

# City authority OKs system-wide sewer connection charge

By **ROBERT KOCH**  
Hour Staff Writer

**NORWALK** — Residents, businesses and others hooking into Norwalk's sewer system will have to pay a connection fee starting March 1.

On Monday night, the Water Pollution Control Authority approved unanimously the impact fee to cover the "increased system burden" on the city's sanitary sewer system and wastewater treatment plant.

"It applies to new connections to the system — residential and commercial," said authority Chairman John Atkin afterward. "Ultimately all new hook-ups have an impact on the system."

Under the approved sewer connection fee, the base fee for a property served by a 5/8-inch water meter — standard for a single-family home — will be \$3,260. The one-time fee increases, as the water meter size increases. A property served by a 2-inch pipe would pay eight times as much to

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**John Atkin**  
Chairman, Water Pollution Control Authority

hook in, or \$26,080. A property served by a 12-inch pipe would pay \$700,900.

The connection fee will apply when a sanitary sewer service permit is applied for for a new structure, when an existing structure is expanded or modified, or when an existing structure is demolished and new structure is built in its place.

Elisabeth O. Bardon, operations manager for the Department of Public Works, said the department so far has no pro-

jections how much money the connection fee will bring in.

"It depends on how many new structures come to the Water Pollution Control Authority," Bardon said after the meeting. "The goal is to have impacts of development pay for sanitary sewer system improvements, so that residential customers aren't paying for the cost of development."

Mayor Richard A. Moccia last year expressed concerns over imposing an impact fee, which he said would affect developers, their budgets and plans already on the books.

On Monday night, Moccia pointed to exemption language since added. That language allows the authority to "exempt all or part of a particular development project from sewer connection fees provided that such opportunities are determined to create extraordinary economic development and employment growth or affordable housing opportunities" for the city.

# Director proposes 2007-08 budget

From A1

rect spending, such as debt service related to the ongoing overhaul of city schools.

The school board is seeking \$147.6 million for 2007-08. Hamilton has recommended \$142.5 million.

"The biggest area of increase in the recommended budget is Board of Education. Again ... they have more than 54 percent of the total budget," Hamilton said. "The recommended budget includes an increase in direct Board of Education spending of approximately \$6.1 million or 4.5 percent."

"The real increase for education in this recommended budget is 6.6 percent," said Hamilton, after factoring in debt service related to the school construction projects and other education-related expenses.

Hamilton said debt service will rise by roughly \$3 million annually over the next two years before leveling off and decreasing.

Debt service and employee benefits each consume 9 percent of Hamilton's recommended budget. Public safety services, including police and fire, make up 13 percent. Public works is

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**Thomas S. Hamilton**  
Norwalk Finance Director

responsible for 6 percent. All others areas consume 9 percent, according to the Finance Department.

On the revenue side, 86 percent of the recommended budget comes from property taxes. Departmental charges and others sources bring in 8 percent. State aid is projected to contribute 6 percent.

Although Norwalk would receive an additional \$2.7 million in education aid through Gov. M. Jodi Rell's proposed budget, Hamilton reminded Monday night that the final state budget remains to be seen.

Using what he described as relatively firm numbers, however, Hamilton said the city stands to see a \$1.16 million decrease in

state aid through the expiration of several programs. On the other hand, Hamilton anticipates extension of the higher real-estate conveyance tax rate, bringing in an additional \$1 million.

In the areas of employee wages and benefits, the recommended provides an additional \$1.3 million for health insurance, \$424,000 for vehicles, mostly for police, \$319,000 more for overtime, \$119,672 more for electricity, and setting aside \$2 million for post-employment benefits under new federal accounting guidelines. Also included: \$250,000 for storm-drain cleaning, and \$100,000 to launch a feasibility study of whether the city should pursue public power.

In staffing, the recommended budget adds a full-time mechanic for public works, and restores funding for two vacant positions in the Fire Department.

The budget draws \$3 million from the city's fund balance, also known as the rainy-day fund. With the draw-down, the fund balance is projected to stand at about \$24 million at the end of June 2008 — still "well above" the threshold for maintaining the city's favorable bond rating, according to Hamilton.

# Local business offers alternative

From A1

Colarossi told *The Hour* last week.

However, there are other ways to fundraise, and this new ban could be an opportunity for parents to explore selling healthier, more environmentally conscious products, Haas said.

"The organic candles don't have the toxins that the other candles do. Paraffin candles aren't as friendly to breathe, but the organic candles are headache free," Haas said.

The candles Haas sells are made from organic soybean oil rather than petroleum wax.

Haas said she's now informing local parent groups and other school groups about Fundraise Naturally in hopes of working with them next year. PTOs have already cemented their fundraising plans for the current school year.

"I'd like to work with people statewide and then branch out into other states," Haas said.

The state's 2006 Healthy Food and Beverages Act, which the board unanimously voted to comply with during their Oct. 3 meeting, mandates that only foods and beverages that fall under the act's "healthy food

option" be sold in school to students. Permitted beverages include milk, water and 100 percent fruit juices. Foods sold limit fats — including trans fats and saturated fats, sugars and sodium, according to the act.

While there is currently a no-exception ban on bake sales, the Board of Education will most likely pass a resolution tonight that would permit groups to hold bake sales during specific occasions.

The resolution will allow for the sale of food items that do not meet the state's nutrition standards, provided the bake sales are "held in conjunction with an event and at the location of the event." The bake sales must take place after the school day ends, and the products may not be sold through vending machines or in school stores.

For example, should the board pass the resolution, candy could be sold at a basketball game but not at a team practice.

"I think (the resolution) will pass," said board Chairwoman Jody Bishop-Pullan. "The board will adopt the resolution; it is within the state guidelines to do this ... It is the state's way

of ensuring that most fundraisers could still take place."

While board member Bruce Kimmel agreed the resolution will likely pass, he will vote against it.

"I think the Board of Education has to send a consistent message at every level of the school system when it comes to nutrition and obesity," Kimmel said. "This sends an inconsistent messages. It says it's okay to eat (sweets) after school but not during school."

Kimmel called for board members to adopt a time frame that would mandate the board to revisit the resolution before the beginning of the next school year.

Kimmel said he expects board members will vote for the resolution because "it's the course of least resistance, and we all have to pick our battles."

The board will hold a special meeting tonight at 7:30 p.m. in City Hall to discuss the resolution. Board members said members of the public are welcome to attend and voice their opinions.

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