



Fiscal Committee - Board of Representatives

John Mallozzi, Chair Linda Cannady, Vice Chair

Committee Report

Date: Monday, August 30, 2010
Time: 7:00 p.m.
Place: Democratic Caucus Room, 4th Floor, Government Center, 888
Washington Boulevard, Stamford, CT 06905-2098

The Fiscal Committee met at the above time and place. Present were Chair Mallozzi and Vice Chair Cannady and Committee Member Reps. DeLuca, Fedeli, Figueroa, Kaufman, Mitchell and Sklover. Absent/excused were Committee Member Reps. Day, Mirkin and Rauh. Also present were Clerk Summerville; Karen Cammarota of Grants; Peter Privitera of OPM; Ernie Orgera, Director of Operations; Fred Flynn, Director of Administration; Lou Casolo, Ann Brown and Laura Labosky of Engineering; and John Freeman of Harbor Point.

Chair Mallozzi called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
1. F28.074	GRANTS RESOLUTION; regarding the elderly and disabled transportation program; amount of grant: \$105,072; city match: \$75,000.	COMMITTEE APPROVED 8-0-0
2. F28.079	GRANTS RESOLUTION; authorizing a supplemental application and grant agreement under the Local Bridge Program to rehabilitate the Cold Spring Road Bridge; amount of grant: 28.3% of costs (\$2,029,000) or \$574,207.	COMMITTEE APPROVED 7-0-0 (<i>Rep. Mallozzi not participating</i>)

Chair Mallozzi left the room for discussion of this item. Ms. Cammarota stated that the State will reimburse up to a maximum of \$574,207 or 28.3% of eligible costs. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the item was approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

3. [F28.075](#) \$25,000.00 ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION (Operating Budget); Community Centers; Chester Addison Community Center; to restore funding inadvertently omitted from the 2010-11 budget process. **COMMITTEE APPROVED 8-0-0**

Mr. Privitera stated that Chester Addison was inadvertently left out of the budget process last year. This amount reflects about 50% of what it received in the prior year. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the item was approved by a vote of 8-0-0.

4. [F28.081](#) \$2,174,017.00 ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION (Operating Budget); Transfers; Transfer to Rainy Day Fund; toward long term plan to continue building Rainy Day Fund; source of funds is surplus from 08-09 General Fund Balance. **COMMITTEE APPROVED 8-0-0**

Mr. Privitera stated that these funds are from the prior year's surplus. There is no formula to determine how much of the surplus should go toward this fund. The administration looks at its various needs (e.g., health insurance reserves), and allocates amounts based on those needs. Mr. Flynn added that a Rainy Day Fund is important to the bond rating agencies, and it will take at least 5-7 years for Stamford to achieve the standard of 5% of the annual operating budget. This will bring the total of the Rainy Day Fund up to about \$7 million. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the item was approved by a vote of 8-0-0.

- 5a. [F28.071](#) REJECTION; of a capital project closeout for Project C56084, Jefferson/Dock Street Connector, in the amount of \$604,000; closed out funds to be used toward Urban Transitway construction appropriations (F28.070 and 071). **NO ACTION TAKEN**

Ms. Brown stated that this unexpended capital money, coupled with the grant, will be used to fund Item No. F28.072. No motion was made.

- 5b. [F28.072](#) \$3,019,000.00 ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION (Capital Budget); Engineering; SUT STP10; Urban Transitway construction. **COMMITTEE APPROVED 8-0-0**

Ms. Brown stated that the grant, in the amount of \$2,415,000 plus the close out of \$604,000 above, comprises the \$3,019,000. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the item was approved by a vote of 8-0-0.

- 5c. [F28.069](#) REJECTION; of a capital project closeout for **NO ACTION**

Project C56084, Jefferson/Dock Street Connector, **TAKEN**
in the amount of \$363,000.

Ms. Brown stated that this unexpended capital money, coupled with the grant, will be used to fund Item No. F28.072. No motion was made.

5d. [F28.070](#) ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION (Capital Budget); **COMMITTEE**
\$1,815,000.00 Engineering; SUT STP10; Urban Transitway **APPROVED**
construction. **8-0-0**

Ms. Brown stated that the grant, in the amount of \$1,452,000 plus the close out of \$363,000 above, comprises the \$1,815,000. Upon motion duly made and seconded, the item was approved by a vote of 8-0-0.

6. F28.062 REVIEW; administration's planning related to staff **REPORT**
reductions in the Tax Assessor's Office. **MADE**

Mr. Flynn stated that after the lay-offs, the Tax Department lost 3 positions, two of which were vacant to begin with. As part of the restructuring, he has changed Mr. Forker's title from Director of Assessment and Taxation to Tax Collector. Both Messrs. Forker and Kirwin report directly to him, and both are extremely knowledgeable in this area.

Mr. Flynn has determined that this department could be "delayered." He is going to continue his assessment of this department within the next 6-9 months, and is committed to becoming more involved in the management of the collections function. He especially wants to address 1) the large number of people who come on the last days to pay their taxes (and who stand in line for long periods of time); 2) investigate the feasibility of providing on-line payment options; 3) work with Mr. Forker to improve management practices in the department; and 3) improve customer service.

In response to Rep. Figueroa's inquiry about paying taxes on-line, Mr. Privitera stated that an RFP for electronic bill paying is in process. There is no "off-the-shelf" software for this service, all of the code must be custom-written, and there is a potential for this to become a money pit. The administration is carefully looking at options.

Rep. DeLuca noted that Sue Greene is extremely helpful to the many senior citizens he refers to her for assistance in applying for senior tax abatement and deferral benefits.

A lengthy discussion then took place regarding many situations of poor customer service on the part of some city employees/departments. Mr. Flynn stated that he is in favor of additional training for city employees, especially in the area of

customer service and is open to any suggestions that board members have that could improve customer service.

7. [F28.076](#) REVIEW; status of Harbor Point Infrastructure Improvement Tax District and \$145,000,000 revenue bonds. **REPORT MADE**

Mr. Freeman appeared on behalf of Harbor Point. Mr. Freeman showed the members a map of the area, pointing out parks and public access. These are not readily accessible now due to the on-going construction, but Harbor Point is required to complete the parks and open space prior to receiving permission to occupy the buildings.

Clerk Summerville initiated a discussion on the difficulty that many citizens have accessing these smaller public accessways and parks. Mr. Freeman replied that they are required to provide signage and that all of the public areas are accessible from public streets. Mr. Freeman will 1) provide the Board Office with a map and/or listing of public areas and means of access to them; and 2) contact the Board Office to arrange a walking tour of the public areas.

Mr. Freeman stated that quarterly reports are provided to the Mayor, the State and the Board of Representatives. They started the project in 2007, bonds were issued in February, and the project should be completed in 2012. They are complying with all requirements of the interlocal agreement that the Board of Reps approved.

In 2007, the initial taxes paid to the City was \$1.1 million. Today, they pay \$2.2 million. 50% of the increase in taxes goes to the City's general fund, and 50% goes to the Trust Account. The same formula is used each year as taxes increase.

8. [F28.077](#) PROPOSED ORDINANCE; **for publication**; establishing a special taxing district to fund the Ferguson Library. **ITEM WITHDRAWN**

Chair Mallozzi advised that the Trustees of the Ferguson Library, along with President Skigen, have withdrawn this item.

9. F28.078 PROPOSED ORDINANCE; **for publication**; allowing for the payment of construction management costs and other similar and appropriate expenses from capital budget project account lines. **HELD IN COMMITTEE 8-0-0**

Chair Mallozzi noted that the ordinance was not yet ready to go forward and asked Mr. Flynn to report to the Committee on the negotiations that he has been holding with Mr. Tarzia (regarding the Board of Finance's recent policy).

Mr. Flynn stated that while he has no problem with the Board of Finance changing policies, this particular policy came after the budget was formally adopted. The implementation of this policy would create an adverse effect on an already tight operating budget. He also felt that the imposition of this policy was not open, transparent or fair with respect to the budget-setting process. For the current year, the Mayor and Mr. Flynn have taken the position that the Board of Finance has usurped its authority and changed the budget arbitrarily and unilaterally.

Mr. Flynn has held discussions with the Board of Finance in an attempt to come up with evaluation alternatives and develop a proposal for the next budget year so the administration can plan accordingly.

Mr. Flynn learned that President Skigen had instituted research on a possible ordinance to address this situation and added that he is not a champion of getting into a legal controversy.

Mr. Flynn also stated that one of the members of the Board of Finance feels strongly that these costs should be expensed, not capitalized, despite the fact that capitalizing them is widely accepted in governmental accounting.

Rep. Fedeli stated that this is a missing piece of information of which the Board of Representatives should have been kept informed. Board leadership members meet regularly with the Mayor and the Mayor was aware of this proposed ordinance.

Mr. Tarzia added that he is working to achieve a compromise but that usurping the Charter (on the part of the Board of Representatives) is not the way to go.

Chairman Mallozzi stated that this item would not be discussed any further, and upon motion duly made and seconded, the item was held by a vote of 8-0-0.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John Mallozzi, Chair