

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS  
COMMITTEE  
REGULAR MEETING  
NOVEMBER 14, 2022**

**ATTENDANCE:** Scott Burns, Co-chair; Tyler Mack, Mary McBride-Lee; Matthew McCarthy, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia

**OTHERS:** Council President A. Nieves, Council Member(s): R. Smith, J. Cruz; & R. Roman-Christy; K. Flatto, Finance Director; N. Nkwo, OPM Director; Fire Chief L. Edwards; Acting Deputy Fire Chief Jeffery Cronin

**CALL TO ORDER**

Co-chair Burns called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. A quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**• October 11, 2022 Regular Meeting**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 11, 2022 REGULAR MEETING.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MACK SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE OF THE MINUTES OF THE OCTOBER 11, 2022 REGULAR MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**BUDGET UPDATE FROM FIRE DEPARTMENT.**

Fire Chief Edwards said that the Department fiscal year started off with a staffing deficit. They need to hold an Assistant Chief's and a Captain's Exam. These vacancies caused an overtime issue. To correct this, the vacancies have been filled with provisional personnel. He then displayed a budget spreadsheet and reviewed the details with the Committee members. They have been able to scale back the training period from 16 weeks to 12 weeks for the newly graduated trainees. This allowed them to scale back the overtime costs by \$90,000 in just a short time. He cautioned everyone that the holidays were coming and the senior firefighter had to use up their holiday and vacation time, so there may not be as great a degree of savings until they move into the New Year.

Fire Chief Edwards reviewed the details of the minimum and maximum staffing levels. There are 40 firefighters that are eligible for retirement and there will be an additional 16 next year.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that she appreciated Chief Edwards mentioning the staffing in light of the upcoming holidays. She said that there seems to be an increased number of fires during the holidays. Chief Edwards agreed and confirmed that the winter was a period when

there are the most fires. With the minimum number of 62 firefighters, they should be in a good staffing position.

*Council Member Roman-Christy joined the meeting at 6:15 p.m.*

Council Member Burns asked about the details of the personnel manpower and displayed the April, May and June 2022 Manpower report on the screen. The discussion moved to the number of retirees and how they take their remaining vacation and holidays.

Mr. Nkwo said that the firefighters are not allowed to bank their overtime or holidays like the Police Department does. He added that the individuals that had the largest amount of banked holidays had already retired and had been paid out. Discussion followed.

Council Member Burns asked for clarification on the upcoming promotional exams. Chief Edwards reviewed the various exams that will be available. However, he cautioned people that the testing companies were having trouble with their staffing also.

*Council President Nieves joined the meeting at 6:18 p.m.*

Mr. Flatto said that he was concerned about the rate of overtime this year. He said that the Fire Department had run over budget by \$2 million dollars last year and this year appears to be on the same overrun track. He then reviewed the details of the projected overtime and the affect that the expected retirements will have. Chief Edwards said that one of his concerns was sick leave and there were still firefighters who were coming down with COVID.

Council Member McCarthy asked how much of a benefit that bringing the training in house would be. Chief Edwards said that he would estimate less than 10% of the overtime could be attributed to training. He said that he still expected to see a downtrend in the overtime once they get past the holidays. However, the firefighters start earning new vacation and holidays again on April 1st.

Council Member Roman-Christy asked if the firefighters were allowed to carry over vacation times. Chief Edwards said that if the firefighter was out for illness or another legitimate reason to carry over vacation. The maximum amount that anyone can qualify for is five weeks and three days.

Council Member Burns asked if they had been able to staff at the stations where there were shortages. Chief Edwards said that it was acknowledged that the younger generation doesn't want to work and this creates a problem with staffing. Discussion followed.

Council Member McCarthy asked if the firefighters get unlimited sick time. Chief Edwards said that they do. Council Member Burns thanked Chief Edwards for presenting the information to the Committee.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ADD THE FINANCIAL REPORT AS EXHIBIT 11-14-2022-A.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MACK SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**General Discussion re: Review of the Monthly Financial Report.**

Council Member Burns said that Mr. Flatto had sent out the monthly report and a copy of the CLA Governance Letter to the Committee members.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ENTER THE LETTER DATED OCTOBER 3, 2022 FROM CLA THE GOVERNANCE ACCOUNTING REPORT AS EXHIBIT 11-14-2022-B.**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MACK SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Flatto said that there was good news on the revenue side and the State has remitted payments to the municipalities earlier than usual. The Golf Course is still doing well. While Real Estate sales are doing well, they are expected to slow down in the winter months. The banks are also raising their interest rates, which is also generating some income.

Debt Service will not change this year, but in the future, the interest rates will be higher if the City goes out to bond. He then reviewed the State reimbursement of the car taxes since the mill rates on cars decreased. With the price of cars increasing, next year's reimbursement should increase.

Council Member McCarthy asked for an update on the rents for Fairchild Wheeler and other properties. Mr. Flatto said that the golf course restaurant contract expired and they were working on a month to month basis. A new lease needs to be negotiated. New invoices are being sent out to the tenants, including the amphitheater.

Council Member McCarthy asked about the parking revenues. Mr. Flatto said that it was the revenue from the large parking garage downtown that they share with the State. Council Member McCarthy asked where the parking revenue from the amphitheater would be found. Discussion followed about whether patrons were being charged to park, what revenue came in from the Sound on Sound and the Amphitheater billboard.

Council Member McCarthy asked that they have issue regarding OPED handling the billing for overtime on the agenda for discussion next month.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked who could rent out the Amphitheater billboard. Mr. Nkwo gave a brief overview of the agreement. Council Member McBride-Lee said that there were a number of people who believed that only the Amphitheater and the City could use that billboard. Discussion followed.

Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia said that she would like to know how many complimentary tickets for the event were distributed. She also requested that OPED present the information on the Sound on Sound.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked for clarification on the revenue from the billboards. Council Member Burns reviewed the details and reminded everyone that the billboard was not built yet. Discussion followed about the agreement.

Council Member Burns asked about the PILOT payments and for a brief update on Steel Point. Mr. Flatto said that he had expected Steel Point to pull permits this coming year, but the housing situation is changing.

Council Member Roman-Christy asked for clarification on arrears taxes. Mr. Flatto said that they were taxes from previous years and often involved the tax lien sales. Council Member Roman-Christy asked if there were penalties accrued with the delinquent taxes. Mr. Flatto said that there was an 18% penalty on the delinquent taxes. She had a number of other questions regarding the details.

Mr. Flatto then reviewed the expenses, including the salaries. There are still a number of vacancies in the non-public safety positions. The job market is still very tight. Mr. Flatto said that the actuary report for Plan A and Plan B is based on the stock market, and this will require about \$3 million dollars in payments. However, Mr. Flatto said that he had reserved some funds in the accrual account to cover this change. This will be a tight budget year.

Council Member McCarthy asked which of the City Attorney's Office budget lines covered the settlements. A discussion followed about the details.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO ADJOURN.**  
**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MCCARTHY SECONDED.**  
**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services