

*(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 Thursday, November 6, 2023 in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

### **CALL MEETING TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 P.M. by the Vice-Chair.

Present                    Councilman Robert J. Ferri  
                                 Councilman Daniel Wall  
                                 Councilman Richard D. Campopiano  
                                 Councilman Christopher G. Paplauskas  
                                 Council Vice-President Lammis J. Vargas, Vice-Chair  
                                 Council President Jessica M. Marino

Absent:                    Councilwoman Aniece Germain  
                                 Councilman John P. Donegan, Chair

Also Present:            Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli  
                                 Anthony Moretti, Chief of Staff  
                                 John Verdecchia, Assistant City Solicitor  
                                 Steven Angell, City Council Legal Counsel (appeared via zoom)  
                                 Thomas Zidelis, Director of Finance  
                                 Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees  
                                 Meredith Potter, Stenographer

### **I.        APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

#### ***A. Minutes of the September 25, 2023 special meeting***

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilman Wall, it was voted to approve the above minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

#### ***B. Minutes of the October 2, 2023 regular meeting***

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilman Wall, it was voted to approve the above minutes. Motion passed unanimously.

## II. COMMITTEE BUSINESS MATTERS CARRIED OVER

**2-23-07** *Ordinance in amendment of Title 3 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled "Revenue and Finance, Chapter 3.97.030 – Fifteen (15) Years Economic Development Tax Incentive Program for Property located at 661 Park Avenue and 271 Doric Avenue (Tax Stabilization Agreement). Sponsored by Councilman Ferri. Co-sponsored by Councilwoman Renzulli. (Cont. from 3/6/2023, 4/3/2023, 5/11/2023, 6/5/2023, 7/3/2023, 8/7/2023 & 9/11/2023).*

**Councilman Ferri** asked that this Ordinance be withdrawn.

**Attorney Angell** stated that, this, he would assume is at the request of the developer. He asked if the developer has filed anything for the record asking that this Ordinance be withdrawn.

**Councilman Ferri** stated that he had a discussion with the developer today and he asked to withdraw this Ordinance. Attorney Angel stated that that is sufficient.

Ordinance was withdrawn.

**9-23-04** *Ordinance allocating \$600,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act Funds for the Purpose of Upgrading City of Cranston Playgrounds in All Six Wards. Sponsored by Mayor Kenneth J. Hopkins. (Cont. from 10/2/2023)*

**Director Moretti** stated that they are making good progress working with the folks at Edgewood Highlands and with the Councilwoman. He stated that with the cooler months coming up, it would be fine to continue this Ordinance to next month when they will have more details of the cost of that playground.

**Council President Marino** stated that she spoke to the Solicitor and Attorney Angell and the form of this is not correct. It should be a Resolution and the Administration needs to look at that.

Ordinance was continued to next month.

*Resolution relative to Playgrounds Upgrade & Maintenance.* Sponsored by Council Vice-President Vargas. *(Cont. from 10/2/2023).*

**Council Vice-President Vargas** stated asked that this Resolution be continued.

**Councilman Donegan:**

- *Exploration of Liability Policy for the City (Cont. from 8/7/2023 & 10/2/2023)*

**Director Zidelis** stated that there is nothing to report at this time. They are going to procure multiple quotes and ultimately this would be a FY24 budget item. The Council will be provided with the two quotes prior to formulating FY25 budget.

**Council President Marino:**

- ***The current remaining funds available on grants received by the City versus the total amount of grant funds awarded/received by the City. (Cont. from 10/2/2023)***

**Director Zidelis** gave an overview of the grants that are currently in operation right now. The City has approximately \$55 million, which includes unused or uncommitted ARPA funds that are outstanding in the amount of \$5.9 million yet to be committed. The City has multiple multi-year grants. As an example, \$3.7 million SAFFER grants which runs for five years. For this overview, the SAFFER grants is fully committed to staffing with the exception of a grant that was just awarded last week to the Police Department for approximately half a million dollars, which he is calling uncommitted right now because he does not know what the use is. The only available balance right now that is not used for a specific purpose would be the SAFFER grant in the amount of \$5.9 million.

**Council President Marino** asked that this item be continued. That is not all that is available. There needs to be a deeper dive. As an example, we received federal funding relative to the pool. Where does that currently stand? There has to be additional funding that the City has likely received. It would be very beneficial for the Council Members to know where that funding stands, what we received, what is available, this way we know and if there is a balance and if it is going to be used and the associated deadline with those funds. That is information she is looking for and is sure other Council Members as well.

**Director Zidelis** stated that in his listing, as an example, the \$750,000 for the pool, he is carrying it as committed for the pool, although we have not drawn the money. He can get that level of specificity.

**Council President Marino** asked that this item be continued.

**V. CORRESPONDENCE/COMMUNICATIONS**

None.

**VI. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**VII. NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE**

**A. *Ordinances***

None.

**B. *Resolutions***

None.

### ***C. Real Estate Tax Abatements***

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilman Wall, it was voted to recommend approval of this list of Tax Abatements as recommended by the City Assessor. Motion passed on a vote of 5-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilmen Ferri, Wall, Campopiano, Council Vice-President Vargas and Council President Marino -5. Councilman Paplauskas was not present for roll call vote.

### ***D. Tangible Tax Abatements***

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilman Wall, it was voted to recommend approval of this list of Tax Abatements as recommended by the City Assessor. Motion passed on a vote of 5-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilmen Ferri, Wall, Campopiano, Council Vice-President Vargas and Council President Marino -5. Councilman Paplauskas was not present for roll call vote.

### ***E. Tax Interest Waiver Approvals***

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilman Wall, it was voted to recommend approval of this list of Tax Interest Waiver Approvals. Motion passed on a vote of 5-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilmen Ferri, Wall, Campopiano, Council Vice-President Vargas and Council President Marino -5. Councilman Paplauskas was not present for roll call vote.

### ***F. Tax Interest Waiver Denials***

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilman Wall, it was voted to recommend approval of this list of Tax Interest Waiver Denials. Motion passed on a vote of 5-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilmen Ferri, Wall, Campopiano, Council Vice-President Vargas and Council President Marino -5. Councilman Paplauskas was not present for roll call vote.

### **Councilman Donegan:**

- ***Audit Process***

**Council Vice-President Vargas** asked that this be continued if incase Chairman Donegan has questions.

**James Wilkinson**, partner with Marcum, LLP, appeared to speak and outlined the process of the Audit and presented a letter as preliminary correspondence outlining what their responsibilities are in preparing the Audit. Their Audit procedures are based on a risk assessment and selective tests.

**Council Vice-President Vargas** asked Mr. Wilkinson if he anticipates having the Audit completed the end of the year. Mr. Wilkinson stated that right now, they have resources in place to get that done barring unforeseen circumstances.

**Councilman Ferri** asked if the Audit process digs into the ARPA funds that were allocated to the City and making sure that they are being distributed when they are supposed to be distributed and spent when they are supposed to be spent so we do not lose them. Mr. Wilkinson stated, yes, those ARPA funds are definitely part of the single Audit, the compliance Audit.

- ***School Construction Update & Potential Additional Bonding***

**Council Vice-President Vargas** stated that this item will be continued incase Chairman Donegan has questions.

**Ed Collins**, Director, Director of Facilities and Capital Improvements with the Cranston School Department, appeared to speak and stated that right now, the School Department has their legal counsel looking at the language of the draft of the bond that Director Zidelis forwarded to them and he is hoping that by end of this week, they will have something to share back with the City on that. They are also in the process of putting together a proposal for the Architect to finish Phase II, which is due in February.

**Council President Marino** stated that she wants to make sure that there is no ambiguity as to where it currently stands with respect to the potential for a Bond Referendum and in the process. She asked Director Moretti if he agrees that once the School Department gets the information, then he will let her know so a special Council meeting can be scheduled, if necessary, because the matter will then have to be referred to the Finance Committee and if approved, then be voted on before the full City Council by year's end so we can then forward it to the General Assembly in time. She asked if she is correct. Director Moretti stated, yes, that is the Administration's target as well.

**Councilwoman Renzulli:**

- ***Status of open grant applications***

**Councilwoman Renzulli** asked what applications we have put in, but not have heard back from, now many are there and what they are and when do we expect to hear? Director Zidelis stated that there are currently three grants currently in play or that have been applied for totaling almost \$9.2 million. One is a State grant, the Learn 365, which has been discussed previously. There are two other Congressional funding earmarks. One is for canine vehicles of \$334,000 and the other is an infrastructure grant for approximately \$1.9 million.

**Councilwoman Renzulli** asked if the Administration has any idea of when we are supposed to hear back if we won these awards or not. Director Zidelis stated that the two federal grants are subject to being appropriated on a Congressional level. He does not know when that is going to happen in light of the Budget process. He would assume it would be when the Federal Budget gets approved. The State one, the application is before the State and we are waiting for their award. We should hear soon, but does not know when.

**Councilwoman Renzulli** asked that this item be continued to the December Finance meeting and also placed on the November Council Docket under Council Member Communications.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Rosalba Zanni  
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees

- **Adjournment**