

The regular meeting of the Council of the City of Norwich was held January 2, 2024 at 7:30 PM in Council Chambers. Present: Mayor Nystrom, President Pro Tem DeLucia, Ald. Singh, Ald. Gould, Ald. Hayes, Ald. Nash with Ald. Bettencourt absent. City Manager John Salomone, Corporation Counsel Michael Driscoll were also in attendance. Mayor Nystrom presided.

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Ald. Hayes, read the opening prayer and Ald. Nash led the members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Nystrom called for a moment of silence for the passing of General Manager, Chris LaRose’s father.

President Pro Tem DeLucia called for a moment of silence for the passing of former Norwich Police Captain, Thomas Pedersen.

Mayor Nystrom gave the State of the City Address as follows:



ESTABLISHED 1659
CITY OF NORWICH
CONNECTICUT

Peter A. Nystrom
Mayor of Norwich

100 Broadway
Norwich, CT 06360

Good evening! As we turn the page and welcome in a new year I’d like to spend a few moments reviewing the last year’s efforts of the city. We’ve been working with the private sector and in particular NCDC to strengthen our local economy and grand list as we have been fortunate that the federal government has invested over \$28 Million in American rescue funds over the last 4 years. These funds have enabled us to form partnerships with the private sector. We also greatly benefited by applying for and being selected to receive funds from the state of Connecticut as we sought to redevelop long-awaited properties in our city, specifically the Reid and Hughes Building and the YMCA property come to mind. Both are in the process of going through a redevelopment while benefiting directly with the award of state and local funds. In addition, American Rescue Funds, funds have been applied to properties across the city to entice private sector investment. These investments will strengthen our grand list and help relieve the financial pressures on the homeowners and taxpayers here in the city of Norwich.

Consider that in March of 2023 NCDC was awarded \$11.4 million to support the initial infrastructure of Occum Business Park. The work will include roadways, pedestrian and bike lanes, bus stops, stormwater management and utility installations. This investment is the next big step forward for a

development that will bring new jobs, tax revenue and utility revenues to our taxpayers of Norwich who will be facing significant cost increases going forward over the next decade as we build new schools and complete other infrastructure needs across this city.

In April 2023 NPU was awarded \$10 million from the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration to begin the process of modernizing up to 10 miles of gas mains. This important work is expected to get underway later this year and NPU has committed regular public outreach on the impact and schedule for this work over the next five years. It's also important to note that in February of 2023 it was announced that \$1.6 million in funding would be coming to the city to support infrastructure improvements that will reduce the number of untreated sewage discharges into the Thames River improving our water quality.

The timing of this is so important when you consider that we now have a new operator committed to the redevelopment and restoration of the Norwich Marina. As we emerge from the winter months you will be able to see an upgraded facility with an operational improved restaurant and services along with a new tent on the site. In the years to follow greater improvements will take place.

Over the next five years NPU is investing in a \$200 million upgrade of our sewer treatment plant. This will enable NPU to enhance and protect the environment not only for Norwich but also for many surrounding small towns, who as they deal with development issues, will look to the city of Norwich to provide clean water technologies for the treatment of any effluent generated within their borders which will mean more utility revenue for us.

I'd also like to take special note of the private investment projects completed such as the Westledge Housing Complex which is providing 120 new market rate apartments here on the westside. Additionally, the same local developer is proposing another 66 housing units representing another expansion for the Hills Development Project in Taftville. Further, with investments from the state and the private sector the Ponemah mills housing project will expand, again providing approximately another 145 units of housing. When completed a total of 460 units of housing will exist at the mill site with 39% of them classified as affordable.

All these infrastructure and development opportunities that I have spoken of demonstrate that the city of Norwich coordinating with the private sector, the Federal and State Governments and NCDC can strengthen our grand list and provide new tax and utility revenues to help us as we move forward. I must however raise an issue of caution as all of this comes with a required increase in operational expenses over the next 10 years that will be borne by all taxpayers of Norwich. This City Council over the next two years must be very careful not to embrace concepts that could in fact increase or escalate the burden on taxpayers exponentially.

One of these issues is called a project labor agreement. There are members of this current council who are promoting such a policy as we build new elementary schools. Such a decision can only lead to an escalation of costs and possible delays in construction as well. Such a decision concerning the first 2 schools to be built will limit the number of small businesses located here in the City of Norwich from participating. This will drive the cost of schools up and it will limit the workforce pool. This is the last thing we want to do when you consider that our state delegation worked so hard to get an increase in our state reimbursement levels. A report put out here in the state of Connecticut demonstrated that issues such as PLA's can in fact escalate the cost of these projects. Applying this to our school building project which is already projected to cost half a billion dollars, neither the taxpayers nor the city of Norwich can afford a gamble of this magnitude. Consider this, even if the report is only half right it's wiping out all the savings our state delegation provided us, and it must be rejected.

We must also reject the call to simply keep increasing spending whether it's in the city's budget, the school budget or NPU's budget. Whether you're a taxpayer or a rate payer the people of Norwich suffer enough. It's our job to be the guardians of their monies and I ask the city council not to impose hardships on them unnecessarily. All these issues that I've outlined are real and costly. Remember we are in a revaluation year. Honest leadership requires that we make hard decisions. Our taxpayers have stood side by side with us over these last five years. Every time we've gone to a referendum, except for the last police station vote, they have given us the authorization to move forward. I raise this last issue because it's still outstanding and we need a new police station. As we continue to look at alternate locations, we must remember we work for the taxpayers, the citizens of Norwich. All of us are here on borrowed time and that includes myself as I stand here in my 11th year as your mayor. I too will leave and someone else will take my place. So, I ask all of you what future will you leave for them if we are reckless in our decisions.

Our budget process must protect the city's rich and historic resources. Clearly that must include the Volunteer Fire Departments whose members are Norwich taxpayers. Combined they save the city millions of dollars annually avoiding additional salary and benefit costs. As we deliver the next budget let us strive to minimize cost and operational pressures.

Our property owners will also be watching us ever so closely. The recent re-evaluation has so many people on edge. Every member of this council and all city department employees must acknowledge these real concerns. Our residents deserve no less.

Thank you.

Mayor Peter Albert Nystrom

Upon a motion of Ald. Nash, seconded by Ald. Gould, on a roll call vote it was unanimously voted to accept the following minutes of December 4, 5 and 18 2023.

City Manager's Report.

To: Mayor Nystrom and members of the City Council
From: John Salomone, City Manager
Subject: City Manager's Report
Date: January 2, 2024

Meetings attended were with Southeastern Council of Governments Executive Committee Meeting (SCCOG), Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency (CIRMA) Investment Committee, and NCDC Executive Board of Directors meeting. I also had the pleasure of attending the annual Senior Center Luncheon.

The second installment for the real estate and personal property tax bills for the City of Norwich 2022 Grand List are now due. During the month of January, Taxpayers can present their current Real Estate, Personal Property, or Motor Vehicle Supplemental tax bills at the Norwich branches of M&T Bank where payment(s) can be processed via cash or check. This partnership provides greater access and convenience to taxpayers. Taxpayers do not need to be an M & T Bank customer to make their payment at a branch location. Delinquent taxes will not be accepted at bank locations and must be paid at the City Hall Tax Office located at 100 Broadway. Payments can be made online at <http://norwichct.org/taxes>, through the mail and in-person. Per CT State Statute, the last day to

pay these bills without penalty is February 1, 2024. Any payment made or postmarked after February 1, 2024 will accrue interest at the rate of 1.5%, 18% per year, or \$2.00, whichever is greater.

The Assessor's Office has had an increase in phone calls due to the 2023 revaluation. Assessor Bill Lee was invited to WICH's Stu Bryer Radio Show to explain the process and answer questions from listeners. Vision Appraisal informal hearings are currently underway during the month of January.

The Youth, Family, & Recreation Division of Human Services just opened a large number of free programs for Norwich Residents. Registration can be completed online at www.norwichct.org.

The Adult & Family Services Division processed over 1,000 rental rebate applications for the State this fall, ensuring our most vulnerable populations stay housed.

Data from this fall's Drug Free Communities school survey has been received. The survey covers substance use, perception of harm, and mental health for students 7-12th grade. The data will be presented at the next Norwich Prevention Council meeting on January 16th at 9am at Youth, Family, and Recreation, 75 Mohegan Rd. Information will be posted on Facebook.

Curbside Christmas tree collection begins this week and will be collected as staffing resources allow. Christmas trees may also be brought, free of charge, to the [Rogers Road Transfer Station](#) during normal operating hours.

Upon a motion of Ald. Gould seconded Ald. Hayes, on a roll call vote it was unanimously voted, pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes 1-200 (6), that the members of the Norwich City Council go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing strategy and negotiations with respect to collective bargaining. The following shall be asked to participate during all or portions of this Executive Session at the request of the City Council, City Manager John Salomone, Comptroller Josh Pothier and Corporation Counsel Michael Driscoll.

The Council was in Executive Session from 7:48 pm to 7:57 pm, at which time Mayor Nystrom, stated no votes were taken.

Upon a motion of Ald. Hayes, seconded by Ald. Nash, on a roll call vote it was unanimously voted to resume the regular meeting.

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Mayor Nystrom called for citizen comment on resolutions.

Marc Benjamin, 125 Hunters Ave, spoke in support of resolution #1 and thanked the Council for adding a new member to the Zoning Board of Appeals and encourages more appointments to this board. He also would like to have the state mandated training that is required to be on this board available via ZOOM.

There being no speakers Mayor Nystrom declared citizen comment closed.

Upon a motion of Ald. Singh, seconded by Ald. Gould, on a roll call vote it was unanimously voted to accept the following resolution introduced by City Manager Salomone.

WHEREAS, the City Manager John L. Salomone has appointed with Council approval as an **alternate member** to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a term to expire on 2/28/26 or until a successor is appointed;

Edward Aberbach (U)

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Norwich hereby acknowledges the appointment of the above named to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Upon a motion of Ald. Gould, seconded by Ald. Nash, on a roll call vote it was unanimously voted to accept the following resolution introduced by City Manager Salomone.

Relative to the approval of the Municipal Employees Union Independent/City Hall Supervisors collective bargaining unit agreement and the related budget changes to fiscal year 2023-24.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORWICH, that the Collective Bargaining Agreement between the City of Norwich and Municipal Employees Union Independent/City Hall Supervisors (“MEUI”), covering the period between July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2026, be, and the same hereby is, approved in accordance with the provisions of Connecticut General Statutes, Section 7-474; and further, that the City Manager, John L. Salomone, be, and hereby is, authorized and directed to execute the same in the name of the City.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORWICH, that the following 2023-24 budget transfers be made related to the settlement of the MEUI collective bargaining unit agreement as listed herein.

Org	Obj	Department/Division	Account Description	Amount
10411700	51610	Finance	Regular Employees	\$17,592.00
10411700	52000	Finance	Fringe Benefits	\$1,346.00
10413100	51601	Assessor	Department Head	\$4,863.00
10413100	52000	Assessor	Fringe Benefits	\$372.00
10415100	51601	Planning & Neighborhood Services	Department Head	\$8,363.00
10415100	51610	Planning & Neighborhood Services	Regular Employees	\$10,110.00
10415100	52000	Planning & Neighborhood Services	Fringe Benefits	\$1,414.00
10430500	51610	PW Engineering	Regular Employees	\$3,467.00
10430500	52000	PW Engineering	Fringe Benefits	\$265.00
10441700	51601	Senior Center	Department Head	\$4,701.00
10441700	52000	Senior Center	Fringe Benefits	\$360.00
10441900	51610	Youth, Family, & Recreation Services	Regular Employees	\$2,884.00
10441900	52000	Youth, Family, & Recreation Services	Fringe Benefits	\$221.00
10442700	51610	Adult & Family Services	Regular Employees	\$699.00
10442700	52000	Adult & Family Services	Fringe Benefits	\$53.00
10500000	58600	Non-Departmental	Contingency	-\$56,710.00

Upon a motion of Ald. Gould, seconded by Ald. Hayes, on a roll call vote it was unanimously voted to adopt the following resolution introduced by Mayor Nystrom, Pres. Pro Tem DeLucia and Ald. Gould.

WHEREAS, the city of Norwich acquired property identified as 504 East Main Street, map 103, block 3, lot 95, by a Foreclosure by Sale Committee Deed recorded August 24, 2017 at volume 3031 page 121 of the Norwich Land Records; and

WHEREAS, said property is currently a vacant lot and contains .09 acres; and

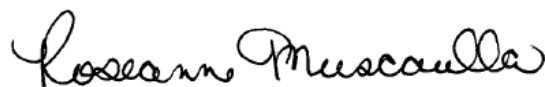
WHEREAS, an abutting property owner has inquired about obtaining this property in order to facilitate development of his property; and

WHEREAS, the Public Works and Capital Improvements Committee of the council met on February 24, 2022 and after reviewing this request recommends that the property be conveyed to an abutter so long as the parcel is combined into the abutter's existing property; and

WHEREAS, there are presently three abutting property owners.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NORWICH, that said property be offered to abutting owners to purchase through the office of the tax collector by letters sent to each abutting owner soliciting bids on the property with the tax collector to determine in her discretion a minimum price, which is to be at least one hundred dollars (\$100), below which no bid will be accepted, and to report to the council by the second scheduled council meeting to be held in February 20, 2024 if a bid or bids have been received and the identity of the high bidder, all bids subject to a bidder's confirming that this parcel will be combined with adjoining property of the bidder within 90 days of the conveyance of 504 East Main Street to the bidder.

Upon motion of Ald. Gould, seconded by Ald. Nash on a roll call vote it was unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:03 pm.



City Clerk