

*(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, June 3, 2024 in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

### **I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order at 7:20 P.M. by the Chair.

### **II. ROLL CALL:**

Present: Councilman Robert J. Ferri  
Councilwoman Kristen E. Haroian  
Councilman Richard D. Campopiano (appeared at 7:20 p.m.)  
Councilman Daniel Wall  
Council Vice-President Lammis J. Vargas, Vice-Chair (appeared at 7:50 p.m.)  
Councilman John P. Donegan, Chair  
Council President Jessica M. Marino

Absent: Councilman Christopher G. Paplauskas

Also Present: Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli  
John Verdecchia, Assistant City Solicitor  
Thomas Zidelis, Director of Finance  
Stephen Angell, City Council Legal Counsel  
David DiMaio, City Council Budget Analyst  
Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees  
Heather Finger, Stenographer

### **III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

#### ***A. Minutes of the May 6, 2024 regular meeting***

On motion by Councilman Wall, seconded by Councilwoman Haroian, it was voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the May 6, 2024 meeting and they stand approved as recorded. Motion passed unanimously.

On motion by Councilman Wall, seconded by Councilwoman Haroian, it was voted to take agenda out of order. Motion passed unanimously.

## **VI. PUBLIC COMMENT**

No one appeared to speak.

## **VII. NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE**

### **A. *Ordinances***

**5-24-01**      ***Ordinance Authorizing the City to Utilize Eastern Cranston Police Impact Fees and Western Cranston Impact Fees Towards Police Rent. Sponsored by Councilman Donegan.***

On motion by Councilman Wall, seconded by Councilwoman Haroian, it was voted to recommend approval of this Ordinance.

#### **Under Discussion:**

**Chair** stated that this item is to mirror what the Council did in the Budget, which is take Eastern Western Police Impact Fees and apply those to the Rent. That frees up just short of \$115,000, which we were able to move to other line items. There were some communications earlier today regarding this and he recognized Council President Marino.

**Council President Marino** asked for a brief recess to confer with Solicitor and Chairman Donegan relative to a question that came up with the Clerk that was sent via e-mail today.

Committee took a brief recess and then returned back to session.

**Chair** asked for motion and second recommending approval of this Ordinance be withdrawn and a motion to continue to Special Finance Committee meeting on June 13<sup>th</sup>, which had already been scheduled.

Motion and second recommending approval were withdrawn.

On motion by Councilman Wall, seconded by Council President Marino, it was voted to continue this Ordinance to the June 13<sup>th</sup> Special Finance meeting.

#### **Under Discussion:**

**Chair** stated that the reason for that is an issue was brought up relative to the notification. It has been three days since introduction, whereas, he believes it has to be five days, so out of abundance of caution, this will be re-advertised and will take this up on June 13<sup>th</sup>. Motion passed with Councilman Ferri abstaining stating that he did not know what the Committee is voting on and was not in the room and Councilman Campopiano also abstained.

### **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 unanimously.

### ***D. Motor Vehicle Tax Abatements***

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilwoman Haroian, it was voted to recommend approval of this list of Tax Abatements as recommended by the City Assessor. Motion passed unanimously.

### ***E. Tax Assessment Board Of Review assessed December 31, 2022.*** *(Informational Only-No Vote will be taken)*

None.

### ***F. 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 unanimously.

### ***G. Tax Interest Waiver Denials***

None.

## **IV. COMMITTEE BUSINESS MATTERS CARRIED OVER**

### **Council Vice-President Vargas:**

*(Cont. from 4/11/2024 Public Works Comm.)*

- ***Status of Playground Council approved funding for***

**Chair** stated that Council Vice-President Vargas is not present yet, but he sees Director Tessaglia present and asked that he speak regarding the above item.

**Council President Marino** stated that Council Vice-President Vargas was caught up at a work emergency and that is why she is not present as of yet.

**Raymond Tessaglia**, Director of Parks and Recreation, appeared to speak and gave the following updates:

- Florida Ave. and Calise have been done with the Resolution money, but those playgrounds have been addressed and are up and going.
- Edgewood Highlands is complete. The components are complete. He spoke to the contractor, Probuilt Designs, and he expects it either late this week that the port in place rubber person will come in and finish that job for him. So, hopefully, next week this will be completed.

- Smith St is complete. It is not open yet. We are waiting on rubber mats that were back-ordered for the swings to prevent the swinging of the engineered wood fiber that gets worn away and then they go down into the dirt. Those mats are due in next week; engineered wood fiber was distributed to all playgrounds addressed in the Resolution from December and was done in a timely fashion.
- Garden City will be next one to be addressed. He met with Director Corso in trying to figure out a plan on the best time to excavate that rubber surfacing. Parts have been ordered for landscape structures for Garden City. They feel best time to do that is when School is out. They put in bid waivers for all three playground manufacturers and Big Toy is now landscape structures in big toy.
- Woodridge – parts have been ordered and delivery date is not determined. Ordered approximately \$4,500 from the Resolution for that playground; zipline has been replaced, swings, chains and attachments have also been replaced.
- Hope Highlands – removed and replaced the weeble wobble. Cut back five feet of brush from the playground perimeter; cement slide footing was installed; triple slide connection was adjusted.
- Stone Hill – epic center was adjusted to operate; finger hazard was addressed; track ride bumper was replaced. There is also a drainage issue and when School is out, he and Mr. Corso will go there after a storm and see what is underneath there and if there is a way to put a basin or drain to alleviate the mulch from washing out.
- Peters School – spin toy was adjusted and secured to the ground; chains and swings were replaced; handles for the monkey bars were stabilized and seats in the sideboards are to be installed, but that is not a hazard.
- Waterman – caps added to exposed playground parts; secured all the S hooks.
- Arlington – brackets were ordered to reinforce a spin toy, but it is not a hazard; rope climber was adjusted, swing replacement; footing for the spin toy was secured into the ground.
- Stadium School – swing chain and attachments were replaced a while ago; the arch climber was secured and adjusted.
- Rhodes School – replaced and secured the swings; for Rhodes, Eden Park and Orchard Farms, minor adjustments have been made and there are no hazards that he is aware of.
- Glen Hills – there is drainage problem there. He met with Highway Superintendent Corso and Richard Bernardo and will look to see if they can redirect the water with some kind of wall and see what seems to be the better fit for that, either a drain or basin that water can at least get to.
- Dutemple – arch limber was repaired; graffiti removed as well as to other playgrounds.
- Oaklawn – tightened some parts there. There was a swivel pole that had to be secured.
- Oak Hill – adjusted the cargo net. Pretty much, the equipment is stable and secure.
- Beachmont, Doric, Spec and Chester Barrows – all minor things. At Chester Barrows, there was a protruding fence that was curling up and inward and was brought back into the ground. There was hazardous branches hanging over and were removed. All playground equipment all seemed to be up and ready.

**Chair** asked that Director Tessaglia e-mail him and Council Vice-President Vargas the information he has provided this evening to be distributed at the next meeting.

- **Itri Park:**
  - *How much has the City spent to date (including the cost/amount paid to AI Engineering, Tower Construction, any overtime in DPW or city departments if any on this project)*
  - *What is the total cost of the project?*
  - *The total amount of money received from the federal and state?*

**Director Zidelis** stated that relative to the funding from Federal and State, that have been assigned to Itri Park, approximately \$30,000 of CDBG, which was assigned to AI Engineering, who did the engineering work for both Itri Park and Phase 2 of the Knightsville Project. Originally, he had \$291,000 of Block Grant assigned to Itri Park. He is revising that estimate down to \$30,000 and going to assign the balance to Phase 2. We also have a Grant from RIDEM for \$400,000, which was directly used to pay for Itri Park and RI Commerce Corp. of \$150,000 Placemaking Grant. On top of that, we had other Grants that were applied for and allowed to be spent on Itri Park and Knightsville Phase 2, which is the current streetscape and that was half million Congressional earmark. Relative to direct costs for Itri Park, \$1,442,420.78 is the direct construction cost with two change orders for the Itri Park Project and the engineering for AI Engineering directly for Itri Park for approximately \$50,000.

**Council President Marino** asked if the \$50,000 for engineering is in addition to the \$1,442,420.78. Director Zidelis stated that that is in addition to the \$1,442,420.78 that was paid to Tower Construction.

**Chair** asked if total cost is approximately \$1,492,000 for Itri Park. Director Zidelis stated, yes, if his allocation of AI Construction is correct. Chair stated that we received \$30,000 from CDBG, \$400,000 from DEM Grant, \$150,000 from RI Commerce Corp. and \$500,000 Congressional Grant. Director Zidelis stated that the \$500,000 was awarded for both. It has been assigned to Phase 2, so in terms of the Chair's calculation, do not count that towards this, but we did receive that Grant that could have been used for Itri Park. It has been assigned to Phase 2. In terms of funding sources, it is \$30,000 from CDBG, \$400,000 from RI Commerce Corp. have been directly assigned and used to balance out. The balance came from the City. Taking the \$1,490,000, minus the \$580,000 and the balance is City funded.

**Council President Marino** asked Director Zidelis if the figures given this evening of approximately \$1,492,000, minus the \$580,000 that has been paid for by outside money with the balance being paid for by the City for Itri Park alone, if it is done or are there other costs relative to Itri Park that are to be incurred? She stated that she says this because it is hard as you drive by you see that the sidewalks, whether or not that is impacting the Park itself, whether or not there are sprinklers in there, etc. These are questions that constituents have asked. Director Zidelis stated that, to the best of his knowledge, the contract with Tower has no other obligations against it, but he will double check with the Acting Public Works Director. In terms of the question about sidewalks, he does not know if the original scope had the sidewalks as part of the Itri or the sidewalks as part of the Phase 2 streetscape project. He can follow up on that.

**Councilman Ferri** questioned if Itri Park cost approximately \$920,000? Director Zidelis stated that it cost the City \$910,000. Councilman Ferri asked where the \$910,000 came from. Director Zidelis stated that a portion of it came from a loan authorization, which he believes was authorized in 2022-2023 and a portion of it came from loans, which he believes were infrastructure loans in the 2023-2024

Capital Budget. Councilman Ferri questioned if we borrowed \$912,420 to build a Park, what would the actual cost be once we pay back the loan. Director Zidelis stated that we used money that was already borrowed. He does not know what the interest was that they were borrowed for. The borrowing preceded his tenure, but he can get those interest rates and get the Council a cost.

**Council Vice-President Vargas** questioned Overtime in DPW for this. Director Zidelis stated that there is no Overtime cost for City employees assigned to this project.

- *What was the date of the change in the outdoor dining plan?*

**Council Vice-President Vargas** asked what the date of the change of the outdoor dining plan was because there was an article that mentioned that there was an outdoor plan that was changed. Director Zidelis stated that he looked into authority for outside dining which arose from the pandemic and then it was extended. If anyone has any more information, it would be greatly appreciated.

Council Vice-President Vargas stated that she has some notes on this but does not have it with her this evening. She will circle back.

**Council President Marino** stated that it was earlier this year that she believes the State Law was changed to allow for outdoor dining. That is why our Executive Order was no longer necessary.

**Director Zidelis** stated that that is also being continued another year. If that is what Council Vice-President Vargas was looking for, yes, the Statute was extended and it is currently being extended an additional year.

**Solicitor** stated that there is a sunset provision due to expire February, 2025. There were two Bills, one in the Senate and one in the House and he does not know if it went to a floor vote yet.

**Councilman Donegan:**

- *Exploration of Liability Policy for the City (Cont. from 8/7/2023, 10/2/2023, 11/6/2023, 12/6/2023, 1/8/2024, 2/5/2024, 3/4/2024, 4/1/2024 & 5/6/2024)*

**Director Zidelis** stated that as he stated two meetings ago, we were trying to obtain two additional quotes, but what he also believes he stated was that this would not be part of the FY25 Budget submission, would be a mid-year, so what we are doing is independent of or addition to getting the quotes, which we are still working on some of the coverages cannot be replicated, we are sitting with departments that will benefit from the Trust. Proposal to the City, one of the biggest beneficiaries is our public safety. That meeting is going to occur this week about what policy we want in a general liability. Because the quote contained certain provisions, which were already under contract, most specifically building insurance, has been rolled into the general liability, we are not advancing this until probably in December or January proposal so we will get the Council something to go to, he believes it is the Claims Committee, well in advance, but they are not prepared to make a recommendation at the moment. Chair asked if recommendation will be made by year end. Director Zidelis stated that a recommendation with departmental buy-ins before September. Also, there is to be a decision on the Trust proposal predicated on us not bidding this, which he is not a fan of. That is one of the discussions that has to take place, do we bid this out? In the proposal, should the City decide to leave, there is an actual buy-in clause in the

Trust so if it is not working in our favor, we want to take a different path to a different provider, we would have to pay out, which is something he is totally adverse to and it is the first time he is stating that, but that is one of the things even if we do, if it looks like we are going to pursue a general liability policy, that will be one of the things he is adamant of not entertaining.

**V. CORRESPONDENCE/COMMUNICATIONS**

None.

**VI. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**VII. NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE**

***A. Ordinances***

***5-24-01 Ordinance Authorizing the City to Utilize Eastern Cranston Police Impact Fees and Western Cranston Impact Fees Towards Police Rent. Sponsored by Councilman Donegan.***

Discussed and voted on earlier in the meeting.

***B. Resolutions***

None.

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

Voted on earlier in the meeting.

***D. Motor Vehicle Tax Abatements***

Voted on earlier in the meeting.

***E. Tax Assessment Board Of Review assessed December 31, 2022.***  
***(Informational Only-No Vote will be taken)***

None.

***F. Tax Interest Waiver Approvals***

Voted on earlier in the meeting.

***G. Tax Interest Waiver Denials***

None.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Rosalba Zanni  
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees

Minutes approved as written July 1, 2024

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Rosalba Zanni  
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees