MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

TUESDAY, MAY 4, 1982

17th BOARD OF REPRESENTATIVES

City of Stamford, Connecticut

A SPECIAL MEETING of the 17th Board of Representatives of the City of Stamford, Connecticut, was held on TUESDAY, MAY 4, 1982, pursuant to a "CALL" issued by eleven (11) members of the 17th Board of Representatives, under provision of Section 202 of the Stamford Charter.

The meeting was held in the Legislative Chambers of the Board of Representatives, 2nd Floor, Municipal Office Bldg., 429 Atlantic St., Stamford, Connecticut.

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 P.M. by the PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD, JEANNE-LOIS SANTY.

PRESIDENT SANTY: I want to remind the people on our floor that only Representatives are allowed in this area once the gavel has been struck, and I've struck it. This meeting is called to order and I ask you all to stand.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG: Led by President Jeanne-Lois Santy.

CHECK OF THE VOTING MACHINE: The machine is in working order.

ROLL CALL: Clerk of the Board, Annie M. Summerville, Called the Roll. There were 34 members present, and six absent. Absent were: Reps. Flounders, Roos, Owens, Dixon, Bonner (excused), and Livingston.

"CALL" OF THE MEETING:

THE PRESIDENT, JEANNE-LOIS SANTY, read the "CALL" of the Meeting, as follows:

"Pursuant to Section 202 of the Charter of the City of Stamford, we, the undersigned members of the Board of Representatives, duly call a Special Meeting of the Board of Representatives for Tuesday, May 4, 1082, at 8:00 P.M. in the Board of Representatives' Meeting Room, on the 2nd floor of the Municipal Office Building, at 429 Atlantic Street, to consider an ordinance regarding a phase-in of the re-assessment for Stamford, and the publication of said ordinance. Presentations will be made by various City officials pertaining to said ordinance.

Signed: Marie J. Hawe
Paul A. Esposito
Sandra Goldstein
Mary Lou Rinaldi
David I. Blum
Bob Owens
Burt Flounders
John H. Roos
Donald T. Donahue, Jr.
W. Dennis White
P. R. Stork "

(Attached at the end of the Minutes is the "Call" of the Meeting and the proposed ordinance.)

MRS. HAWE: Thank you. I would like to make a Motion to allow the following people, who are not members of the Board of Representatives, to speak and answer questions on the subject of the phase-in: Patrick Marra, Robert Thomas, Edward Faski, and Peter Lucia.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Is there a Second to that Motion? Motion is made and Seconded to allow four people who are not members of the Board of Representatives to speak before this body. Under Section 205 of the Charter this is certainly legal. It states that meetings of the Board of Representatives shall be open to the public but the Board shall have the power to restrict public discussion on the question before it. We determine as a body who can speak before us and at this time my ruling is that we have to take a vote and by a majority of those present this Motion will be passed. We will have a discussion on that.

MR. ZELINSKI: Just so I understand what we're voting on, will the people that are making their presentations be allowed to be questioned and answer our questions?

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mr. Zelinski, after the Motion is passed and we're setting ground rules. Yes, that is the format of tonight's meeting.

MR. BLUM: I would like to make an amendment that we allow a certain number of people within the audience who may want to question either one of these gentlemen in regard to the phase-in. That is being as a part of Section 205 of the Charter.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mr. Blum has made an amendment to the Motion that we allow the public to speak and answer questions and take part in the discussion. There is a Second to this amendment.

MR. BOCCUZZI: Madam President, first of all, I'd like to say that there is no way in my intentions to cut the public off from discussing or having an input. But as you well know and as Mr. Blum well knows, that when and if this ordinance is published, a public hearing will be set up and the public at that point will be allowed to ask questions or make statements. At that public hearing, I presume that the people who have the information as far as this phase-in is concerned from the administration, will be there to answer questions plus the committee who is assigned this particular item for the Board. Therefore, I don't think at this time that we should have the public participate and as I said in the beginning, this is in no way trying to cut the public off from participating.

PRESIDENT SANTY: That is right, Mr. Blum, and members of the Board. This is for publication and they do plan on having a public hearing. The date will be given in a few moments during the discussion period.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: I, too, feel that the public should be involved in all of these decision-making processes. However, I feel at this point in time, it will be counter-productive at this meeting to invite the public to participate. At the time when we have published the ordinance, and we are holding a public hearing, we will be able to have the public participate in the proper fashion. We will, no doubt, need a larger room or a larger facility and all of the public can be invited with the notice published in the newspaper. All of those people who wish to speak and make their views known can do so, but at this point in time this can be considered a work session, if you will. It will be only counter-productive to achieving the goals which we want to achieve, if the public participates.

MR. DeLUCA: Yes, I have to agree with comments of John Boccuzzi and Mike Wiederlight. The public, if we do go ahead with a public hearing, will have their opportunity sometime next week. To permit this to happen this evening would be an injustice to the people who are not informed that they would have a right to speak. I agree that this is just a work session. We have set the ground rules earlier. I think we should abide by them and over-rule this amendment.

MR. DZIEZYC: I, too, would like the public certainly to express their opinions on this very important, crucial issue. However, I think the proper procedure would be at a public hearing called for that purpose, so the public can be notified and plan to be here. Tonight's meeting was a Special Meeting of our Board. We will allow the people to inform us of whatever facts and information they wish. I would strongly urge Representative Blum to reconsider and withdraw that amendment.

MR. BLUM: I withdraw my amendment.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mr. Blum, you withdraw your amendment? Second? Fine. Amendment's withdrawn. We are now speaking to Main Motion as presented by Mrs. Hawe. I will take a show of hands who would like to speak of the Motion made by Mrs. Hawe.

MRS. GUROIAN: I have a question. Since Mr. Blum withdrew the Motion and since so many people spoke about the public being allowed to speak at the hearing, I thought this was going to be a question-and-answer session. Will the public also be allowed at that public hearing to question the same people we're questioning?

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mrs. Guroian, Mrs. Hawe would like to answer that question.

MRS. HAWE: I would just like to say that it's my understanding that the very nature of the public hearing is that the committee, or the Board, or whoever the agency is at that hearing, sits and hears input from the public. I don't believe that a public hearing, that we've ever had them on this Board, where the public asks questions. It's just a time when the Board hears the public's input; but I think the public that is here tonight will hopefully get a lot of information from the presentation that will be made tonight and enable them to make their views known next week at the public hearing, if we have one.

MRS. GUROIAN: I assume that was so, because I had never seen the public invited to a hearing where they could question-and-answer on the issue. But then I failed to see the comparison between this meeting and the public hearing, because this meeting is not to sit down and get input, it's to ask questions. So I am assuming then, that whatever information we gain, the public will hear via the news media and will not have an opportunity on their own to ask questions, unless they call the individuals directly and hope to reach them and get their questions answered.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mrs. Guroian, I want to remind you at this time that we, as a Body, have to vote for the public hearing and to vote for the publication at the conclusion of this meeting.

MR. BLUM: I withdrew my amendment to that Motion with the understanding that if we do have a public hearing, that the same people that will be here tonight, namely Mr. Marra, Mr. Faski, whoever else will be here, will enable the public to ask questions who are not here this evening, who may not be even listening but might see the notice in the paper. I think it's only wise that we do have those people present, if we do have a public hearing.

MRS. CONTI: I believe Mr. DeLuca and Mrs. Hawe mentioned a public hearing next week. I think we should give it a little bit of thought. There is going to be quite a lengthy session next week for the Board and also there is a public hearing sheduled by the Legislative and Rules for the 17th of this month. There isn't going to be much time to squeeze these things in and I think some thought should be given to when this public hearing should be held.

PRESIDENT SANTY: I am sure that Mrs. Hawe and Mr. Esposito will take that into account. Motions have been made to Move the Question Seconded. Is there any discussion? All in favor of Moving the Question, please say Aye. All opposed? Noted that Mrs. Saxe is opposed to Moving the Question. Mrs. Hawe would you repeat your motion?

MRS. HAWE: The motion is to allow the following people who are not members of the Board of Representatives to speak and answer questions on the subject of the phase-in at this meeting tonight: Patrick Marra, Robert Thomas, Edward Faski and Peter Lucia.

PRESIDENT SANTY: At this time, Mr. Owens is now present and Mr. Bonner is now present. We have a total of 36 members present. We are now going to use the machine to vote on the Motion as presented by Mrs. Hawe, and Seconded by many. Up for yes, and down for no. The Motion passed 30 yes, 2 no, 4 not voting, and 4 absent. The Motion has passed. I would ask these guests to please come forward. Mrs. Hawe, would you show them where to take their places while we go over the ground rules?

MR. ZELINSKI: Yes, would it be proper at this time, please, to inform us, if you would, regarding the public hearing, should there be one. What committee would run the meeting and approximately could we set a tentative date so that we know between now and the end of the discussion when we'll be voting on those, please?

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mr. Zelinski, the format of the meeting has been set up and that will be discussed later. Right now we've brought our guest speakers before the leadership, which met prior to this meeting and upon discussion we decided that the speakers' presentation at this time, and I would ask them to take special note, will be limited to 30 minutes. Then we are going to be allowed a question-and-answer period and we hope to limit that to 30 minutes. Of course, if we have pertinent information and we would like to run farther, we could stretch that a little bit, making it a total of one hour. Then I guess we'll be leaving and we will act on the information that we have; and at that time Mrs. Hawe and Mr. Esposito will come forth with the information of the dates of the public hearing and what committee will be handling it. We'll go from that.

But the first step is the speakers will give their presentation limited to 30 minutes and then our question-and-answer period. At this time I would ask and thank our guests for attending tonight. We do appreciate them giving their time and I would like to introduce Commissioner Marra. I don't know how you want to handle this, Commissioner Marra, you just want to speak first and then turn the podium over to... The format's up to you. Why don't you make your presentation, the four of you together in total be limited to 30 minutes?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Just to give an up-date, about a week ago I wasn't that enthusiastic about phase-in. This week I'm convinced phase-in does solve a problem, and I am enthusiastic about solving a particular problem. What is the perceived problem? And I say perceived because all of the facts cannot be in until all of the taxes are billed and out and in the taxpayers' hands.

The perceived problem is very simple. There are a lot of taxpayers out there, I believe, and the people that have looked at the numbers believe, with substantial tax increases, and we'll have these tax increases regardless of what is done in the final two steps of the budget: Your deliberations and final cutting; and the mill rate fixing budget problem. It has nothing to do with the reassessment problem and they are independent.

What I will basically try to discuss tonight is the problem caused by reassessment. First thing, there is a definite switch in the tax burden. Very simple, for the last year we taxed 100 million dollars. Reassessment, if we use that $100 million, we would still collect 100 million dollars. In doing so through the new reassessment, some people are going to pay the same as they would have paid last year. That is the perceived problem as we see it. Where is this switch in tax burden? There is a definite switch in the tax burden to the benefit of the commercial taxpayer and he gains very simply on personal property or tangible property. If we do not phase-in, and if we use last year as a tax base, the commercial taxpayer will save about 6 million dollars. There aren't many of those in numbers, and 6 million dollars isn't an awful lot. It's 6% on 100 million but that's spread out through the real estate, including the commercial taxpayer who does tend to have a big impression on certain residential taxpayers, moreso than on the commercial.

The 6 million dollar saving on property would probably mean an additional burden to residences of 3.6 million dollars. An additional burden to the commercial taxpayer by his real estate tax of 2.4 million dollars. The second important switch in the tax burden is due to the auto tax. If we do not go to a phase-in, the auto tax will result in a reduction of tax of 4 million dollars. Reduction, once again, would mean we would have to get 4 million dollars from another taxation source, real estate. That 4 million dollars represents an additional burden to the residents of 2.4 million and commercial about 1.6 million. The 4 million reduction in auto tax probably would benefit more of the residential owners because we presume they own most of the 70,000 cars that are out there. What that number is, I don't know, but it probably breaks somewhere about 90% non-commercial owners and 10% commercial owners. The personal property increase, the need for increased taxes to make up the short-fall on personal property, on average to the 21,000 residential owners represents $171.00 individually, on average. This could mean $1,000 to 1, it could mean a saving to others, but on average $171.00.

Another problem that we seem to detect, and I'm pretty sure it is a fact, is that residential real estate has appreciated at a higher rate than commercial real estate, in general. One of the reasons for this is probably a good number of Stamford is set out on a one-acre lot type basis, so that property, the land which has suffered tremendous appreciation over this period, impacts very heavily on the final Grand List. There has been a switch, effectively, from the commercial to the residential for that. What does this all mean? If you put it all together, some simple numbers and this is a cross-section of the whole city, if your assessment went up 200%, this is not the market value, this is the assessment. Last year, you were assessed at 60%; this year at 70%. If the final assessment went up 200% , or if the number you have now on your assessment is 3 times what it was last,200%, you break even. Break-even means that regardless of phase-in or not phase-in, you will pay the same taxes last year basically, give or take one or two percent. So the taxpayers that are out there that went up 200% will not have an additional tax burden, or an additional benefit. They will pay probably the same amount of taxes that they did last year; once again excluding any increase in the budget.

If your tax assessment went up 100% and not many people went up below 100% over this basic 10-year span. No one went down that we can detect, so everybody is up. It's a question of how far up you went. If you went up 100%, you will probably stand to get a 35% tax reduction on your real estate. If you went up 200%, you would get no tax increase. If you went up 300%, your tax would go up 35%. If you went up 400%, you would go up 70%, and we have taxpayers that went up more than 400%.

One taxpayer, and I won't go into who he is, to give you an impact of numbers here, and this comes about when a big question is raised. If we have all of these taxpayers with the big increases, we must have the same number of taxpayers out there with big decreases. The answer is no, we do not. What we do have if we have a certain number of dollars that are increasing, we have the equal number of dollars decreasing. Dollars, not numbers of taxpayers. I'm raising this as an example to show you what I mean. One taxpayer out there, using last year's budget, not including the budget increase, paid almost 1.5 million in tax last year. On the basis of the new Grand List he would pay this year, 1 million. It's about a $500,000 tax savings to one taxpayer. We don't have too many individual taxpayers that would pay $500,000 more, so you can see where one taxpayer gaining a $500,000 tax reduction might be offset by hundreds or more individual taxpayers each paying a little bit to make up that.

That is the basic problem as I see it out there. Without phase-in, this particular taxpayer would pay $89,000 less than last year, or a 6% reduction. So he would still get a reduction.

Now a little bit about phase-in. The options we have of solving the reassessment problem are a couple. The first one, I think we can put together a volunteer corps and go attack Greenwich and Darien and take over all that taxable property, but I don't think we would get away with that. The second one, we can simply say all right, reassessment is a problem compounded by inflation, compounded by a whole bunch of factors, and every ten years we correct the sins of the past and maybe some of the sins of the future, also. Everybody on this new Grand List is up to the same point, and that's fine. I'm not arguing against that. You can take that argument and that argument holds up. The other side of the argument is, if we have taxpayers out there in numbers, and I believe we do, with 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, and maybe more percent increases, you have to wonder at what point you have to decide on a simple democratic principle: the most good to most taxpayer. If you go on that basis, I think you have to find relief for those people in numbers. Phase-in does relieve that situation. It obviously cannot be as equitable as no phase-in. No phase-in puts everybody up to the same point, very equitable but maybe a little bit unfairly and maybe a little bit improperly. Without phase-in, what we have done, we've caused a spectrum about this big. We've got people with very big increases, people with decreases. Phase-in does nothing more than simply compact it into closer to the center. Going back to those numbers I gave for the 100, 200, 300, 400, percent increases. On phase-in, the person who would be up 100% assessment, or a reduction of 35% in tax, on a phase-in he would get a tax break still. He would maintain a tax break, however, the 35% would come down to 15%; he would stand to get a 15% reduction in tax compared to last year.

So phase-in takes the people at the bottom and brings them closer, but it does not eliminate the decrease. People closer to the center might lose some of that decrease, but the people out at 100% would not.

The 200% taxpayer breaks even with or without phase-in. The 300% taxpayer who's up 35%, would go up 15%, so you haven't eliminated his problem either. You've gotten it down from 35% to 15%. It's a lot better than 35%, but it's still a problem. The 400% taxpayer, instead of paying a 70% increase, would pay a 30% increase. That first year savings is a permanent saving. I've heard allusions to installments and making it up in the next couple of years. No, that doesn't happen. What happens is the 100% taxpayer that would get a 35% break now; on phase-in, would get a 15% break, and over the next 4 years, he would go from some place between the 15 and the 35, and in the fifth year he would finally receive his 35% increase. This is assuming that nothing changes, and we know that can't happen. We will have a new budget next year. We will have a new tax roll. We'll have growth and everything else. Most of those factors help to mitigate the problem and compounded don't make it worse. They help in the favor of an inequitable taxation system. I think that at this point, I'd probably rather cut short this presentation and go to specific questions because I do know those questions are out there. I will not ask these gentlemen to speak except for answering the particular questions.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Thank you, Commissioner Marra. We will go right into the question-and-answer period. First is Mrs. McInerney.

MRS. McINERNEY: Yes, Commissioner Marra. You indicated that on the phase-in, the properties would revert back to their old assessment on the old Grand List. You would stay at your assessment for the 1970 figure, is that what you would do?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No, phase-in. I assumed that was known. Phase-in, what it does, is take your last year's assessment. Let's assume you had 100 last year. Let's assume your new assessment is 300. You have a difference between the two assessments of 200.

MRS. McINERNEY: I'm sorry, I wasn't explaining myself right. You would have your figure of 100, add 20% on, correct?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No. Not 20% on 100. You would take 20% of the difference.

MRS. McINERNEY: That has nothing to do with my question at any rate. I am concerned about the new construction. How are you going to figure out what level they were at, if the construction was begun in 1980 and was completed in 1981? How do you determine what their value is?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The same as we have basically done it last year. We've always had this problem and this is the same that all other cities that have gone into a phase-in have done. We have to peg them back to what they would have been effectively in 1971, and then take 20% of the difference and add it to that number, the same as every other taxpayer.

MRS. McINERNEY: Well, then I guess my question is, then who pegs them back to that 1971 figure?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The same people that have always done it, the Assessor's Office.

MRS. McINERNEY: The Stamford Assessor's Office. You do not have to hire special assessors to go out and do this?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No, there are two major problems here. One, the real problem focuses down to two specific categories. One would be the new ones as you've described them, the new construction that came on. The other one would be the conversion of the condominiums that came on and now we have 200 assessments, where last year we had one number. That one number will have to be broken down into 200 numbers, so that we can calculate 20% and that's it.

MR. TARZIA: Commissioner, let me ask you a couple of questions. One is in reference to the uncollectibles. In the past, 1%, I believe, is the figure that was used. This year, we're talking in the neighborhood of what, I believe, 3 to 4%?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The budget, as presented, included a proposal to lower the collection rate to 97% rather than 99%. That's somewhere around 3 million dollars.

MR. TARZIA: Could you tell us what has happened the last few months in terms of the taxes that have been coming in, or not?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Right now the last numbers I have are from April 15. As of April 15, the City of Stamford had $3.8 million delinquent taxes of the current year. On real estate only, we had billed out 80 million, 80 of the 100 million was real estate, and that was delinquent to the extent of 3.8 million dollars. I believe it comes out to about 4.8%, which is high, based on our experience over the last couple years.

MR. TARZIA: Which has to be made up through the taxation? Let's say that if we put in a 3% uncollectible figure, it would have to be made up through taxation, obviously.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Right. We've projected the 97 one because we really don't believe the 99 is a realistic one under certain terms and because of certain abatements and everything we've tried to handle it in that additional 2% this year.

MR. TARZIA: On the auto tax, with the phase-in, now it would be a reverse? I don't think people realize it's the reverse of the property,. because you're going from a high figure to a low figure, so there would be a 20% drop. Now would you clarify in terms of who owns the cars in this town and who really pays the auto taxes?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Let me clarify this. I don't think I even mentioned it. On the auto tax last year we collected 7 million dollars. This year, without phase-in, we will probably go to 3 million. The total cars are 145 million on the assessed present Grand List. What we are anticipating if we do adopt phase-in, we will keep that low auto tax rate. I would like to believe that the Board of Finance will be agreeable to this and I spoke to them as of an half an hour ago. The whole Board wasn't there. I did speak to some of them individually, and I really believe that if you do support phase-in, I believe that they will be convinced on the merits of the numbers that keeping the auto tax rate down will be in the benefit of this city. From a couple of standpoints. One, it's a difficult tax to collect. The bigger it is, the more we have to put in uncollectible, and it is the hardest, worst tax we have in the City of Stamford to my knowledge.

MR. TARZIA: My third question, and the final question, because I'd like to give the other people the opportunity to ask questions. On the corporations, basically, we're talking about the big taxpayers. My point is, since they have the right to appeal, and there's no doubt that most of these cases will be appealed since they went before the Board of Tax Review and they do have the right to withhold 10% of their taxes each and every year, interest-free, until the case is resolved. It could be

5, 8, 10 years maybe down on the line, which will have to be carried, that burden, by the rest of us. Not too many of us can afford to hire a lawyer to appeal the case. Can I assume then that we will have many more of these appeals, and therefore, we will have to pay not only because of the fact that their taxes will be witheld the 10%, but interest-free? Also the legal expenses which these cases will drag on for years and years. You're talking about an ever-increasing number of these people on the Grand List. It's not like 1971. I think the experience will be quite different.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: We expect only because we can't get a better fix on it. We have to expect that we're going to have a lot of protests this year. I would not single out commercial taxpayers in this. The law very simply is, if you have a $500,000 assessment; over $500,000, you can withold 10% of the tax as long as you've gone through the Board of Tax Review. If you have an assessment of under $500,000, which is mostly residences, you can withold 25% tax; so the problem is a real problem with the residential owners, too. I wouldn't single out the commercial taxpayers here, although our experience has been many commercial taxpayers do avail themselves of this right, and it is their right. This is a legal right and I understand it. What I think we're going to be looking for is trying to work with some of these corporations and try to persuade them as best we can, talk to them and see if we can settle some of these disputes as quickly as possible, But in no case do we want to take a right away from them. That is their right to do so.

MR. TARZIA: Wouldn't the problem be compounded by the procedure that happened this year? The so-called problems with the notices that were sent out and other procedural problems in terms of legality here, or in terms of the appeals?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: In simple numbers, obviously we have 1,700 people that went before the Board of Tax Review that are potential claims, or witholdees. We have 1,700 more of them than we might have had if we had not had that unfortunate experience. The cost of that, we have tried to build some cost into the budget for this problem.

MR. GAIPA: Mr. Marra, when this first came up, I believe you used the word nightmare in describing the experience in other cities. Could you be a little bit more specific and give us some examples of what kind of nightmares they experienced?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The word "nightmare", and that is a quote, which I did use, and I guess this is a question of positive thinking versus negative thinking. The comment I made was before the Fiscal Committee reviewing my budget and I don't even know how we got on the tax subject. But we spent an hour and half on it. I said very simply that night, phase-in has been a nightmare in a lot of the cities that have experienced it and we've got this much of a chance to get it in. But we will get it in, if it's right; now we've lost a lot of time.

If you adopt phase-in, we will get it in, if it's right. We will get it in. My people are committed to it. The City is committed to it and if it is in the interest of the taxpayers, we will get it in on time. We will get it in and get our tax bills out. How? We'll do a task force if it requires pulling the accountants out of the Accounting Department for a day, day and a half, we'll get it done. I would like to believe that we're going to look at the problem, what's the problem, come to a solution, and once we get a solution, then we're going to find out how to get it done. We have gone through this. The people sitting up here are all of the people that are going to have to live with this nightmare. When I say nightmare, I mean it's our nightmare, my nightmare, and these gentlemen here, it is their nightmare. However, if this is what you want, we'll take on that nightmare, and we'll put it in, and straighten it up.

MR. HOGAN: Commissioner, if I am not mistaken, the figures that you quoted before, the 100%, 200, 300, and 400 and the 35% reduction versus the 35% increase, etc..., those percentages were based on what?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: They were based on leaving the tax at $100 million without any increase. The budget right now calls for $112 million, subject to your level of cut. Fixing the tax at $100 million and calculating as best we could a mill rate. Taking that mill rate and going through the assessor files and applying it in specific cases, district by district to taxpayers. The mathematics, well before we pull that selection we knew what the mathematics would show. The mathematics do show exactly what we thought it would do. In fact, one of the games I've played and I'm getting a lot of calls from taxpayers, when I get a call complaining about this whole situation, I normally can predict what their tax increase is right down close to the penny. The numbers are right. The 35% is not going to be off by much. It's subject to some number changes depending on what the final budget is going to be once we do get to that and the final full calculation of the mill rate, which is a two-and-half day calculation. We're confident those numbers are accurate.

MR. HOGAN: This, then, will mean that there will be taxpayers, putting it in plain language, taxpayers who will be paying more tax than they normally would be under an equitable system where everybody was on an equal basis and there would be taxpayers who would be paying less tax than if it were under an equal basis, as it is at the present time.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: There will be taxpayers that will not be getting a full deduction, yes, specifically the commercial taxpayers are the ones who wind up paying more under phase-in because of the personal property tax.

MR. HOGAN: But there will be inequities also in the residential area?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: There will, but that inequity, let's say the ones that are on this side of spectrum, will not get a full decrease that they would have been entitled to without phase-in. They will phase-in to that decrease in five years. They will lose some of that advantage. However, they will keep the auto tax reduction.

MR. HOGAN: You said this side of the spectrum? Just one more question. In which category would you place most of the taxpayers?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I'll tell you how I look at it. Of the people with big increases and the big decreases, if I don't do something about the big increases, I think we might be putting in jeopardy some of our real estate market as such and putting an awful lot of confusion and worry and concern into those people, and maybe telling them go live elsewhere. The big decreases scare me less. If we give people less of a decrease than they would have had, I think we can still convince them of staying in Stamford. I'm not as concerned with cutting them back as much as I am with cutting the increases back. Personally, I find when you get a tax increase in today's world of 100%, 70% increase in one year, that almost to be borders on being sinful. Once again, phase-in, I have to believe that's the problem. That is the problem to me, those people out there. If that is not the problem, phase-in is not the solution. Phase-in solves that problem.

MR. HOGAN: I think it's one of the problems, but I don't think it's all of the problem. I don't think phase-in solves it.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I agree. You tell me what the other problems are?

MR. HOGAN: I think that the problems are any inequities in the tax structure are wrong. I think also that some of your assumptions are incorrect.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: My assumptions are held up mathematically and they have been proven and proven and proven. There is an element of doubt in anything until we get the tax bills out, but I would say this: if we have any doubts about what's out there, and I think we might all have some of that, I think that might come out in a public hearing. If phase-in is to be killed, maybe the public hearing will kill it properly. If we kill phase-in before we go to that public hearing, it might be killed too prematurely. I look upon phase-in as a possibility of taking less risk, that's all. It takes less risk, because really we can't answer for the 33,000 taxpayers out there. Some of them aren't even aware of the problem.

MR. HOGAN: Well, I look at phase-in as maybe taking less risk, but I also look to phase-in as taking more money from the smaller taxpayer.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I have the numbers. The biggest switch will be in numbers of dollars which will come from the bigger taxpayers.

MR. HOGAN: And the smaller taxpayer will also get a switch in the number of dollars.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: He will not get as big a decrease as he was going to get.

MR. HOGAN: That's right, that's what I'm saying, but that is taking money from him.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I can't dispute that. Yes, it is.

PRESIDENT SANTY: I want to remind the Representatives that we have limited half-hour question-and-answer, so try not to get into a debate: try to make pointive questions. Mr. Flounders is now present and we have 37 members on the floor.

MRS. HAWE: Commissioner, you said that the average assessment increase is 200%. Is that revised from the 228%?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Yes, that's more closely refined than it was when we spoke last.

MRS. HAWE: O.K. Now, you mentioned that many of the commercial properties have realized increases of less than 200% increase in assessment. Now what other areas of the city, in terms of residential areas, can you tell us what other areas have experienced either 200 or less increase in assessment?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: If I cut across the City on a real estate basis only, the A district will pay 10% more in tax as a total district. The B district is a separate problem. I won't even pull that one in. The C district will pay 11% more in taxes; and the CS district as a district, will pay 10% more. Now this is the total district together. B is 8, so they all pay more. How can they all pay more? Because I did not include personal property there. That's real estate. The tax from real estate in each one of those districts would be up on the same tax as last year, $100 million, so everybody pays more because of personal property and auto goes down.

MRS. HAWE: Now you're talking about without the phase-in?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: That's without phase-in.

MRS. HAWE: O.K. I guess what I'm asking is, can you tell me like the West Side, the Cove, Newfield, what areas?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: It goes in all areas of the City. It might impact a little bit more in the properties that have more acreage. The bigger the area, but that doesn't hold up. One gentleman called me up today. His tax was up 340% on a ½ acre lot. I've had people call me up; you can't identify it, there's no such thing out there as average typical. We've got 33,000 average taxpayers, and each one of them has a particular problem which is going to show on his bill. We have some condo's that are up, some up not as much, and some down. We've got some commercial enterprises out there up a lot, up hardly anything, or down. Every possibility is out there.

MRS. HAWE: Let me ask you something about the costs of implementing the phase-in. The ordinance in front of us says that under subsection 5, that the Board of Representatives recognizes the implementation of this phase-in ordinance will necessitate additional personnel in the assessor's and tax collector's offices, thereby requiring additional appropriations. Now have you come to more of a definite estimate of how much it will cost? The second part of my question is, I don't understand why the tax collector will need extra personnel and could this personnel be part-time or temporary rather than permanent people?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: In the ordinance as drafted, we did not put in data processing, and I suggest that be put in. The numbers that we expect on the implementation of this would be basically $14,000, as estimated by the individuals involved. As a security measure, we are tripling that 3 times, and saying that 50,000 is an outside cost. We can't put it down specifically but we know that will be enough to do it. At outside we're talking $50,000. Well, we lost one week since the 80 and we've got to fit it in a shorter span.

MRS. HAWE: Would these additional personnel be just temporary people? Would they get money for part-time or over-time?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Most of the cost there is either outside consulting, outside manpower to help on a program, the data processing programs, key punching outside, and overtime in the assessor's office, and we didn't throw in the cost of the people that we would assign from other departments down there to give them a hand. We didn't put that in that number.

MRS. HAWE: And would additional money be required in the tax collector's office? Extra help there?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No, if it is, it's a couple of bucks; I can't think of how.

MRS. HAWE: Any additional needed for next year, as a result of this over the next four years.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: This is the big step. Once we phase-in here, we'll have problems coming up in future years, but that will be a routine matter. We do have problems over-all in the assessor's office, no doubt about that. The assessor's office, right now, is months behind it's normal routine work. Is that right, Ed? We're at least 4 months behind right now. Transfers are not being posted and we're still going through a lot of problems of the reassessment. We believe we are short manpower down there and the budget does not provide for what we need down there. We're convinced of that.

MRS. HAWE: That's any way, regardless?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Yes, that's any way, regardless, right.

MR. BLAIS: First of all, Commissioner Marra, I would say that in reference to the fact that you do have the figures, we all realize that, I would have appreciated to have had distributed tonight, a set of figures showing how it would specifically affect different groups of taxpayers. For instance, in my analysis, and I think I'm correct, the difference between paying more tax and less tax under the tax deferment plan as proposed, is the amount of increase that you had in your tax assessment? Is that not correct?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: It's not a tax deferment. I don't know what you intend by tax deferment. It's not a tax deferment. Let me have the question.

MR. BLAIS: O.K. Under the proposed plan, is it not true that the difference between paying and saving money over the five-year span is the percentage by which your assessment went up? In other words, if you only went 240% you would probably pay more money under the plan over five years?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Right.

MR. BLAIS: O.K. Now earlier tonight you stated that there are a lot of big increases in tax assessments, or projected tax assessments, and very little tax decreases.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I said there were less numbers of people with big decreases.

MR. BLAIS: Well, doesn't that mean that you're going to have to have a lot more people pay more money over five years to offset the people who are saving money with the big swings?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No, it doesn't mean that in terms of numbers. It means in terms of dollars. There's a big difference. The biggest burden on phase-in would be a reshifting back to the commercials. That's the biggest taxpayer to suffer on phase-in. It would mean close to $6 million more from the commercial taxpayer due to personal property tax.

MR. BLAIS: Without the personal property tax, the effect on the real property tax, how does that treat the corporations?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I don't understand the question.

MR. BLAIS: In other words, leave the personal property out of it and look at just the real estate taxes.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I can't leave the personal property out of it because it's an integral part. Rephrase your question, maybe I can get it better.

MR. BLAIS: In other words, this plan to change the assessment base over a five-year period on real property taxes and only looking at real property taxes, is this plan much more beneficial to corporations, or less beneficial to commercial property?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: It depends, it would be more beneficial to the corporations whose assessment went up over 200% and the ones that are below 200% would lose. From that standpoint, it's the same across the city.

MR. BLAIS: Could I ask you what the percentage increase in commercial property was? Over the ten-year period?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The percentage increase in commercial property over a ten-year period? I'll answer you this way, Peter. The commercial property, without phase-in, would pick up a couple more percents. A couple more million dollars in tax than it would last year. However, all of the numbers I've given to you tonight are based on the taxation system after we've considered growth. If we had put the Grand List on the same basis both years, the problem is much more dramatic than

I've been telling you. The corporations, as a group, will be paying more tax from last year to this year without phase-in. They will, on real estate, a couple percent more. So will the residents be paying a couple of percent more.

MR. BLAIS: Thank you very much, Commissioner.

MR. ZELINSKI: Let me begin by saying Commissioner Marra, I want to commend you on a very strong presentation in your opinion and beliefs as to why you feel phase-in is good. Regarding some questions. First of all, I want to clarify in my own mind and I think it would be helpful to my colleagues to know number one, as far as commercial property, large corporations in the city and taxes, do they get any type of a break because of the buildings being depreciated each year?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: On real estate? No. They get it on persoanl property as there is a depreciation factor.

MR. ZELINSKI: Right, meaning desks, office equipment, etc... Correct? In other words, there is no depreciation on their buildings themselves because of...

MR. FASKI: No, once a building is put on line during the re-evaluation, depreciation applied on that at that period of time, will stay there for the ten years, until the next re-evaluation. Personal property is just like an automobile, what its current value is on any....what will happen is when a re-evaluation takes place at that given point in time, that building gets reviewed and its condition is noted and a depreciation factor is noted and a depreciation factor is applied to the replacement value less the depreciation, which could be physical, functional, and the end result is actual value times 70% and that assessment figure is maintained for 10 years. At that same figure, barring any improvements in the property, of course, remodeling is so, the depreciation figures would change.

In personal property and in automobiles, there is always a current value on any October 1 of any given year so the property that went on line as of this October 1, it's in its 100% value. What I mean by 100% value, it's its value less it's proper depreciation for age times 70% equals your assessment for that specific thing. Now last year it was treated the same way except it was going in at 60%. So you could see what happens, you still have the same amount of dollars. Now let's say there was no increase, except now what's happening to law states you must take it from 60% to 70%. But all this is, is an equalization rate and that will take them approximately 14 to 15% but that's because of your equalization rate change, but they are always in at current value. It's the same with the motor vehicles. So that's why you find a great big shift when you're doing a re-evaluation in that your real estate was running again at approximately 26% assessment to sales ratio last year and your personal property, which is motor vehicles and that, was always running in at 100% times your equalization factor of 60. So you can see what happens is when you go into re-evaluation, you can't bump anybody up more than 100% of value because they're there already. But when you take your real estate and put it where it belongs in the market place, now what happens is you're both equal. But this one was way down here. He has to join this group, so when you apply your mill rates, because it's a great big volume during re-evaluation, you are going 4 billion dollars as against a billion and a half. You could see the mill rate of course will go down to generate the same amount of income, but now these people stay here because you've always had them at 100%, if you will.

MR. ZELINSKI: Yes, Mr. Faski, thank you. On the same line, does that also hold true for the office equipment, desks, chairs, and so forth in the large corporation, or is there a depreciation taken in on those pièces of equipment and machinery?

MR. FASKI: Personal property is personal property. The only people who pay personal property tax other than automobiles, are commercial enterprises. There isn't any homeowner that pays this tax. You also don't pay a boat tax now; you pay registration tax through the State of Connecticut Motor Vehicles Department and there is no longer a personal property tax on boats, if you will.

MR. ZELINSKI: But again, my question was, the office equipment and machinery each year does that depreciate or does that stay the same? As an example: after this re-evaluation, I presume that when they revalue they also took into consideration every piece of equipment in a particular corporation.

MR. FASKI: What it is, as I mentioned before, is it's always at current value. What I mean by that is that if it is one year old and worth a million dollars, it's worth some depreciation because if you put it out on the market place, you certainly wouldn't get the same amount of money as a new piece of equipment. So now it reflects that five percent or ten percent depreciation for it's age. Many times there are out-moded pieces of equipment but we follow a standard assessors' schedule. We don't permit them to write it off in five years or so. They must follow the trend of 5% off the first year, then 10%, so on, to a minimum 20%.

MR. ZELINSKI: O.K. Well, then if we accepted phase-in, wouldn't that small piece of assessment, that is the personal property in the corporations, we would be giving them a break because we're, as you said, each year it's depreciated so of course they would be paying less because of that 20% factor, rather than the full 100% now without phase-in.

MR. FASKI: You realize that when I say 20% factor, they're paying 100% of its value, because all it's worth is 20% of its original value. That 20%, in a market place, and that many times is not realistic, except we do keep a base. We say you cannot go below 20% and we take 70% of that but that 20% reflects market value at that specific time for an old piece of equipment. This is a kind of revolving account, in that they are always changing. You'll always see the companies, the commercial enterprises putting something in the new year, as we change our schedule to bring in the new year. Like 1982 now we'll have a new one, put your equipment for 1982. You'll always see something come in there, things dropping out the bottom and new pieces of equipment being purchased, more expensive in many cases. Personal property isn't phased-in.

MR. ZELINSKI: Commissioner Marra, you had mentioned that this phase-in would be helping the majority of the people that have had large increases as far as percentages, which I think you said right now was about 200%. Do you have any numbers as far as how many taxpayers, if you will, would benefit by phase-in?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The numbers? No we don't because we can only calculate that once we get the full list on the 33,000 taxpayers.

MR. ZELINSKI: I think that's very important for us to know because again, your arguments are strong, because of your strong beliefs in phase-in. However, I think we, as Representatives, have to be cognizant of not only our own constituents, but also the rest of the City and I think we have to be cognizant of those people who have had large increases, but I don't think it should be at the expense of the smaller taxpayers.

Now in the local paper you had been quoted and I just wanted to make sure that quote was correct. You had mentioned despite your support of the program last night, this was pertaining to a meeting held on April 21, the only benefit of the phase-in is the people out there with huge tax increases are brought closer to the center. Which means that, as an example, if a taxpayer, based on the assessment, had an increase of say 100%, which is 100% under the average of 2%, in their particular situation, then phase-in would not be really beneficial to them, would it, Commissioner Marra? Those with 100% increase in assessment from 1971?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No, phase-in to the individual with 100% assessment, would lose something on the phase-in. He will still get a decrease in his tax. Definitely! Instead of reducing down to 35%, he would reduce down to 15%. I find out of the spectrum, that a 35% increase is high. I find a 35% decrease is also too much, personally.

MR. ZELINSKI: An example, using an increased value on a particular home that went from $25,000 to $100,000 of assessed value, would be an increase of 300%. The taxes would be calculated by multiplying the mill rate for the district by the old assessment plus 20% of the increase if phase-in is accepted.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: As a general answer, yes, but you don't know what the mill rate is until you have a phased-in list.

MR. ZELINSKI: Right, but the point is again the mill rate is going to be set and the same amount of revenue. I believe that the figures that you had mentioned at that Special Meeting, our budget at the present time is 112 million, without any further action, I should say, by our Board?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The numbers I've been quoting tonight are based on $100 million, not $112 million. I'm trying to segregate the reassessment problem. For instance, the guy that went up 35%, would now go up 35% plus what additional percentage is needed to meet the budget at whatever number you set it in over $100 million.

MR. ZELINSKI: In other words, your example this evening was $100 million, not $112 million?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: That's right.

MR. ZELINSKI: What about the other $12 million?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I don't know where the final budget is. I'm trying to segregate and show you what problem we have caused by the reassessment. If you get the budget down to $100 million, my numbers hold up. If you stop at $105 million or $110 million, we've got to add to the problem. That is a budgetary problem. That is not the problem caused by reassessment. I'm trying to segregate that.

MR. ZELINSKI: Now, the latest figures that I have again, based on that meeting of that evening and checking with the finance office, the tax rate for District A would be 26.90; District B would be 25.30; C would be 23.10; CS would be 24.70; and autos would be 25.50.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Those numbers are as the budget stands today. Under $12 million, you've cut something we don't know about.

MR. ZELINSKI: Now the point is, if we do phase-in, the difference where the money would come from, from those people who have the large increases, be they residential, or commercial, would have to come from somewhere and the only place that the money can come from is the remaining taxpayers that without phase-in would not have to make up the difference with phase-in.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I have trouble following you.

MR. LUCIA: You no longer can use those mill rates if you phase-in.

MR. ZELINSKI: No, using any mill rate.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No, no, John, let me answer you this way. Those numbers right there, they're based on the Grand List of $4 billion. If we phase-in, the final Grand List probably will be somewhere about $2.2 billion, or $2.1 billion, or $2.0 billion, or somewhere about there. Now, as the Grand List goes down to that number, the mill rate will go up proportionately. Theoretically, if the Grand List went down by 50%, the mill rate would go up 100%.

MR. ZELINSKI: Yes, but the point is the money. The difference, o.k.? In other words, without phase-in, the taxes would be based on whatever the assessments are each particular of the 4 taxing districts, plus automobiles. Now, with phase-in, granted certain people will be getting a break because of the large increase in percentage in their assessment. The money to make up the $112 million or the $100 million dollar budget that we need to operate and balance the budget, everyone would go up?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: 12% on top of the phased-in mill rate.

MR. ZELINSKI: So it would seem to me that no matter which way you look at it, it certainly is not an equitable way of taxing the people because if we accept phase-in we're going to be demanding of those people that have smaller pieces of property, who did not have a large increase because they have small pieces of property. They don't have large acreage; we're asking them well now, you will be compelled to pay more taxes to help those people, the larger taxpayers and the commercials to help alleviate their taxes; and that's the only way I could look at it, unless you could explain to me differently, Commissioner.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Excuse me, Mr. Zelinski. We have 13 more speakers. We have already been speaking for 40 minutes. I don't want to cut you off, but if you could just be brief, and cut it to maybe one or two questions. I think that at this point, since the hour is getting late, if we would limit our questioning to maybe one or two, and then we'll come around a second time if the questions haven't been answered, but give everyone a chance to speak this evening.

MR. ZELINSKI: I'm sorry. I just have one more question after he answers that and that will be it, thank you.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I was waiting for a reply on how else can we get the money. I'll have to go back to Mr. Hogan's comment. Any taxation system is going to be inequitable at some point. The more you get out of one pocket, the less you're going to get out of somebody else's pocket. It's a question of who should pay it. Now you say it's been inequitable; yes, maybe we've been inequitable for 10 years, and we've been sinning for 10 years. The real question is do you want us to sin for another year? That's the question. Do you want to carry it on, or do you want to take the shock waves that might go through this community if that problem is bigger than everybody here thinks? When those tax bills go out, we either have a problem, or we don't have a problem. Maybe it depends on which side of the parade you want to be on. The front or the back. Now I'm saying to you, why take the risk at this time? If you open it to an open hearing, you might get a better answer than we have here tonight. If we kill phase-in, we kill it, and fine. That's it. We go on to new business. If phase-in is to be put in, we have to put it in. You have to judge on the balance, where do you want a tax? Where do you want to over-tax, under-tax? It has to fit in there some place.

MR. ZELINSKI: O.K. to conclude, I believe that the phase-in, based on your comments and what I've done research on myself, I believe sincerely that it's only going to polarize the community. It's going to discriminate against certain taxpayers and it is going to turn taxpayer against taxpayer depending on which district they live in and everything else, and I think we should leave it alone and that's my comment. Thank you.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Thank you, Mr. Zelinski. I would appreciate questions more than comments at this point.

MR. BLUM: I'd like to go through a few questions in regard to the budget and get them clear in my mind based on the answer-and-question and remarks that I saw of yours in the Sunday newspaper. I think you made some remarks in regard to surplus, that the taxpayer in a sense is obligated to pay a certain portion of his tax for the surplus. Is that true?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Let me simplify it. The budget as it stands now. You can look at this budget from many different angles and get a whole different bunch of answers. The way I see the budget at this point right now is, it's 12 million dollars more burden to the taxpayer than it was last year. That 12 million dollars can be broken down to some significant numbers. (1) Five million of the 12 million....

PRESIDENT SANTY: Excuse me, Commissioner Marra. May I remind the Representatives in the caucus room that we must maintain a quorum on this floor and I don't think at this point we have 21 members.

MS. SUMMERVILLE: The only time you have to have a quorum is when you take a vote. You don't have to have a quorum.

PRESIDENT SANTY: I would like the Representatives to take their seats, please. Give respect to the speaker. You Representatives called this meeting. Ten of you Representatives wanted this meeting and I would please ask them to take their seats. If you're going to get up, maybe one or two at a time, but certainly not en masse. I'm sorry, Commissioner Marra, will you continue?

MS. SUMMERVILLE: All ten? Seven of them.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: All right. The $12 million we're up, now before your final deliberations, are 5 million of it is marked as surplus. 2 million more for the additonal reserve for uncollectibles that we built in, and 5 million is sitting as an increase for the Board of Education. That's 12 million right there. There are other increases. Compared to last year, we are at almost 3 million below in capital from taxation. That 3 million below would be offset by additional costs in the rest of the City outside the Board of Ed. If I met those two and put those aside for the time being, the 12 million once again is five from surplus, 2 from Bad Debts, and five from the Board of Ed. That's where the budget stands. It also tells you something else. The budget right now, except for those three factors, is below last year and we're one year behind. So you have eaten below the budget level on a total basis where it was last year. Does that answer your question on the budget?

MR. BLUM: Let me ask another question of you. That answers my first one. Why do you call it a surplus? Would you call that a Contingency Fund?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No. This is not the Contingency. Two years ago we had a surplus of 8 million. Last year we had a surplus of 3 million. When you have a surplus, it means you have to go out and tax less, if you can understand this. If I start out the year where I'm carrying forward 8 million dollars into the year, I have 8 million cash. I don't have to go tax the taxpayer that 8 million. Now what happened is both years we had a surplus. One year is $8 million, the other is $3 million. It went the wrong way, unfortunately. If it were 3 and 8, we'd be having a 5 million saving. Unfortunately, it went 8 and 3 which means next year we have to tax 5 million to make up the reduction, because of that surplus carry forward. In other words, I started out this year with 8 million dollars in the bank before I started to tax. Next year I start out with only 3. If I have the same budget level, I'm going to need 5 million more. Right? That's it.

MR. BLUM: You did mention in one of your meetings about tangible properties.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: That's personal property.

MR.BLUM: That's personal property? At that meeting you told us when you were present, that tangible property cannot in a sense go up or down, but with the auto tax, that you can make it if you have to get some extra funding, you might have to go under it with the auto tax. Why can't you go into the tangible property?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I think what I was trying to get across was this. Tangible property is not reassessed or revalued. It comes on the tax roles at a number and it does not go up because of the reassessment year. It's not subject to reassessment. If that makes it clear. The auto is the same thing. That is not subject to reassessment. The idea on increasing the auto tax to get more tax out of it was not mine, that was some members of the Board of Finance and I am thoroughly against that in terms of getting more tax out of the auto tax, because I think it's the poorest tax we have.

MR. BLUM: Yes, but they do tax it. One year they made it straight in various districts, it was different. Like one district A, had one mill rate, and one year we made it straight across-the-board.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: We have a uniform tax rate which very simply is $100 million, or whatever we need in tax, is divided by the Grand List.

MR. BLUM: I'd like to ask you a question. I have before me, if everyone read this in the Sunday Times, this past Sunday, talking about Hartford when they in 1978 had their reassessment and they found out that there was a disparity between commercial and residential, they, through the General Legislature, were able to come out and make a change where the commercial paid a higher tax than the residential. They are now discussing this whole thing, or trying to phase it back in because now the commercial are complaining about the difference between the residential and it's the other way around. But here in Stamford, as a result between the ten-year period, in 1970, we didn't see that building that's sitting right in front of us: Landmark Square; and it's only through this URC that came about in this past ten years which brought on the assessments that went much higher because of this. Because of the demand for land, the demand for more homes, and so on. I want to ask you if there was a possibility of another plan other than the phase-in that you're talking about. Could it be that the people who brought on the high assessment, and this is the problem? I don't think as you had said once before, even if we cut 20 million dollars off our budget, there will be some people that will still suffer with a higher tax increase. I'm trying to bring the fact out that this Board just can't arbitrarily cut to no services at all.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I'm not proposing a $20 million cut. Let me bring the major points out. (1) I have to say, as a taxpayer, and a Finance Commissioner, thank God for the corporate world that is out there. They represent somewhere between 36 and 45 million dollars in tax, depending on what numbers you put in, what numbers you take out. If we did not have the commercial taxpayer, we would not be collecting 36 million dollars in taxes in minimum. I don't think we could eliminate that cost out of the budget. I am happy that on balance we have them paying the tax. As far as the impact on the corporation, in terms of the real estate values, housing etc...I'm happy for that. I would rather have my house appreciate than depreciate and we've got a lot of communities through the U.S. that are depreciating. One fact of life, this is Fairfield County, and whether we had corporations or commercial out there or not, this property would have been highly valued because it's a highly valuable area. On balance, I have to say financially the decisions to go the way Stamford has gone over those last ten years has been proper and right in any interests of the City. No doubt about it.

PRESIDENT SANTY: At this time, I'd like to mention that this meeting was called specifically to address the phase-in. I know we're all interested in taxes and this is very good. It's a good question-answer period but this meeting was called specifically for phase-in, and these gentlemen were invited specifically for this issue. So I would remind you to stick to this issue and please be brief. There are still 13 other speakers, and in fairness to your colleagues, please keep it brief.

MR. BLUM: One question in regard to phase-in. In the audience this evening I invited people here today, yesterday, and all during this week, since they read about phase-in. I invited them to come to this meeting tonight not knowing that we're over the air this evening. Believe me, I'm sorry to bring you out when you could have heard it over the radio. Many people from condominiums have called me, telling me to vote against phase-in for the simple reason that they now have been assessed properly and they now are, if phase-in came in, they would have to pay more. Can you please talk about that particular issue?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Once again if the condo, like any other piece of property is up 200%, over 200% phase-in helps them. If it's below 200%, it doesn't help them. There are condo's out there going both ways. There are.

MRS. GOLDSTEIN: Commissioner, you spoke about the problems that other cities have had in relation to phase-in. I have a three-part question that speaks just to that. (1) Which cities in Connecticut or elsewhere for that matter, have experienced phase-in? Have you had your staff or have you been in contact with any of these cities to see how they address the problem so that we can learn from their mistakes and we can pick up some of their good points, and what have you done at this point to facilitate the phase-in if the Board votes for it?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The first one we had, we've had correspondence from a legal nature with seven or eight cities that went through the phase-in, and we had direct visits to Waterbury, and our feedback there was that it was a positive one. The real area we did look at was New Haven and on that visit, data processing went up to take a look at and the assessor's office went up to take a look at to see their systems in terms of computer because they were similar to us and discuss some of the actual problems. We also invited a consultant in to speak to us (all of these gentlemen are at least data processors or assessors) and the cabinet on this particular issue. Putting it all together, we found that there was really no city out there with the specifics that Stamford had.

For one reason, no one has had the growth that we had. So the problems that we did see in the other ones were not our real problems. Our problem is a particular, more particular than theirs was, in terms of the commercial growth we've had over the last ten years, the condo growth that we've had over the last ten years. The little number that we get like a 60 million dollar increase in personal property assessment and taxes go down 6 million dollars. No one had that. 45 million dollars increase in automobile assessment and taxes go down. No one had that swing. Their swings were of a different nature than ours. We found parallels. We found very different arguments. Some of the people say it was a nightmare. These are the people who had to put the system in and work through it and what not. We found some communities that really went through the experience and didn't understand some of the mathematics to it, also. I could see where that was a nightmare problem especially where they didn't understand what was going on. We found it all over. We had to come to our conclusion that (1) Is this something that we can put in? The answer is yes. We would like to have another month or so to do so, but we don't have that additional month. We are confident that we would get it in from a mechanical standpoint.

MRS. GOLDSTEIN: Have you made any plans as to how you're going to do it? How you will facilitate it? Can you share that with us?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: From a data processing standpoint, Bob is already starting to put the program together in his head. From the assessor's standpoint, he's already identified the problems. We do know what we have to do in terms of breaking down the properties, especially the new ones that we mentioned that weren't here last year that we have to phantom them, in their terminology, and give them a value last year so we can calculate the 20%. We have to break down the condominiums, where we have 200 or so of those where we had one number last year, we have to get 200 numbers for last year on that. We are aware of those problems and we know it's really just a mechanical problem. It is compounded based on the delays or the lateness that we already have in the assessors office. We have that as a problem. We're trying to do things to correct that. I've had one firm that's volunteered some people, one so far. One of the big 8 CPA firms who we're talking to, and they sent in a person that started today. She's going to be doing a lot of the auditing of some of these cards. We're still finding errors. Yesterday, we found a card with a million dollar error. Thank

God it was a non-exempt rather than an exempt, but this whole thing already has been a nightmare. Compounding it a little bit more with phase-in, might be like getting a little bit more pregnant, that's all.

MR. ESPOSITO: I'd like to go back to clarify some of the questions that have been raised before. For example earlier today, I believe Mr. Tarzia raised the issue of collections, and you pointed out that we have about a 99% collection rate. Without the phase-in, with the new reassessment, do you anticipate a higher delinquency rate in collections next year, and how would the phase-in affect that?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I'd have to vote for a tougher collection situation without phase-in than with phase-in, for this reason. Those big increases that are out there, some of the ones that maybe aren't so big but are substantial is the individual taxpayer. When you compound that with the 17,000 elderly out there, I don't know how drastic the situation is. I spoke with a taxpayer today who is in the 40-50% increase and he has no doubt that he can't meet his tax bill next year. He doesn't have the money for it.

MR. ESPOSITO: So you can anticipate more people not paying their taxes, and this is with all the things notwithstanding, keeping the tax levy the same, not increasing the assessment, and keeping it the way it is and not phasing-in, which means that other taxpayers will have to pick that up?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The biggest increase will be passed on through the personal property. I heard one tonight by one of the Members of the Board of Finance, who mentioned to me that his wife was in a supermarket yesterday and ran into a woman and the woman started crying about the tax problem.

MR. ESPOSITO: Will phase-in dry up her tears?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I don't know if she's above 200 or below 200. I don't know.

MR. ESPOSITO: Another question. I'd like to go back to Mr. Blais' question because I believe he asked a very important question, and I wasn't clear with your answer and I'd like it clarified. He asked a question about the commercial taxpayer. Will they pay more tax on real property next year than they did last year without the phase-in?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: All sources of real property will go up. I mentioned that by district they go up; by resident, commercial, they all go up.

MR. ESPOSITO: So the commercials will pay more next year than they did this year, but so will the residential, and every district?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: So will every district. Based on last year's 100 million, not even bringing 112 million. You don't believe that?

MR. ESPOSITO: And finally, you have been mentioning, and I've heard about this the last week or two, about the personal property tax on the corporations, and a couple of us in Fiscal have been looking for that in the the revenues. Where does it show up in revenues?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: It's in the tax bill.

MR. ESPOSITO: On the sheet you gave us about revenues, you have a breakdown tax collection?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: It's in tax. Personal property is taxed by district like real estate. It's in the A, B, C, and CS District.

MR. ESPOSITO: So it's under tax collection, unlike the auto tax, you have a separate line.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Auto tax is taxed separately because that's considered a uniform tax district, one district. What auto tax pays is if we had only one tax rate in this city, that would be the tax rate, the auto rate.

MRS. GUROIAN: These are the sheets you handed out the other day? I'm not too bright.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I won't accept that. You want to ask another question?

MRS. GUROIAN: That wasn't a question.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: That was an answer, though.

MRS. GUROIAN: I have a few questions on it. From the percentages that I got out of it, the grand total went up 294 times. Am I right, or approximately? Comparing the prior to the current Grand List, by type of property, that's the sheet I'm on.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: You're talking about 1,488 going to 4,388?

MRS. GUROIAN: Yes, now you tell me if my methodology is wrong, which it may be. I recognize the fact that unfortunately you have, to coin the term, "phased-in the increase" in the Grand List in this comparative. But that muddies up the waters a little bit. I would have been happier if you'd had three columns and shown me the increases without the phased-in addition to the Grand List and then also with what you have here. But the percentages I would imagine, would more or less hold true, and it's clear when I worked out the tangible and the autos, one comes to 141, one comes to 133, that those are the ones that are going to benefit the most, vis-a-vis, the 294. Are you following what I'm saying? Am I clear? So if I assume that I can see that clearly, then I have to assume that the percentage that that category which increased in the most percentage is going to benefit the most by a phase-in? Is that assumption wrong?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: That assumption is right.

MRS. GUROIAN: All right. According to my percentages that I worked out, I find that commercial land increased the most and I would assume that that would be one category where additions to the Grand List wouldn't be affected as much because that's not like buildings and things. That increased 418%.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: There could be in these numbers some classification changes from one category to another. Forest Street, last year, might have been one category.

MRS. GUROIAN: But there would also be a lot which I know we passed on which became non-taxable property, so they would have gone out. So that one, more or less should be stable just as the residential land couldn't have changed much by additions. If my methodology is right, if I'm thinking right, then they are the ones who will benefit the most by a phase-in because their increase was the most. 418 was the highest that I got.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: In total category, you're right, but if you broke this down this list, this is a summary of a computer list. If you take a look at the summary of the computer list, the properties that go up the most are more in a residential land area.

MRS. GUROIAN: No, no, you have them divided on this. Residential land only went up 370. Commercial land went up 418.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: There's a particular problem in that category because of a public utility that really went through the roof on that one. That increase is unusual for something that happened in the B District in one particular property. If you work with the total, you're going to get to the wrong answer. It's caused by one property.

MRS. GUROIAN: But the only one that comes nearest to it, to the 418, is the 370, which is land residential.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Here's what I'm saying. If I adjusted the land number for that one problem, you would find that the real problem is up in a land residential. There's an unusual problem in the commercial land.

MRS. GUROIAN: 572 million dollars? It would affect the percentage that much? Well, it's not going to affect it that much. It's not going to come below 400. From 418 it's not going to come below 400, fast calculations.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I'll tell you how bad it is. This winds up showing that the B District in terms of tax, because of this one piece of property, they will pay 101% more tax than they did last year.

MRS. GUROIAN: In this particular category?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The B District will pay 101% more money because of that.

MRS. GUROIAN: It's hard enough to follow what I'm following. Don't bring in the districts on me. I'll talk about that later. The categories according to my percentages, that would, as you said, benefit the most, would be the tangible property, and one is 133 and one is 141. The next one that would benefit the least would be residential building, which is the highest category on this sheet. That will benefit by phase-in the third least. You mentioned the two, but you did not mention that the next category that will benefit the least by phase-in would be residential building which is the highest number on this list; and the most that would benefit, even if I take into consideration his 22 million dollars, will be the commercial land. It's going to end up in terms of dollars in the same way and in that instance, then the district they lie in will muddy up my thinking a little bit because I don't have access to the figures that I would have to have in order to determine that. But the percentages, of course, hold true in the tax increase. The percentages I've worked out hold true as in the tax, as they do in the assessment, except for the impact of which district they're in. But if I assume that the A District has, as you said, increased 10% more, that had the highest increase, excuse me, C District had the highest increase. So if, in fact, it does muddy up the waters, it will muddy up the waters to the benefit of the A District, not the CS District. Am I still thinking right?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I think so. I'm lost on that last one, though.

MRS. GUROIAN: All right. I know I'm thinking right. I assure you the other thing that confused me is, on this sheet which I really didn't understand too well, where it said phase-in example, wait a minute, go back to the other sheet, I haven't finished. The sheet that I was on, By Type Of Property. When you made the comparison between prior Grand List and current Grand List in terms of tax.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Let me go back and correct one thing. This comparison here is distorted by one important factor. The current Grand List has got growth in it; the other one didn't. O.K., so those increases, coming back to my thought,.....

MRS. GUROIAN: That's why I said I would have preferred if you had given me the comparison also without the growth...

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I would have loved to have done it, if I had it. I didn't have it. But we expect the growth is somewhere about 5% in here. I am pretty confident that it is.

MRS. GUROIAN: But the 5% doesn't matter as much as where that growth was.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: But the growth is basically in the commercial.

MRS. GUROIAN: Right, I would assume that. Right

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Phase-in, because of that, phase-in gets more money out of commercial.

MRS. GUROIAN: Why shouldn't it be 18% of the taxes?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Because the assessment is changed by virtue of what tax, but it changes depending on the mill rate in a particular area.

MRS. GUROIAN: You told me what tax. It's almost $100 million. How could you do that, when all of commercial isn't in the same area, or all of residential?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I know because I calculated all of this district by district, property by property, to get these numbers.

MRS. GUROIAN: O.K. and then you put it together? That explains why there are small differences between the two. Because if you took 100 million, it should come out exactly.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The real number was 99. The reason between the 99 and 98 is because when I calculated the mill rate on the current Grand List, we picked the actual Grand List that was sitting in the computer as of that date, which was not the same as the prior Grand List. So there was a change in there. So we had to calcualte the mill rate and that's why it didn't stay even.

MRS. GUROIAN: Now the other question is, when it came to that column, that's headed by current Grand List, although it doesnt' make any sense, because we're talking about tax. Why did you choose the total 98 million?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The 98,091? That's what I was just trying to explain. The 4383 Grand List? That was in the computer as of like about 11 days ago. We knew we had that in the computer. I used that number and used a mill rate based on that number, rather than recalculate the whole thing; now when I applied that mill rate out, it only gave me 98, rather than the 99. Had I used a different number, I think the number would have come out exactly 99.530. They would have been the same, but I wanted to see where we were standing as of ten days ago, rather than January.

MRS. GUROIAN: But the assumption there is for reason of example, you're using approximately the same total for the two years?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Exactly, and as we stand now, the final Grand List, if you haven't heard it, is 4,377.

MRS. GUROIAN: Yes, but we don't know what that final tax is.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No, but it can't be 1% difference in here. We don't know what the tax is, but we know there won't be a 1% error as to the numbers presented here for purpose of calculating the reassessment.

PRESIDENT SANTY: May I interupt a moment? Mrs. Guroian, do you have any further questions? Because we have eight speakers left and I'd like to suggest at this time, Commissioner Marra, you have been standing for an hour and 20 minutes. Would you like to take Representative Dixon's seat and sit down?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I would rather be standing than hanging. I have no problem with that.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mrs. Guroian, would you conclude then?

MRS. GUROIAN: I have two questions, one is very short, one's a little bit longer. Is that all right?

PRESIDENT SANTY: Would you just ask the short one and maybe if we come around the second time?

MRS. GUROIAN: I'll save the short one, but I'll ask you the longer one because that one I'm more curious about. You gave an example, which shows that Mr. X has a small residential home and he will save, I think you said somewhere in the vicinity of $171 with the phase-in.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No, I didn't say that. What I said on 171, the saving to the commercial taxpayer on personal property is about 6 million dollars. 3.6 million, of that would be picked up by the residential owner. There are roughly 21,000 residences out there. That means on average, that they would pay $171 more.

MRS. GUROIAN: My curiosity is peaked by something Barbara said. If the new additions, or a new commercial building is built, and she asked you how they will be affected by the phase-in, if the new additions are built, and how you'll come up with an assessment figure, and if I understood correctly, you said something which would be in effect going back to 1970 and then pro-rated some kind of pro-ration. Using that, will you tell me how this is going to affect, and just use general numbers, a construction like Trizec? How much are they going to benefit by phase-in?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Trizec didn't come on stream this year.

MRS. GUROIAN: When they do come on stream, how much are they going to benefit by phase-in?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I can't tell you. That would be pure speculation because we don't even know what the cost or anything would be. But I would say this in general. The newer construction that came on this year would wind up picking an additional tax up, General will pay more. Now, as for the future I don't know. If the Trizec came on next year, it would be different. If it came on a year after, or the year after, or the year after. It depends on what you're going to...

MRS. GUROIAN: If they come on next year, will they benefit by phase-in?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I'd have to see what the numbers are.

MRS. GUROIAN: If I give you a number, can you give me a fast calculation? If I say an approximate 250 million dollars?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: That wouldn't mean anything.

MRS. GUROIAN: But the theory should be the same. Will they, or will they not, benefit by phase-in?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: They probably would not benefit by phase-in because the newer construction doesn't, but by the time they come on, you're so far down the line that it wouldn't make any difference. If they don't come on within the next two years, roughly in the third year, you're almost there.

MRS. GUROIAN: But if they come on stream next year and you pro-rate them as of 1970, they should benefit. Am I wrong?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Let me put it this way. Whatever comes on the Grand List at that point, it would be growth. We would be ahead of the game on that. The actual number, I don't know. I'll tell you where we would gain, probably one of the biggest numbers of the Trizec or anybody that came on, is the effect of personal property. They would pay less in personal property obviously because the Grand List is bigger. But that's something the reassessment has caused. I can't help that.

MRS. GUROIAN: If you pro-rate them back to 1970, and you're not giving them an actual market value of 1980, it seems to me logically that they would benefit by it, whether it's personal property or not.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mrs. Guroian, I think I counted about nine questions in that one long question. Can you conclude your questioning now, please?

MRS. GUROIAN: That's it. That was my last question. When I get an answer, I'll be finished.

MR. FASKI: Maybe I can answer for you because what we're calling it is a base year, a phantom year, or what you will. Everything will have to be trended back to a base, because you cannot take one figure and find out the difference between that and another unless you have something to start with. So we're saying currently, if you're in a five-year phase-in period, and three years up the road, they happen to start let's say any time after October 1 and up until the next October they have 75% of a building on line, We have to create a base for that with the 71 value. O.K. Then take that percentage in, but we would have to add the third year of phase-in in. In other words, 60% more would be added on to that base to recreate it and bring it right in the market place with everybody else that has been going up that 20% per year. Because we're saying this building is now 75% complete the third year into phase-in. So there would be 60% more added on to the base which would create the two of them together times the mill rate would be equal to your taxes. Everything has to have a starting point, or you can't do it, because you can't determine the difference or the phase-in, the amount of dollar difference divided by five between one and the other.

MRS. CONTI: Commissioner Marra, you mentioned, and I came to the same conclusion that with the first year of phase-in, the Grand List on which we will be taxing would be approximately 2.1 billion?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: We have to guess at that.

MRS. CONTI: Approximately within a few million, it would probably be close, I would say.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I would hope so.

MRS. CONTI: Based on that, what kind of mill rates would you estimate for the first year of phase-in?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: With phase-in, now when I give you this number don't take these numbers and apply them against your assessment. O.K., because we're talking about the phased-in assessment, we're talking about 20% plus the old. On the A it would be roughly 51.8; this is without the budgetary increase; and the B would be 47.7; C would be 41.4; CS would be 45.7. That's with the phase-in.

MRS. CONTI: Without the increase in the budget?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Right, and this on a presumption that we are going to hold, and this is important, the auto tax down to 22.6, the same as it would be with or without phase-in.

MRS. CONTI: Right, thank you very much, Commissioner.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Let me follow up on that one. This number here we did not go through the full two-and-half day calculations, but we're confident it would be in the ball park.

MRS. CONTI: No, but I reached very similar conclusions, and I just wanted to see if you were in the same neighborhood.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Then I know you're right.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: Commissioner Marra, I have a more basic and simpler, fundamental question. Let's go all the way back to the beginning. Let's take a simple homeowner. Let's try to explain this in the basis of dollars and cents if we might, and this is not a theory question or a philosophy question. Let's take a homeowner that is now paying $2,000.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Could I give you some examples?

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: How about if I give you the examples and you explain them to me? Because that is where the questions emanate.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: All right, good.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: A homeowner is paying $2,000 right now for his tax, and with the new reassessment it's anticipated that this homeowner will pay $1,500. Somebody's gone down. There's a decrease of $500. What will the phase-in do to that person?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: He's roughly getting a reduction of 33%. Excuse me, 25%. At 35%, I know he would go down to 15%.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: The actual physical aspects of it, in other words his tax bill will come in at what, instead of twice a year at $750 and $750 which is the normal situation. What will happen, the physical aspects of it?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: He would get more than the $1500. He would be some place between the $1500 and the $2000. He would still be billed the same as he was on the two installments, without a problem. His tax bill would show how we calculated the 20% additional on there. In other words, it would show, if he had an assessment last year of $50,000, and the 20% is another $10,000 that would be shown on the bill. So he would have a full record of what we did. In fact, if we had gone back a couple of months ago, and had we adopted this, we would have put these numbers already on the assessment. Notices that went out.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: Let's take the next case. A homeowner is now again paying the same base.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Excuse me. If we went to phase-in that taxpayer would be about 10%. Instead of getting a 25% reduction, he would get a 10% reduction. The first year.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: And the second year?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: It would move from 10% back up to 25%. O.K. over the next five years, all things being equal, he would slide into the 25%, and at the end of the fifth year he would be getting 25%.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: Let's take the next instance. You've got a homeowner that's paying $2,000 now for taxes, and with the reassessment it comes to $3,000. You've got an increase of $1,000. Now this homeowner obviously doesn't pay that $1,000 in one shot.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: He would probably, instead of paying a 50% increase in taxes, he would go somewhere between 15% to 20%, probably 17%.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: In other words, the first year his taxes would increase between 15% and 20%? And then the second year?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Instead of the 5% the second year. From that point on, it would be less.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: It would be less than 15 to 20%. It would be the 15 to 20% from the previous year compounded on top of that another 10%.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: And at the end of the fifth year, he would be up 250, all things being equal which we're never going to be.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: Nothing is ever equal, right?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Exactly, it can't be.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: That last example is the homeowner that's now paying $2,000, and it goes to $4,000?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: A 100% increase?

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: Yes, sir.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: 40 to 50%, the first year. My example in the thing that was handed out was 110% would knock it down to 51%.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: As far as what was handed out, I regret to say some of us did not receive it, and I think some of these questions that some of us are answering would have been answered, if we had received it.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The 100% would probably go down to 50% instead of 100%.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: In any event, thank you very much, and I think you're doing remarkably well under the pressure, sir.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Thank you. I think the pressure is really here. You have a tough decision to make, no doubt about it.

MR. BONNER: The question I have is on the credibility of the present evaluation. It is not directly related to the phase-in, so I pass.

MR. BOCCUZZI: It's been so long, I forgot what I was going to ask. Now you're saying a few times tonight; as a matter of fact, you emphasized the fact that the shift, if we had phase-in, would go back to commercial in tax.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: At least 6 million dollars of it. Close to $6 million.

MR. BOCCUZZI: So, therefore, if they hold 10% out, they're going to hold a little more out than if we didn't have phase-in?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: That might be a problem; it might not.

MR. BOCCUZZI: Would I be right in assuming that if they held 10% out in phase-in, they would hold out more than if you didn't have phase-in?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I don't know the exact number. I think it's 25 or 30 taxpayers.

MR. BOCCUZZI: Will the 10% be more in dollars, or will it be less, in phase-in with the commercials?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: It should be more.

MR. BOCCUZZI: Yes, but they're holding out 10% of their assessment, they've got a figure. 10% of the taxes, you know what I'm talking about. In phase-in, their tax would go up.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Personal property.

MR. BOCCUZZI: Their assessment of their building wouldn't go up?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Some will, some won't.

PRESIDENT SANTY: I don't want to interrupt your train of thought, Mr. Boccuzzi, but there are several people that are being blocked. They're Members of the Planning Board. So I would ask any Representative who is double parked, you are probably blocking a Member of the Planning Board. Would you please move your cars? In reference to that, I must tell the Planning Board that the Representatives have the right to park there and they are told when they come to a meeting to just pull up and park but we will all go down and accommodate the Planning Board now. Anyone who is double-parked, please move the cars now.

MR. BOCCUZZI: I just can't seem to get to the point where I'm trying to get. I think no matter how you look at this, we've got to steal for

Peter to feed Paul. Is that correct? And this Board is going to decide how many Peters and how many Pauls? That's the bottom line.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The question is do you have more Peters than Pauls out there?

MR. BOCCUZZI: That's what I've been trying to get. So all these numbers really it's nice to know what I think the bottom line is. Who pays what in our district as far as where we're going?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: That's where your decision is.

MR. WHITE: Commissioner, you said in terms of the real estate tax that everybody, both commercial and residential, received an increase. Is this correct?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Right. Holding that 100 million constant, we would get additional tax by district for real estate.

MR. WHITE: But did the real estate taxes on the commercial go up more or less than that of the residential?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: In percentage or in dollars?

MR. WHITE: In percentage.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I think I have that. The tax from the residentials on a $100 million base, would go from $50,200,000 to $52,800,000. So it would go up $2,600,000 for residents. For the property, commercial, it would go up close to 5.7 million. This is after growth. So it isn't that there is a bigger pickup only on the same taxpayer basis, we have more money coming in because of growth. Both numbers are because of growth, but I believe there is much more growth out there in the commercial side than in the residential side.

MR. WHITE: According to the figures you just read though, the percentage is much greater in terms of what is paid tax-wise in real estate for residential. Correct?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The percentage is more from the residential. We get 52 to 53 million from the residents and 36.7 from the commercial side on real estate.

MR. WHITE: So there has been a greater percentage shift on to the residential taxpayer when you talk about real estate, correct?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: In percentage or value?

MR. WHITE: Percentage.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No. The percentage of tax to residents on this basis would produce 50% last year of the tax. That would go to 54% of the tax. The commercial went from 32 to 38. Going from 32 to 38 is a bigger percentage than from 50 to 54. Depends on which way you want to calculate your percent. There is more money being generated from the residents, but there has been a bigger percentage increase from the commercial. That's excluding the personal property.

MR. WHITE: So with the enormous growth of commercial properties in Stamford, I would think that the increase would be much greater for both figures. Would you not think so? There's a justification for this.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: They both can't go up that much more. They can't because I've got 100 million, and it's a question of who pays 100 million. I can't have both of them going up substantially, can I? If I say in effect, I need 100 million and the residents are going to pay 60, and the corporations are going to pay 40, let's say if I put it on that basis, no matter how much the growth is in there, I'm going to get 60 and 40. That's basically what's happening here. The next change is because of auto going down and personal property going down.

MR. WHITE: I'm just going to have to see these figures, Commissioner, and kind of chew through them, frankly, because I simply don't understand in terms of the percentages the actual growth, what's going on because we've had, I know you're talking about phase-in but this is critical for the whole concept of phase-in, and I don't understand how you can have such an enormous growth in taxation when these commercial properties are welcomed here to Stamford.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I didn't say we had a growth in taxation, I said we have a growth in the Grand List. There's a big difference. We're getting tax for the same amount.

MR. WHITE: I know that, but the two of them are obviously related and the justification for bringing these commercial properties here was the fact that it was going to build the tax base and now we find with the tax base that we have not a decrease, but an enormous increase for the residents. I simply don't understand how that operates mechanically.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: If I put the two of them together on this basis, the residents would be required to pay 2.8 million more in tax. The commercial side would pay 5.7 more in tax. However, the tangible property would go down 6 million, which is commercial. They kind of net out a little bit and the auto goes down 4 million. No matter how you slice it, if I'm getting 60 and 40, basically, from the commercial and residents, I get 60 and 40 no matter what I do on this current Grand List. If the growth is in there, it just means proportionally everyone would pay less.

MR. WHITE: I guess what bothers me, Commissioner, and I'll end it with this, is the whole question of assessment. I have a very real feeling that the actual real estate properties of a commercial establishment are basically worth much more than residential and we're simply not picking up the proper differences in taxes.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: You're saying we're under-assessing commercial?

MR. WHITE: I would suspect that from the basis of these figures, seems to me, when you get to the final analysis. I don't say you're under-assessing them in the sense that you are not, I think maybe the formulas are wrong. That's not your fault.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: That's always possible that the assessments are low, but I can tell you this that 700 million dollars worth of assessment out of the 4.3 billion, did go before the Board of Tax Review at least to register a review and how much of that will ultimately go into the tax cost, I don't know. They might be satisfied with their assessments. I don't know. $700 million where at this point right now, we're dealing with $700 million potential assessment out of $4 billion or so, we're talking about 20% being questioned at least through the level of the Board of Tax Review. Whether these go to court of not, I cannot predict. It's something we're going to be monitoring very closely because it is important. Especially at today's interest rates.

PRESIDENT SANTY: There are four first-time speakers left, and then we're going to start a second time, if you want to continue. First time speaking still is Mrs. Saxe.

MRS. SAXE: Mr. Marra and your staff, I'm delighted to have you here. I wish it had been like two months ago.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: We tried.

MRS. SAXE: You didn't try with phase-in because I know when I first came on the Board that was discussed at a meeting that I went to, and nobody ever picked it up. But that's beside the point, that's water over the dam. I have a lot of individual questions I'd like to find out. Number one, one mill equals how much money?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: On which Grand List? The current Grand List?

MRS. SAXE: We're going to have to go on the current Grand List.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: $4.4 million.

MRS. SAXE: Would you say that the re-evaluation was equal and it was done well, so that we are now on an equal footing within the whole community?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: You mean in the whole 33,000 cases?

MRS. SAXE: Yes.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I haven't studied the 33,000 cases. I wouldn't make an opinion on that. That's a technical problem for the Assessor and I'm leaving that to the Assessor and to the judges when that gets questioned, if it does get questioned. I'm in no position to answer that.

MRS. SAXE: We have 33,000 taxpayers in the City of Stamford? Is that correct?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No, we have 33,000 real estate taxpayers; we have 70,000 automobile taxpayers; and I don't know how many non-taxpayers we have. We have probably thousands of them on the automobile list that don't pay taxes.

MRS. SAXE: Of the 33,000 real estate taxpayers, how many are commercial?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Somewhere around 1,500 to 1,800.

MRS. SAXE: That's a big jump 1,500 to 1,800. Don't you have the exact number, Mr. Faski?

MR. FASKI: I'm sorry, I haven't added them up.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: What's the exact question you want the number for? Maybe that will help.

MRS. SAXE: Well, you can't put all these things together, because you say to us we have a mill rate which is going to be 1 mill equals 4.4 million. Then you say you've got 33,000 taxpayers, you have 100 million dollars you're going to tax for, and then you break down districts and you say you're going to have an increase of 10%; I assume 71% in the B District because it wasn't given; 11% in the C District; and 8% in the CS District, as an increase. Well, what are you increasing? Increasing over what: I mean you never get the answer. Then you turn around and say you have 33,000 taxpayers of which we're going to all be having a problem, and the next minute you say we're going to have a certain amount of those that aren't going to have any problems or any increases, because they're going to have decreases. Nobody knows what that number is, or where they're coming from.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Can you give me your questions one at a time? I'm a little lost.

MRS. SAXE: I'm lost, too, that's why I'm asking the questions.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: All right, let's take them one at a time.

MRS. SAXE: If we have 33,000 taxpayers in the City of Stamford, real estate taxpayers, how many of them are going to be affected by a decrease in taxes?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I don't know. I am convinced that without the facts there are more increases of a larger number than there are decreases of a large number. Numbers of taxpayers.

MRS. SAXE: All right. So we're going through this rhetoric tonight for what purpose, for ten taxpayers? We don't know.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: If the conclusion is that there are only 10 or 20 taxpayers out here with a problem my suggestion is you kill phase-in tonight, if that's the only problem. All I'm telling you is that I perceive a problem. You 40 Members here have to perceive the problem as you see it. If we percei̇ve it wrongly, we could have a problem.

MRS. SAXE: Mr. Marra, if we have a problem and we don't get all the right input, how can we make a decision?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: You have to make it on the best judgement that you can. I think that's what we're trying to do here.

MRS. SAXE: Then you're saying to us that we should go ahead and we should incur a larger amount of money to put into phase-in because it's going to cost the taxpayers money for the necessary costs for clerical and for expertise to do this and yet we should not have the proper amounts given to us, we should do it on supposition?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: If I had the proper amounts, I would give them to you. We don't have them at this point.

MRS. SAXE: Then I think this is a case of rhetoric and I really think it's terrible that we should be sitting here under a supposition that maybe this could be right.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Maybe it is. You have to come to your own judgement on what the problem is out there. I'm telling you if the problem is large increases to large numbers, phase-in solves it. That's all I'm saying. And where does it go? It pushes the tax burden more back to the commercial. That it does. It will give people less of a decrease than they would get. They'll still get a decrease. That's all I'm saying.

MRS. SAXE: It was mentioned at some other meeting that I had gone to that commercials in the City of Stamford this year paid 49% of all taxes paid. I assume that that will be, of course, be 49% or more by next year because that Grand List has grown.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: You mean for next year?

MRS. SAXE: I'm making a lot of assumptions because I really don't have a lot of facts.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: All right, the 49% I gave you was based on the tax from residents who will be paying 52%, and $52 million, which represents 54%. The commercial will pay $36 million which is 38%. Tangible property will pay $5 million, which is 5%. The autos would pay $3 million which is 3%. They were the numbers that were given. At that meeting, if it's the same meeting I'm thinking, this is what we're reciting the numbers from.

MRS. SAXE: All right, now it's your opinion that phase-in is something that you want to do?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: That is not what I said.

MRS. SAXE: If for some particular reason, you find that phase-in has been expensive, and you have also found out that it is not doing what you had perceived it would do, how do you get out of it?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: How do we get out of it? I can't predict how I could react to the problems that might or might not come. I don't know the extent of that problem. How extensive would that problem be? I can't answer you. I really can't answer you.

MRS. SAXE: Well, if it becomes a terribly extensive problem and it's very costly, how do we get out of this?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: It might be just as costly and more risky not to go to phase-in, that's all I'm saying. If we go to the five-year phase-in, which we're proposing here, at the end of the third year, we can do away with phase-in. You're permitted to do that under the legislation.

MRS. SAXE: You cannot at the end of the first year?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No, we cannot.

MRS. SAXE: If we find ourselves in a position where we have to go into short-term borrowing because of mistakes, not necessarily mistakes, but poor assumptions were made because we find something different that puts us in a pretty bad bind financially, doesn't it?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Yes, probably. I would say less of a bind we would go than if we misjudged this, did not go to a phase-in, and have the same problems you mentioned. I think they would be more severe. Same problem. Phase-in brings everyone closer to the center, if anything closer to where they were a year ago. If you leave them out here, we don't know how serious that is, that's what I'm saying.

MRS. SAXE: Maybe, we as Legislators, would be wise to be penny-wise and hopefully not pound-foolish; but to look at our budget and also look at our situations and we know where the problem is in the city because it's in our labor contracts, and to really and truthfully find out how we can work together so we can all stay on an equal footing. If we did that, we wouldn't have to worry about phase-in or raising taxes.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I don't agree.

PRESIDENT SANTY: I'm going to first-time speakers, and I'll let you know when we're going to start the second time. Mr. Flounders to speak for the first time.

MR. FLOUNDERS: Thank you, Madam Chairman, I'm passing.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Passing, do you want to come back Mr. Flounders?

MR. FLOUNDERS: I don't know.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mrs. Gershman, for the first time.

MRS. GERSHMAN: I pass, too.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mrs. Gershman is passing. Mr. Wider is next to speak for the first time.

MR. WIDER: Thank you. I've got figures running out of my head, so I'm going to stop dealing with them. Commissioner Marra, we have a budget to meet for each year. Do you see with the phase-in, we being able to meet our obligation to our budget each year, and if so, how?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Which part are you talking about? The whole...

MR. WIDER: I'm talking about the city budget, and right now we have $112 million.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The budget problem is a problem of it's own, not the phase-in. The phase-in just calculates who's going to pay the tax. We need $112 million from all the taxpayers.

MR. WIDER: But, get what I'm saying, if most of us are going over 100% increase in our property value; now, if we all spread it over five years, then who's going to support this budget? Who's going to support our budget each year? That's what I'm thinking about. Will we be able to meet our obligations?

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mr. Wider, oh, Commissioner, do you want to answer that?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Yes, we will be able to meet our obligations, yes. I have no doubt about that from one standpoint. At this point now, we still have the taxing authority. I do not see why not we would not meet our obligation.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Thank you, Mr. Wider. To speak for the first time, Mr. Dziezyc.

MR. DZIEZYC: In my district, I had numerous calls, and everyone of them is more than 225%. Some are 300%, and some are 400%. There's none less than the 200% increase. So in my district, everybody's going to be clobbered with this reassessment, without the budget increase. Not all of them are aware of what's going to happen because they didn't figure out their tax, and when the single-family homeowners are going to receive that first tax bill, there's going to be a tax revolution. They're going to have to proposition 13 or something, because they don't realize what's going on. The ones that called me, I asked them what is their old assessment, what is their new assessment, and I gave them the figure, and they said, Oh My God!, when they saw the increase. They didn't realize it. Before we get to the phase-in. During reassessment, the last two reassessments in 1960 and 1970, I went through it. All homeowners practically all went up in '60 and '70 the same way. That means somebody was getting a reduction. It must have been the commercial or industiral properties and that's what's happening now. If you talk to practically everyone that owns a single-family home now, they have more than the 200% increase and they're going to be hit hard. With a phase-in they'll be saving money, because the first year, I figured out mine, and I'll be saving $700.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Saving $700 the first year?

MR. DZIEZYC: Yes, $700. Without a phase-in, it's going to cost me $700 more.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: What percent increase is that, may I ask?

MR. DZIEZYC: It's about 300 and...(tape ended)

MRS. PERILLO: Mr. Marra, that gentleman that you had come in your office that said he could not pay his tax. I have them in person everyday in my store. Not just homeowners, but tenants who cannot afford a rent increase if the landlords' taxes go up. I would like to know when people come and tell you they cannot afford to pay their taxes, what provisions are there? Is there any help for them? What is the answer to them? Do they just lose their homes, or do you have provisions to help these people?

MR. FASKI: Well, the first thing is when anyone shows up in our office, what we try to do is to take their field card, or property card, review it for errors, number one. If they're senior people, we make them aware of the different benefits that the State gives, and also Ord. 449, which you people have passed which has been pretty good. We didn't expect as many. We came in with somewhere around 134 people had applied for additional supplemental credits to their taxes, if you will, over what the State paid them. We make them aware of anything and everything that they may be entitled to, such as veterans' exemptions, disability exemptions, anything possible that we can have. If we feel that they want more information as to what if should they do, they're over-assessed, we advise them that the Board of Tax Review meets at certain times. All the information in any avenue for them, is explained to them at our office. The only one that can do anything as far as giving benefits to anyone, is the Board of Reps which for their elderly any ordinances that you pass here, of course, are put into Motion and we comply with them. That's all we can give them.

MRS. PERILLO: You could not give them an installment plan, that they pay so much?

MR. FASKI: Well, that we have nothing to do with. We have no control over that. All we do is we're responsible for assessments; the installments or anything that changes the tax picture at the time they could pay or anything that is within the realm of the Board of Reps, or they would have to change this paying your taxes bi-annually.

MRS. PERILLO: I would hope we would do something rather than people losing their homes after they've worked so hard for them.

MR. FASKI: Just a little reminder. Your Ordinance, 449 is running out this year, May 15. Now that was a two-year Ordinance and you people can look into that again. The State is changing qualifications. They're bumping them up. I just saw in the paper today where the qualifying income is somewhere around $15,000 now, and we still have your Ordinance with $12,000, so someone is going to have to sit down with you people and create either a new ordinance, if you want to extend it, or whatever you want to do but just bring that to your attention at this point.

PRESIDENT SANTY: At this time I would like to stop the question-and-answer period. All the first-time speakers have had their questions answered. Is there anyone who has not spoken for the first time, who would like to raise a question at this time? I'll give everyone the opportunity.

MR. FLOUNDERS: Commissioner Marra, Betty Conti asked you for the mill rates, your estimates on the mill rates based on the phase-in, and you gave them to her. What budget was that based on? What total tax levy, I should say?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: $100 million.

MR. FLOUNDERS: $100 million?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Theoretically, if I had to guess at where it would be right now, we would have to add 12% on it.

MR. FLOUNDERS: Why did you pick $100 million, because that's what it was last year?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I picked $100 million because we've been trying to isolate just the reassessment problem of itself, take it away from the budgetary problem. I wanted to ask you how severe the problem was for the reassessment. Anything that happens in the budget would just be an add-on. If you settle in at 505, it will be a 5% up to you.

MR. FLOUNDERS: What you're saying is that you're trying using the $100 million theoretical example, or tax levy. You were trying to isolate the impact of the reassessment? But it is, I would like to point out, because I sense that there may have been some confusion among certain Board Members, that is a phoney number, an unreal number.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: The $100 million?

MR. FLOUNDERS: It is not a realistic number at this point. The number right now is more like $112, at this moment, correct?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: Yes.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Thank you, Mr. Flounders. To speak for the first time, Mr. Bonner.

MR. BONNER: The question that I have is in two parts. The first is, do you have an idea or an estimate of how many homeowners there would be in a category of 100% to 200%, that is those who would be paying from 200% to 400%. Who would be paying more than they are now?

COMMISSIONER MARRA: No, we don't have that. The reason we don't is because we just got our Grand List as of April 30, and I don't know what would be involved in getting that, that's one of the numbers we do want to see in terms of stratifying. Bob, when could we get something like this here at the earliest, if we went to this? The answer is it would probably take us two weeks to get it, which is two weeks from now is when we have to fix the mill rate, or not far from that. You're bringing up a question that is maybe remaining unasked. With all of the facts, with all of the numbers, we're giving you, we do feel confident. However, I do admit there is a certain amount of doubt which we'll have up to the point that we get the 33,000 taxes calculated. I can't give you an answer for that other than the people that have been most involved with these numbers all are in agreement on what they seem to show. That's the best I can give you, unfortunately. I have it, too! You have no more doubts than I do. I know it is. But I'll tell you what, that even with that doubt, the tendency is too overwhelming to say that phase-in does not solve that one perceived problem.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Please, if you have any questions through the Chair, I would ask any first-time speakers, and then we're going to close the question-and-answer period. It's been exactly two hours that Commissioner Marra has been standing there answering questions.

COMMISSIONER MARRA: I'm willing to go as long as you want.

PRESIDENT SANTY: But we were going to limit it to a half hour and we've gone into almost two hours in the question-answer period, and I think that everyone who has spoken for the first time has finished. I would like to thank Commissioner Marra, Mr. Faski, Mr. Thomas, and Mr. Lucia for a very informative session. We appreciate the time you have given us to be here this evening, and I know in many instances we went off on other questions but we have to make many important decisions next week, and I think that maybe these questions were important although it did not address phase-in. Thank you, gentlemen, and as soon as you leave the floor, we will continue with our business. I am now asking the Representatives who are not in their seats to take their seats. Mrs. Hawe has the floor.

MRS. HAWE: I would like to make a Motion for publication of an Ordinance providing for staged increases in certain real property tax assessments. If the Board votes for publication, the Fiscal Committee would hold a public hearing next Monday, the tenth of May, at 7:30 p.m. in the Board of Representatives Chamber.

PRESIDENT SANTY: The Motion is made and Seconded. For information purposes at this time, this has been assigned to the Fiscal Committee Co-chairmen, Marie Hawe and Paul Esposito. Are there speakers to the Motion?

MRS. CONTI: Actually our residential taxpayers will, in the long run, pay more taxes with phase-in than without it. Let's look at the figures. The present Grand List is $1.5 billion. The reassessed Grand List is $4.4 billion. Taking 20% of the difference between the two, we have a first year phase-in Grand List of 2.1 billion. Commissioner Marra and I arrived at the same figure; and that's less than half the reassessed list on which the tentative mill rates of 26.9 through 25.5 were calculated. By reducing by more than half the base on which these tentative mill rates were set, we can safely assume that the first year phase-in mill rates would have to be at least double, giving us mill rates in the first year after reassessment ranging from 46.2 to 53.8. Reading the handwriting on the wall, with phase-in we will have the usual nickel-and-dime token cuts. Can we have order?

PRESIDENT SANTY: Yes, I'm sorry, Mrs. Conti. Would the Members please give Mrs. Conti their attention. We are now speaking to the Motion as made by Mrs. Hawe for publication of the Ordinance in front of us on our desks. Continue, Mrs. Conti.

MRS. CONTI: With phase-in we will have the usual nickel-and-dime token cuts, thus setting the stage for the inevitable 20% to 25% increases in spending every subsequent year. Thus the mill rate will climb 3 or 4 mills a year and at the end of the five year phase-in, our taxpayers will be paying mill rates ranging from 64.4 to 72.6 mills on their full assessments. By the tenth year, adding 3 or 4 mills a year, our constituents will be bankrupt and bereft of property. At the budget public hearings, the taxpayers gave us a clear mandate to cut back and begin the process of shrinking government, not expanding it. Don't forget it will cost $70,000 or $80,000 a year for the phase-in paperwork.

The only way to ease the tax burden on our constituents permanently, is to start cutting back on staff right now, enforce the hiring freeze that is supposed to be in effect and pave the way for reduced budgets each subsequent year in the future. This phase-in Ordinance will only serve to insure business as usual, with constantly increasing taxes; and there is another point to be considered and it is this talk of the greatest good for the greatest number. That is one of the basic concepts of socialism, and I want no part of it. If, in fact, some of us were under-assessed, in my opinion we are all over-assessed now, but if some have over-assessed for the last ten years, or some part of that time, then the inequity must be corrected justly, and phase-in just prolongs the injustice. Words fail me at the duplicity that is planned for our taxpayers with a sham public hearing on the tenth of May. Everyone of us here knows that all the budget deliberations will be completed and the figures finalized by May 10th. I, for one, protest this deception being planned for my constituents. Let's be honest with the public for a change. There is no time for an honest public hearing, so let us vote against publication, and mock public hearing, and let's sharpen our axes and get on with the job of cutting the budgets. I urge a no vote on even publication.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mrs. Hawe is next to speak because she made the Motion and now she's going to speak to that.

MRS. HAWE: I would hope that the Representatives can separate the two issues which I really do believe are two separate issues and one is the issue of the increase in the budget and the corresponding decline in revenues, and the other is this phase-in. I think that we have to look at the budget in an intelligent manner and to cut as much as we can out of the budget, regardless of whether there is a phase-in, or there is not a phase-in. I think that has nothing to do with how we should look at the budget. The matter of the phase-in of the tax assessment is one of the most important issues, I believe, that's ever come up before us. It's vital to the people that we represent. I would ask the Board Members to vote for publication of this Ordinance to allow the public, the ones that will be affected by this the most, to have their say. I disagree with Mrs. Conti when she says that a public hearing would be a sham. It's not, it's an opportunity to allow the people to come in and to give their views. As I said, the budget issue is entirely different from the phase-in issue, and I really believe that we should keep those two separate in our mind, and approach the budget in the same way whether we vote for phase-in or not, or vote for publication of this or not.

MR. ESPOSITO: I don't want to reiterate what Mrs. Hawe has said, but I just want to point out that although many people would agree with Mrs. Conti that we have to cut the budget; in order to get the tax levy down to what it was last year, we have to come in here next week and cut 12 million dollars. I want to point out that to cut 12 million dollars out of this budget as it stands now, is to severely cut services. I don't know if we're going to do that next week and that's another issue, but that's what's going to happen. We severely cut services and that's just to get the tax levy down to that point. The tax levy is a different issue than the phase-in. If we get the tax levy down to the same 100 million dollars that we have it this year, we're cutting 12 million dollars in various City departments, you still have a problem that some people are going to be 35% or 40% higher, their tax bill is going to be 35% or 40% higher because of the increase in reassessment. That is what the Commissioner started out his arguemnt with. The point is that there is a separation, a difference between the tax levy and the assessment. The phase-in only deals with the assessment. The tax levy is totally a separate issue. We can have the phase-in, and we can come in here next week and we can cut the budget 20 million dollars and then everybody's taxes go down. There's no connection between the two. They're really separate issues.

The other point, which is very important, is the right for the public to speak. It's a basic fundamental right of democracy for the public to speak. The greatest good for the greatest number. I don't know how we associate that with socialism but to deny the public to speak is totalitarianism. This is a democracy where the public has a right to come out and tell us how they feel. I'm not sure what the difference is between a mock public hearing and a non-mock public hearing. Every public hearing I've ever been to, there are individuals who come out and speak and there are also organized groups. At the budget public hearing last month, we had an organized education lobby, they had signs, they had posters, they had labels. We had organized groups from other parts of the city. We also had many taxpayers, individuals who read the announcement, wanted to say something and came out. Every public hearing has that group. I'm not sure what we would have here Monday night. I've urged, individually, and I'm now urging collectively every Board Member to at least give this an opportunity, a chance. I don't know if the corporations are going to come in here and argue for or against this. I don't know if it's going to be the small homeowner from Shippan or the Cove or North Stamford. I don't know if it's going to be the condo owner. None of us really know for sure.

Mr. Zelinski and Mr. Bonner both asked a question. How many homeowners had a 100% increase? How many homeowners had a 200% increase, or 400% increase? We don't have those answers. We're not going to have those answers for two weeks, but if we give the public a chance to come in here next week, they might tell us. They might tell us if they had a 400% increase, or they only had 100% increase. By killing this now, we're denying the basic fundamental right of the public to tell us what we should be doing as their Representatives. I don't agree with this on every issüe, and I don't think we should go to public hearing for every issue, but this issue is so important, so essential, it affects every single citizen who has property in this city that it should be given that hearing. There has been no issue this important since the Charter Revision Commission of a few years ago when we had a request to hold taxation down to a certain level. Therefore, I would strongly urge my fellow Board Members to support the publication, and the public hearing; and if I may, just so that we, if this passes, have an accurate ordinance, I'd like to make an amendment because on page two of the ordinance it refers to the additional personnel needed in the tax collector's office, and it wouldn't be the tax collector's office, but it would be data processing. If I could make that amendment, so that if this does pass the publication, it is an accurate ordinance.

PRESIDENT SANTY: You all have your ordinances in front of you and you understand what Mr. Esposito is saying at this time? Will you make the amendment formally, Mr. Esposito?

MR. ESPOSITO: I would move that on page two, paragraph 5, the Board of Representatives recognizes the implementation of this phase-in ordinance will necessitate additional personnel in the Assessor's and Tax Collector's, I would amend that Tax Collector's office be crossed out and Data Processing office be substituted, thereby, requiring additional appropriations for their offices.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Thank you, Mr. Esposito. Motion to amend Mrs. Hawe's Motion has been made and Seconded. We're now going to speak to the amendment. Is there any discussion on that? Motion to Move the question. We don't have to Move the question; there's no one else to speak. We will now vote on the amendment. All in favor of Mr. Esposito's amendment, please signify by saying Aye. Opposed? I would like the No's to raise their hands to they can be counted: Mrs. Perillo, Mr. Franchina, Mr. Blais, Mr. Rybnick, and Mrs. Saxe are the No votes. The amendment has Passed. We are now going to...Three abstentions: Mrs. Conti, Mrs. Guroian, and Mr. Blum. We are now going back to the Main Motion, and I remind the Representatives we are speaking to publication at this time on this ordinance. Next to speak is Mr. Zelinski.

MR. ZELINSKI: Move the question.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Motion has been made to Move the question and it's been Seconded. There's no discussion on this, Mr. Blum. All in favor of Moving the question and we better vote by the machine at this time. The machine is printing out the roll call because several people joined the meeting after. It will just take about 30 seconds. We are voting now on whether to Move the question or not. All those in favor of Moving the question, vote up for yes, and down for no. Excuse me, Mr. DeLuca, you voted yes to Move the question and it's not registering? Mr. DeLuca did register. Mr. Franchina? You voted no or yes to that? You voted yes, I'm sorry we have to correct that. The Motion to Move the question has 21 yes, 15 no, and one non-vote. The Motion has lost.

There are no abstentions, but three people are absent, one non-vote, 15 no's and 21 yes. We'll have to go on, Mr. Blum. You're not next to speak on the Motion. Mrs. Goldstein is next to speak on the Motion.

MRS. GOLDSTEIN: When I came here tonight, I thought I was definitely in favor of the reassessment phase-in. I'm really not so sure now. There are so many unknowns, and I'm quite convinced that there may be no general good in doing this. However, I firmly believe that on an issue so important, and on an issue that faces us once every ten years for which there has been so much concern shown by so many people, we owe the taxpayers the right to come here and talk and tell us what they want, and I think not to publish this ordinance and hold a public hearing and allow the taxpayers to speak would be a very arrogant thing for us to do, and I hate to see us do it. If we do vote to publish, I would hope that we would get, as Mr. Tarzia suggested a little while ago, not on the floor but elsewhere, and I think it's an excellent suggestion, that we ask the Commissioner of Finance for a sample list of real taxpayers, no names, with their tax assessments on both their homes, property, and personal property, with the phase-in, and without the phase-in, in the three or four tax districts to see whether there is an appreciable difference with phase-in or without phase-in. I do hope we'll consider publishing tonight so that we can avail ourselves of the additional information and so that we may hear the public and know what they would like us to do.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Before we go on to the next speaker, Mr. Zelinski has left, we now have 36 Members present. Next to speak, Mr. Blum. We are speaking to the Main Motion for publication.

MR. BLUM: Madam Chairman, if this is so important that we want to hear the public, I feel that the Board of Representatives room would be too small for that occasion. I feel that we should change the location of where we will have this public hearing and I suggest that we have the same...

PRESIDENT SANTY: Excuse me, Mr. Blum, that statement is out of order. We are discussing publishing it. You're speaking to the publication, not to the time and date, whether you do or not want to publish it, but not to the location.

MR. BLUM: I'd like to ask a question of you. How do we put where we will have that public hearing?

PRESIDENT SANTY: That is the committee assignment, Mr. Blum. I leave it to their responsibility and their discretion.

MR. BLUM: I've heard people talking in fact of having it at this Board room and that's part of the Motion.

PRESIDENT SANTY: That is the committee decision. We're not speaking to that. We're speaking on whether to publish it or not. The committee has made that decision and they have chosen that and this has been assigned to that committee.

MR. BLUM: Well, then I'd like to make an amendment to it. because that location was mentioned as a part of the Motion. I want to make an amendment to that Motion.

MR. ESPOSITO: Is that information indeed a part of the Motion, Madam Chairman?

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mrs. Hawe did read that as part of her Motion.

MRS. HAWE: I didn't intend to make that a part of the Motion. The Motion was to publish the ordinance and I said then if it is published for informational purposes, I stated that the public hearing would then be in such, but I didn't intend to make that a part of the Motion.

MR. BLUM: Well, whether you intended to make it a part, you did read it into the Motion.

PRESIDENT SANTY: It's part of the Motion. You want to amend the Motion?

MR. BLUM: I would like to amend the Motion, that the location of that hearing be at the Cloonan Middle School.

PRESIDENT SANTY: All right, is there a Second to that Motion? There is a Second to that amendment that the public hearing be held at Cloonan School. There are several to speak to the amendment. Except that it was part of the Motion.

MR. BOCCUZZI: Madam President, this whole discussion has nothing to do with the question on the floor right now. She said it wasn't. If we pass that we're going to have a meeting, we'll set up a place. It just may be all worthless at the end of this vote, and to say that we're going to have it at Cloonan School tonight is ridiculous. You don't even know what's going on in Cloonan School that night.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Mr. Boccuzzi, it's his right to amend the Motion. It was part of the Motion. You can vote against the amendment if you're in disagreement with it. We are now discussing the amendment. First to speak, Mr. Conti.

MR. CONTI: Now this is not on the amendment.

PRESIDENT SANTY: But we're only speaking to the amendment now.

MR. ESPOSITO: Yes, I first of all disagree that the original Motion has included the Board of Representatives room, but nevertheless, I would ask Mr. Blum if he would give the committee a little more flexibility. It may be that Cloonan School is not available next week on Monday night, and we are really tied into Monday night and if you would amend your amendment by just giving us a little more flexibility, and saying any large auditorium, and if not Cloonan School, Rippowam, or any other large auditorium.

MR. BLUM: I concede to that. Any large auditorium, other than the Board of Representatives room.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: The Seconder also agrees.

PRESIDENT SANTY: The Seconder also agrees. Fine. That is what we're speaking to now is that amendment.

MR. WIEDERLIGHT: Thank you, Madam President. I think it is important that we have the proper facilities available for the public to speak, and I fully recognize that most of us do that this facility would not be large enough, if in fact the turn-out that is expected does come to this meeting. It is my fondest hope, also, that the chairpeople of this committee will recognize the need for proper security at this meeting, and make the proper preparations and plans to make sure that there is not a repeat performance at this meeting as was at previous meetings. Not at the Board of Representatives, by the way.

PRESIDENT SANTY: Next to speak on the amendment, Mr. Blais.

MR. BLAIS: Move the amendment, Madam President.

PRESIDENT SANTY: It's been Moved and Seconded to Move the question which is the amendment made by Mr. Blum to change the meeting place from the Board of Representatives room to any school with a large auditorium available to the committee. All in favor of the amendment please say Aye. Opposed? Carried unanimously. Now part of the Motion will be, any large auditorium or school that's available to the committee. We are now going back to speak to the Main Motion. Next to speak, Mr. Rybnick.

Mr. Rybnick has Moved the question. It's been Moved and Seconded, we are now going to use the machine. There are now 36 Members present, 24 are needed. If your light does not light up, just raise your hand and we can correct it on the sheet.

MRS. CONTI: Point of Information. Madam President, how many speakers are there left to speak?

PRESIDENT SANTY: How many speakers? 14. The machine is now ready and we are voting on whether to Move the question which is voting on the publication of the ordinance. Please raise your hand if your light does not light up on the board. The vote to Move the question has Passed. 27 yes, 5 no, two abstentions, 2 non-votes; and 4 people are absent. We are now voting on the Main Motion. Mrs. Hawe, would you repeat the Motion with the amendment made by Mr. Blum?

MRS. HAWE: All right, even though that wasn't part of my original Motion, but I will. I Move that we approve for publication an ordinance providing for staged increases in certain real property tax assessments; if Passed, with public hearing to be held by the Fiscal Committee next Monday, the tenth of May, at 7:30 at any place larger than here.

MR. ESPOSITO: Madam President, I request a roll call vote.

PRESIDENT SANTY: There's been a Motion for a roll call vote. We cannot use the machine with a roll call vote. At this time I would ask Mr. Wiederlight and Mr. Stork to come up and get the sheets for the roll call vote, and Ms. Summerville will call the roll. Yes, Ms. Summerville?

MS. SUMMERVILLE: If I understand the Motion, Mrs. Hawe said any other place than here that's larger. What happens if there is no available larger place whenever you're going to hold this public hearing? Then there is no public hearing? Thank you very much, Fellow Board Members, and Madam President.

PRESIDENT SANTY: We are now voting on a Roll Call vote. Can we have some order here, please? We are now voting on a Roll Call vote. It's been Moved and Seconded. All in favor of a Roll Call vote, please say Aye. Opposed? We're going with a Roll Call vote. Ms. Summerville will read the roll.

Will the Tellers please come forward when they complete their count? A majority vote was needed, a simple majority. It did pass the public hearing. The vote was 19 yes, 16 no, and 1 not voting.

Before we adjourn, ladies and gentlemen I have something to read and I think it is important. It's to all Members, you have it on your desks, but I think I will read it. To All Members of the Board of Representatives: From Audrey Maihock, Chairman of the Environmental Protection Committee. Subject: Presentation of the proposed Luis-Mapping Information System.

> "A coalition of City officials will be available to make a detailed presentation of the proposed Luis-Mapping Information System on Thursday, May 6, 1982, at 7:30 p.m. in the Board of Representatives meeting room. All of you have received a report on the proposal. The presentation will provide a demonstration of the system and allow time for questions. We encourage as many of you as possible to attend. For further information. in this system, you may call Mark Lubbers or John Smith, if such information should be necessary."

I would like to call to your attention that Members of this Board have asked for this meeting. All of you interested, the meeting will be held this Thursday.

Thank you for coming. May I have a Motion to Adjourn? Seconded. All in favor, say AYE. Opposed? The Meeting is Adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Board of Representatives, this Special Meeting was Adjourned at 11:30 P.M., upon Motion duly made and Seconded.

By Helen M. McEvoy
Helen M. McEvoy, Administrative Assistant
(and Recording Secretary)
Board of Representatives

APPROVED:

Jeanne-Lois Santy
Jeanne-Lois Santy, President
17th Board of Representatives

HMM:HC
Encs.

(52) "CALL" OF THE MEETING (52)

Pursuant to Section 202 of the Charter of the City of Stamford, we the undersigned members of the Board of Representatives duly call a Special Meeting of the Board of Representatives for Tuesday May 4, 1982 at 8:00 P.M. in the Board of Representatives Meeting Room on the 2nd floor of the Municipal Office Building at 429 Atlantic Street to consider an ordinance regarding a phase-in of the reassessment for Stamford, and the publication of said ordinance. Presentations will be made by various city officials pertaining to said ordinance.

Marie J. Hawe
Paul A. Esposito
Sandra Goldstein
Mary L. Rinaldi
David I. Blum
Bob Owens
Burt Stounden
John H. Boccuzzi
Donald T. Donahue Jr.
W. Darwin Coletti
P.R. Storb

MH:PE:AK