

(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, April 7, 2025 in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Councilwoman Bridget R. Graziano
Councilman Andy Andujar
Councilman Frank J. Ritz, Jr.
Councilman Michael A. Traficante
Councilwoman Kristen E. Haroian, Vice-Chair
Council Vice-President Daniel Wall, Chair
Council President Jessica M. Marino, Ex-Officio

Also Present: Councilman Christopher E. Buonanno
Anthony Moretti, Chief of Staff
Christopher Millea, City Solicitor
Thomas Zidelis, Director of Finance
Michael Favicchio, Director of Personnel
David DiMaio, City Council Budget Analyst
Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees
Heather Finger, Stenographer

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- ***Minutes of the March 3, 2025 Regular Meeting***

On motion by Councilman Traficante, seconded by Councilwoman Haroian it was voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the March 3, 2025 regular meeting and they stand approved as recorded. Motion passed unanimously.

- ***Minutes of the March 24, 2025 Special Meeting***

On motion by Councilwoman Graziano, seconded by Councilwoman Haroian, it was voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the March 3, 2025 regular meeting and they stand approved as recorded. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. COMMITTEE BUSINESS MATTERS CARRIED OVER

None

V. CORRESPONDENCE/COMMUNICATIONS

None

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Arthur Jordan, 35 Lincoln Park Ave., Business Manager of Rhode Island Laborers District Council and also Business Manager for Local 1322, appeared to speak regarding the contract that is before the Committee and urged passage of this contract. He also stated that this contract is fair for the taxpayers of Cranston and it is also fair for the employees he also stated that this is an enormous important position as the second largest City in Cranston to fill, Department of Public Works Director. He thinks we have a qualified candidate and he also is a Cranston resident so he has a special interest in Cranston he would think. He urged the Committee to approve his appointment. The City cannot keep going with temporary and sooner or later we have to fill that position.

Gary Desilva, Assistant Business Agent for the Teamsters Local 251, appeared to speak and stated that he supports and encouraged the Committee to pass this contract. They have been negotiating from May until January and feels that they have negotiated in good faith and came to what he considers a very solid contract and hopes the Committee will take that into consideration when it votes this evening.

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

VIII. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

Council President Marino:

- *Discussion and update from the Finance Director as to the status of all federal funding appropriated to the city for this fiscal year, including any concerns relative to this source of revenue for this fiscal year and the next fiscal year*

Director Zidelis stated that there is no update. He did a quick survey today relative to the departments that are recipient of grants and, to date, there is no notice about any administrative changes on a federal level adversely affecting any of our grants.

- *A list from the City Solicitor to the Finance Committee as to all pending lawsuits involving the city which is to include a listing of the cases, the attorneys of record, and attorneys and law firms retained or paid by the city to work on the pending lawsuits*

Solicitor Millea referred to the billing for Laprocina and Lepizzera's Office and stated that the firm has done an enormous amount of work over the years for the City of Cranston and in the course of converting their billing system, they came out with a number of items which had indicated that they had never been paid by the City, some dated back and some were relatively current, but a lot of it dated even

prior to Mayor Hopkins's Administration and to the prior Administration. He sat down with the principles of that firm and went through all the bills and through negotiations, they settled all of the pending billing at a reduced rate for what appeared on the last legal report and it was approximately \$52,000, which was quite an excess to that amount. That firm is current with the Law Department. He expects no further bills at last at this point in time because as of right now, they have no pending matters with the Law Department, but that could change. He has been trying to keep track of all the pending matters before the City. He did compile a spreadsheet with that information and he can share it with the Council by email, but it would be confidential and cannot be shared outside.

Council President Marino asked if there are any potential settlements coming up. Solicitor Millea stated that as of this evening, nothing to discuss, nothing on the horizon.

Council President Marino stated that the point for Executive Session this evening is that, as Council Members, may have specific questions with pending litigation that is not privy to the public.

Councilwoman Graziano questioned bill payments. She stated that she is confused because she sees legal bills paid outside the Fiscal Year with no approval and questions who signs that and says those are legitimate bills if it was prior to this Administration. Solicitor Millea stated that as the head of the Law Department, he has the approval to settle all Claims from the City.

- *Discussion with the Finance Director and City Solicitor regarding the legal expenses of the city overall*

No discussion.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Upon a motion, second, and open call by an affirmative vote of a majority of the members present, the City Council will convene in a closed session pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5(a)(2) pertaining to prospective and actual litigation matters as listed below: (Cont. from 3/3/2025)

- *Discussion of cases on the list from the City Solicitor to the Finance Committee as to all pending lawsuits involving the city which is to include a listing of the cases, the attorneys of record, and attorneys and law firms retained or paid by the city to work on the pending lawsuits.*
- *Discussion and Informational list from the City Solicitor as to all pending litigation (not in suit), including a listing of the cases, the attorneys involved, and all the attorneys and law firms retained or paid by the city to work on the pending litigation matters*
- *Discussion and update from the city solicitor on anticipated settlements of any pending litigation matters involving the city*

Pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5(a)(2) pertaining to collective bargaining:

Update on the Administration's negotiations and contract details relative to:

- *Collective Bargaining Agreement for the Rhode Island Laborers' District Council on behalf of Local Union 1322, Providence, Rhode Island, of the Laborers' International Union of North America, AFL-CIO for the term beginning July 1, 2024. (Votes may be taken*)*

- ***Collective Bargaining Agreement for the International Association of Firefighters Local 1363, AFL-CIO. (Votes may be taken*)***

On motion by Councilman Traficante, seconded by Councilwoman Haroian, it was voted to go into Executive Session. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting went into Executive Session at 7:26 p.m.

RETURN OPEN SESSION

****Upon return to open session, the presiding officer will report out any motions made in Executive Session, and may call for a motion to seal the minutes of the Executive Session***

On motion by Councilman Traficante, seconded by Council President Marino, it was voted to come out of Executive Session. Motion passed on a vote of 6-0. The following being recorded as voting “aye”: Councilwoman Graziano, Councilmen Andujar, Ritz, Traficante, Councilwoman Haroian and Council President Marino -6. Councilwoman Haroian was not present for roll call vote.

The meeting came out of Executive Session at 7:55 p.m.

On motion by Councilman Traficante, seconded by Council President Marino, it was voted to seal the minutes of Executive Session. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair indicated that no votes were taken in Executive Session.

VII. NEW MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

A. Ordinances

3-25-01 ORDINANCE Ratifying the Teamsters, Local Union 251, Collective Bargaining Agreement (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027). Sponsored by Mayor Hopkins.

On motion by Councilwoman Haroian, seconded by Council President Marino, it was voted to recommend approval of this Ordinance. Motion passed unanimously.

3-25-02 ORDINANCE Ratifying the LIUNA, Local Union 1322, Collective Bargaining Agreement (July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2027). Sponsored by Mayor Hopkins.

On motion by Councilwoman Haroian, seconded by Council President Marino, it was voted to recommend approval of this Ordinance. Motion passed unanimously.

B. Resolutions

None

C. Real Estate Tax Abatements

On motion by Councilwoman Haroian, seconded by Councilman Traficante, 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

None

E. Tangible Tax Abatements

None

F. Tax Interest Waiver Approvals

On motion by Councilwoman Haroian, seconded by Councilman Traficante, it was voted to recommend approval of this list of Tax Interest Waiver Approvals. Motion passed unanimously.

G. Tax Interest Waiver Denials

None.

H. Tax Assessment Board of Review assessed December 31, 2023

(Informational Only – No Vote will be taken)

None

ADVICE AND CONSENT of Mayor Hopkins' appointment of Frank Corrao as Director of the Department of Public Works.

Director Moretti introduced Mr. Corrao and gave his background. He stated that Mr. Corrao comes with a distinguished career of public and professional experience in civil engineering for over three decades in public service. He had an impressive career in public service as a professional Engineer and still is and was a significant member of the Executive Management team of the Rhode Island Department of Transportation. His resume, which has been provided, speaks for itself. He has already proven to be extremely capable. He has done so given his decades of service at RIDOT and most recently over the past few months with our Public Works Department. He has been instrumental on a part-time basis ensuring that our essential City services continue and they have. He checks all the boxes when it comes to being a Public Works Director for the City and we will be fortunate to have him. Some may have the impression that the salary for this position proposed lies in the higher range of compensation with the City. This compensation for the City of Cranston seems high relative to our very low Administrative pay rates. He noted that Mr. Corrao has offered to forego over \$27,000 of medical, dental and benefit costs with the City and place that in incremental salary. Although the proposed salary for this position appears to be towards the higher end at first, the reality is that it is not unusual for the City to compensate specialized employees competitively. Mayor Hopkins respectfully requests the Council's approval for the Advice and Consent of Frank Corrao.

Mr. Corrao appeared to speak and stated that he has significant amount of experience as it relates to dealing with Public Works with his career with the Department of Transportation holding different positions. He asked that one of the key things the Council should keep in mind is his last several years, eleven of that, were Head of Construction Operations with some of the projects that the State has dealt with would have been like the demolition of the Jamestown Bridge, the construction of the Sakonnet River Bridge, the relocation of the I-195 in Providence. Several of those major projects were all overseen by himself and the 190 plus staff members that he had during his life at the Department of Transportation. He had been asked to come in to fill in as part-time Acting Public Works Director and during that time he acquired a liking for what the work was, dealing with the people and he thinks he has a lot to offer the community that he has been a member of for the past forty years.

Chair asked Director Zidelis if the City can afford this and if this is in the budget. Mr. Zidelis stated that funding for this Fiscal Year is covered and in Fiscal Year 2026 budget, the Administration has proposed \$172,000 in next year's budget for this position.

Chair stated that he has read Mr. Corrao's resume and he comes well regarded, well experienced.

Councilman Traficante welcomed Mr. Corrao and stated that the City needs a professional person in that particular job because he is basically in charge of five Divisions, which are very critical to the City of Cranston.

Councilman Buonanno stated that he knows Mr. Corrao from serving on the Zoning Board when he was Chair and he knows him to be very intelligent and he knows him to do his homework. Since Mr. Corrao has been Acting Director, he has had a few questions and they were always answered immediately and he is confident he has all the information he needs. He is very much in support of Mr. Corrao. He will be an asset to our City. When it goes before the full City Council, he has his support.

Councilman Andujar thanked Mr. Corrao and thanked Mr. McAuley because for the brief time he served there, he did a great job. He welcomed Mr. Corrao.

Councilwoman Graziano stated that the DPW Director is one of the most important positions in any City. She has no problem supporting the salary. She stated to Mr. Corrao that she hopes they can work on the stormwater together.

Councilman Ritz stated that he is very excited to have Mr. Corrao on board and thanked him for everything he has done so far.

Council President Marino stated that she is in support of this this evening and looks forward to Mr. Corrao taking on this role full time. She asked if this position will be starting in the next Fiscal Year and the salary will commence next Fiscal Year. Director Moretti stated that the Administration is hoping he would start after approval, the end of this month. The funds are there. The Chief Engineer position is still vacant so there won't be a problem funding this position this year. Council President Marino stated that she wants to make sure this is done procedurally correct in order to implement the correct salary. She is in favor of the increase and just wants to make sure it is done correctly. Director Moretti stated that he will have it validated, but he believes that as long as the funds are in the DPW, overall within the department, it would not be an issue, but he will confirm that and report back by the Council meeting.

On motion by Councilman Traficante, seconded by Councilwoman Haroian, it was voted to recommend approval of the Mayor's Advice and Consent of the appointment of Frank Corrao as Director of the Department of Public Works. Motion passed unanimously.

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Above items were taken earlier in the meeting.

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IX. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees