

(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 8, 2024 **(BUDGET HEARINGS)**

A special meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Monday, April 8, 2024 in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 869 Park Ave., Cranston, Rhode Island.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:45 P.M. by the Chair.

II. ROLL CALL

Present Councilman Robert J. Ferri
 Councilwoman Aniece Germain
 Councilman Richard D. Campopiano
 Councilman Christopher G. Paplauskas
 Councilman Daniel Wall
 Council Vice-President Lammis J. Vargas, Vice-Chair (appeared at 6:10 p.m.)
 Councilman John P. Donegan, Chair
 Council President Jessica M. Marino

Also Present: Councilwoman Nicole Renzulli
 Tom Zidelis, Finance Director
 John Verdecchia, Assistant City Solicitor (left meeting at 7:30 p.m.)
 Stephen Angell, City Council Legal Counsel
 David DiMaio, City Council Budget Analyst
 Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilman Campopiano, it was voted to take the agenda out of order and hear proposed Ordinance 3-24-02 at the end of the meeting. Motion passed unanimously.

03-24-02 ORDINANCE In Amendment of Title 2 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, Entitled “Administration and Personnel” (Minimum Wage); Sponsored by Councilmember Donegan and Councilwoman Germain.

Discussion and vote held at the end of the agenda.

POLICE DEPARTMENT; ANIMAL CONTROL; HARBOR MASTER

Director Zidelis appeared to speak and stated that relative to all the departmental budgets, the budget is predicated on the salary side, on any settled collective bargaining agreements and in this case, the Police Union, any contributions with what is required by State and ARC payment for the closed pension system and the OPEB funding is pursuant to all prescribed by the respective ARC payment.

Rest of the budgetary line items are predicated on estimates based on what information we have for what we believe will happen in the future and they should be looked at as estimates as we go through line by line. The Mayor's 2025 budget recommendation to the City Council for the Police Department is in the amount of \$29,263,245, an increase over last year's appropriation in the amount of \$29,025,761.

Colonel Michael Winqvist appeared to speak.

Chair addressed the Expenses and stated that Overtime FY2025 is remaining at \$1.5 million. Looking at 2024 actuals, they are annualized and it is currently running at \$1.4 million, but annualized, it is a little over \$2 million. He asked why it is remaining at \$1.5 million. Is that realistic for next year? Director Zidelis stated that there were certain aspects of that Overtime budget, which we are changing our accounting practices. There are certain aspects that they get Grant reimbursements. For the ones that are processed through the payroll system, those will be coming out of both the Revenue and Expense side of the budget in terms of the reimbursement from the Feds.

Colonel Winqvist stated that they have been operating nine Officers down last year and they have six in the Academy right now and will be graduating May 24th. Having six Officers down and having difficulty replacing them sooner, there is only two Police Academies a year, that results in Overtime and that is where most of the Overtime is, that is why it is tracking a little bit higher than normally would. Once those six Officers come on in May, they will be on the streets trained and they will have only three vacancies at that point, not counting the five vacancies by contract that are held open as a result of the Union contract. He believes that the projection that they came up with should be accurate for next year.

Chair asked if the six new Officers are reflected in the salary schedule. Director Zidelis stated that the salary schedule reflects all positions that are currently filled, so the people in the Academy are filled and he believes the vacancies in the budget is two and not three, as stated by the Colonel. The salary schedule reflects all current personnel and any vacancies that were funded this year that were carried over into next year's budget.

Chair indicated to line item #53205 "Computer Expenses" and stated that the proposed budget is \$100,000 down from \$135,000. The annualization for 2024 is running at \$47,000. He asked why this is running so much lower this year compared to other years. Colonel Winqvist stated that some of the equipment they purchased out of this year's budget will equip some of the cruisers going forward.

Council President Marino stated that she understands, through the Grant Writer in discussions with her, she had worked with the Administration and Congressman Magaziner to supplement some money for K-9 Program. She asked that Colonel Winqvist expand on when that will take effect and how that facilitates and helps the K-9 Program. Colonel Winqvist stated that they received \$344,000 through Congressman Magaziner in appropriations and they have four aging K-9 vehicles that have been on the road with well over 150-160,000 miles on them. That money will go towards buying four Chevy Tahoes fully equipped with K-9 containment system, temperature control system and computers. Basically, the entire expense will be funded with that money. They are in the process of ordering those vehicles and getting the equipment that is needed as soon as they can. Council President Marino asked if the money to facilitate the purchase of those vehicles going to expand the K-9 Program or keep the number of Officers for that program about the same. Colonel Winqvist stated that they hope to possibly expand it.

Council President Marino indicated to line item #53201 "Ammunition" and asked if that is on track and if the Colonel thinks that amount is sufficient. Colonel Winqvist stated that that has been pretty steady over the years and they have been able to control the costs and that amount should be sufficient.

Councilman Paplauskas asked Colonel Winquist if we still have a CARES Detail and if there still is, what line item is that taken out of? Colonel Winquist stated that it comes out of Special Duty line item. They still have that program and it is used heavily and this is the time of the year when they do a lot more details. A lot more speeding complaints are received and that is where they divert the Officers on Overtime to work that and do intensive speed enforcement, stop sign enforcement things, that sort of nature.

Councilman Ferri indicated to line item #53503 “IOD Blue Cross” and asked why only \$60,000? Director Zidelis stated that last year there was an exceptional case that was credited to that line item. This year, through December, it was tracking about half of it. They are projecting that that will carry through to next year.

Councilman Wall indicated to line item #51118 “School Safety Initiative” amount of \$106,000 and asked what type of things are paid out of that line item. Colonel Winquist stated that that would be for Officers who conduct random checks and are visible at all the Schools.

Councilwoman Renzulli asked where the flock cameras and body cameras fall in this budget. Colonel Winquist stated that body worn cameras is 100% reimbursed, so there is no money that necessarily comes out. The money is expended, but they are quickly reimbursed through the State and Department of Justice for the first year and Director Zidelis can state where those funds are taken from. As to the flock cameras, they have used forfeiture monies in the past to pay for those, but typically, maintenance contracts covers the cameras going forward and they just signed a three or four year contract extension to lock in the positive rates that they have because the prices are going up for flock cameras. This is a very successful program leading to many arrests and missing persons being located and many communities are following suit. Cranston was one of the first departments in the State to utilize these cameras.

Chair stated that for maintenance contract line item, for FY24, it is running a little over \$8,000 under budget. He asked if there are any contracts that we are obligated to that full \$300,000 or could it be lower? Director Zidelis stated that he believes there is, but he cannot cite it this evening. He can report back regarding this.

Mr. DiMaio asked if the Cadets get paid while they are in the Academy and if they get paid at reduced rate. Colonel Winquist stated that they do get paid. He does not know the exact rate, but it is set via the contract.

Revenue

Chair indicated to line item #53202 “Police Detail-Cars” and stated that it is proposed at \$900,000 for FY25. That is 128% increase from \$395,000. For FY24, when it is annualized, it is at \$740,000. He questioned how this number was arrived at. Director Zidelis stated that at mid-year point it was \$500,000. During the Winter months, not much is done on details that requires cars. In terms of annualizing it and factoring it up from next year, what we have seen is not only the construction projects through the City requiring vehicles has increased dramatically, you also need to take into consideration with previous COVID money coming out being through into infrastructure as well as the Inflation Reduction Act, which had a lot of infrastructure work being done. The combination of the trend we have seen to date continuing through this year into next year increasing or factored for the federal money that has date specific work timelines. Multiple facets of construction work that will require the use of cruisers account for the increase that we are seeing today and we project into the future.

Chair indicated to line item #44500 “VIN Verification” and stated that it is proposed to go up \$150,000 to \$500,000. Annualized this year at \$460,000. He asked for explanation on that. Colonel Winquist stated that he believes Providence Police Department shut their VIN Station down and other Police Departments are really not wanting to do VIN checks anymore so with our proximity close to the DMV, we have lines of cars out to the street every single day so we do project that is going to be much higher next year.

ANIMAL CONTROL

Expense

Colonel Winquist and Director Zidelis were present to answer any questions.

No discussion was held and no questions were asked.

Revenue

Council Vice-President Vargas asked where we are year to date. Chair stated that the numbers he has is the actuals for line item #43300 “Animal Shelter Impound Fees” is \$1,386, that annualized to \$2,079, which is \$921 under the budget of \$33,000 for 2024 through February.

Council President Marino asked that for future budget meetings, if Director Zidelis could email the Council a printout of the actuals budget to date how the Revenue and Expenditures are tracking for each department for the night of the meeting. Director Zidelis stated that he will absolutely provide that. The month of March has not been closed so for the next hearing, which is two days from now, he may just put in a qualifier on that this is just posted without any adjustments, but he would be more than happy to send those out in advance of the meeting.

HARBOR MASTER

Expense

Colonel Winquist and Director Zidelis were present to answer any questions.

Chair stated that department expenses are running at -0- dollars this year. He asked if the Harbor Master intends on using anything. Director Zidelis stated that we can circle back, but he finds it odd that this was under the Police Department and he personally has had no contact with the Harbor Master, but he will make a phone call.

Colonel Winquist stated that the Harbor Master does use the Police Department boat and the boat is in storage right now so usually any expenses take place soon as they get the boat in the water if there are any issues with the engine or any other maintenance. This is why they do not spend the money until the Spring.

MUNICIPAL COURT

Director Zidelis, Chief Judge Raymond Coia, Maranda Botelho, Court Administrator and Court Clerk appeared to speak. Ms. Botelho presented a packet for the Committee members.

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilman Paplauskas, it was voted to place on the record document presented by Ms. Botelho. Motion passed unanimously.

Expense

Chief Judge Coia stated that former Court Administrator, Elizabeth Bettis, is also present with many years of institutional knowledge and has offered to share some answers if needed.

Chair indicated to line item #52510 “Advanced Payment to the State of RI” and asked what this line item is for. Ms. Botelho stated that it is for tickets. Chair stated that this is being reduced from \$72,000 to \$45,000, which based on annualization of FY24, makes sense because the traffic fines revenue is projected to go up so much. Wouldn’t there be a correlation between the two if one is going to go up, wouldn’t the other go up? Director Zidelis stated that the one thing new compared to all other years is the conversation of parking tickets. In terms of a revenue, which he had no basis to compare it to, is the procedure. He asked Ms. Botelho to speak regarding the procedure. Ms. Botelho stated that from a parking ticket, there is a series of assessments that are added, it doubles, it triples and it eventually gets turned into a traffic ticket against the license. so, it can go from a parking ticket to a traffic ticket. Director Zidelis stated that that is the basis for the increase and that is their revenue.

Council Vice-President Vargas stated that part-time help on the expenditure side has gone up a little from last year. In looking at year to date for part-time help on the expenditure side, are we going over that line item? Director Zidelis stated that in terms of year to date in expenses, last year’s budget was \$32,300, to date, they are at \$40,000, so they are trending over in FY2023. In terms of the request for next year, they did increase it in terms of the \$40,000, but in conversations with the final budget, it did meet the request of the department that they were looking for, so this funding request is lower than what was requested by the department for the year. In terms of this budget, that is an issue with trending that this part-time help is lower than what was requested and this is something we all work with the department to ensure that their existing staff is properly carried through the end of the fiscal year. Council Vice-President Vargas asked what the initial request was for the department. Judge Coia stated \$62,000. Council Vice-President Vargas stated that there is also a part-time vacancy in that department. She asked if that is correct. She stated that the Court Translation Clerk is vacant and she asked if that is a full time position. Judge Coia stated that the full time slot is an interpreter, but they do have a part-timer who serves as an interpreter during Court hours. Director Zidelis stated that the full time position was not funded in either year as a full time position. Judge Coia asked if Ms. Bettis wanted to add anything. Ms. Bettis stated that the full time interpreter position was initially funded by the Council. the next year it was still a position in the Court, but it was not funded and then this upcoming year, it is also unfunded. So, we do not have any translators and she knows that was not funded. She questioned if the request is to bring in a translator. Director Zidelis stated that the funding request for this FY both in terms of what was sent out in terms of full time position did not include funding for a full time position. Council Vice-President Vargas stated that in terms of the position listing, no. He can’t speak about any budget prior to FY24.

Councilman Wall asked what the differential line item is. Judge Coia stated that his understanding, it is the monies that were due to Ms. Botelho from Administrator of the Court as well as the Clerk of the Court and his understanding is when she was hired that they were going to make up the difference of the two added together, Administrative Salary and the Clerk of the Court and from her current salary to equate to that figure is a differential of \$12,300. In discussing this budget the other day, it has come to their attention that she has not gotten that. She has reached out to payroll and is working on that. Judge Coia stated that the request for differential was \$12,300 and the Mayor budgeted \$7,500.

Councilwoman Renzulli stated that regarding the differential, she does not understand how it is going to go down if something was already signed. What is it that the City Council has to do? This differential is expected to be the salary difference between two jobs that the Clerk is doing. She asked if that is correct. She does not think we can really lower it. Director Zidelis stated that it is compensating an employee for work above and beyond what her job duties are. Councilwoman Renzulli asked if her job is going to be the same this year or does she have less. Director Zidelis stated that there is two distinct issues. To date, he does not know what was conveyed to the incumbent on the differential amount and in discussions with Judge Coia, that differential has not been paid to the individual. They are having Personnel look into what the compensation should have been. When putting the budget together, the request was \$7,500 in terms of a differential and he has to go back and see how they arrived at that number. That number may have been agreed upon, but one thing that needs to be checked at is if the incumbent was promised a differential getting processed and then carrying it forward for a full year. Councilwoman Renzulli stated that she recalls this being an issue in past years with Elizabeth Bettis, but doesn't recall the details. It was because the Council had to put in something to make her the Administrator, but there was something that is not covered here that maybe we have to do or there was a certain qualification that she had in order to get that title. She asked if someone could look into that and speak about it offline to see if there is anything that needs to be done in order to make this happen officially because there was an issue in the past.

Council President Marino stated that, as a Council, they did appoint Ms. Botelho as the Municipal Court Clerk, so they did everything they are to do. There is nothing further for the Council to do.

Councilwoman Renzulli addressed the part-time help and stated that it was stated that there are two translator positions. She asked what the other two are. Judge Coia stated that there is another part-time Clerk and Elizabeth Bettis had agreed upon after she left to come back with some part-time hours to lend her knowledge and expertise to the Court and assist Ms. Botelho as she became acclimated with the Court and all of its duties. Councilwoman Renzulli asked Judge Coia if he anticipates that continuing through next Fiscal Year. Judge Coia stated, yes, he hopes so. Director Zidelis stated that potentially too, once the incumbent is more familiar, he would assume the hours of the fourth position eventually going down. Councilwoman Renzulli asked if that is reflected in the budget of the amount that was put through. Director Zidelis stated that the FY25 budget on the fourth position, he anticipates less hours for the fourth position.

Council President Marino indicated to the Departmental Expenses and stated that last budget, she believes reduced to the \$45,000, the request for submission this evening is for \$60,000. It would be an increase of \$15,000. She asked how important it is for this department to have an increase of 15,000. Are there any particular contracts that are crucial to this increase? Also, where is this tracking? Director Zidelis stated that through February, it is \$30,000, but he can't say what term those payments went through. At this particular point in time, he can't answer the question with any certainty with their budget. Council President Marino stated that she just wants to make sure that we are budgeting appropriately for the anticipated expenses. Judge Coia stated that in speaking with staff, he was told that Curio, which is software, is \$35,000 per year. Ticket books, which is a requirement, are over \$5,000 expense. That is \$40,000 with those two items. Pitney Bowes \$4,388 to date. With all those, it is at \$45,000. When Council President said how important it is, it is important because those are required expenses. That is how they came up with a \$60,000 figure. Council President Marino stated that if those are in fact accurate expenses, then that number needs to be reflective of the actual expenses because they are going to be greater than \$45,000.

Revenue

Chair indicated to line item #42150 and stated that there is \$180,000 proposed change in traffic fines. FY25 proposed budget is \$750,000, annualized for 2024 is \$537,500 and average over past five years has been \$522,000. He asked where we are getting \$750,000. Director Zidelis stated that when they opened up the changes in the procedure on collections of certain fines that are currently in place, with the increase in the conversion of certain tickets was the basis for the increase in the revenue estimate. Chair asked Judge Coia or the Clerk their thoughts on that number because even the numbers for this year are running low. Director Zidelis stated that in going through with the department in terms of the change in their procedure, that revenue estimate is aggressive in his estimate. Judge Coia stated that his review of the figures reveal that the 2024 budget revenue was \$586,000 and his understanding from discussions with the Court staff is right now close to today's date, we are at approximately \$410,000 and their goal is probably approximately \$500,000, so \$767,000 from \$500,000 is to quote Director Zidelis "aggressive". Chair stated that Building Code is being reduced down to -0- and all other fines are being bumped up \$7,000. He asked if there is a connection between those two and on the financial side, is the plan to combine #52151 and #52152? Director Zidelis stated that if you look at the actuals, for FY24, the actuals for Building Code Violations is -0-. If you look at all other fines, what he has seen is everything other than traffic fines, being classified in the account #42152, so that is where their prospective revenues are projected to be seen. Chair stated that as for the Building Code fines, and he will stated this again when we get to the Buildings Department, he thinks it is preposterous that, no fault of the Court, it is preposterous that in a City of our size, there are -0- fines that have been collected for Building Code Violations when he knows personally he has sent and called in issues on mold, lead, all sorts of unsafe housing and to see that people are not being held accountable for those issues is detrimental to peoples' health in this City. It is not Director Zidelis's fault or the Court's fault and he will bring up again in Buildings, but someone needs to send a message to that department that they need to hold people responsible because they are not doing it.

Council Vice-President Vargas stated that that is exactly what she was going to state on that. She asked what the revenue is that is being proposed in the budget for FY25 overall for the City. Director Zidelis stated \$323,328,164 in total General Fund Revenue. Council Vice-President Vargas stated that she is a little taken back because that is what the proposed Revenue is, but when she is hearing they increased the Revenue in Municipal Court Traffic Fines an extra \$180,000, she hopes that we are being very mindful and really putting a number that really seems as close as possible and not using a number to boost the Revenue here in this proposed budget and offset expenditures or vice versa. She is hoping that moving forward and looking at these numbers, that that is not the case by the Administration and when Director Zidelis is looking at these numbers, it is not just an estimated \$180,000 spike in other departments as well. Director Zidelis stated that when he sat with the Court on the development of their budget, that is when he learned about their new procedure on how they were approaching the collection of tickets. As he stated, this is one of the items that he had no trending on. Council Vice-President Vargas asked what that new procedure is. Judge Coia stated that he does not believe there is something new to the Court. References have been made as it relates to owner's liability and that has been in existence for some time. Owner's liability is when an individual does not pay a parking ticket and it is doubled and they do not go to Court and they are defaulted and then gives rise to a traffic of violation, which is in owner's liability. There is nothing new. Director Zidelis apologized and stated that when he sat down with the Court, it was expressed to him that there was a new procedure. He will check his notes from that meeting.

Councilwoman Renzulli asked Director Zidelis who he met with when reviewing this budget. Director Zidelis stated that he did not meet with Judge Coia. He met Ms. Botelho. One of the problems we have on our side is we do not have the receivables in terms of what is outstanding. Maybe he misunderstood what was conveyed to him when he met with the Court that it was a new procedure and we were going to see upticks, but it was not with Judge Coia, it was with Ms. Botelho and another Judge.

Councilwoman Renzulli asked Judge Coia if he sees us hitting the \$750,000 number. Judge Coia stated that he does not see getting to that number in 2025, if to date, we are at \$410,000 in the current fiscal. He asked Ms. Botelho to explain the differential for a ticket that is heard by the Municipal Court versus one that is heard at the Tribunal. Ms. Botelho stated that the ticket goes into owner's liability. It is a traffic ticket. The Judge has the option for the defendant to pay on the parking and dismiss the owner's traffic ticket that way the Court gets more money. Councilwoman Renzulli asked if Building Code Violations are being issued and coming to Court and then they are being forgiven or given more time or are you not seeing them? Ms. Botelho stated that they are, most of them are being continued for corrective actions. Not a lot of them get closed out very often. Councilwoman Renzulli stated that if they are written out and someone's coming and then we are continuing them and continuing them and they never get closed out, then it does not all go on to Inspections because they are writing something and the people are never getting fined and paying a fine. We have to have some kind of data on that to know what is going on there. Judge Coia stated that the Court does have a dedicated day, Monday, where the Court hears housing violations. His understanding is that compliance is one of the main concerns from the Inspector's Office. They will receive a violation, there will be a fine dollar amount attached to it and in the spirit of getting them to comply with, the matter is continued and ultimately may come in front of the Court at a later date with the representation that compliance has been made and seems that the Inspector's Office is satisfied with that. His understanding from discussions with the Court staff is that there is a separate Solicitor that handles the Building Inspections violations and works with the Inspections Office to ultimately get a compliance and then will come before the Court and indicate that compliance is made and that they are not seeking to go forward with prosecution of the matter. That ultimately results in no fines and/or costs being assessed to it, but as to the concerns of the Council, he thinks that needs to be looked at again from the Court and he will do that because if compliance is made, that is the ultimate goal, but we should at least get some costs associated with it.

Chair asked Mr. DiMaio to give some historical insight.

Mr. DiMaio stated that he believes that in the past, there was some liens put on houses that were bank-owned and the liens were put on for the cleanup and the work that the Council had done and some of the banks when they went to sell the properties, did satisfy the liens in full.

FIRE DEPARTMENT & FIRE ALARM

Expense

Chief Robert Ryan appeared to speak.

Chair stated that Salary and Overtime combined are going down, which sticks out to him. He asked how numbers are going down for next year. Director Zidelis stated that we are going into putting a class of 18, which will be on trucks the third week of July. This, to the best of his knowledge, will be the highest compliment of firefighters since he has been with the City, In developing the budget with the Fire Department, new employees have an Admin benefit than our more seasoned firefighters come with. That coupled with the need that you have fresh bodies. The third factor with the Overtime reduction is the salary differential between the firefighters and officers that were coming out of service and backfilling with new recruits. Those multiple factors where you focus on the Overtime. Chair asked if those 18 recruits are already built into this budget book. Director Zidelis stated, yes. They are at a substantially lower salary than if they were a firefighter or an official that retired that we were filing with.

Chair indicated to line item #53017 “Medical Supplies” and stated that the 24 budget was \$165,000 and the proposed FY25 budget is \$170,000. Looking at the actuals for this year, it is running at \$83,000, which annualizes to \$125,000. The five closed fiscal years most previously averaged to \$150,000. He questioned what the increase is for, Director Zidelis stated that departmental request was higher than \$170,000. After consultation with the Chief, we backed it down. This was a line item that the original request by the department was higher, we reduced it based on the budget. Chair asked Chief if there are any specific purchases or expenses that he anticipates the FY25 for that increase. Chief Ryan stated that medical supplies are going up like everything else. As an example, gloves cost approximately \$5,000 for a pallet of gloves and between the rescues and the engines, they go through quite a bit of them, so they are anticipating increase in runs and supplies.

Chair indicated to line item #53503 “IOD Blue Cross” and stated that proposal by the Mayor is \$200,000, a decrease of \$150,000. He assumes that the decrease is the expectation that someone will be coming off IOD? Director Zidelis stated, yes.

Chair indicated to line item #53506 “Training Programs” and stated that proposal is \$40,000, the 2024 actuals are \$12,500, annualized just under 419,000 and historical average is \$28,000. It seems that that is relatively under-utilized. Is there room for movement on that for FY2025? Director Zidelis stated that original department request was higher and Administration backed them down to the \$40,000. One thing he has learned with the Fire Department, training especially when you have new recruits, is imperative.

Mr. DiMaio asked how many current firefighters are out on IOD that we are trying to transfer to the State Pension and is there any anticipation that we may get a few to appeal those to the State Pension before the end of this budgetary period? Chief Ryan stated that we have between 14-15 IODs. Of them, long-term some of them had their Court cases and they have been denied, so now they are appealing it, which gives them another date and then have another Court case. We have whittled it down. It was much higher, before we were up to the upper 20’s and now we are down to 14 or 15. We are making an accomplishment on the IODs.

Councilman Paplauskas indicated to line item #53014 and stated that \$8,000 expense from the 2024 budget for Homeland Security and there is nothing budgeted for this year and nothing budgeted in the past. He asked what the \$8,000 expense was for last year and do we need to spend that money again this year? Director Zidelis stated that last year, FY23, they did not spend any money on that line item. This year, we have not spent a dime on that, so he does not know what they spent it on.

Council Vice-President Vargas asked Chief Ryan if he is ok with that line item being -0-. Chief Ryan stated that he expected some cuts in his budget and these are some of the cuts he and Director Zidelis decided on.

Council Vice-President Vargas asked if we are getting any SAFER Grants. Director Zidelis stated that the 18 is a SAFER Grant class that came in in March of 2023 and that Grant runs three years. Council Vice-President Vargas asked if we are still paying EMT Certification when we are bringing in new firefighters and what line item does that fall under? Chief Ryan stated that we are responsible for paying the EMT Certification. Director Zidelis stated that that is approximately \$2,800 per candidate and he is not and could never be Chief, but he thinks he would be a little uneasy thinking that he would have to run this department with \$2.5 million less than the year before when you are going to be hiring 18 more people. Council Vice-President Vargas asked how the expenses are going to go down \$2.5 million? Chief Ryan stated that when he goes to full staff at 196, right now he is paying Overtime for 18 positions, so once he has those 18 on staff, he won’t be paying Overtime in those positions anymore, so his Overtime budget was cut by \$1.25 million.

Councilman Ferri stated that the last thing we would want is we would be running into last quarter of the next FY and seeing that that number is not realistic.

Revenue

Chair indicated to line item #43103 “Plan Review Application” and stated that proposed at \$60,000 increase to \$100,000, annualized through February for FY24 is projecting at \$68,000. He asked if that is due to a foreseeing increase kind of development projects within the City. Director Zidelis stated, yes, and it is types of projects that the Fire Department review.

Chair indicated to FEMA reimbursement and stated that 24 budget is running at \$500,000, to date we have received \$138,000. There is no change in that number for FY25 year. He asked if that is a set number where we have not received reimbursement yet or is there a variable there or is it fixed? Director Zidelis stated that in FY23 we had a \$500,000 estimate, to date, we have received \$137,000. Going into next FY, we are carrying -0- in the Mayor’s proposed budget. In no uncertain terms, the actual \$500,000 number was mistaken. Original COVID money before the ARPA money, the City had a very high receivable on the books. Unbeknownst to himself when he got to the City, the actual receivable was paid and the one problem is the accounting of it had accrued the receivables, so when the money came in it should have reduced the receivable. They charged it in FY23 as revenue never reducing the receivable. When they were formulating the FY24 budget, they saw \$750,000 due from the federal government. They thought they were being conservative putting in for \$500,000 and come to find out, due to an accounting error, that had been paid for and never reduced the receivable. Unless something new comes in, they are not anticipating any FEMA or public assistance outside of SAFER

Chair indicated to line item #43108 which is staying the same at \$50,000 for FY25, actuals to date are \$13,000, which annualized to just under \$20,000. There is a \$30,000 difference? Director Zidelis stated that, yes, and that is one that he did not adjust download.

Council President Marino asked where in the revenue line item is Rescue Runs. Director Zidelis stated line item #41521.

Chair asked if reimbursement rate has increased. Director Zidelis stated, yes. Council President Marino asked how that is tracking to date. Director Zidelis stated that we are trending \$1 million through February, the actuals are approximately \$2 million revenue side for third party rescue.

FIRE ALARM

Chief Ryan appeared to speak.

Chair indicated to line item #53111 and stated proposal is for \$130,000, same as last year, annualized at \$120,000, historically average is \$109,000. Why remain at \$130,000? Director Zidelis stated that they are trending lower and in terms of computerization, one of the things they are looking to do is upgrade. The Fire Department has a request of half that was originally in FY25 to replace the aging equipment. In formulating the Capital Budget, the Administration deferred that request to FY26. In spite of the trend they are seeing, their request was increase this line item. With the Chief, they backed it down to keep it level funded.

Council Vice-President Vargas asked what kind of equipment is that? Chief Ryan stated it is a radio alarm system. Council Vice-President Vargas asked Chief Ryan if he has approached any type of potential Grants on those alerting system? Director Zidelis stated that the only public safety equipment potential they were looking for is they have identified on a federal level on the Police side and he has not heard anything on the Fire side for equipment.

No one appeared to speak from the public.

03-24-02 *ORDINANCE In Amendment of Title 2 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, Entitled “Administration and Personnel” (Minimum Wage); Sponsored by Councilmember Donegan and Councilwoman Germain.*

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

Under Discussion:

Chair stated that this does not apply to the School Department, Libraries or private businesses. This really only applies to people that fall out of collective bargaining. The proposal would be changing minimum wage from \$12.75 to \$15 starting January 1st, which is what the State’s minimum wage is going to be starting. It also removes an exemption where previous minimum wage Ordinance in the City did not apply to high school students. He does not know what the fiscal impact would be. He requesting a motion be made requesting a fiscal note for the May Finance meeting.

On motion by Councilman Paplauskas, seconded by Councilwoman Germain, it was voted to request a fiscal note for the May Finance meeting.

Under Discussion:

Councilman Paplauskas asked if this can be done by the May meeting since we are in the budget process. Director Zidelis stated that he would have to reach out to departments. If he cannot get this done by the May 6th Finance meeting, he will notify the Chair in advance.

Motion and second to recommend approval of this Ordinance passed unanimously.

Motion and second were withdrawn.

No one appeared to speak from the public.

On motion by Councilman Ferri, seconded by Councilman Wall, it was voted to continue this Ordinance. Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees