

**CITY OF NORWALK  
BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
MARCH 26, 2013**

**ATTENDANCE:** James Clark, Chair; James Feigenbaum, Erik Anderson  
Atty. Ed Camacho, Greg Burnett, Mayor Harry W. Rilling,  
Anne Yang-Dwyer (via telephone conference)

**STAFF:** Thomas Hamilton, Finance Director; Robert Barron,  
Assistant Finance Director; Donna King, City Clerk

**OTHERS:** Curtis Law, Norwalk Housing Authority, Council  
Member Travis Simms

**CALL TO ORDER.**

Mr. Clark called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. Ms. King called the roll. A quorum was present.

**DEVELOPMENT OF TENTATIVE BUDGET RECOMMENDATION TO BE  
SUBMITTED TO THE COMMON COUNCIL BY MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2014.**

Mr. Hamilton said that this meeting was to allow the Board to discuss any issues that were raised at the public hearing. He added that Mr. Curtis Law, the Norwalk Housing Authority director was present. The Board will have this opportunity to ask questions of Mr. Law regarding the Housing Authority's in the Head Start program. Mr. Hamilton said that the Finance Office was not prepared to make a recommendation at this time due to some additional information that is needed to finalize the numbers. The Housing Authority will be presenting a significant request to the City in the future.

Mr. Barron then reviewed the various budget figures as outlined in a three page memo dated March 14, 2014 from Mr. Barron to the members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation. He said that there were some requests from the public hearing on March 19, 2014 and also a request from the Senior Center.

Mayor Rilling said that the original budget had been submitted to the Council and the Council had reduced that by \$500,000. Then there had been a BOE return of \$500,000. So the budget was significantly under the cap.

Mr. Hamilton said that the City had made significant contributions to NEON in the past of \$937,000 for Head Start and then an additional amount for the general administrative support. This 1.3 million funding was discontinued two years ago when the BET had to cut 2.5 million from the budget. This was also at the same time that the Federal audit had been done at NEON.

Since then, the Housing Authority has stepped in and is now running the Head Start program. There are 232 students in the program and 162 are covered by the funding from the Federal Head Start program and the remaining students are not covered by the Federal funding. The students age out and move into regular schooling. However, the Housing Authority would like to continue to serve the full number of students and sponsor the summer program. Historically, the program has been run as a full 12 month program. Mr. Hamilton said that there were two aspects to consider: the number of students being served and the summer program costs. He said that conceptually, this discussion is important because the request from the Housing Authority is over one million.

Mr. Law said that originally, when the Housing Authority took the program, they mistakenly assumed that the NEON funding was being held in escrow. Since the original request was made, one donation has been received and the Federal Government announced a COLA increase.

He said that the students who are enrolled in the program have families who work, so that they need a 12 month program. It is also important to have Mr. Hamilton said that this was not an all or nothing request and then said that there might be funding available through a child daycare grant. Because of this, it is difficult to determine what the final figure would be.

Mr. Law said that his department has not been able to get any records about the maintenance or other documents on expenses. Mr. Clark said that it would be helpful to have an estimate of the cost of running the 10 month program and the cost of the summer program. Discussion followed about the details.

*Mr. Simms left the meeting at 7:35 p.m.*

Mr. Clark said that it would be important to understand the overall picture and the various revenue streams that would be coming in. Mayor Rilling agreed and said that not having any records made it difficult to calculate the amounts. He also cautioned everyone that using an estimate of \$9,000 per student could be flawed in that there is an economy of scale when a certain number of students per teacher ratio is reached.

Mr. Feigenbaum said that the City was working in the dark since the Housing Authority has no documents other than salaries. Mr. Law said that the only thing he was certain of was the salaries. Mr. Barron said that he had contacted the Assistant Finance Director, a list of salaries was given, but he explained that the way the figures were arrived at was by taking one paycheck and extrapolated it to cover a year. There are 64 staff employed, and 9 of which are vacant. There are 13 Head Start staff and one Federal Head Start teacher. The staff is being interviewed and they have been fingerprinted.

Ms. Yang-Dwyer asked if a Norwalk resident would be able to apply for a slot in Stamford or Bridgeport. Mr. Law said that he didn't know, but thought that transportation might be a problem. Ms. Yang-Dwyer then said about some of the Stamford Head Start program are run by

Child Care Learning Centers. She suggested that perhaps the students could be out sourced to these programs or that there could be leveraged into existing programs. Mr. Law said that the Head Start had been in Norwalk for over 30 years and that there was no issue with a new program. It was lack of documentation and funding that was the issue. Ms. Yang-Dwyer said that she would like to see the cost of each student from the other programs. Mr. Hamilton said that the Federal Government had assigned Head Start to the Housing Authority. Mr. Law said that they have a consultant assigned to help them with this program.

Mr. Anderson pointed out that the Board of Education originally had the Head Start program decades ago. He added that the BOE had a surplus this year and wondered if any of those funds could be directed to Head Start. Mr. Law said that if there was a joint meeting, many of the details would become clear.

Mr. Barron said that the entire two month summer program was not funded and the funding for the 55 slots from the 10 month program. However, there was a number of variables. Mr. Feigenbaum suggested that a member of the BET be present at the meeting. Discussion followed.

Mayor Rilling said that he thought that the Board would do whatever they could within reason but would not be able to do anything to without some figures. Mr. Law said that he had not come with any expectation of a decision to be made on money, but just to have a sense of the Board.

Mr. Barron suggested that perhaps it would be good for him to spend some time with the Assistant Financial Director of the NHA. Mr. Law pointed out that these children were the most vulnerable children and that they needed to have good teachers. He said that he would rather cut back to a smaller number of students with good teachers than the full 162 with mediocre teachers.

Mr. Clark asked if anyone had other comments on open items.

Ms. Yang-Dwyer said that she was on the Board of the Senior Center. Ms. Yang-Dwyer suggested that the literacy program be moved to the Senior Center. They would have space and the program could be accommodated in a not for profit. Mayor Rilling said that there would be more information needed on that.

Mr. Anderson said that the library would be receiving a contingent funding. He said that this would give the Board a year to think about this solution. Ms. Yang-Dwyer said that by putting the staff on the Senior Center, this would allow the program to do fund raising. Mr. Barron said that the intention was to give a one time allocation of \$30,000.

Mr. Anderson then asked if there was any feedback on the guidelines and rules on the expenditures for the Council. Mayor Rilling said that there were discussions about this and how it might be worked out. Mr. Anderson said that he would like to comfortable with the rules and

regulations. Mr. Barron said that when the planning is completed, a special appropriation could be done to provide the funding. Mr. Hamilton said that the tentative vote would be April 7th and the final vote in May.

Mr. Barron said that there was a discussion with Youth Services in response to the BET regarding the Juvenile Review Board. Mr. Walenczyk reached out to Superintendent of Schools regarding funding half of the salary. Mr. Morris said that he would go to the State and lobbying for financial support due to the fact that it reduced the amount of cases for the court system. Mr. Barron asked if the City would consider funding \$28,000. Mr. Barron said that he was hesitant without a commitment from the BOE. He added that if it was not in the budget, a special appropriation could be done. Mr. Anderson said that he applauded Mr. Walenczyk for his creativity regarding commitments from the BOE and the State.

The Board Members then reviewed all the open items in the budget.

Mr. Burnett asked if there was a running list of potential special appropriations . Mr. Hamilton said he does have a list. Mr. Barron said that there was roughly 30 million in the fund balance. Any item that was deemed to be worthy of special appropriation would most likely be funded from the contingency.

Atty. Camacho said that regarding the South Norwalk Community Center, he was there agent or attorney. He said that he would be recusing himself from the vote.

Atty. Camacho then said that while the Fair Housing Office supply budget had been approved. He said that there was a still an issue with her salary. Mr. Barron said that in the past, part of her salary had been supplied by CDBG funding. The City now has assumed the cost of her salary. He went on to give the details of the issue. Discussion followed.

#### **ADJOURNMENT.**

**\*\* MR. FEIGENBAUM MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes  
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Norwalk  
Board of Estimate and Taxation  
Special Meeting  
March 26, 2013

