

FINAL

THIRD TAXING DISTRICT
of the City of Norwalk
Commission Meeting
July 28, 2025

ATTENDANCE: Commissioners: Johnnie Mae Weldon, Chair; Pamela Parkington, Michele Sweeney; Read Auerbach, Treasurer; Peter Johnson, Rate-Payer Representative

STAFF: Kevin Barber, General Manager;
Ron Scofield, Assistant General Manager/District Clerk

OTHERS: Sylvia Archibald, Emily Barboza, Laurie Brayton, Susan Carter, Diane Cece, Brent Diamond, Lauren Esposito, Eric Hause, Deborah Ross

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Weldon called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. A quorum was present.

The Commission and TTD Management introduced themselves to the public attending the meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

**EAST NORWALK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION REQUEST FOR DISCUSSION
OF EAST NORWALK HISTORICAL CEMETERY AND EAST NORWALK LIBRARY**

Chairman Weldon invited Diane Cece to speak. Ms. Cece introduced herself and stated she serves as the Board President of the Board of the East Norwalk Neighborhood Association (ENNA), who are charged with preserving the natural and historic resources of East Norwalk and the character of the neighborhood. ENNA, not to be confused with the East Norwalk Association which is a group that are the Board Trustees for the Library and formerly known as the East Norwalk Improvement Association. Ms. Cece wanted to speak about the Library and the East Norwalk Historic Cemetery. Ms. Cece expressed her concerns about the current state of the Cemetery. It had been reported to ENNA that the cemetery, which should be a source of pride and historical significance, has fallen into neglect over the past couple of years. Ms. Cece stated she understands there is a distinct responsibility between the District, which are funds that get transferred from the Electric Department to support the District Parks, landscaping, grass and tree work and the actual Cemetery work and anything to do with the preservation of headstones or repairs would fall to the non-profit, East Norwalk Historic Cemetery Association. Ms. Cece said she raised a couple points to Mr. Scofield recently and shared photographs with him of issues with landscaping, trees and lawn upkeep. Also, there are headstones that are toppled over, not being kept clean and there appears to be no routine maintenance at all. Ms. Cece wanted to come before the Commission to see how these issues can be addressed, as a portion of the annual budget that District Rate Payers approve goes to maintain the Cemetery. In the last budget the amount was around \$30,000 but it isn't broken into what this money covers and with the recent condition of the Cemetery, Ms. Cece feels like the District is not getting a good bang for the buck. The other reason for concern is that there was a report of a homeless encampment in the Cemetery which was also reported to Mr. Scofield. The encampment has since been cleared. There is also debris that is left, and people are using the area to relieve their dogs and not cleaning up after them. Ms. Cece reiterated that the Cemetery is Historical and should be maintained in a respectful manner. The other concern is that she has twice reached out to Chris Burr who is the long-time President of The East Norwalk Historic Cemetery Association and has not received a response from him. There was also a report that two of the landscape contractors have trucks within the Cemetery and use motorized mowers, instead of hand mowers, causing possible damage to headstones. There are also some broken planters, those are maintained by the Norwalk Women's Garden club on a volunteer basis. Ms. Cece expressed concern that she needed to bring these issues to anyone's attention in the first place since the Cemetery is right there and part of the responsibility of TTD is to actively visit the Cemetery to ensure everything is properly maintained and take preventive action. Mr. Scofield ensured the group that the gate that allows vehicles access to the Cemetery is now locked. Ms. Cece expressed hope that someone from the Commission will reach out to Chris Burr. He is probably in the same boat that many of the civic groups are, dealing with a lack of volunteers, many people that were originally involved with maintaining the Cemetery, have died and others, have either moved away or lost interest. Ms. Cece thinks it's important to have communication with Chris Burr and if there is no communication then the Commission will need to take action to see what else can be done to be sure the Cemetery is maintained properly.

Ms. Ross said that Chris Burr has contacted her in the past to ask her to join the Board for the Cemetery and said that he doesn't have enough members or enough support. Mr. Scofield said that Chris Burr is in Maine for two weeks. Ms. Cece said it could be that maybe Chris Burr may not be aware of the issues happening at the Cemetery.

Commissioner Parkington said that Chris Burr is aware of the issues at the Cemetery and that Mr. Scofield has been in contact with Mr. Burr about these issues at the Cemetery.

Ms. Cece said the financials for the Cemetery that were provided to ENNA were only the budget line item from the annual budget and she requested a line-item detail. Also, the breakdown was for the operating budget to the District for maintenance and she would also like the capital budget and any requests coming directly from the Cemetery Association. Mr. Barber said that information is included on the spreadsheet, and we can send Ms. Cece that detail.

Ms. Cece went on to discuss the Library shared her concerns over the long-term viability of the Library. The question of funding the Library and how much funding should be allocated from Rate Payers versus what is being done for fund raising, endowments and grants by the Library itself has always been a controversial issue. Ms. Cece said whether residents use the Library or not isn't always the main question, as she has found that people she spoke with want to make sure the Library stays in East Norwalk, and it is a resource for the community on different levels. It should be realized that, after all these years, there is always going to be a percentage of funding that is going to come from the Rate Payers and it may be up for debate in an budget year, but from a financial perspective the Library can't be sustained without support from the District budget. Ms. Cece said she hoped that TTD wasn't giving the Library a mandate to completely self-fund..."or else". Ms. Cece said she had no idea what the "or else" would be or if TTD means the Library should make a better effort to revamp and make sure there is a viable Board in place and a good faith effort to do marketing and fund raising to support the Library programs long term. Ms. Cece believes the deed to the Library specifies that the building itself can never be used for anything other than a Library. Therefore, from a District/Rate Payer point of view if financially there wasn't going to be any support or as much support for the Library from the District, then what is the Commission's intention if the Library wasn't running, what would happen to the building? Ms. Cece thinks the Library needs to be given a realistic opportunity to revamp and get an annual plan in place. Ms. Cece said she thought TTD gave the Library 3 months' time to get a plan in place and build up the Board. She doesn't think 3 months is enough time, especially given that it is summertime and people are away. Commissioner Parkington questioned Ms. Cece's statement regarding the TTD Commission giving the Library 3 months and said she didn't recall the Commission giving the Library a 3-month period to make changes. Ms. Cece said she thinks it was stated in the June 9th or May 22nd Commission meeting minutes. Mr. Barber said when we met with the Library a few months ago, the Commission said let's meet again in 3 months to get an update on the Library and that it was not a mandate. Ms. Cece said most civic and volunteer programs have suffered since COVID in recruiting people to join and getting people to step up once they have joined and commit to being on the Board. Ms. Cece suggested that the Library Board could have Advisory Board members who allow people on the Board that would be helpful toward its mission but they don't need to live in the District. Ms. Cece concluded by saying she thinks the TTD Commission should do everything it can to support the Library, and most Rate Payers understand that there is a certain amount of the budget that would be funded by the District and most people think that's a good spend of the money that gets transferred over to the District.

Emily Barboza introduced herself to the Commission as a neighbor and a member of the transition team for the Library Board. Ms. Barboza said she would love to get any input that the Commission may have to help build an action plan for the Library. Ms. Barboza thanked Sylvia for bringing the group together.

Commissioner Sweeney said it would be very difficult for the Library to make it without a Board. Commissioner Parkington agreed and said we are not trying to shut it down, we are saying we can't go get you a Board and that's what we told Sylvia and Beth Siegelbaum and even though Sylvia came to the Commission with a bare bones budget for the Library the Commission gave an extra \$20k this year. Currently, no one is running the Library other than Sylvia and it is unsustainable.

Brent Diamond said we know we need to organize as a Board first and that is what we are doing and are planning on marketing, fund raising and community outreach. Commissioner Parkington said that for the past 6 years Sylvia has been doing it all herself. The Commission has supported her all the way. Chairperson Weldon said she knows it's not easy, but relying on volunteers is the best way to go. Ms. Archibald said the new Board being formed is also talking about creating an Advisory Committee because she has permanent volunteers that want to be on the Board but live outside the District, so they would agree to be on the Advisory Committee. Commissioner Parkington said that's great, but it's up to the Library group to do that themselves as the Commission can't do that for them, but the Commission would support them.

There was a discussion on the Library Bylaws and what is required to vote in new Board members. Commissioner Parkington said they should be able to request the Bylaws from the Secretary of State of Connecticut.

Ms. Cece said the Board of the Library was always through the East Norwalk Association and they controlled the operation of the Library, but most Libraries have a Board of Trustees that runs things. The East Norwalk Association didn't have anything on file with the State until Stan filed the East Norwalk Library Foundation which is the one with the Secretary of State. The East Norwalk Association had the original Bylaws from the 1950's. Commissioner Parkington said the original Bylaws are from 1910.

Ms. Ross asked who carries the Liability insurance for the Library or any of the insurance for the Library. Does this fall under TTD? Mr. Barber said the property insurance falls under TTD. Ms. Parkington said they should have D&O Insurance and Liability Insurance if someone trips on the property. If something happens to the building or outside property, TTD insures it. Ms. Parkington said talk to the bookkeeper as she should have that information and she suggested they speak with an attorney and an insurance provider.

Commissioner Sweeney asked if everyone present is a Library Board member. The response from the room was “we are working on it”, but the old members need to swear in the new members, but the old members are not active on the Board. Ms. Archibald said there are some members that are still around who she is on contact with. A discussion ensued regarding the process for swearing in the new Board members and Mr. Barber said to be sure to read the Bylaws to use as a guideline.

Commissioner Sweeney said that the Commission also needs clarity on whether the deed states that the Library can only be used as Library, as the Commission has never heard this before. Commissioner Parkington said that information would be found on the deed. Mr. Auerbach said he would find out this week about what the deed says about the Library building. Chairman Weldon said there are a lot of missing pieces to the puzzle, and this is all homework for the new Library committee to do. Ms. Cece asked Mr. Scofield if he had the information on the Library deed. Mr. Scofield said he doesn't have that information.

Ms. Cece raised the point of the autobody shop near the Library that uses the Library parking lot regularly along with the Fire House who is allowed to park there. The autobody shop should not be parking there at all. Commissioner Parkington said the Fire Department has always been allowed to park at the Library. TTD owns the Fire House as well. Ms. Cece said the issue is not with the Fire House. Commissioner Parkington said it has always been the Library's responsibility to police the parking lot. Ms. Archibald said she didn't know this, and she would be inclined to have the cars parked illegally. Mr. Barber said it would be best that once the Board is formed, they could then send a letter to the autobody business to let them know their customers are not allowed to park in the Library parking lot.

Commissioner Sweeney reiterated that the TTD Commission doesn't want to see the Library close. Commissioner Parkington pointed out that the Commission gave the Library extra money this year. Commissioner Sweeney agreed but said giving extra money all the time can't continue in perpetuity. The Commissioners are hopeful and excited to see Ms. Archibald have a group around that will now help the Library succeed.

Ms. Archibald asked Mr. Barber when the next meeting for a follow up discussion on the Library would be. Mr. Barber said September or October. Ms. Archibald said she would have a draft of an action plan for the Library. Mr. Barber said the funding for the Library for the fiscal year is already in place.

Chairman Weldon asked the group if there were any other questions. There were no other questions from the group.

The group of volunteers from the Library left the meeting.

FINAL

Commissioner Sweeney asked what was going on with the Cemetery. Mr. Barber gave an update on the Cemetery including the fact that currently the grass is burnt. The sprinklers that are in place are for the benefit of the trees. Mr. Barber and Mr. Scofield walked through the Cemetery the other day as they do periodically, and it is clean, no trash present. Commissioner Sweeney and Commissioner Parkington said we can't do anything about the headstones as it's not in our purview.

Mr. Scofield is in contact with Mr. Burr. Mr. Burr is working on the Cemetery issues. Mr. Scofield said that the Third Taxing District as it relates to Cemetery maintenance, are responsible for having the grass cut, dealing with fallen trees, fixing the fence, etc. But TTD can't touch the headstones, according to Mr. Burr. This is the responsibility of the East Norwalk Cemetery Association. Mr. Scofield discussed the East Norwalk Cemetery Association and the fact that most of the members are no longer involved due to having moved out of the area. Mr. Burr has been struggling to execute the care of the headstones as he is currently the only member of the Cemetery Association. Commissioner Sweeney asked if there are funds to care for the Cemetery. Mr. Scofield said the Cemetery Association have an endowment fund, although we do not know how much there is in the endowment. Mr. Scofield said Mr. Burr has found five new people to be on the Cemetery Association. Commissioner Parkington asked about the issue of trucks entering the Cemetery. Mr. Scofield said his landscapers do not bring trucks inside the Cemetery ever.

Chairman Weldon moved the meeting to the next Agenda item.

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING – JUNE 23, 2025 – *A/R

The Commission reviewed the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 23, 2025. No one had any changes.

MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES – REGULAR MEETING

**** COMMISSIONER SWEENEY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 23, 2025 REGULAR MEETING.**

**** COMMISSIONER PARKINGTON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL
STATEMENTS/KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Mr. Barber reviewed the Financial highlights. From July 2024 – June 2025, prior to any year-end adjustments that have been made. Overall doing well compared to last year. For the first 11 months there is a total income of \$12,487,651, we had total expenses of \$11,625,326 which leaves us with a net ordinary income of \$862,325. Other income of \$594,699 and other expenses of \$544,920, that leaves us with net income, before the Rate Stabilization Fund, of \$912,104. We added \$226,272 to the Rate Stabilization Fund (RSF) which leaves us with a total net income of \$1,138,376.

Cash Balances:

- Operating Accounts	\$1,685,024
- Savings	\$3,998,852
- Capital Improvements Fund	<u>\$2,885,248</u>
Total:	\$8,569,124

Funds held at CMEEC include:

- Rate Stabilization Fund (RSF)	\$4,252,157
- Municipal Competitive Trust	<u>\$2,293,242</u>
Total:	\$6,545,399
- Economic Development Fund	\$ 164,856
- Conservation & Load Management	\$ 664,621
- Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative	<u>\$ 303,086</u>
Total	\$ 1,132,563
- Total outstanding Principal Bal. w/ CMEEC	\$2,468,815
- Current Fiscal Year Capital Assets	\$ 719,487

PCA spreadsheet reflects the change in the billable rate. The aged receivables are better this month than last month.

FINAL

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Nothing to report.

**** COMMISSIONER SWEENEY MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COMMISSIONER PARKINGTON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Erica Joyce
Executive Assistant
Third Taxing District