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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 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. Edwin Camacho
	Mr. Joshua Goldstein	Ms. Nora Niedzielski Eichner
	Ms. Barbara Smyth	

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

At Roll Call there were fifteen (15) Common Councilmembers present. A Quorum was present.

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

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting: February 14, 2023 – Special Meeting

The following correction was made to the last page. The City has not received any money yet because there have been no cannabis sales in Norwalk

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS CORRECTED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

February 14, 2023 – Regular Meeting

**** MR. HEUVELMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED
** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MR. MEEK)**

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

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

Mayor Rilling made opening remarks and said that he knew a lot of people wanted to talk about the Board of Education budget. He reviewed public participation protocols and said the budget is a work in progress. The Board of Estimate and Taxation will go over each line item and once they reach a consensus, they will hold a public hearing. The public is invited to speak at that public hearing.

Mr. Burnett announced that the Common Council would not be voting on the operating budget cap this evening; however, they will hold a special meeting of the Common Council on March 7, 2023 at 7:30 p.m.

Christian Penta spoke in support of the Board of Education's request to fund mental health workers for students.

Lisa Brinton said that on Friday, the City gave away a parking lot for apartments, but the revenue does not cover school funding. The Board of Education's budget request is alarming; all City departments are struggling. Ms. Brinton spoke about expenses such as lawsuits and the intake of immigrant students. She suggested implementing a city sales tax.

Valia Dightman spoke in support of the Norwalk Public School workers and said the City needs to fund the Board of Education more than 4%. She said the money has to come from the Rainy Day Fund, then so be it.

Janine Randolph urged the approval of the proposed school budget. She said these are not luxuries, they are necessities. The pandemic took a toll on the students.

Dan Decker said it is tough to balance all the needs, but said he chose to be a champion for the children. He asked that the Board of Education's budget be increased.

Sarah McKinsley grew up in a neighboring town and said there are so many amazing things about Norwalk, but no one gave a good reason why the Board of Education can't meet its contractual obligation.

Barbara Myer Mitchell said she understands the struggle to fund the Board of Education's initiatives and urged the Common Council to step up and support their budget.

An unidentified speaker said everyone else got something and the gap needs to be filled.

Sarah Lenzycki spoke about the teachers at Cranbury Elementary school and said they need more support and resources. She said there is a national teacher shortage and there is a mental health crisis. She said Norwalk prides itself on diversity, but with that comes needs.

Justin Matley spoke about his struggles growing up and said that he is where he is now because he had resources when he was in school. He said academics are important and this is a time of trauma.

Erika DePalma (issues with the audio) Said there is a mental health epidemic in the nation. She said they were not prepared for the number of crisis calls on a weekly basis. She spoke about the importance of having a lead agency for mental health needs.

Ezra Esada spoke about how difficult it is for the staff to meet the needs of the students. Staff members use their free time to fill those needs. She said that other parts of the City are not nickel and dimed as much as the Board of Education.

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Mary Ellen Flaherty Ludwig spoke about her memories going to St. Joseph Elementary School in South Norwalk. She said the Norwalk Public Schools were flush with Federal money during the pandemic. She said that Dr. Estrella was told to think boldly. She urged the Common Council members to approve the maximum increase the can.

April Witherstone spoke about the mental health crisis created by the pandemic. She said the budget should taken into consideration that children need a support system. She urged supporting the mental health of the children.

Susan Patronelli said it was important to fund the Board of Education's increase.

Godfrey Cameron spoke about his experience as a parent. He said the kids deserve to be in school and that the services are necessary.

Sheri McCready Pritchett said she was appreciative of the funds provided by the City. As a former member of the Board of Estimate and Taxation she understands the challenges facing the the City. They are in a critical financial time period. She said that she expects there will be continued discussions to ensure students get the resources and tools they need.

Iliana Zuniga spoke about the accomplishments of the children. She said that education is a main reason people move to Norwalk and all students should have the opportunities they deserve.

Diane Lauricella said they need to add more funding to Board of Education's budget by reducing more from the spending side. She said that she has asked for years that they optimize the use of renewable energy. There are numerous Board of Education properties where they should have solar energy, but they do not due to wrong policies. She also suggested ending the lease on the Family Center and moving it to a City owned building.

Ms. Lauricella suggested that the City hire a full time grants person with a team. Until the Board of Education and the Norwalk Public School staff reduce their spending, the City should not increase the cap.

Diana Carpio asked the Common Council members to think about the budget and the 4% that has been put forth. The budge allocates funds that benefit all students in the District. It represents the welfare and future of the children. She asked the Common Council members to think long and hard about the 4%.

Sara LeMieux said there are a lot of stories. She said the Norwalk public schools are meeting the needs very efficiently for literacy and math. She would love it if there was a way to have a standing standing committee of the Board of Education and the Common Council members to have discussions year round and have a more collaborative working relationship.

Michael McCarthy asked if the grand list had been released yet. Mayor Rilling said it was not finalized.

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Pamela Young said that social type opportunities are important for the growth of the students. She said she hoped all comments would be considered this evening. She said she loves the teachers but there is a shortage our teachers and a lot of turnover.

Jessica Jones said both of her children receive services. The kids have experienced a trauma from COVID and they do not have the skills to cope. She said she hears the inmates run the asylum at West Rocks Middle School.

Maria Robinson said she was here to ask the Common Council to find the funding for the children. They deserve to have an education.

Bridget Kennedy said they chose Norwalk because they were attracted to the community and school performance was on the rise. She said she deals with budgets all the time and understands the need to prioritize. She urged the Common Council to look at and prioritize the numbers.

There were no other members of the public who wished to speak.

IV. MAYOR

A. RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

RESIGNATIONS: There were no resignations announced this evening.

APPOINTMENTS: There were no appointments announced this evening.

REAPPOINTMENTS:

**** MR. BURNETT MOVED TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING REAPPOINTMENTS**

JANET KARPIAK, M.D. – BOARD OF HEALTH

KENNETH LALIME – BOARD OF HEALTH

TERRY TAVELLA QUELL, PHD, MSN, RN – BOARD OF HEALTH

Mr. Burnett spoke in support of the reappointments.

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

MAYOR'S REMARKS:

Mayor Rilling thanked the members of the public who were present both in person and on Zoom to share their thoughts on the budget. He thanked the Department of Public Works for the

incredible job they did in responding to the snow and keeping the streets clear and safe. Last week, Norwalk kicked off its quarterly business roundtable to help assist local businesses, as well as provide help and resources to those looking to start a business. The recently opened Business Development Center on Belden Avenue also provides resources to assist local businesses. Upgrades are under way at Calf Pasture Beach, which will increase pedestrian safety and will have a nautical theme. Mayor Rilling thanked city staff and residents for their participation in planning and attending Black History Month events during February.

V. COUNCIL PRESIDENT

A. GENERAL COUNCIL BUSINESS:

Mr. Burnett announced that Mr. Goldstein would read this evening's consent calendar.

RESIGNATION AND APPOINTMENTS:

RESIGNATIONS: There were no resignations announced this evening.

APPOINTMENTS: There were no appointments announced this evening.

REAPPOINTMENTS: There were no reappointments announced this evening.

B. 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. PUBLIC WORKS

1. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO CONVEY A 183± SQ. FT. UTILITY EASEMENT IN FAVOR OF THE SECOND TAXING DISTRICT AS AND WHERE SHOWN ON A CERTAIN SURVEY ENTITLED "EASEMENT MAP DEPICTING EASEMENT TO BE GRANTED TO SOUTH NORWALK ELECTRIC & WATER ACROSS THE PROPERTY OF NORWALK POLICE DEPARTMENT #2 MONROE STREET, NORWALK, CONNECTICUT" PREPARED BY REDNISS & MEAD DATED DECEMBER 12, 2022.

2. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING TO ENTER INTO ANY AND ALL AGREEMENTS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO ACCEPT A SANITARY SEWER EASEMENT DEED OVER 9 SHOREHAVEN ROAD, NORWALK, CT CONFIRMING EASEMENT RIGHTS AS SET FORTH IN CERTAIN “COMPILATION PLAN, 9 SHOREHAVEN ROAD, NORWALK, CONNECTICUT, DEPICTING SANITARY SEWER EASEMENT TO BE GRANTED TO CITY OF NORWALK ACROSS THE PROPERTY OF KEAT-JIN LEE, TRUSTEE LINDA HO LEE, TRUSTEE, SCALE 1” = 20’ FT.” DATED JANUARY 18, 2023 AND PREPARED BY WILLIAM W. SEYMOUR & ASSOCIATES, P.C.

C. FINANCE AND CLAIMS COMMITTEE

1. RESOLUTION: REQUESTING A SPECIAL CAPITAL APPROPRIATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$489,225 TO INCREASE THE APPROPRIATION TO FUND FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT TO PURCHASE TWO FIRE ENGINES (PUMPER TRUCKS) ACCOUNT 09233110-5777-C0437 (APPARATUS REPLACEMENT). THE \$489,225 OF BONDS OR NOTES OF THE CITY SHALL BE ISSUED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS AND TERMS SET FORTH IN THE ORIGINAL BOND RESOLUTIONS THAT AUTHORIZED THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS OR NOTES OF THE CITY FOR PROJECT # 0923110-5777-C0437 (APPARATUS REPLACEMENT).

2. RESOLUTION: DEAUTHORIZE IN THE AMOUNT OF \$489,225 OF AUTHORIZED BUT UNISSUED BONDS FROM THE POLICE COMMUNICATIONS CONSOLE ACCOUNT #09213610-5777-C0638 TO PURCHASE TWO FIRE ENGINES (PUMPER TRUCKS).

**** MOTION FAILED WITH ONE (1) VOTE IN OPPOSITION (MS. ALTERMAN) AND ALL ITEMS CAME OFF OF CONSENT**

VI. REPORTS: DEPARTMENTS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

A. CORPORATION COUNSEL

VII. COMMON COUNCIL COMMITTEES

A. PUBLIC WORKS

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO CONVEY A 183± SQ. FT. UTILITY EASEMENT IN FAVOR OF THE SECOND TAXING DISTRICT AS AND WHERE SHOWN ON A CERTAIN SURVEY ENTITLED “EASEMENT MAP DEPICTING EASEMENT TO BE GRANTED TO SOUTH NORWALK ELECTRIC & WATER ACROSS THE PROPERTY OF NORWALK POLICE DEPARTMENT #2 MONROE STREET, NORWALK, CONNECTICUT” PREPARED BY REDNISS & MEAD DATED DECEMBER 12, 2022.**

Ms. Smyth reviewed the item.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH TWO (2) VOTES IN OPPOSITION (MS. ALTERMAN AND MR. MEEKS)**

**** MS. SMYTH MOVED TO Authorize the Mayor, Harry W. Rilling to enter into any and all agreements and other documents necessary to accept a sanitary sewer easement deed over 9 Shorehaven Road, Norwalk, CT confirming easement rights as set forth in certain “Compilation Plan, 9 Shorehaven Road, Norwalk, Connecticut, Depicting Sanitary Sewer Easement to be Granted to City of Norwalk Across the Property of Keat-Jin Lee, Trustee Linda Ho Lee, Trustee, Scale 1” = 20’ Ft.” dated January 18, 2023 and prepared by William W. Seymour & Associates, P.C.**

Ms. Smyth reviewed the item.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH TWO (2) VOTES IN OPPOSITION (MS. ALTERMAN AND MR. MEEKS)**

B. LAND USE AND BUILDING MANAGEMENT

Due to a potential conflict of interest, Ms. Smyth recused herself.

**** MR. LIVINGSTON MOVED TO AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE AN AMENDMENT TO THE LEASE AGREEMENT WITH NORWALK HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. FOR THE MILL HILL PARK COMPLEX TO EXTEND THE LEASE PERIOD RETROACTIVELY AND ENDING ON MARCH 15, 2039 AND TO INCLUDE THE OLD SMITH STREET JAIL AND THE BARN AS ACCESSORY BUILDINGS IN THE COMPLEX.**

Mr. Livingston reviewed the item.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH TWO (2) VOTES IN OPPOSITION (MS. ALTERMAN AND MR. MEEKS)**

Ms. Smyth returned to the meeting.

C. FINANCE AND CLAIMS COMMITTEE

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

RESOLUTION: REQUESTING A SPECIAL CAPITAL APPROPRIATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$489,225 TO INCREASE THE APPROPRIATION TO FUND FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT TO PURCHASE TWO FIRE ENGINES (PUMPER TRUCKS) ACCOUNT 09233110-5777-C0437 (APPARATUS REPLACEMENT). THE \$489,225 OF BONDS OR NOTES OF THE CITY SHALL BE ISSUED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS AND TERMS SET FORTH IN THE ORIGINAL BOND RESOLUTIONS THAT AUTHORIZED THE ISSUANCE OF BONDS OR NOTES OF THE CITY FOR PROJECT # 0923110-5777-C0437 (APPARATUS REPLACEMENT).

AND TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING

RESOLUTION: DEAUTHORIZE IN THE AMOUNT OF \$489,225 OF AUTHORIZED BUT UNISSUED BONDS FROM THE POLICE COMMUNICATIONS CONSOLE ACCOUNT #09213610-5777-C0638 TO PURCHASE TWO FIRE ENGINES (PUMPER TRUCKS).

**** MOTION PASSED WITH TWO (2) VOTES IN OPPOSITION (MS. ALTERMAN AND MR. MEEKS)**

3. Fiscal Year 2023 - 2024 Operating Budget and Cap Review.

There were two presentation from the Chief Financial Officer in terms of the recommended operating budget. During the Finance Claims committee meeting the Committee members did not have the updated grant list numbers. As a result, they moved to have a discussion at tonight's meeting.

Mr. Dachowitz said he and Mr. Ford are on version five, but the numbers being presented are version four. He shared his screen and presented the FYE 2024 Mayor's Recommended Budget – City Wide Mill Rate. He said that based on the Mayor's recommendations, they are proposing a 4% increase for the Board of Education and a .75% increase for the City.

Mr. Dachowitz shared his screen and presented the mill rates for each District. Mayor Rilling explained there was an indication that the grand list numbers could be off. Mr. Dachowitz said that Mr. Ford received an extension from the State. They will be redoing the mill rate charts with

the latest grand list numbers. He apologized for all the changes. He said next year he will make sure when the Common Council meets on March 7th, that they have the final numbers.

Mr. Dachowitz said these numbers are the next to the last numbers. There is a week to deliberate, because the date to set the cap is March 7th. He said he will calculate and circulate the numbers tomorrow.

Ms. Ayers said she was trying to be sensitive to what Mr. Dachowitz and Mr. Ford are trying to do. She said they can't expect the City to accept this below par work. She said this was unacceptable to go through the presentation knowing the numbers were wrong. She said she lost complete and utter faith in Mr. Dachowitz and Mr. Ford to provide true data and to run the City's Finance department.

Mr. Burnett asked Mr. Dachowitz if the anticipated changes would have any impact on the operating cap. Mr. Dachowitz said it would not. Mayor Rilling asked if the percentage for the mill rate will go up. Mr. Dachowitz said it would go up.

Mr. Ford said he expects the numbers before Sunday. He explained there were upgrades to the financial management system in September. In addition, they converted to a new assessment system. The new numbers will be available in the morning.

Mayor Rilling said there will be a special meeting of the Common Council on March 7, 2023 to set the cap. Mr. Ford said the Common Council members will have the numbers tomorrow and they will be published for the public.

Mr. Dachowitz said the date was moved to an earlier date and that was a mistake. He said that Mr. Ford has never not met a deadline and it seems that it is more important to have the most accurate data.

Mr. Goldstein said he thought it was a pattern that the cap is set on the second Tuesday in February. He said they need to be informed and not surprised with updated figures in a public meeting. He said that if there is a change in the mill rate and the grand list, they need to understand that. Mr. Dachowitz said the grant list was submitted to the State. The amount of City spending has not changed. The only changes are assessments.

Ms. Smyth said this was her sixth budget cycle on the Common Council and she never saw anything like this. She said the cap is always set on the second Tuesday in February. This is unacceptable.

Ms. McMurrer asked for clarification on the numbers on the scenarios. Mr. Dachowitz explained he wanted to show the impact district by district if there was a change to the cap. He said it was a tool to help the members of the Common Council come to a decision on the cap.

Ms. Alderman asked if they were voting tonight. Mayor Rilling said they would not be voting tonight.

Mr. Meek said that when he was on the Board of Education, they used to provide the City with a three year forecast. He noted that the teacher's contract was up for negotiation in August 2023 and he anticipates they will not come back asking for two percent. He asked if anyone knows where the teacher's contract is going to land. Mayor Rilling said he will find out. Mr. Meek said he expects they will come back and ask for an eight percent increase.

Mr. Meek said what is most concerning is that the debt service is at 10% and it is going to grow. He asked if there is a five year forecast. Mr. Dachowitz said the financial advisor revises the scheduled increase to the debt service for the next 30 years. The amount of debt has increased significantly and the rates they have to pay for the debt has increased.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner said as a member of the Common Council they have to think about what it takes to maintain diversity in the City . She said more than half of the residents are housing burdened. They have to consider the burden they are placing on the families. This is why the Common Council members need accurate numbers.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner responded to suggestions made by the speakers. She noted that Connecticut has very restrictive laws and as a Common Council they can't increase property credits or impose various taxes. She said they are trying to figure out how to support families while maintaining diversity. She told the parents that they hear them and respect them.

Ms. Young said this is not an easy decision and there are a lot of moving parts. She said they are not against children or Education. She said they love Norwalk.

Mr. Burnett asked Mr. Dachowitz if he could show that the projected tax increase would look like if they provide the \$27 million request to the Board of Education. Mr. Dachowitz shared his screen and reviewed the scenarios. Mr. Burnett asked Mr. Dachowitz if he anticipated the numbers going up or down. Mr. Dachowitz said that based on discussions with Mr. Ford, the rates will go up.

Mr. Livingston said it is important for residents to understand that they have to think about future years. The debt service is going to increase next year. Mr. Dachowitz said that when they borrow this summer, it will be added to the debt service and they expect it to go up. He noted that the interest rates are not as low as they were before. Mr. Livingston said that if they increase the cap, they have to make it up next year and every other year. Mr. Dachowitz said that by law in Connecticut, with the Board of Education, for every dollar they are given is where they have to start next year. Mr. Livingston said it is important to understand the implication of additional spending on the long term financials.

Mr. Dachowitz explained that the Board of Education gets 60% of the budget, which is a good indication that schools are a number one priority for the City.

Ms. McMurrer spoke about the flat funding two years ago. She said the Board of Education needs to talk about a strategy for the flat funding. They need to be proactive on the budget. They are faced with a lot of restrictions. But they need to be more strategic on the budget.

Ms. Smyth said she was quite upset when the Board of Education was flat funded, but understood the reason. She said this is by far the most difficult budget season she has experienced. She said that each year as a former teacher, hearing from others that 4% is not enough, is meaningful to her. She added that it has been really hard understanding what the students have been through. Now they hear the burden on the tax payers is going to be higher. She asked if they could draw down from the Fund Balance.

Ms. Smyth said they need to be sure the students have the services they need. She said some kids do not get services unless they are at school. She said she would like to see if they could go to the Board of Estimate and Taxation for more money.

Mr. Goldstein said it was wonderful to see all the students in the audience tonight. They saw that everyone on the panel cares about Norwalk and agonized over this decision. He said they are dealing with serious generational challenges. For the parents this is a collaborative process across various branches of government. He noted the Common Council does not have oversight on how the Board of Education spend the money.

Mr. Goldstein asked the parents to show up to the Board of Education meetings and hold them accountable about how they spend their funds. The Common Council is restricted by law on weighing in on those decisions. The Common Council has to decide the tax rate and that decision impacts a lot of people.

Mr. Heuvelman said a lot of heartfelt things were said tonight. He said that a 12% increase is unattainable. He said the Common Council is one part of the process, but the budgetary decisions come from Norwalk Public Schools and the Board of Education. He urged everyone to attend the Board of Education meetings and ask about the spending. The Common Council does not have control over how the money is spent.

Ms. Ayers said she wanted the Common Council members to think about a department on the City side. She said she has major concerns about the lack of funding for the IT department. A city of this size does not have sufficient cyber security and that is a big issue. She said they need to increase funding in the IT department because the budget is not sufficient to support their work.

Ms. Ayers said that as a parent, that is her most important job. For parents to think she and her colleagues are not invested is not true. She said they care about the children and the staff, but

there are hard questions to be asked. She said she hears people say they have the option to move out of Norwalk. But not everyone has that option to sell their home and move to a more affluent town.

Ms. Ayers said she did not agree with the recommended 4%, but said the City can't afford 12%. She said she will advocate for a slight increase for the Board of Education and to fully fund the IT department.

Ms. Ayers asked Mr. Dachowitz to clarify how taking more out of the Rainy Day Fund will jeopardize their AAA bond rating and for a definition of emergency. Mr. Dachowitz said the Rainy Day Fund is an insurance policy. He said there are no hard and fast rules as far as an emergency; however, the rating agencies thought the City's use of Rainy Day Funds during covid was appropriate. He added that it is up to the Mayor and the Board of Estimate and Taxation to decide what is the right drawdown, but there is a risk when they go to the rating agencies. They look at the overall financial health of the City.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner said she agreed with Ms. Ayers regarding the IT department and would like to see an increase for IT services. She also noted that there was a decrease in the School Resource Officer budget. That is another place to consider covering.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner pointed out that since FY2018/2019, the City increase full time equivalents by 32 and the Board of Education increased by 337. She said that a budget increase of 4% was not high enough but wants to find a number that is below 12%. She said that adding 337 additional positions is not sustainable for the tax base. Ms. Niedzielski Eichner said the ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) funds were always temporary funds. She said what was troubling was the way in which the use of the ESSER funds were presented to the Common Council. It was not transparent in the presentation to the parents.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner said the budget request includes counselors and social workers. She said they are struggling with fiscal responsibility and want all of the children to have the resources they need. She said that in the FY2021/2022 budget there were an additional 90 Board of Education positions added. She said it was her job to ask questions about fiscal transparency. They need to be fair and transparent to the tax payers.

Ms. Niedzielski Eichner said she was thrilled to hear parents talking with such joy about the teachers, social workers and counselors and wants to be able to find the funds for them to continue their work. She said she hopes they can raise the cap beyond 4%.

Ms. McMurrer reiterated what she meant by wants verses needs. She said every budget has to have a priority list. It is important to ask what are the priorities. She added that there are education advocates on the Common Council, but they want residents to advocate to the Board of Education as well. Everything can't be at the top of the list. She asked everyone to attend the Board of Education meetings and ask their representatives to ask why they are talking about

cutting services and not starting at the top. Ms. McMurrer asked if they need that many administrators that micromanage the teachers who do not earn enough.

Ms. McMurrer said she did not appreciate the sentiment that people on the Common Council do not care about the schools. She said they have children in the schools. She asked the residents to hold the Board of Education accountable and ask why their first cut is to the direct services for the children.

Ms. Revolus said she is a representative of the Haitian Community and Black Children and helps families and children on a regular basis. She said that developments only provide rental spaces and will push people out. Ms. Revolus said she hopes parents will hold the Board of Education and the Board of Estimate and Taxation accountable. She referred to Ms. Lauricella's comment for the Board of Education to reduce spending. Ms. Revolus suggested that if they cut 1/3 of the Board of Education staff they could fund the students. She said that the Board of Education was not supposed to create new employment using ESSER funds. It was well known those were a temporary measure. She said the Common Council directly asked for that to not happen, but they did it. Ms. Revolus said they can not suffocate the families that are connected to the children.

Ms. Revolus said they keep raising taxes and kids spend more time in school than with their parents. She said that schools have authority over the children when they are at school and they need to be careful about that. There needs to be some accountability on the Norwalk Public School side; there is a lot at the top that could be cut. She said Ms. Lauricella had a good idea about installing solar at the schools. There are environmental issues in the schools.

Ms. Revolus said they need to pay attention to the students who can't buy food. She said she hopes that parents will make an effort to have conversations with the Board of Estimate and Taxation and the Norwalk Public Schools. She added that the Common Council is concerned about their children.

Ms. Revolus said that if they keep doing developments, there is no sustainability for residents and they will have tax increases the people can't afford.

Ms. Young said they care about the children. She said that in a city of 91,000 people and 11,500 young people in the school system, those numbers may be going down. She said they are being funded at 60% and asked about the other people. This year the Mayor asked departments to cut their budgets so they could come in with a manageable budget. Another issue is that they have tried to have communications with the Board of Education and there are challenges. Ms. Young said they do not come to their final decision lightly.

Ms. Young said that what drives people to a community is how it looks and how it feels. She said their hands are tied by a lot of state statutes. She said they would love to have conversations about how the money is spent and what worked last year. There needs to be more communications. This is not the first Common Council who tried to have better transparent

communications with the Board of Education. She said they wanted to meet with the State delegation, because this is not working.

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 11:12 p.m.

ATTEST: _____
Irene Dixon, City Clerk