

(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, August 3, 2020 via Zoom Webinar.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 P.M. by the Chair.

Present Councilmember Aniece Germain
 Councilmember John P. Donegan
 Councilmember Edward J. Brady
 Councilmember Christopher G. Paplauskas
 Councilmember Kenneth J. Hopkins, Vice-Chair
 Council Vice-President Michael W. Favicchio, Chair

Also Present: Councilmember Steven A. Stycos
 Daniel Parrillo, Director of Administration
 John Psilopoulos, Deputy Director of Administration
 Robert Strom, Finance Director
 Christopher Rawson, City Solicitor
 David Dimaio, City Council Budget Analyst
 Leanne Zarrella, City Clerk
 Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees
 Heather Finger, Stenographer

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

On motion by Councilmember Brady, seconded by Councilmember Hopkins, 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

OLD BUSINESS:

- *Review of Online Records Project (Council Vice-President Favicchio)*

Chair gave update from the City Clerk, who had done some research for him regarding this item. He asked that the Clerk find out from the City Clerk what UAT stands for and who “different vendor” is for title card system and timetable of when this will be done be provided for the next meeting.

Chair asked that this item be continued to next month’s meeting for answers to the above questions.

PUBLIC HEARINGS/NEW BUSINESS:

7-20-02 Ordinance amending the Budget for the Fiscal Year commencing July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021 (Economic Development). Sponsored by Council Vice-President Favicchio.

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

Under Discussion:

Larry DiBoni, Director of Economic Development, appeared to speak and stated that by taking “Marketing” out of his budget, he has lost the ability to market businesses from into the City.

Councilmember Donegan stated that, procedurally, he has a concern that, as a Council Member, he has serious concerns about after approving a budget then we go back and change a line item. He urged his colleagues on the Council that we cannot start setting a precedent after a line item has been approved. He is not even sure if we are legally allowed to change that line item.

Councilmember Hopkins stated that he is looking at amending the budget and that is legal.

Chair stated that we are amending the language because it is a mistake. We are not changing the budget itself. If we leave it the way it is, we are going to put funding to something that we don’t have to pay for this year and defund something that promotes bringing businesses into the City.

Councilmember Germain questioned what Prov/Warw/ConvBureau mean. Chair stated that it is Providence Warwick Convention Bureau.

Councilmember Germain indicated that this meeting was to start at 7:00 p.m. and she logged in at 6:50. She questioned if something can be done to notify the Council if a meeting is running late. Chair stated that we can’t pinpoint starting a meeting right on time if a prior meeting ends late. He suggested that a Council Member can always text another Council Member to see if a prior meeting is running late.

Solicitor stated that the Chair and Councilmember Hopkins are correct. This Ordinance is amending the line item that is similar in nature and can be amended.

Director Parrillo stated that there was to be a follow-up meeting with Providence Bureau to get a better understanding of the program, but due to COVID, it did not happen. Nothing has been signed with them and hopefully, by the end of this year or beginning of next year, that will be done.

Councilmember Brady stated that he is in absolute support of this. He thinks there should be a follow-up meeting with Warwick Providence Convention Bureau. He is also in support of placing the funding in the budget next year for the Convention Bureau.

Councilmember Stycos asked for clarification of legality to amend the Operating Budget because he thinks this opens the door to endless budget amendments. He was under the impression that the City Charter states that only the Mayor could initiate the expenditure during the year and it is clear that this is the initiation of an expenditure for marketing rather than for an agreement with the Providence Warwick Convention Bureau. He thinks this is a very liberal policy that is being advocated by the Solicitor. He thinks that we are really bending the City Charter.

Chair stated that we are just changing the name so that it reflects the reality. By not passing this Ordinance, this would be defunding the Economic Development Department.

Councilmember Paplauskas stated that we are arguing over \$3,500 of a \$3 million budget. He asked that we vote on this this evening and forward it to the full City Council and in the meantime obtain a memo from the Council Legal Counsel and the Solicitor as to whether we would be violating the City Charter.

Councilmember Donegan stated that this has absolutely nothing to do with Mr. DiBoni, but this would set a very bad precedent.

Director Strom stated that, in his opinion, this amendment can be made because the dollar figure of \$3,500 is the same. What this Ordinance is doing is changing just the description of that line item. This amount has always been under “Marketing” in the past. What we are trying to do is help Mr. DiBoni run his department and to have a “Marketing” line item to use that \$3,500 which has already been approved in the budget.

Councilmember Brady stated that he does want to see Economic Development spend this money and if this is not passed they won’t.

On motion by Councilmember Hopkins, seconded by Council Vice-President Favicchio, it was voted to recommend approval of this Ordinance pending legal opinion from Council Legal Counsel and Solicitor. Motion passed on a vote of 5-1. The following being recorded as voting “aye”:
Councilmembers Germain, Brady, Paplauskas, Hopkins and Council Vice-President Favicchio -5. The following being recorded as voting “nay”:
Donegan -1.

Real Estate Tax Abatements

No one appeared to speak in favor or to oppose.

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

Motor Vehicle Tax Abatements

No one appeared to speak in favor or to oppose.

On motion by Councilmember Hopkins, seconded by Councilmember Paplauskas, 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 Councilmember Hopkins, seconded by Councilmember Brady, it was voted to recommend approval of this list of Tax Abatements as recommended by City Assessor. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Tax Interest Waiver Approvals**

No one appeared to speak in favor or to oppose.

On motion by Councilmember Paplauskas, seconded by Councilmember Hopkins, 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 Councilmember Paplauskas, seconded by Councilmember Brady, it was voted to recommend approval of this list of Tax Interest Waiver Approvals as recommended by City Treasurer. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees