

STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
MUNICIPAL ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW BOARD  
**RESCHEDULED MEETING MINUTES**

**Meeting Date and Time:** Thursday, September 14, 2023, 10:00 AM –12:00 PM

**Meeting Location:** Microsoft Team Meeting Only  
Meeting ID: 229 696 783 89  
Passcode: BGAuP7

Meeting materials can be found at  
<https://portal.ct.gov/OPM/Marb/Full-Board-Meetings-and-Materials>

**Call-In Instructions:** Telephone: 1 860-840-2075  
Meeting ID: 735 824 07

**Members in Attendance:** Jeff Beckham (Secretary), Andrea Comer (State Treasurer’s Designee), David Biller, Stephen Falcigno, Tom Hamilton, Lisa Hammersley, Mark Waxenberg, and Susan Weisselberg

**Municipal Officials in Attendance:** Julian Freund, Paul Foster, Leigh Ann Ralls, Debra Carabilla, Maureen Colman, Deputy Chief Dustin Rendock, Mayor Nancy Rossi, Chris Hodgson, David Taylor, Rick Spreyer, Neil Cavallaro, Matthew Cavallaro, Ken Carney, Chief Michael Terenzio, and Bill Lindsay.

**Staff in Attendance:** Kimberly Kennison, James Caley, Simon Jiang, John Mehr, William Plummer, Michael Reis and Lori McLoughlin

**Protiviti Staff in Attendance:** Zachery Unger, Charles Dong, Sharon Chun

I. Call to Order & Opening Remarks by Secretary Jeff Beckham

Secretary Beckham called the meeting to order at 10:04AM. He welcomed new board member, Lisa Hammersley. Ms. Hammersley is the Executive Director of the School and State Finance Project, which is a nonprofit, nonpartisan nonprofit that works with stakeholders in the education funding space. She is a veteran budget and policy advisor, having worked at OPM in a prior capacity, and she's served as a senior staff member in the General Assembly as well. In addition to her work, her breadth of budget and policy experience will have tremendous value to the MARB.

II. Public Comment Period – *The Public Comment portion of the agenda will be announced by the Chair. Members of the public will be provided an opportunity to speak. Before making their comments, members of the public wishing to speak must be recognized by the Chair. Speakers may be asked to limit their comments due to time constraints of this meeting. Speakers who called in by phone please press \*6 to unmute.*

There was no public comment.

III. Approval of Minutes: August 31, 2023, Special Meeting

A motion to approve the August 31, 2023, was made by Mr. Biller and seconded by Ms. Weisselberg. Motion passed unanimously.

#### IV. City of Hartford

##### a. Review, Discussion and Possible Action: Labor Contracts:

###### i. Tentative Agreement – Municipal Lawyers’ Association

The term of this Agreement is from July 1, 2021, to June 30, 2025, for the Associate Counsel, Assistant Corporate Counsel, and Senior Assistant Corporate Counsel positions. The Tentative Agreement was signed on August 7, 2023. MARB has 45 days until September 21st to act. The package includes the tentative agreement, a copy of the redline agreement, and a summary of the cost impact of the salary increases. OPM provided a mediator to assist with this contract.

Mr. Freund provided the MARB with an overview of the contract. The agreement covers nine positions that work in the office of the Corporation Council. The agreement aimed is to improve the City competitiveness in these positions and for retention purposes.

Mr. Hamilton asked about the growth increment compared to GWI. Mr. Freund stated it’s more like a step increase for the first two years to make these salaries more competitive in the market than the last two years increases would be on performance base. Mr. Hamilton mentioned that the retroactive increases were sizable in the 8.5% range.

Mr. Falcigno, asked about the comparison of these positions’ salaries in other cities. Ms. Carabillo provided the MARB with the salaries being paid by those other cities that have union contracts. This union contract will make Hartford more competitive with its peers.

A motion to approve the Tentative Agreement was made by Ms. Weisselberg and seconded by Mr. Waxenberg. Motion passed unanimously.

###### ii. MOA - Hartford Municipal Employees Association (HMEA)

This Memorandum of Agreement is for the 12 positions within the Department of Development Services. The positions include Inspector II, Sealer of Weights & Measures, and Chief of Building & Trades. The Memorandum of Agreement was signed August 9, 2023. MARB needs to take action by September 23, 2023.

Mr. Freund provided the MARB with an overview of the contract. These positions are important to implementing the City Economic Development that will help grow the tax base. Also, these positions are extremely difficult to fill. This is a concerted effort to make the positions more attractive and to make the City very competitive to attract candidates. In addition to adjusting the salary ranges, there is a sign-on bonus and a retention bonus built in for new hires. There is also a retention bonus for existing staff. These offers would expire in July 2026 unless extended.

Mr. Waxenburg mentioned prior discussions with the Mayor about these positions and how this is the methodology to be used to attract and to retain employees in these positions.

Mr. Hamilton is pleased to see this agreement is targeted at addressing a specific problem. By applying this to a limited number of positions and building in a sunset on the bonus provision after three years.

A motion to approve the Memorandum of Agreement was made by Mr. Waxenberg and seconded by Mr. Biller. Motion passed unanimously.

b. Review and Discussion: Non-Labor Contract

i. Axon Enterprises – Police Body Cameras, Vehicles Cameras and Tasers

The contract is between the City of Hartford and Axon Enterprises, Inc. The contract term is five years from November 15, 2023, through November 15, 2028. Axon will provide police body worn cameras, police vehicle cameras, tasers, and digital media and metadata storage.

Deputy Hartford Police Chief Rendon provided an overview of the Axon agreement that is a renewal of an existing contract. The contract is slightly over \$4 million and is for a five-year term to replace existing equipment with SIM and for those services relating to this replacement.

No action needed by the MARB.

c. Review and Discussion: Monthly Financial Report: June and July 2023

Mr. Freund introduced Paul Foster, School Assistant Superintendent. Mr. Foster is filling in until someone is hired to replace Mr. Penn.

Mr. Freund provided an update on the City's monthly financial reports.

Mr. Foster provided an update on the Board of Education monthly financial reports.

d. Moody's Upgrade of Credit Rating

On August 4, 2023, Moody's Investors Services upgraded the City of Hartford's issuer rating to Baa3 from Ba2. Also, Moody's changed the outlook for Hartford from positive to stable.

Secretary Beckham noted that in the report that the City is benefiting from the management practices established under the oversight of the MARB.

Mr. Hamilton commented that Hartford going from a Ba2, below investment grade, to Baa3, an investment grade status is really a big deal. Everyone in Hartford as well as this board deserves to be recognized for this accomplishment.

V. City of West Haven

a. Tier IV Updates:

i. Introduction of Finance Manager Firm

The Finance Manager firm has been contracted and will be starting to work with the City of West Haven. The firm, Protiviti Governmental Services, Inc., was selected and members of the Protiviti team are here at the meeting for introductions to MARB members.

Mr. Beckham introduced Zachery Unger, Charles Dong, and Sharon Chun of Protiviti. Protiviti will be embedded in West Haven.

Mr. Unger, Managing Director of Protiviti, provided an overview of the firm, and discussed the coordination the assignment with West Haven, Whittlesey, the auditors, and OPM.

Ms. Kennison mentions that a kick-off meeting will take place on Tuesday, September 19, 2023, in West Haven with the West Haven staff, the OPM staff, and the Protiviti.

Mr. Waxenberg inquired about the lack of policies and procedures. Will this be a role for Protiviti to develop. Mr. Unger stated that the first step is to build out remediation plans with many of those plans include development of policy and procedures. This is something to work through while figuring out each discrete item.

Ms. Kennison thanked Protiviti for attending today's MARB meeting.

ii. Update on Whittlesey's Assessment

Ms. Kennison stated that an updated draft was reviewed and found some areas of continued vulnerability. Protiviti's priority is to work on the vulnerable areas prior to the report being released.

iii. Update on Tier IV Corrective Action Plan

There has not been much movement on the Corrective Action Plan. West Haven staff has been working on completing the audited June 30, 2022, financials and focusing on Moody's report to get removed from the watch list. Mr. Taylor stated that draft financial statements were provided to Moody's with the help of the auditors. Moody's indicated that the draft statements were sufficient to take West Haven off the watch list. Moody's requested a rating call be scheduled.

b. Review, Discussion and Possible Action: West Haven Bond Issuance

i. Proposed Bond Anticipation Issue of 2023, Series B - Notes Issuance September 28, 2023

The City of West Haven issued \$6.53 million of Bond Anticipated Notes (BANS) on March 28, 2023, and will be maturing on September 28, 2023. Due to the delay in completing the audit for fiscal year ending June 30, 2022, the City needs to refinance the BANS by rolling them to a new maturity date of February 15, 2024. City is seeking MARB approval. The intention of Finance is to issue bonds in the Fall 2023 to permanently finance these BANS.

Mr. Lindsey, the City's Financial Advisor from Munistat, provided the MARB with an overview of the \$6.53 million BANS situation.

A motion to approve the issuance of \$6.53 million of Bond Anticipated Notes (BANS) on September 28, 2023, was made by Mr. Falcigno and seconded by Mr. Biller. Motion passed unanimously.

ii. Proposed Bond/Note Issue of 2023, Series C - Issuance November 21, 2023

The West Haven City Council and the Mayor approved an Ordinance that appropriates \$12,780,100 for certain capital projects (list in the packet) approved in the Fiscal Year 2022/2023 Capital Budget of the City. Also, the Ordinance authorizes the issuance of \$12,780,100 of bonds to meet the cost of these capital projects.

Mr. Lindsey, the City's Financial Advisor from Munistat, provided the MARB with an overview of the Ordinance situation.

A motion to approve the City Ordinance was made by Mr. Biller and seconded by Ms. Weisselberg. Motion passed unanimously.

The City of West Haven is currently planning to issue long-term bonds in the amount of \$19.3 million in November 2023. These bond proceeds would be used to pay off the BANS issued on September 28, 2023, and the capital project appropriations.

Mr. Lindsey, the City's Financial Advisor from Munistat, provided the MARB with an overview of the issuance of long-term bonds.

A motion to approve the Bond Issuance was made by Mr. Biller and seconded by Ms. Weisselberg. Motion passed unanimously.

In addition, in November, the City plans to issue \$10,435,000 in BANS to reimburse itself for school construction grant retainage on the high school project. The intention is that these BANS would not be permanently financed. These BANS would be retired from school construction grant proceeds once the State completes the post-project audit. (The post-project audit could take up to five (5) years).

A motion to approve the issuance of \$10,435,000 in BANS was made by Mr. Waxenberg and seconded by Mr. Biller. Motion passed unanimously.

c. Review, Discussion and Possible Actions: Labor Contracts:

i. Tentative Agreement – West Haven Police, Local #895, UPSEU-C.O.P.S.

The City of West Haven and the West Haven Police Local #895 reached a tentative agreement relative to the West Haven Police Pension Plan. The West Haven City Council approved the tentative agreement at its special meeting on August 15, 2023. The Mayor and the members of the police union approved the tentative agreement on September 12, 2023. One of the changes in the tentative agreement is that all members hired after November 1, 2009, will transfer to the City of West Haven Police Defined Benefit (DB) Plan. The intention is that the tentative agreement would become APPENDIX A to the police pension plan. Provided to the MARB, is a copy of the tentative agreement, an analysis by the City's actuary Milliman, a summary of the cost impact of pension plan agreement with the police department, and a copy of the City of West Haven Police Department Pension Plan.

Mayor Rossi is very much in favor of this tentative agreement. West Haven has been losing police officers to other towns due to the current pension that is being provided to those police officers hired after November 1, 2009. Milliman has calculated that cost of these changes to city would be \$20 million over 20 years. Over the past years West Haven would hire, train the police officers only to have them leave to another town with a better pension plan.

Chris Hodgson, the labor attorney with Burcham Moses, discussed having conversations with other municipalities in the State about what to do about the inability to recruit and retain police officers. West Haven felt the problem more acutely than others and has been working on this pension issue with the Union since January. Mr. Hodgson provided the MARB with an overview of the Tentative Agreement. He mentioned that the signed Tentative Agreement states 9.5% in error and it should be 10% regarding the contribution rate to the pension plan.

Mr. Taylor provided an overview relating to the cost of the tentative agreement. Chief Pernell provided Mr. Taylor some data regarding retention that shows West Haven has been losing four to five officers a year with the stated reason for leaving being the lack of a pension.

Secretary Beckham asked if the item relating to changes to the retirees medical benefits affect those officers that are currently retired. Mr. Taylor stated not for those that are now retired but those officers that will be retiring in the future with 30-year or more service. Secretary Beckham asked if the \$465,000 cost increase relates to the ADEC. Mr. Taylor stated yes it does. Secretary Beckham asked if the ADEC will be increasing over the next 20 years. Mr. Taylor belief is yes. Secretary Beckham noted that the State is going in the other direction by trying to bring these costs down.

Mr. Waxenberg expressed his concerns relating to this police pension. While he is a supporter of Defined Benefits Plans for municipal employees, he finds this program with these proposals troublesome. What was presented before me was hastily put together and did not have the proper documentation for this body to deliberate with. No red line copies of anything. The cost analysis is vague. Questions about the demographics, the 8% buyback program, the DROP program, the 5% increase in the present officers' pension calculation from 60% to 65%, and those that retire with 30 or more years of service with no premium cost share of retiree medical benefits that should be changed in the collective bargaining agreement – Article 24. Looking for a simple straightforward plan with straightforward cost analysis.

Mr. Hamilton expressed his concerns relating to this police pension. First and foremost, the process that was used here was fatally flawed. West Haven, being a Tier 4 community, which is the highest level of State oversight exercise over any municipality, is dealing with long term liabilities relating to defined pensions and retiree health insurance that are big issues that every municipality deals with. If West Haven was looking to make changes of this significance to these benefits, the MARB should be informed in advance of negotiations so that we can discuss the collective bargaining strategy and the potential solution or change to those benefits. When it comes to public safety employees, police, and fire, in the State of Connecticut defined benefit plans are the norm. The fact that West Haven does not have a defined benefit plan for those police officers that have been on board since 2009, puts you at a competitive disadvantage and probably leads to some number of officers getting trained in West Haven then moving on to other communities that have a defined benefit plan. My big problem is the way it was done and most of the cost associated with this proposal does not affect those new hires at all. The pension calculation changes for those hired before 2009 is a costly provision.

Mr. Hamilton stated that West Haven has a convoluted plan design here. A police officer that retires as a police officer goes out at the next rank as a sergeant and is getting their pension based on a salary that was never earned. This provision is not common in a defined benefit plan. If you were going to negotiate to put in a defined benefit plan for new hires and for people hired going back to 2009, this would be an ideal time to look at potentially trying to clean up this pension plan and to get rid of some of these uncommon provisions.

Secretary Beckham stated that the Board will defer action until the next MARB meeting. Mr. Hamilton brought up the point that there is an election coming up, and the next mayor should be able to weigh in on this situation. Mr. Waxenburg chose not to reject the contract but to remand this agreement back to the City for clarification. Simple movement from defined contribution plan to a defined benefit plan relating to item 1 that is clean with no bells and whistles.

A motion was made to defer action on this police pension matter until the next MARB meeting by Mr. Biller and seconded by Ms. Comer. Motion passed unanimously.

d. Review, Discussion and Possible Actions: Non-Labor Contracts:

ii. APPA Grant Small Business Subaward: Park Commons, LLC

The ARPA Committee reviewed and approved a grant for Park Commons, LLC for \$208,843 for rent reimbursement out of the “Aid to Small Business” Grant.

Mr. Spreyer provided an overview. This is rental reimbursement to Park Common for its tenant Harford Healthcare. Mr. Carney stated that Park Commons built 156,000 square feet of new building space. Hartford Healthcare took 20,000 square feet with a 20-year lease.

A motion was made to approve the ARPA Grant for Park Commons, LLC by Ms. Weisselberg and seconded by Mr. Biller. Motion passed unanimously.

iii. Vision Government Solutions, Inc. – Revaluation of All Real Estate Properties

The City of West Haven is looking to contract a firm to provide revaluation services of all real property for FY2024. The City went out to bid in June and received two bids back on July 21, 2023. Vision Governmental Solutions Inc. was awarded the bid at a bid price of \$154,900.

Mr. Spreyer provided an overview. The City Assessor reviewed the bids and recommended Vision Government Solutions, Inc.

A motion was made to approve the Vision Government Solutions, Inc. contract by Ms. Comer and seconded by Mr. Hamilton. Motion passed unanimously.

iv. Tilcon Connecticut, Inc. – Street Paving

The City of West Haven is looking to contract Tilcon Connecticut, Inc. to do milling and paving of four (4) roads for a cost of \$225,000. Tilcon has a State Contract.

Mr. Spreyer provided an overview.

Ms. Kennison asked if West Haven has a statement of work or just issue a P.O. Mr. Spreyer said the City issues a P.O. off the State Contract based on the agreement with Tilcon. The terms and the conditions are stated on the back of the P.O.

A motion to approve the Tilcon Connecticut contract was made by Mr. Waxenberg and seconded by Mr. Hamilton. Motion passed unanimously.

v. A&S Electrical Services, Inc. – Boardwalk CCTV “Blue Light” Installation (Sitework)

The City of West Haven is planning to put a CCTV Blue Light System on the West Haven Boardwalk. The City went out for bids for sitework contractors and received one bid from A&S Electric Services Inc. for \$367,750. This project is an ARPA project.

Mr. Spreyer provided an overview.

A motion to approve the A&S Electric Services, Inc. contract was made by Ms. Weisselberg and seconded by Ms. Comer. Motion passed unanimously.

vi. Omni Data, LLC – Installation of Video Surveillance and Emergency Call Stations

The City of West Haven is looking to put a CCTV Blue Light System on the West Haven Boardwalk. The City went out for bids for a contractor to provide video surveillance equipment and the installation of this equipment. Two bids were received. Omni Data, LLC was awarded the bid of \$219,268. This is an ARPA project.

Mr. Spreyer provided an overview.

Mr. Hamilton asked about the call boxes. Mr. Spreyer stated that the call box would notify the police to promote safety on the boardwalk. These call boxes are similar to the ones that are being installed on college campuses.

A motion to approve the Omni Data, LLC contract was made by Ms. Weisselberg and seconded by Ms. Hammersley. Motion passed unanimously.

vii. Winkle Bus Company of West Haven – School Transportation

The West Haven Public Schools has provided a copy of the proposed student transportation contract with Winkle Bus Company of West Haven. The term of the contract is for five years starting in the 2023-2024 school year through to the 2027-28 school year (or 07-01-2023 to 06-30-28). There is an option for three (3) additional years.

The contract includes public and non-public school home-to-school transportation, early and late public services, identified special education transportation, summer transportation, and extra-curricular services including field and athletic trips.

Mr. Cavallaro provided an overview of the bus contract. They did some negotiating to get a responsible contract at the lowest price. Winkle provides a good transportation service. By doing a cost comparison there is not anyone close to what West Haven was able to achieve. West Haven has a lower cost compared to surrounding towns.

Mr. Hamilton appreciated negotiating further reduction in price to get the best deal for West Haven. A good job in terms of getting the price down to a competitive price.

Ms. Weisselberg recommends that for the next contract to go out for bids eight months before the contract is set to expire. She agrees that West Haven got a great price.

Mr. Waxenberg expresses a concern about the transportation account being overspent.

A motion to approve the Winkle Bus Company contract was made by Ms. Weisselberg and seconded by Ms. Comer. Motion passed unanimously.

e. Review and Discussion: Monthly Financial Report: June and July 2023 –

Board of Education Monthly Financials – no report

City of West Haven Monthly Financials - Mr. Taylor provided an overview of the City's Financials.

f. Update: FY 2022 Audit

Mr. Taylor discussed this earlier in the meeting. The West Haven staff has been working on completing the audited June 30, 2022, financials and focusing on Moody's report to get removed from



the watch list. Draft financial statements with the help of the auditors were provided to Moody's. Moody's have indicated that this is sufficient for them to take West Haven off the watch list. Also, Moody's did ask for a rating call that is being scheduled.

g. Open Items List

Ms. Weisselberg asked about the brewery development agreement. Taylor responded that it is no longer an option.

VI. Town of Sprague

a. Review and Discussion: Monthly Financial Report: June and July 2023

Copies of the financial reports were provided to the MARB - No report.

b. Moody's Upgrade of Credit Rating

On August 3, 2023, Moody's Investors Services upgraded the Town of Sprague's issuer rating to Baa2 from Baa3. Also, Moody's kept the stable outlook for Sprague.

VII. September Subcommittee Meetings

Ms. Kennison stated that the West Haven Subcommittee will meet on site in West Haven on September 19, 2023, for a Kick-off meeting with Protiviti, and to also work on the 5-year plan.

The Hartford Subcommittee meeting will take place on September 21, 2023. Milliman will be presenting their report.

VIII. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Biller, seconded by Ms. Weisselberg. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:22 p.m.