

*(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 6, 2022**  
**(BUDGET HEARINGS)**

A special meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Wednesday, April 6, 2022 in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 869 Park Ave., Cranston, Rhode Island.

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 P.M. by the Chair.

Present                    Councilwoman Jessica M. Marino  
                                 Councilman Richard D. Campopiano  
                                 Councilman Matthew R. Reilly  
                                 Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli, Vice-Chair (not present for roll call)  
                                 Councilman Vice-President Robert J. Ferri, Chair  
                                 Council President Christopher G. Paplauskas

Absent:                    Councilman John P. Donegan

Also Present:            Michael Igoe, City Controller  
                                 David DiMaio, City Council Budget Analyst  
                                 Rosalba Zanni, Acting City Clerk

**SCHOOL DEPARTMENT, SCHOOL HEALTH INSURANCE**

**Superintendent Jeannine Nota-Masse** and **Joseph Balducci**, School Chief Financial Officer, appeared to speak.

**Superintendent Nota-Masse** presented the School Budget.

**Mr. Dimaio** stated that within the budget, \$4,655,503 is allocated as part of the ESSER funds. He asked if that is a one-time expense or if it is for additional costs. **Mr. Balducci** stated that as to the operational ESSER 3, they are scheduled to receive just shy of approximately \$20 million so they are going to use a portion of that, \$4.6 millions for operational related, but at this point, just a placeholder, but as they move forward with the budget process and getting closer to June 30<sup>th</sup>, they will know what the final State numbers are going to be.

**Council President Paplauskas** asked **Mr. Balducci** or **Superintendent Nota-Masse** if they have any concerns or if they think they may be building a structural deficit. **Superintendent Nota-Masse** stated that the money they are receiving is earmarked for student services in the form of programs or things that they can use to help bridge the gap of lost time with COVID. It is a significant amount of

money and it comes with significant restrictions. It is very difficult to make people understand that even though they are receiving approximately \$20 million, they cannot use those monies for salaries, for example, because once that money is gone, it goes away, but the costs do not go away. They are trying very hard to use a substantial amount of money from ESSER for their operating budget. Thus they use the ESSER money for is to purchase curriculum, which costs approximately \$1-2 million. Those are the things they use ESSER money for because once you buy it you have it and it is a one-time cost. They cannot use ESSER money to give people raises because the next year you are going to have to pay those raises without the money. They are trying to use the money responsibly and for those one-time costs. They are applying some of the ESSER money to the Garden City project because the ESSER monies are to be used for costs that have been directly impacted by COVID. Any building increases that they are incurring for Garden City they can use ESSER monies because they can make a very valid argument that COVID has impacted the cost of that project. They are also using that money for after school programs, credit recovery programs and summer programs. The problem with that is they will have a budget to do those programs more robustly than they usually do, but after two years, they are going to have to figure out how they still would have to provide those services and they are hoping that within those two years, if the programs work well enough, kids will have kind of caught up.

**Council President Papluskas** asked Mr. Balducci where they are running on the nine-month actuals now. Mr. Balducci stated that through the month of February, they seem to be on target to at least with a balanced budget for the year they are in and he does not see a deficit. He can't give a bottom line at this point, but he does not see any problems three months out, which is good news.

No one appeared to speak from the public.

## **BOARDS & COMMISSIONS**

**Mr. Igoe** stated that for FY 2023, Boards and Commissions budget is level funded. This budget consists of donations to the Pawtuxet River Authority, Cranston Arts Commission, Tax Assessment Board of Review for a stipend the board members receive, Cranston Conservation Commission, Historic District Commission and the Diversity Commission.

**Mr. Dimaio** stated the current budget at nine months is running at approximately 49%, which is currently roughly approximately 25% under actual. It will come in under budget unless the Administration is aware of any additional expenses that may not have been allocated and will come into the fourth quarter, so at this point, it will probably be under budget. Mr. Igoe stated that he does not foresee anything unusual that is going to go over.

**Council President Papluskas** stated that the Arts Commission will be doing a bright box project and that is going to be approximately \$1,000 per box and there is going to be six of them. He asked what the actuals are on the Cranston Arts Commission as of now because he does not think that they requested funding for that yet. Mr. Dimaio stated that they did expend the money for the project.

No one appeared to speak from the public.

## CITY COUNCIL

**Council President Paplauskas** stated that the video streaming budget was funded at \$10,000 and we obviously funded \$28,000 for last year. The actual for video streaming right now is \$14,000 spent for this year, but this year we had some expenses, such as a TV, a few service calls with Ambient Sound to fix some issues we had, purchased a computer, which hopefully will last us four years. Tom Lima is looking for another mixer to make the quality a little bit better than we are putting out and that may come out of this year's budget so \$10,000 might be a little tight, but he thinks we can get by if we had to or we could always take some out of Orders of the Council if we run over.

**Mr. Dimaio** stated that current actual expenses are running approximately 69%, which is just about on track.

**Councilwoman Vargas** asked if we have exhausted the funds in Order of the Council. Council President Paplauskas stated that we have not used it all. There is a little left in there. He knows the Tree Council keeps asking for more funds and we may be able to do that with this money before the year is over. He will bring this before the full City Council and if it is approved, we will do that.

No one appeared to speak from the public.

## CITY CLERK

**Councilwoman Vargas** stated that looking at the five-year average for certified copies on the Revenue side, proposal is for \$10,000 and five-year average is approximately \$27,000 or so, but it was reduced. She questioned if we do not foresee that Revenue an extra \$20,000 in Revenue at all and what does certified copies entail? Clerk stated that certified copies for vitals has its own line item. Certified copies are for copies of documents, such as deeds or mortgages, which are certified.

**Mr. Dimaio** stated that currently, this is at 75% for nine months and the activity has only been \$684, which is roughly only 23% of the \$30,000 that has been allocated so he thinks the decrease in the Revenues is justified based on the current activity. The Revenue as a whole for the department is running at 92%. The expense side, it is actually tracking at 81%, which is actually higher and we are probably going to be somewhere instead of \$1.8 million somewhere over \$2 million, but the allocation of expenses and the increased Revenue was kind of running on the same pace.

**Councilwoman Germain** indicated to line item #51100 Salary Schedule and asked if the is the amount budgeted for 2023. Director Parrillo stated that this includes the City Clerk's position. There is a little of an upgrade in that position. Right now, he believes it is funded at \$81,000 and the new Clerk is going to be funded at \$91,000.

**Councilwoman Marino** indicated to line item #42137 "Auto Repair License" and stated that the projected Revenues seems high because current Revenue summary to date shows that it is down significantly. She asked what the reason is for that. Clerk stated that Auto Repair Licenses are renewable July 1<sup>st</sup> so Revenues are taken in prior to July 1<sup>st</sup>.

No one appeared to speak from the public.

**PROBATE**

**Mr. Dimaio** stated that this line item is running at 73%. There is a slight increase in the proposed budget of \$300 in departmental expenses.

No one appeared to speak from the public.

The meeting adjourned at 9:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Rosalba Zanni  
Acting City Clerk