

(The following is not a verbatim transcript of comments or discussion that occurred during the meeting, but rather a summarization intended for general informational purposes. All motions and votes are the official records).

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Monday, January 6, 2020, in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 8:15 P.M. by the Chair.

Present Councilmember Paul J. McAuley
 Councilmember John P. Donegan
 Councilmember Kenneth J. Hopkins, Vice-Chair
 Councilmember Christopher G. Paplauskas (left meeting at 9:05 p.m.)
 Council Vice-President Michael W. Favicchio, Chair
 Council President Michael J Farina

Absent: Councilmember Edward J. Brady

Also Present: Councilmember Steven A. Stycos
 Councilmember Lammis J. Vargas
 Daniel Parrillo, Director of Administration
 John Psilopoulos, Deputy Director of Administration
 Robert Strom, Director of Finance
 John Verdecchia, Assistant City Solicitor
 David Dimaio, City Council Auditor/Budget Analyst
 Maria Medeiros Wall, City Clerk
 Heather Finger, Stenographer

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

On motion by Councilmember Paplauskas, seconded by Council President Farina, it was voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting and they stand approved as recorded. Motion passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE/COMMUNICATIONS

None.

OLD BUSINESS:

9-19-01 *Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 2 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled "Administration and Personnel" (Minimum Wage). Sponsored by Councilmembers Stycos and Donegan. Cont. 12/2/2019.*

Council President Farina stated that his dad works for the library part-time and he will not be taking part in any discussion or vote on this matter.

Director Strom stated that since this Ordinance does not take effect until 2021, this should be discussed during the budget session.

Director Parrillo stated that Library Director Garcia is waiting for Labor Attorney Ragosta's opinion on whether the City Council by passing a wage increase does not infringe on the powers of the Library Board of Trustees, since the Board sets the salaries.

Councilmember Donegan stated that he feels the salary adjustments is appropriate to be done now so as various departments create their budgets they know beforehand what the minimum wage is. He thinks we have had a long enough debate on this matter and does not want this continued again.

Director Strom stated that this Ordinance takes effect January 2021, a year from now. He questioned why we are doing this one year in advance. Councilmember Donegan stated that this would give the Administration and various departments due time to plan. Director Strom stated that the Ordinance states January 2021 as the effective date. He questioned Councilmember Donegan if this passes, would he want to have the wage increase for half the year, since our budget starts July 1st. Councilmember Donegan stated that he would have no problem changing the effective date to July 1st.

Director Parrillo stated that this should be done during the budget process. Each department meets with Director Strom to discuss their budget and they can prioritize what is needed for that particular department, whether it is equipment or salaries. He indicated to the Council that Director Strom should be given the opportunity to prioritize.

Councilmember Stycos stated that he agrees with Councilmember Donegan where this Ordinance should be passed this evening. We are going to have a very difficult time finding \$33,000 during the budget. This would give the Mayor time and expertise to find the \$33,000 for 2021.

Councilmember Vargas stated that she is in favor of increasing the hourly wages, but she would like to know what the budget would look like and would like the opportunity to question the City Directors and get more information from them.

Councilmember Hopkins asked if there is a breakdown of who the 155 part-time workers are. Are they students, teenagers or Senior citizens? Director Strom stated that all he can state is they are not lifeguards or Parks and Recreation summer help. They are all part-time employees in various City departments. He does have a list of each department and the part-timers in those departments, but they are not summer help. Most are middle age or older. He can provide the Council with a copy of this list if they wish.

Councilmember Vargas questioned if this could be continue to April or May during the budget season, which will allow the Directors to come before the Committee to speak on this and give the Council a chance to vote on this.

Chair stated that he is not sure we have the authority to set minimum wage for part-timers. We do set salaries during contract negotiations and ratifications, but he is not sure we have any authority when it comes to part-timers.

Councilmember Donegan stated that we have had four months to vote on this and each month an issue comes up. We should vote on this tonight and set the priority in the budget.

Chair asked if there were any members of the public who would like to speak.

Public Speakers:

Dana Holmgren, 161 Ferncrest Ave., appeared to speak and stated that she strongly supports this Ordinance. The City Council and the Mayor's wage increases were recently passed outside of the City's budget process.

Councilmember McAuley stated that he is willing to vote on this this evening and if the vote is reversed, then so be it. This is the first he is hearing about a ruling we are waiting on.

Councilmember Hopkins stated that Ms. Holmgren was correct about the Council voting for theirs and the Mayor's salary increase and in good conscience, he cannot not vote in favor of this Ordinance.

On motion by Councilmember Paplauskas, seconded by Councilmember McAuley, it was voted to recommend approval of this Ordinance pending the labor attorney's opinion. Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS/NEW BUSINESS:

- ***Liability Insurance. Councilmember Donegan. Cont. 10/7/2019.***

Director Strom stated that he had a discussion today with our insurance carrier and the company that is interested wants a five year history and what the claims were for. This can be done, but would require a lot of research. After this research is done, he thinks, as a body, we should see how much we want to self-insure and what is most cost effective.

Chair stated that this is clearly something that should be discussed during the budget process. **Director Strom** agreed and also stated that he can obtain different scenarios to discuss during the budget season.

Councilmember Donegan asked that this item be continued to see if there is any more information from Director Strom.

On motion by Council President Farina, seconded by Councilmember Paplauskas, it was voted to continue this item. Motion passed unanimously.

- ***Administrative Report on decommissioning estimates for solar farms.*** Councilmember Stycos. ***(Referred by City Council 11/25/2019).***

Director Parrillo referred to the 1% in the report from DiPrete Engineering and stated that he has not been able to get more clarification on this since this is the first facility, but they are open to the percentage for the next one.

Councilmember Stycos asked that for the next meeting, the Administration provide an update analysis on the Hope Farm facility.

Chair stated that he would like an engineering expert to discuss this with the Committee.

- ***Motor Vehicle Tax Abatements***

No one appeared to speak in favor or to oppose.

On motion by Council President Farina, seconded by Councilmember McAuley, it was voted to recommend approval of this list of Tax Abatements as recommended by City Assessor. Motion passed unanimously.

- ***Tangible Tax Abatements***

No one appeared to speak in favor or to oppose.

On motion by Council President Farina, seconded by Councilmember McAuley, it was voted to recommend approval of this list of Tax Abatements as recommended by City Assessor. Motion passed unanimously.

- ***Tax Assessment Board of Review Decisions as of December 31, 2018*** (Informational only)

No discussion needed.

Councilmember Donegan questioned the Abatement for 100 Sockanosset Crossroad and why the dramatic drop in value. Council President Farina stated that this is a question for the Tax Assessment Board of Review.

Director Strom stated that he will contact the Tax Assessor tomorrow and obtain a report from him regarding this and report back next month.

Councilmember Stycos asked for minutes of the meeting of the Tax Assessment Board where they made the decision for this Abatement be provided for the next meeting.

- ***Tax Interest Waiver Approvals***

No one appeared to speak in favor or to oppose.

On motion by Council President Farina, seconded by Councilmember McAuley, it was voted to recommend approval of this list of Tax Interest Waiver Approvals as recommended by City Treasurer. Motion passed unanimously.

- ***Tax Interest Waiver Denials***

No one appeared to speak in favor or to oppose.

On motion by Council President Farina, seconded by Councilmember McAuley, it was voted to recommend approval of this list of Tax Interest Waiver Approvals as recommended by City Treasurer. Motion passed unanimously.

12-19-01 Ordinance ratifying School Committee's Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Rhode Island Council 94 AFSCME, AFL-CIO, Cranston Public School Employees, Administrative Assistants Local 2044 (July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2020 Wage Reopen and July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021). Introduced pursuant to Charter Sec. 11.02.1.

On motion by Councilmember McAuley, seconded by Council President Farina, it was voted to recommend approval of this Ordinance.

Under Discussion:

Joseph Balducci, School Department Chief Financial Officer, appeared to speak and stated that this is a third year re-opener. This is a 1.25% increase.

No one appeared to speak in favor or to oppose.

Roll call was taken on motion to recommend approval of this Ordinance and motion passed unanimously.

12-19-02 Ordinance ratifying School Committee's Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Rhode Island Laborers District Council 1322, Bus Drivers Unit (July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2020 Wage Reopen). Introduced pursuant to Charter Sec. 11.02.1.

On motion by Council President Farina, seconded by Councilmember Paplauskas, it was voted to recommend approval of this Ordinance.

Under Discussion:

Joseph Balducci, School Department Chief Financial Officer, appeared to speak and stated that this is a re-opener with a 58 cents increase, just over 3% increase.

No one appeared to speak in favor or to oppose.

Roll call was taken on motion to recommend approval of this Ordinance and motion passed unanimously.

Financing of \$2.5 million payment for Cullion property. (Council President at request of Suzanne Arena).

No one from the public appeared to speak regarding this issue.

No discussion held.

Budgeting status on the technology changes in the City. (Council Vice-President Favicchio)

Director Strom stated the following of what has been expended to date:

- FY 2019 - \$15,000 for Ambien Sound.
- FY 2020 - \$30,626 for Ambien Sound and \$6,100 for ClerkBase.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees