

(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 – APRIL 26, 2021
(BUDGET HEARINGS)

A special meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Monday, April 26, 2021 via Zoom Webinar.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 PM. by the Chair.

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

Also Present: Councilwoman Lammis J. Vargas
 Councilwoman Aniece Germain
 Anthony Moretti, Director of Administration
 David Igliazzi, Assistant City Solicitor
 Robert Strom, Finance Director
 Michael Igoe, City Controller
 David DiMaio, City Council Budget Analyst
 Leanne Zarrella, City Clerk
 Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees

Chair stated that from his understanding, there will be some amendments this evening and the bulk of the amendments will be made the night of the Adoption, which is May 6th at 6 p.m. He asked if there is anyone from the public who would like to speak first.

Public Speakers:

Randall Jackvony, 2219 Phenix Ave., Chair of Board of Canvassers, appeared to speak and requested that the City Council consider an amendment for additional position in the Canvassing Office, making a current part-time position a permanent full-time position.

Council President Paplauskas stated that the following amendments for the Library, are housekeeping at the request of the Director of the Library and the Trustees.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Donegan, it was voted to amend the “Part-time Help” line item of a decrease of \$8,000.

Under Discussion:

Edward Garcia, Director of Library, appeared to speak and stated that the reason for these changes is the Library had asked for an increase to the budget and they received most of the increase, but not everything they asked for so after a meeting he had with the Finance Director, there were some adjustments made to the proposed budget that the Library Board of Trustees was not consulted on those changes so these changes reflect those revisions. There are no salaries affected by this and the overall budget stays the same.

Roll call was taken on above motion and motion passed unanimously.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to amend line item #1500-56001 “Audio Visual Material” of a decrease of \$5,000. Motion passed unanimously.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Donegan, it was voted to amend line item #1500-56002 “Books and Care” of an increase of \$10,000. Motion passed unanimously.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Reilly, it was voted to amend line item #1500-56007 “Online Resources” of an increase of \$3,000. Motion passed unanimously.

Council President Paplauskas stated that the next few amendments will create a full-time position in the Board of Canvassers Office.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Ferri, it was voted to amend line item #1108-51200 “Part-Time Help” of a decrease of \$15,500.

Under Discussion:

Councilman Reilly asked what the total increase is. Mr. Dimaio stated \$45,220.

Roll call was taken on above motion and motion passed on a vote of 4-3. The following being recorded a voting “aye”: Councilwoman Marino, Councilmen Donegan, Ferri and Council President Paplauskas - 4. The following being recorded as voting “nay”: Councilwoman Renzulli, Councilman Reilly and Council Vice-President Brady -3.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Council Vice-President Brady, it was voted to amend line item #1108-51300 "Payroll Taxes" by decreasing it by \$1,162.

Under Discussion:

Councilman Reilly stated that the Canvassers Office did a great job last year during the Elections and the pandemic, but to put an extra \$45,000 into a department that you are not going to get any more productivity out of, in his opinion, does not make sense. We need to be more prudent and not go forward with this.

Councilman Donegan agreed with Councilman Reilly that this Office did a great job last year with the pandemic, but with the rollout of mail ballot voting, it is tough to roll that back so you are going to see that going forward and that adds strain on the Canvassing Department. You will be seeing, going forward, an increase in people voting by mail or voting beforehand so Elections really have changed based on precedent that 2020 Election cycle set. There is increase demand on what this department is doing, but also, we are very likely to see that the City will be potentially required to hold bi-lingual Elections and that is going to add another significant challenge going forward. Ensuring that someone in this department is competent in aiding the residents of the City access to Election system and has experience is really important.

Director Moretti stated that the Administration is really not keen on hiring with the potential of future laws. Something very concerning is at a prior public meeting and this meeting, several people have spoken about hiring a particular individual. Cranston is an Equal Opportunity Employer and he does not know if we are open to lawsuit. What has been mentioned several times and at public meeting is it seems like someone is earmarked for this position and from the Administration's end, we maintain that we are an Equal Opportunity Employer in the City and it would be unfair to characterize someone as a shoe-in and a position being made for a particular individual and this is not the right thing. The Mayor is more than willing to add additional resources of lending people both bi-lingual. This is not the time to add this position especially in a non-Election year.

Motion and second were withdrawn.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Council Vice-President Brady, it was voted to reverse the above motion in reference to Part-Time Help. Motion passed unanimously.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Council Vice-President Brady, it was voted to amend line item #1108-51200 "Board of Canvassers" by adding back \$15,500. Motion passed unanimously.

On motion by Council President Paplauskas, seconded by Councilman Ferri, it was voted to forward the budget as amended to the full City Council on May 6th at 6 pm for adoption and any further amendments to be made at that time.

Under Discussion:

Councilman Donegan stated that at the full City Council meeting on May 6th, there will be a series of amendments that the Democratic Caucus will offer to fund the Board of Canvassers position. It is crucial that it is funded.

Councilwoman Renzulli asked that for the May 6th meeting, answer be provided from the Solicitor on whether we can fund that position if it becomes law for us to fill or do we have to wait until the next budget cycle. Director Moretti asked Solicitor Rawson to review that with Solicitor Millea. Solicitor Rawson stated that they will look into that issue, but indicated that the budget can be amended during the fiscal year under certain circumstances.

Roll call was taken on above motion and motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

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