

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

MAY 12, 1997

24TH BOARD OF REPRESENTATIVES

STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT

The meeting was called to order by President Carmen Domonkos at 8:00 p.m., who stated: "I, Carmen L. Domonkos, President of the 24th Board of Representatives of the City of Stamford, Connecticut and pursuant to Section 2-10-4 of the Stamford Charter, hereby call a special meeting of said Board of Representatives at the following time and place: Monday, May 12, 1997, 8:00 P.M., Legislative Chambers, 4th Floor, Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard, Stamford, CT 06904-2152 to consider and act upon the Operating, Capital, Water Pollution Control, Smith House and Grant-Funded Budgets for the fiscal year 1997/1998, as transmitted by the Board of Finance on April 15, 1997, pursuant to provisions of Section 8-30-5 of the Stamford Charter."

INVOCATION: The Invocation was given by Russell Davis.

"Heavenly Father, as we prepare ourselves to vote on the budget that we will deliver to the people, guide us in our hearts that we may make the decisions based upon what we truly believe in our hearts. We pray and ask that you guide us in this move. Thank you. Amen."

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG: Led by President Carmen Domonkos.

ROLL CALL: Conducted by Clerk of the Board Annie M. Summerville

There were thirty-seven (37) members present, three (3) members absent/excused: Reps. Gaztambide, Sabia and Romaniello. The President declared a quorum.

President Domonkos stated that the meeting will be conducted as follows: First, the Operating Budget will be voted on. There will be a rolling motion. President Domonkos will read each page of the budget, and the Chairman of the Fiscal Committee, Mr. Martin, will note whether the Fiscal Committee has proposed any reductions. If not, he will say, no change, and we will

proceed to the next page. Once the page is turned, we will not go back. So, if there are any proposals that a member wants to make, they must be made before the page is turned.

MACHINE TEST VOTE: Conducted by President Carmen Domonkos

The machine was in good working order.

FISCAL COMMITTEE - David Martin, Chairman

Rep Martin reported that the Fiscal Committee met with the department heads and directors of all of the departments over the past few months. The attendance records are as follows: The first meeting was the public hearing, which has already been reported on previously, and all members were present except for Mr. DeLuca, who was absent due to illness.

The first budget meeting was on Monday, April 14, 1997. Present were Reps. Martin, Ponzini, Owens, Nanos, DeLuca, Loglisci, Drucker, Mellis and Abbazia. The next meeting was on April 16, 1997. Present were Reps. Martin, Ponzini, Owens, Nanos, DeLuca, Loglisci, Sherer and Mellis. The meeting on April 17, 1997 was attended by Reps. Martin, Ponzini, Owens, Nanos, DeLuca, Loglisci, Drucker, Mellis, Abbazia and Weiner. On the 24th of April, present were Reps. Martin, Owens, Nanos, DeLuca, Loglisci, Drucker, Mellis and Abbazia. For the meeting held on the 28th of April, present were Reps. Martin, Ponzini, Owens, DeLuca, Drucker, Loglisci, Sherer, Mellis and Weiner.

On May 6, present were Reps. Martin, Owens, Nanos, DeLuca, Loglisci, Drucker, Sherer, Mellis and Weiner. On Saturday, May 10, 1997, present were Reps. Martin, Nanos, DeLuca, Loglisci, Drucker, Sherer, Mellis, Abbazia and Weiner.

Rep. Martin reported that the total recommended cuts to the Board are \$804,000 in operating cuts and \$175,000 in the capital budget.

President Domonkos advised that the first page of the Operating Budget, the Office of Administration, appears on Page 16. Rep. Martin moved for approval of the budget, subject to the rolling motion, and that he will make the motion regarding the Fiscal Committee recommendations at that time. Said motion was seconded.

Rep. Martin stated that the book the Board will be working from does not include the cuts from the Board of Finance and that he would, to the best of his ability, mention those as they appear.

OPERATING BUDGET

Office of Administration.

On Page 16: Rep. Martin stated that the Board of Finance made a \$25,000 budget reduction cut. The Fiscal Committee has no recommendations.

On Page 18: The Fiscal Committee has made a recommended cut of \$15,000. This brings the total activity of the Office of Policy & Management to \$617,250.

President Domonkos noted that Reps. Kuzlik and Abbazia were totaling the amounts. Both Messrs. Kuzlik and Abbazia agreed with the total of \$617,250.

On Page 20: No recommendation.

On Page 23: No recommendation.

On Page 25: No recommendation, however, the Board of Finance made a cut in Division 1032, Controller of \$10,000.

On Page 27: No recommendation.

On Page 29: No recommendation.

On Page 31: No recommendation.

On Page 33: The Fiscal Committee has made a recommended cut of \$15,000 in the Information Services Account, No. 1060.

On Page 35: No recommendation.

On Page 38: No recommendation. The Section Total was reported by Rep. Abbazia as \$4,817,567. Rep. Kuzlik concurred.

On Page : No recommendation.

Office of Operations

On Page 40: The Board of Finance made a \$40,000 cut in program expansion. The Fiscal Committee recommends a \$75,000 cut from the salaries account. The intent of the \$75,000 salary cut is that it be taken throughout the area of Operations.

Rep. Nakian moved to amend the cut by reducing it by \$25,000, making a cut of \$50,000. Said motion was seconded. Rep. Loglisci stated that the cuts were made based on seven vacancies in the department. Rep. Nakian stated that the Board received a letter this evening from Glen MacWilliams explaining the cut would not be reflected in unfilled positions, but the position of a vegetation specialist. The cut would be taken in the neighborhood community cleanup program,

and Rep. Nakian feels that both of these services are needed in the community, and therefore, she proposed the smaller cut.

Rep. DeLuca stated he would be interested in receiving a copy of the memorandum. Rep. Sherer stated that he was annoyed to receive last minute memos and that this reminds him of the Board of Ed in years past where they threaten to eliminate football [for example] if cuts are made. Rep. Sherer stated that we are being forewarned at the midnight hour by the recipient of our cut to indicate where it is going to go, and he feels this is almost a threat or a scare tactic; further, he feels this is inappropriate. He stated that they selected a very popular program, community pickup, to scare the Board. Further, Rep. Sherer stated the Fiscal Committee found more than \$75,000 in unfilled positions and the \$75,000 was in fact a compromise, and he will not support the motion to reduce.

The motion to reduce the Fiscal Committee's recommended \$75,000 cut by \$25,000 was approved by voice vote.

On Page 43: The Board of Finance made a \$25,000 cut in Supplies Land; the Fiscal Committee has no recommendation.

On Page 44: The Board of Finance made a \$45,000 cut in Street Painting Supplies and a \$35,000 cut in Street & Traffic Signs; the Fiscal Committee has no recommendation.

On Page 46: No recommendation.

On Page 49: The Fiscal Committee recommends a \$25,000 cut in Snow Removal Account.

Rep. Nakian moved to amend this cut by deleting it. Said motion was seconded and approved by voice vote.

On Page 51: The Fiscal Committee recommends a \$50,000 cut in the Vehicle Maintenance Account.

Rep. Owens moved to amend this cut by reducing it by \$25,000. Said motion was seconded.

Rep. Loglisci stated there is \$600,000 in the capital budget for new vehicles and therefore the maintenance should be going down due to these expenditures on large machines. Further, Rep. Loglisci stated that \$50,000 seemed prudent, and he sees no reason now to lessen the cut. He stated that he now sees a pattern of going backwards, and that at the last minute, the Mayor's Office and others sent things down, and the Board just doesn't want to cut. Rep. Loglisci further stated that none of the cuts were made capriciously, and there had been agreement [in Committee] this was a fair cut; further, he stated he will vote against this reduction.

Rep. Owens stated that when the maintenance supervisor reported to the Committee, he did state they would be buying new vehicles, and that this would probably cut down on some of the

maintenance costs. However, in buying the vehicles, maintenance must be kept current so that we will not have to keep buying new vehicles. The maintenance supervisor also stated that some of the parts are not readily available, and he would like to have a supply of parts on hand. This is why Rep. Owens supports keeping as much money in this account as possible to enable the supervisor to keep parts on hand.

Rep. Loglisci stated that today, people are trying to keep parts inventories down, and it seems to him that we are going in the opposite direction. Further, he believes that a less than 10% cut in this line seems credible. Rep. Loglisci also asked for a machine vote. Said motion was approved by machine vote with 26 yes votes and 11 no votes. Rep. MacInnis vote was not recorded due to a malfunction in the machine; he stated he voted YES on the item.

On Page 53: No recommendation.

On Page 56: No recommendation.

On Page 58: No recommendation.

On Page 59: No recommendation.

On Page 61: No recommendation.

On Page 62: No recommendation.

On Page 64: No recommendation.

On Page 65: No recommendation.

On Page 67: No recommendation.

On Page 68: No recommendation.

On Page 72: No recommendation.

On Page 73: No recommendation.

On Page 75: The Board of Finance cut \$35,000 in Haulaway Garbage and \$4,000 in Bulky Waste Haulaway. The Fiscal Committee did not recommend further cuts.

On Page 78: No recommendation.

On Page 79: No recommendation.

On Page 81: No recommendation.

On Page 82: No recommendation.

On Page 83: No recommendation.

On Page 85: No recommendation.

On Page 87: No recommendation.

On Page 89: No recommendation.

On Page 91: No recommendation.

On Page 93: No recommendation.

On Page 95: No recommendation.

On Page 96: No recommendation.

On Page 97: No recommendation.

On Page 98: No recommendation.

On Page 99: No recommendation.

On Page 100: No recommendation.

On Page 101: No recommendation.

On Page 102: No recommendation.

On Page 104: No recommendation.

On Page 106: No recommendation.

On Page 108: No recommendation.

On Page 111: The Board of Finance cut \$6,000 in Seasonal, \$6,000 in Overtime and \$6,000 in Capital Outlay of communications equipment. The Fiscal Committee did not recommend further cuts.

On Page 112: No recommendation.

On Page 115: No recommendation.

On Page 117: No recommendation.

On Page 119: No recommendation.

On Page 120: No recommendation.

On Page 121: No recommendation.

On Page 122: No recommendation.

On Pages 124 and 125: The Board of Finance cut \$30,000 in Program Expansion and a \$5,000 cut in Overtime. The Fiscal Committee did not recommend further cuts.

On Page 127: No recommendation.

On Page 128: The Board of Finance cut \$18,000 in Capital Outlay - Equipment. The Fiscal Committee did not recommend further cuts.

Rep. Abbazia stated the section total is \$32,939,653. Rep. Kuzlik concurred.

Office of Public Safety, Health & Welfare

On Page 131: No recommendation.

On Page 132: No recommendation.

On Page 136 and 137: The Fiscal Committee recommends a cut of \$75,000 in the budget reduction line. However, it is anticipated that this will primarily come from salaries.

On Page 139: No recommendation.

On Page 141: No recommendation.

On Page 143: No recommendation.

On Page 144: No recommendation.

On Page 147: The Fiscal Committee recommended a cut of \$17,000 in the salary line and a \$20,000 cut in equipment rental. This is for emergency rental of equipment that would only be used in the event of multiple failures of equipment, and the Committee felt this was an item that would more properly be covered by contingency funds.

On Page 148: No recommendation.

On Page 150: No recommendation.

On Page 152: No recommendation.

On Page 154 and 155: The Fiscal Committee recommends a \$50,000 cut from the salary line in the Fire Department and \$10,000 from the Hydrant Maintenance Account.

On Page 157: No recommendation.

On Page 159: No recommendation.

On Page 161: The Fiscal Committee recommends a cut of \$5,000 in the budget reduction line, however, it is anticipated it will come from the Laboratory Supplies Account.

On Page 163: No recommendation.

On Page 165: No recommendation.

On Page 167: No recommendation.

On Page 168: No recommendation.

On Page 170: No recommendation.

On Page 171: No recommendation.

On Page 173: No recommendation.

On Page 174: The Fiscal Committee recommends a \$100,000 cut in the budget reduction line for 3920, the Welfare Division in anticipation there will be a reduction in the relocation and moving and storage expenses.

Rep. Abbazia reported that the Section Total is \$52,074,888. Rep. Kuzlik concurred.

Office of Legal Affairs:

On Page 176: The Board of Finance cut the Tax Appeal expenses by \$50,000. The Fiscal Committee recommended no further cuts.

On Page 179: The Fiscal Committee recommends a cut of \$2,000 against the Salary Account.

On Page 180: No recommendation.

On Page 182: No recommendation.

Rep. Abbazia reported the Section Total is \$2,011,057. Rep. Kuzlik concurred.

Non-Affiliated Departments:

On Page 184: No recommendation.

On Page 185: No recommendation.

On Page 187: No recommendation.

On Page 188: No recommendation.

On Page 190: No recommendation.

On Page 191: No recommendation.

On Page 193: No recommendation.

On Page 194: No recommendation.

On Page 197: No recommendation.

On Page 198: No recommendation.

On Page 199: No recommendation.

On Page 200: No recommendation.

On Page 201: No recommendation.

On Page 202: No recommendation.

On Page 203: No recommendation.

On Page 204: No recommendation.

On Page 205: No recommendation.

On Page 206: No recommendation.

On Page 207: No recommendation.

On Page 208: No recommendation.

On Page 209: Rep. Martin reported the Board of Finance reduced the City Bonds account by \$400,000. The Fiscal Committee had no further reductions.

On Page 210: No recommendation.

On Page 211: No recommendation.

On Page 212: Rep. Martin reported that the Board of Finance made a number of reductions in this line. The Fiscal Committee had no further reductions. For the record, the Board of Finance reduced the Insurance Account by \$175,000; the Medical and Life Insurance Account by \$200,000; the Social Security Account by \$125,000; the Unemployment Compensation Account by \$10,000; and the Employee Benefits Account by \$55,000.

On Page 213: No recommendation.

On Page 214: Rep. Martin reported the Board of Finance cut this line, the Board of Education, by \$1,000,000. The Fiscal Committee has no further budget reduction recommendations.

Rep. Martin stated that the Contingency Line, while it is part of this budget, is not listed in the book, but is referred to in the transmittal letter. The Fiscal Committee recommended a cut in the amount of \$350,000.

President Domonkos stated that there is a motion and a second to approve the Operating Budget, as amended. Said motion was approved by voice vote. Rep. Abbazia stated the total is \$274,138,298. Rep. Kuzlik concurred.

Rep. DeLuca stated that he would like a letter sent to the Tax Department, or the Assessor's Office, recommending that an explanation of the reduction be included in the tax bills. Rep. DeLuca stated the taxpayers should be aware that the Water Pollution Control Authority is under a separate budget, and they should know that taxes are being reduced because of this. Rep. DeLuca stated this matter was discussed at the Saturday budget deliberation meeting, and it was felt this would allow taxpayers to make a comparison. Further, he would like a notation indicating the additional tax paid because of the changes in the volunteer fire department service.

Rep. Martin stated that it would be fine to include this in a recommendation to Director Hamilton. Rep. Martin further stated that with the Mayor's Budget, the recommended cuts by the Board of Finance and the recommended cuts by the Board of Representatives, with consideration of Mr. DeLuca's statement, the tax rate for this budget will probably be flat or a reduction in the mill rate for every district in the City.

Rep. Sherer stated he fears he will be hearing the following from now until Election Day – that this budget, as presented, is a flat or reduced budget. Rep. Sherer stated that if a person gets a flat or reduced tax bill, and then gets the Water Pollution Control Authority bill of \$1,000 a year, it is actually up. Rep. Sherer further stated that the Water Pollution Control Authority amount

was not reduced dollar for dollar from the budget and that the only reason the budget was decreased is because this section was excised from the budget. Rep. Sherer further stated that by calling this a flat or reduced budget, it is unfair for the public to be fed misinformation. Rep. Sherer stated that he would be the first one to congratulate if after the public adds up both bills, there is a reduction.

President Domonkos stated that if one reads the Mayor's transmittal letter, it states very clearly that this item was removed from the budget. Further, President Domonkos stated that in the response letter, Mr. Martin will include such comments.

Rep. Sherer stated that he was not going to sit back and keep hearing that this is such a "marvelous" budget in that it is reduced because it is not going to be reduced in the end, and this is what the public needs to understand.

Rep. Loglisci stated, in reference to transmittal letters from the Mayor within the budget books, that the general public won't see them. He further stated that he was concerned that the press report fairly as to where the budget really is and that there will be an increase, although it will be within the rate of inflation.

Rep. Ponzini stated that he believes the budget is a fair budget and that it represents a lot of work by the departments in the City. He also believes it will result in a flat or reduced tax rate and he does not believe that it is a misrepresentation because the Water Pollution Control Authority amount is something mandated by law and it has nothing to do with this budget. Rep. Ponzini stated that one should look at the tax savings as a result of the budget and not add in a water pollution control charge that is mandated by state statute. Rep. Ponzini stated that the other side of the aisle is accusing the administration or the Democrats of making some sort of misrepresentation, and that there is no misrepresentation. Rep. Ponzini further stated that this budget is going to result in a flat or reduced tax bill, and the addition of other items to create an appearance of misrepresentation for political purposes is the real misrepresentation.

Rep. Leydon stated that he believes the numbers speak for themselves, the public will see the numbers and decide for itself and further noted that he looks forward to Mr. Sherer's congratulations when the time comes.

Rep. DeLuca stated that they are not trying to create a Democrat/Republican issue here or trying to decide whether the budget is fair or unfair, but based on the numbers and on Tom Hamilton's comments at the budget deliberation meeting, it was agreed that the operating budget is up 2.8% and the Board of Education is up 4.3%. Therefore, he does not see how this translates to a flat rate. Rep. DeLuca stated that there will be a further increase with the Water Pollution Control Authority billing and that the anticipated decrease in taxes for people will be about \$48, however, the Water Pollution Control Authority billing will be much higher.

Rep. Martin stated that the Fiscal Committee worked very hard and covered a lot of issues. In addition to the meetings he mentioned earlier, additional meetings were held with directors

regarding the budget. Further, Rep. Martin stated that he wanted to assure the Board that the Committee deliberated long and very carefully, there were a number of disagreements, and he believes that they came up with a very good set of recommendations. He also stated that the fact that the Board has come up with some minor revisions to those changes endorses the excellent work the Committee did. Again, Rep. Martin thanked everyone for their hard work.

President Domonkos stated that the Capital Budget will now be reviewed.

Capital Budget

On Page 1: No recommendation.

On Page 2: The Board of Finance reduced the modular classrooms by \$50,000. The Fiscal Committee had no further recommendations.

On Page 3: No recommendation.

On Page 4: No recommendation.

On Page 5: No recommendation.

On Page 6: No recommendation.

On Page 7: No recommendation.

On Page 8: No recommendation.

On Page 11: No recommendation.

On Page 12: No recommendation.

On Page 13: No recommendation.

On Page 14: No recommendation.

On Page 15: No recommendation.

On Page 16: No recommendation.

On Page 17: No recommendation.

On Page 18: No recommendation.

On Page 19: No recommendation.

On Page 20: No recommendation.

On Page 21: The Committee recommended elimination of the 320 Government Center Stacking, thereby reducing this amount to \$0. The Fiscal Committee felt that if this project could be cost-justified, or if it could raise revenue, then the administration would have to justify this before the Committee would approve the funding.

Rep. Abbazia reported that the Section Total is \$1,515,000. Rep. Kuzlik concurred.

On Page 22: No recommendation.

On Page 23: No recommendation.

On Page 24: No recommendation.

On Page 25: No recommendation.

On Page 26: No recommendation.

On Page 27: No recommendation.

On Page 28: No recommendation.

On Page 29: The Fiscal Committee recommended a reduction of Line 280, West Broad Street at Stillwater road by \$75,000, or from \$125,000 to \$50,000. The reason for this is that the project will not be proceeding as planned, however, there is work that needs to be done on it. The Committee did not want to cut the activity altogether, but wants the Operations Department to come back and request the appropriate amount of funds.

On Page 30: No recommendation.

On Page 32: No recommendation.

Rep. Abbazia reported that the Section Total is \$1,355,000. Rep. Kuzlik concurred.

On Page 34: No recommendation.

Rep. Martin stated that the Water Pollution Control Authority's estimated capital expenditures is \$17,000,000 over the next three years. Rep. Martin stated that the Fiscal Committee is concerned over the size of capital expenditures anticipated over the next few years, and in the future, the Committee will be looking at capital projects more closely in order to maintain the City's debt capacity at appropriate levels.

On Page 35: No recommendation.

On Page 36: No recommendation.

On Page 37: No recommendation.

On Page 39: No recommendation.

On Page 40: No recommendation.

On Page 41: No recommendation.

On Page 42: No recommendation.

On Page 44: No recommendation.

On Page 46: No recommendation.

On Page 47: No recommendation.

On Page 48: No recommendation.

On Page 49: No recommendation.

On Page 51: No recommendation.

On Page 52: No recommendation.

Rep. Abbazia reported that the total is \$31,604,278. Rep. Kuzlik concurred.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Capital Budget was approved by voice vote.

Special Revenue Fund Budgets

Water Pollution Control

On Page 10: The Board of Finance made a \$50,000 cut in the budget reduction line. The Fiscal Committee made no further recommendations.

On Page 12: No recommendation.

On Page 13: No recommendation.

On Page 14: No recommendation.

On Page 15: No recommendation.

On Page 16: No recommendation.

On Page 17: No recommendation.

On Page 18: No recommendation.

On Page 19: No recommendation.

Rep. Abbazia reported the Section Total as \$10,267,716. Rep. Kuzlik concurred.

Smith House:

On Page 2: No recommendation.

On Page 3: No recommendation.

On Page 4: No recommendation.

On Page 5: No recommendation.

On Page 6: No recommendation.

On Page 7: No recommendation.

Rep. Abbazia reported the Section Total as \$7,203,765. Rep. Kuzlik concurred.

Rep. Martin stated that the Smith House SNF is doing well this year, but because of changes in the federal and state formulas, we could be looking at some problems in about eighteen months.

Grant-Funded Programs:

Rep. Martin stated that the grant-funded programs were 99% grant funded, and as a result the Fiscal Committee has not recommended any cuts to these lines.

On Page 1: No recommendation.

On Page 2: No recommendation.

On Page 3: No recommendation.

On Page 4: No recommendation.

On Page 5: No recommendation.

On Page 6: No recommendation.

On Page 7: No recommendation.

On Page 8 No recommendation.

On Page 9 No recommendation.

On Page 10: No recommendation.

Rep. Abbazia reported that the Section Total is \$6,572,390. Rep. Kuzlik concurred.

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the Special Revenue Fund Budget was approved by voice vote.

RESOLUTIONS:

Rep. Martin reported that there were resolutions as follows to be voted on for approval. Said resolutions are appended hereto and are included herein.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. RESOLUTION No. 2443; Adoption of the Operating Budget (Including the Board of Education Budget) Fiscal Year July 1, 1997 to June 30, 1998.
Amount: \$274,138,298 | APPROVED
BY VOICE
VOTE |
| 2. RESOLUTION No. 2444; Adoption of the Capital Budget Fiscal Year July 1, 1997 to June 30, 1998.
Amount: \$31,604,278 | APPROVED
BY VOICE
VOTE |
| 3. RESOLUTION No. 2445; Adoption of the Water Pollution Control Authority Budget Fiscal Year July 1, 1997 to June 30, 1998.
Amount: \$10,267,716 | APPROVED
BY VOICE
VOTE |
| 4. RESOLUTION No. 2446; Adoption of the Smith House Budget Fiscal Year July 1, 1997 to June 30, 1998.
Amount: \$7,203,765 | APPROVED
BY VOICE
VOTE |
| 5. RESOLUTION No. 2447; Adoption of the Grant-Funded Budget Fiscal Year July 1, 1997 to June 30, 1998.
Amount: \$6,572,390 | APPROVED
BY VOICE
VOTE |

6. RESOLUTION No. 2448; Authorization of Preliminary Application for State School Construction Grants for Board of Education Capital Projects.

**APPROVED
BY VOICE
VOTE**

Rep. Zelinsky questioned why Resolution No. 2448 authorizes the Board of Education to reject grants. Rep. Martin responded that the State could stipulate additional conditions beyond which were anticipated when the grant was made, and this gives the Board of Education full authority to act.

President Domonkos thanked the Fiscal Committee and the chairs of the other committees for their hard work and efforts. She stated it was a big job and commended the representatives, the office staff, and David Martin as Chair of the Fiscal Committee.

Rep. Martin stated, as Chair of the Fiscal Committee, he thanked President Domonkos and the office staff.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Note: A tape of these proceedings is available in the Board of Representatives office.