

The Hour

Sports

Staples girls basketball team loses double overtime thriller.

A13



Outlook

The Hour's special editorial supplement takes a look at the economy and issues that impact the success of local businesses. C1

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50¢

Business / D1



Colombian flower growers struggle to cut pesticides.

World / A11



Troops gain little information in recent sweep of car bomb makers.

Director hands tax board \$264M budget

Presentation kicks off formation of city's 2007-08 spending plan

By ROBERT KOCH
Hour Staff Writer

NORWALK — City Finance Director Thomas S. Hamilton recommended to the Board of Estimate and Taxation Monday night a \$264.5-million operating budget for 2007-08, which would boost the annual property tax bill on a median-single family home in Norwalk's 4th District by \$291. "The recommended budget maintain all existing city services. We do add a net of three positions, and restore the funding for two vacant firefighters," Hamilton said. "The total spending

increase under the plan is an increase of 5.9 percent. The tax increase attributable to the budget is 4.6 percent, and if we had no revaluation, the mill rate would go up by 4.6 percent, and the median single family taxpayer in the 4th District would have taxes projected at \$5,542, which is an increase of \$291, or 5.5 percent."

Hamilton's presentation to the Board of Estimate, including Mayor Richard A. Moccia, in the Common Council chambers, marked the kick-off of the formation of the city's 2007-08 operating budget.

"It's a good starting point, but clearly there's more work to be done. We need to get the total tax increase below 5 percent," said Board of Estimate Fred Wilms, speaking to *The Hour*.

Between now night and May 7,



Finance Director Thomas S. Hamilton presents his 2007-08 budget recommendation to Board of Estimate & Taxation.

the Board of Estimate will hold budget-review workshops, at which department heads and

school officials will explain their spending requests. The council on Feb. 27 will adopt a spending

cap toward which the board will aim when crafting the operating budget.

A public hearing on the unfolding operating budget is set tentatively for March 28.

At \$264.5 million, Hamilton's recommended budget represents a 5.9-percent increase over spending approved for fiscal year 2006-07. The budget would boost the tax levy by 6.1 percent. The tax increase attributable to the budget would be 4.6 percent; the fourth and final year of the city's phased-in 2003 property revaluation would account for the balance of the increase, according to the Finance Department.

In his presentation, Hamilton focused at several times on school spending — both direct and indi-

See DIRECTOR, A5

Local / A3

Area attractions jazzed over funding proposal.

Editorial / A10

Scoters are a fad that requires DMV regulation.

Online Poll

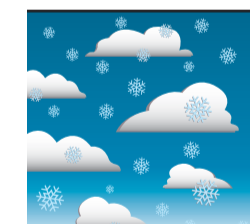
Hour Poll
What do you think?
Submit your answers online at thehour.com

Calendar



Check out *The Hour's* online community calendar for events in your area. Go to www.thehour.com.

Weather / A2



Partly sunny, chance of snow today with highs in the mid-20s. Snow tonight with lows in the mid-20s.

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Redefining the bake sale



Hour photo / HANS HALLGREN

Rosie Haas, owner of Fundraise Naturally, at her Norwalk home. Haas sells a variety of organic products.

Woman offers healthy fundraising alternative

By ANNA GUSTAFSON
Hour Staff Writer

NORWALK — Norwalker Rosie Haas said she may hold the solution to Parent Teacher Organization members' recent bake sale woes.

Haas is the founder of Fundraise Naturally, a business that offers organic candles and soaps to be sold in lieu of cookies and candies at fundraisers. The newly formed business, she said, will help parents recently upset by the Board of Education's ban on the sale of baked goods to students.

"People are saying they're very happy that they have an alternative to gift wrap and candy."

Rosie Haas
Founder of Fundraise Naturally

"People can sell healthy, environmentally friendly everyday products in their fundraisers, and they can earn a 40 percent profit on them," she said. "People are saying they're very happy that

they have an alternative to gift wrap and candy."

Bake sales — which were banned following an October decision by the Board of Education to comply with the state's 2006 Healthy Food and Beverages Act — make up a significant amount of fundraising dollars, and parents said they were concerned that the ban would mean a sharp drop in revenues. In turn, this could cause a decrease in funds going towards new school books, enrichment programs and classroom supplies, parent Steven

See LOCAL, A5

Fire chief steps back from racism probe

By ROBERT KOCH
Hour Staff Writer

NORWALK — Addressing concerns about intimidation, Fire Chief Denis McCarthy has stepped further back from a Common Council panel's investigation of alleged racism in the Norwalk Fire Department.

"I respect many of the concerns expressed by you and the Investigative Committee; in particular that your investigation be unfettered to insure that all members of the Norwalk Fire Department are free to express themselves honestly to the Investigative Committee," wrote McCarthy in a Feb. 8 letter to Phyllis Y. Bolden, chairwoman of the panel investigating the allegations. "Thus, to make sure the council's investigation appears fair and comprehensive, I will remove myself from the process and will not participate in any way except at the specific request of the Investigative Committee."

The panel is investigating

"I will remove myself from the process and will not participate in any way except at the specific request of the Investigative Committee."

Denis McCarthy
Norwalk Fire Chief
on Common Council's investigation of alleged racism in the Norwalk Fire Department

alleged racism, after firefighter Scot Wilson last November released a copy of a videotape showing a firefighter using derogatory terms when referring to blacks and Hispanics. Wilson, on suspension without pay at the time, used the tape to bolster his claims of racial discrimination in a lawsuit against the department. Wilson, who has admitted having problems with alcohol abuse, maintained his drinking problem

See NORWALK, A6

Police: Roommate stabbed in alcohol-charged rumble

By PATRICK R. LINSEY
Hour Staff Writer

NORWALK — A booze-fueled bout between buddies turned bloody Saturday night when Jomil Soboluarro stabbed roommate Luis Reyes in the chin, police said.

Officers arrived at the 37 Quintard Ave. residence of Soboluarro, 23, and Reyes, 22, at 6:14 p.m., police said. Reyes was found with a laceration to the chin "bleeding profusely," said police.

Both were allegedly drinking alcohol.

According to police, Reyes "said something to Soboluarro that upset him" and an argument ensued. Reyes then allegedly pushed his roommate, leading to a brawl.

Soboluarro was charged with second-degree assault. His bond was set at \$50,000.

"Soboluarro appeared not to have received any serious injuries," said Sgt. Andre Velez, a police spokesman.

Officers did find scratch marks on Soboluarro's chest and forearm, Velez said.

Reyes was taken to the hospital by ambulance, police said. He was later arrested by summons and charged with third-degree assault.

The knife used in the incident was not recovered, police said.

Said Velez: "Reyes was it on the record that 'We're friends, and these things happen because of beer.'"

Lawmakers push for safety survey of Indian Point

By PATRICK R. LINSEY
Hour Staff Writer

REGION — The Indian Point nuclear power plant must undergo an Independent Safety Assessment, according to a bipartisan group of legislators including U.S. Rep. Christopher Shays. The lawmakers introduced legislation Monday requiring the completion of an ISA at Indian Point within six months.

The bill would force Entergy, which owns and operates the plant, to comply with the ISA's recommendations or be denied a licensing extension in 2013.

A similar assessment of the

Maine Yankee nuclear power plant preceded its decommissioning in 1997.

An Entergy spokesman deemed the current legislation an "unfair" effort to shut Indian Point.

Shays, R-4, has previously called for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to suspend operations at Indian Point pending an independent review of the plant's emergency preparedness plan.

"Indian Point's location near highly populated areas means we have to go the extra mile to ensure it is safe," Shays said Monday. "This legislation will ensure that if Indian Point continues to run,

it meets strict safety standards and is continually monitored."

Two nuclear reactors are operated at the Indian Point facility in Buchanan, N.Y., roughly 45 miles from Norwalk. The plant produces 2,000 megawatts of electricity, supplying between 20 to 40 percent of the region's electricity.

Lawmakers have called for special safeguards at Indian Point, given its proximity to major population centers. Entergy spokesman Jim Steets said Indian Point is similar to many other plants.

"The impression they want to

See INDIAN, A6



Rehabilitation Services of Norwalk Hospital offers a support group for amputees

the first Monday of every month from 12-1pm at Outpatient Rehabilitation Services, 698 West Ave, Norwalk For more information, call 203-855-3679.



The right care is right here.

