rather than one site would be a higher priority.

Mr. Watts pointed out that there was an area in the Common Council Chambers where the spackling had been done, but never sanded or painted. He added that he was aware of the fact that there were families that fish off the pier for their dinner. He said that some people will realize that this is not a necessity.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTION :**

**RESOLVED, THAT A SUM NOT TO EXCEED \$725,00 BE AND THE SAME IS
HEREBY TRANSFERRED FROM FUND BALANCE TO VARIOUS ACCOUNTS FOR
EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND DEBRIS REMOVAL EXPENSES RELATED TO
HURRICANE SANDY (ACCOUNT NO.: VARIOUS)**

PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO ADJOURN .
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services