

(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).

SPECIAL FINANCE COMMITTEE

A special meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Thursday, January 21, 2021, via Zoom webinar.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 P.M. by the Chair.

Present Councilwoman Jessica M. Marino
 Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli
 Councilman Matthew R. Reilly
 Councilman Robert J. Ferri, Vice-Chair
 Council Vice-President Edward J. Brady, Chair
 Council President Christopher G. Paplauskas

Absent: Councilman John P. Donegan

Also Present: Councilwoman Lammis J. Vargas
 Councilwoman Aniece Germain
 Mayor Kenneth J. Hopkins
 Anthony Moretti, Director of Administration
 John Verdecchia, Assistant City Solicitor
 Stephen Angell, City Council Legal Counsel
 David Dimaio, City Council Budget Analyst
 Mike Igoe, City Controller
 Leanne Zarrella, City Clerk
 Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees
 Heather Finger, Stenographer

Chair stated that Councilman Donegan is fighting COVID and will not be in attendance this evening and wishes him a quick and speedy recovery.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

PUBLIC HEARINGS/NEW BUSINESS:

- **Ordinance 01-21-01S transferring appropriations and amending the Budget for the Fiscal Year commencing July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021 (Administration Position Changes – General Fund). Sponsored by Councilman Brady.**

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to recommend approval of this

Ordinance.

Under Discussion:

No one from the public appeared to speak in favor or to oppose.

Council President Paplauskas asked Administration to explain this Ordinance.

Director Moretti stated that before explaining this Ordinance, he would like to propose a modification to this Ordinance. He indicated that he became aware of, what the attorneys are stating is a scrivener's error, of \$451 in the amended salary budget in the line item on the second schedule section 2 under Economic Development Director. The amended salary currently proposed is \$72,380, which should have been \$72,831 and also, the title of that position being unchanged reads Economic Development and Minority Business Outreach.

Chair asked Solicitor if the Committee needs to take action on those errors. Solicitor stated that if they are errors made in transposition, they can be corrected by the Clerk after and no action is needed at this time.

Councilwoman Marino stated that she wants to confirm that those are in fact scrivener's errors because for the salary of the Economic Development Director is one thing, but then adding to the title "Minority Business Outreach", that is a big difference. Director Moretti stated that if this is going to cause a problem, then it can be left as is and those responsibilities would just be included under that position.

Director Moretti stated that this Ordinance would be restructuring of the positions themselves and their related responsibilities. Some positions have been eliminated and others have been established and some others have been funded that were not funded previously. The purpose of all the schedules is there are no salary increases from position to position. Some positions have been eliminated and the Administration felt that those funds could be utilized in other ways by establishing another position or funding positions. The net effect is simple. They took former Mayor Fung's and City Council Budget and just realigned and shifted them around. This Administration would like to spend the exact same dollars that were included in that approved budget that would be included in this budget to have a net zero budget impact. He asked Mr. Igoe to explain the Ordinance and discuss the line items in the Ordinance.

Mr. Igoe stated that the two Ordinances before the Committee are drafted in the exact same format and are broken down into two sections. Section 1 is an adjustment to the original budget Ordinance 2020-20 and what it does is it shows what the amounts are listed in the current budget as adopted. On the second page, it shows in the first column the changes that are being made to each of those numbers and then in the second column it shows that the new figures would be. The total of the original changes was \$2,452,717. After all the adjustments are made, the total is \$2,452,717, which is in essence a neutral or expense revenue no change adjustment. The second section of this Ordinance, Section 2, is an adjustment to the Resolution 2020-21, which contains the salary schedule that was adopted as part of the FY 2021 budget. On the left hand column, it shows what the original adopted amounts were set forth in the budget and in the right hand column, it shows the changes that were made to the grade and step and the new salaries. Both Ordinances are set up the same way and have no dollar effect to the budget.

Director Moretti explained each of the line item changes. He stated that in the Executive Department, the Confidential Assistant to the Mayor, title is not being changed, but that person will assume added responsibilities and the Mayor has emphasized that he wants this department and wants the City of Cranston to be extremely responsive to our constituents and that increase would reflect assisting and support of the Constituent Affairs. The former Community Outreach Aide position is being eliminated and giving that position will have much more responsibility that this position would have city-wide and responsible for administering the City website. This position would also assist in press releases since we do not have a person that handles that at this time. Councilwoman Marino asked Director Moretti how this position differs from the Constituent Affairs position. Director Moretti stated that the Constituent Affairs person is primarily to assist the Director of Administration with City Council Member requests, in particular, any requests from the public, whereas, the Communications Coordinator is more of a website person to work through the website marketing the City functions and more communications, but not so much constituent affairs.

Director Moretti addressed the following positions:

- Administrative Assistant position and stated that there is a position of Administrative Assistant in the Personnel Department and the Administration would like to put that position in the Mayor's Office to better utilize that person with high levels of responsibilities working with the Director of Administration and Constituent Affairs and helping out with COVID responses. In terms of part-time, the Administration is reducing that line item in the Mayor's Office and eliminating that at approximately \$30,000. The Mayor has an intern, at no cost to the City, to help in terms of City services and will be working around her school hours. That is not in the schedule, it is just as a side note.
- The Assistant to the Finance Director position has been eliminated and the Administration felt better utilized having more competitive salaries in some instances and also funding the positions he just described.
- Economic Development, that position is also to include the title "Minority Business Outreach". There is a salary decrease for the Director of Parks and Recreation. He also stated that the Administration tried to pair that salary with that of Director of Senior Services to be more in an equitable status. Parks and Recreation Director supervises a staff of approximately 25 people and Senior Services Director is responsible for running a staff of approximately 52 people. The Administration feels that that position requires high level of senior management experience then the prior level. The Mayor feels the need to bolster Senior Services and also feels he wants to upgrade the position called "Communications Information Specialist".

- Community Development and Workforce Solutions are funded and reimbursed by the federal government. During the interview and transition process and in speaking to Community Development Department, the Mayor believes that by hiring a Community Development Director, it would ensure the money is spent in the right places for the City. Workforce Development is consortium along with the City of Providence, there is a decrease. The Administration felt there was an equity adjustment.

Mayor Hopkins shared an excel spreadsheet of municipal salary comparisons with Cranston, Warwick, Providence, Pawtucket, East Providence, Woonsocket and Newport. He stated that this is an indication of the salaries we are offering and we are trying to be competitive to get some quality people in comparison to what other communities are doing.

Councilwoman Marino stated that the comparison to other cities is informative, but what really matters is the revenue and we do not have the same revenue coming into our City as Newport has coming into their City. This a concern of hers. She also stated that, while she appreciates the effort in keeping it level, she would be more pleased to see if there is a savings. Some of these roles are, as stated, taking on additional tasks, some of the people seeking to be appointed to some of these positions are new and they have not proven themselves and to have that kind of a job, for example Senior Services Director, there is a huge jump in salary from \$58,966 to approximately \$74,000 and in addition, that person is now going to have someone on that is going to be a Programs Director to take some of those additional tasks. The size of the City and the tasks for that department have not changed, but yet this person who has never been in the role is going to be getting more. That is also a concern of hers. The same thing with the Parks and Recreation Director. The new person coming in, new salary change is less than \$2,000. The issue we had a person who was in that role for eighteen years and the new person stepping into this role does not have that experience. She thinks there could have been a savings there. The other concern to her is the Administrative Assistants positions have shifted to the Executive Office and she has concerns that the Finance Department now does not have an Administrative Assistant. She asked for further explanation on this, similar to Personnel Department. Director Moretti addressed the Administrative Assistant position in the Finance Department and the Administration spoke to Director Strom who felt this position was not necessary.

Roll call was taken on motion to recommend approval of this Ordinance and motion passed on a vote of 5-1. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilmen Reilly, Ferri, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -5. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Councilwoman Marino -1.

- **Ordinance 01-21-02S transferring appropriations and amending the Budget for the Fiscal Year commencing July 1, 2020 and ending June 30, 2021 (Administration Position Changes – Non-General Fund). Sponsored by Councilman Brady.**

No one appeared to speak in favor or to oppose.

On motion by Councilman Reilly, seconded by Councilman Ferri, it was voted to recommend approval of this Ordinance and motion passed on a vote of 5-1. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilmen Reilly, Ferri, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -5. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Councilwoman Marino -1.

- **ADVICE AND CONSENT HEARING ON MAYOR'S APPOINTMENT OF:**

Chair asked Solicitor or Attorney Angell if the Committee can take all the following items as a block. Attorney Angell stated that it depends upon what the Committee would like to do. If the Committee has specific questions from an individual, then you should take them individually.

On motion by Councilman Reilly, seconded by Council President Paplauskas, it was voted to hear the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointments. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Christopher Millea as City Solicitor**

Director Moretti introduced Christopher Millea and gave some of his background.

On motion by Councilman Reilly, seconded by Councilwoman Renzulli, it was voted to approve the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Christopher Millea as City Solicitor.. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Daniel Parrillo as Director of Personnel**

Director Moretti introduced Daniel Parrillo and gave some of his background.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to approve the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Daniel Parrillo as Director of Personnel. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Raymond Tessaglia as Director of Parks and Recreation**

Director Moretti introduced Raymond Tessaglia and gave some of his background.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to approve the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Raymond Tessaglia as Director Parks and Recreation.

Under Discussion:

Councilwoman Marino asked Mr. Tessaglia what the scope of his role was in Providence, was it overseeing all the parks or a few parks because that makes a big difference to her. Mr. Tessaglia stated that he ran the Neutaconkanut Recreation Center in Providence at various points in his tenure there and he may have overseen four or five fields and a skate park and a splash park was put in under his direction. Councilwoman Marino stated that her decision is not a personal decision. She is present to make a decision based on what she thinks is best for the City as a whole.

Council President Paplauskas stated to Mr. Tessaglia that we have numerous fields, parks, playgrounds and on and on in the City of Cranston and our constituents and residents certainly expect a level of service of our Parks and Recreation Department is historically known for. He absolutely will be supporting Mr. Tessaglia in this role and he thinks his experience in Providence is enough and his tenure in Providence doing the role that he did qualifies him for this.

Councilman Ferri welcomed Mr. Tessaglia and stated that he hopes he will see one of the assets of the City, the bike bath, as something that needs to be looked at and taken care of and cherished by many people that use it and he has his support.

Councilwoman Marino asked Mr. Tessaglia how many people he oversaw in his previous role. Mr. Tessaglia stated that it varied in the summer, between 30-40 and generally running the Center, it was approximately 8-10 people.

Council Vice-President Brady stated that we have a great history in our Parks and Recreation and we take a lot of pride in it and it is a testament to the previous Director and the team that he has built. He also stated that Mr. Tessaglia comes highly recommended by the Administration and wishes him well.

Roll call was taken on the approval of the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Raymond Tessaglia as Director of Parks and Recreation. Motion passed unanimously.

▪ **Franklin Paulino as Director of Economic Development**

Director Moretti introduced Franklin Paulino and gave some of his background.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilwoman Renzulli, it was voted to approve the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Franklin Paulino as Director Economic Development.

Under Discussion:

Councilwoman Marino asked Mr. Paulino where he obtained his undergraduate and when. Mr. Paulino stated that he obtained his undergraduate from URI in 1987. Councilwoman Marino asked Mr. Paulino when the last time was that he lived in Rhode Island. Mr. Paulino stated 2005. Councilwoman Marino asked Mr. Paulino if he currently lives in Rhode Island or in Florida. Mr. Paulino stated that he is currently looking for an apartment or home in Rhode Island. At this time, he is living with his mother-in-law.

Councilwoman Vargas asked Mr. Paulino what his experience is in terms of economic development. Mr. Paulino stated that he has helped a lot of businesses in Providence. He has worked with CPA and has helped minority community in obtaining loans, as one example. Councilwoman Vargas asked Mr. Paulino, based on his experience, if he has any plans in place. Mr. Paulino stated that he plans to walk and go visit businesses in Cranston and have open communication in helping them and see what City resources are available to them. Councilwoman Vargas stated to Mr. Paulino that she wants to make sure that he understands the needs of our community, of our City and the opportunities available.

Councilman Ferri offered Mr. Paulino his assistance and stated that one thing he is hopeful is there is no current organization in the City to help small businesses. He hopes this is something that he will address.

Council President Paplauskas asked that Mr. Paulino, as soon as he gets confirmed, walks the City with him and he will introduce him to the businesses.

Councilwoman Renzulli stated that she can appreciate Mr. Paulino going business to business, which may have lacked in the past. She can also appreciate him being bi-lingual.

Councilwoman Germain asked Mr. Paulino, if there is one thing he would do right now, what would it be. Mr. Paulino stated that he would help the small businesses that are struggling and look into resources the City has and give them advice.

Councilman Reilly stated that he has to be confident that our elected Mayor has done his due diligence and put the team together that will do the best for the City because his success is the City's success. He also stated that two major concerns he has is we do not have a Chamber of Commerce in the City. We have to work together, whether in our elected capacity or private capacity, to somehow put that together with this department and the Mayor. We need a place where small businesses can go to not only network but to be in a private extension of this department.

Roll call was taken on the approval of the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Franklin Paulino as Director of Economic Development. Motion passed on a vote of 5-1. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilmen Reilly, Ferri, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -5. The following being recorded as voting "nay": Councilwoman Marino -1.

- **Stephen Craddock as Director of Senior Services**

Director Moretti introduced Stephen Craddock and gave some of his background.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to approve the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Stephen Craddock as Director of Senior Services.

Under Discussion:

Councilwoman Marino asked Mr. Craddock what he thinks he will bring to this job that otherwise is not there, such as what services or needs to our seniors. Mr. Craddock stated that he would look at what services the City currently provides and then look to see what services are needed.

Roll call was taken on the approval of the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Stephen Craddock as Director of Senior Services. Motion passed on a vote of 5-1. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilmen Reilly, Ferri, Council Vice-President Brady and Council President Paplauskas -5. The following being recorded as voting "nay": Councilwoman Marino -1.

- **Timothy Sanzi as Director of Community Development**

Director Moretti introduced Timothy Sanzi and gave some of his background.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to approve the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Timothy Sanzi as Director of Community Development.

Under Discussion:

Councilwoman Marino asked Mr. Sanzi what his expectations are of what he is going to be doing as Director of Community Development. Mr. Sanzi stated that the main priority is the management of the federal grant, which he has a lot of experience in. His expectation is to optimize that grant to benefit the citizens of the City of Cranston and to identify areas within the guidelines of the grant that we can resource the funds to.

Councilwoman Renzulli asked Mr. Sanzi what other departments he sees himself working with. Mr. Sanzi stated that he sees himself working with any representative of the community to identify the needs, along with the Planning Department, Housing and Urban Development.

Roll call was taken on the approval of the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Timothy Sanzi as Director of Community Development. Motion passed unanimously.

▪ **Robert Strom as Director of Finance**

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to approve the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Robert Strom as Director of Finance.
Under Discussion:

Director Moretti stated that Director Strom has done so much for the City, he has been the anchor.

Council Vice-President Brady stated that his experience with Director Strom over the last few years, he has always been responsive and has given him great insight and looks forward to working with him in the next two years.

Council President Paplauskas stated that Director Strom has been extremely responsive and looks forward to working with him in the next two years.

Councilwoman Marino stated that she is glad to see that Director Strom is staying onboard as Director of Finance.

Councilman Ferri stated that he worked with Director Strom for three years while he served on the Board of Contract and Purchase and he is glad to have him staying on.

Councilman Reilly stated that Director Strom has done an incredible job under former Mayor Fung's Administration and is glad to see that he is transitioning with the Hopkins Administration.

Roll call was taken on the approval of the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Robert Strom as Director of Finance. Motion passed unanimously.

▪ **Kenneth Mason as Director of Public Works**

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to approve the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Kenneth Mason as Director of Public Works.

Under Discussion:

Director Moretti stated that Director Mason has been with the City for eight years. He is solid with tremendous experience.

Councilman Ferri stated that he worked with Director Mason for the past three years and every time he has ever asked him a question or has had a problem, Director Mason has gotten back to him within hours and he has his support.

Council President Paplauskas stated that Director Mason always follows through and credits to Mayor Hopkins for keeping Director Mason on board.

Councilwoman Marino echoed Council President Paplauska's statements and she stated that she is glad Mayor Hopkins is keeping Director Mason on board.

Councilwoman Germain stated that Director Mason is always helpful when she calls him and she is glad he is staying on.

Councilwoman Vargas thanked Mayor Hopkins for giving Director Mason to opportunity to continue serving the City as Director of Public Works. She stated that Director Mason has always been quick in responding to her whenever she contacts him and she looks forward to continue to work with him.

Chair stated that Director Mason is truly an asset to the Cranston community and his leadership is truly appreciated.

Roll call was taken on the approval of the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of Kenneth Mason as Director of Public Works. Motion passed unanimously.

- **David Rodio as Building Official**

On motion by Councilman Reilly, seconded by Council President Paplauskas, it was voted to approve the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of David Rodio as Building Official.
Under Discussion:

Director Moretti stated that this department continues to be a department where the Mayor places a high degree of emphasis on. The Mayor believes there could be further improvement that could be made to this department and he has every confidence in Director Rodio to continue improvement in that area. Director Rodio has been with the City of Cranston for approximately two years and he comes from 25 years of experience in the City of Providence and served as Building Official in Hopkington for one year. The Mayor has confidence in him and he will serve the City well.

Councilwoman Marino asked Director Rodio how open he is to the notion of improvements within this department. Director Rodio stated that he is very open to new ideas. He also stated that they could use some improvements in the property maintenance and zoning compliance because they do not have the staff to do it.

Roll call was taken on the approval of the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointment of David Rodio as Building Official. Motion passed unanimously.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilwoman Renzulli, it was voted to forward the above two Ordinances and all the Advice and Consent of the Mayor's appointments of all the above-listed Directors to the full City Council. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Nicholas Lima as Registrar**

Director Moretti stated that the Administration is withdrawing this.

- **MAYOR'S APPOINTMENTS OF *(NO ACTION NEEDED – INFORMATIONAL ONLY)*:**
 - **Sean Holley as Director of Workforce Innovation**
 - **Michael Winqvist as Police Chief**
 - **Stephen MacIntosh as Fire Chief**

Director Moretti stated that Chief MacIntosh has retired as of January 15, 2021 and the department is under the Acting command of Deputy Chief Warren at this time.

No action is needed on the above appointments.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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