

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 13, 2023**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton, Co-chair; Mary McBride-Lee, AmyMarie Vizzo-Paniccia, Matthew McCarthy (6:15 p.m.), Jeanette Herron (6:30 p.m.)

OTHERS: Council Member(s): A. Boyd, M. Pereira, R. Roman-Christy, R. Smith & Council President A. Nieves; Ken Flatto, Finance Director; Nestor Nkwo, OPM Director; Terron Jones, EOC; Santo Carta, Clifton Larson Allen; Scott Appleby, EOC Director; 203-880-5666

This meeting was held via teleconference.

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF COMMITTEE MINUTES

• January 9, 2023 (Regular Meeting)

Council Member Burns said that he could not find a copy of the minutes.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA MOVED TO TABLE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 9, 2023 REGULAR MEETING.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO TABLE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 9, 2023 REGULAR MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

19-22 Proposed Budget Transfer to FY 2022-2023 From: Department of Emergency Operations Center Salary Account #01290000-51000 (\$80,000) To: Emergency Operations Center Security Services Account #01290000-56225 (\$80,000) for retention/payment of security guards for the rest of FY 2022-2023.

Mr. Jones greeted the Committee and said that this request was an interoffice transfer involving the retention of the security services due to the low pay scale. This request is to increase the budget for the security guards. Mr. Flatto said that the administration was pleased with the security guards and so they were increasing the salary ranges. The services are used at City Hall and the Health Department from 9 to 5. There are four

guards. The primary goal is to de-escalate situations, primarily at the Tax Collector's Office and other locations. A discussion followed about the supervisor's responsibilities. Mr. Jones explained that the supervisor is based at 999 Broad Street, but he visits all the other sites and will often be there for evening meetings.

Council Member Pereira asked if the security guards had the power to arrest individuals. Mr. Jones said that they did not. Council Member Pereira wished to know why there was a need for two individuals for security.

Council Member Pereira said that the immediate need for the additional funding was to retain the current security guards. Mr. Nkwo explained that they had to increase the hourly rate and they had to extend the hours.

It was decided to temporarily table the matter until Mr. Appleby, who was involved in a different meeting, could join the meeting.

Council Member McCarthy joined the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

**REVIEW OF CAFR AND FY2022 AUDIT WITH SANTO CARTA
OF CLIFTON LARSON ALLEN.**

Mr. Flatto explained that the name of the report had changed but the report remained the same. He said that they had a surplus last year and they were able to include the status of the Internal Service Fund. The former large deficit has been significantly reduced.

Mr. Flatto said that Mr. Carta had worked with the City for the last year or so and that this year's audit was clean with no significant issues. He thanked the staff for all their hard work with the auditors.

Mr. Carta greeted the Committee. He then narrated a PowerPoint slide deck with the pertinent information for the audit. There were no findings to report and no compliance findings or deficiencies were found.

He then reviewed the highlights of the various funds including the pension liability, the General Fund and other financial classifications such as the ARPA grant. The new GASB standards have been adopted. There were no disagreements with the management and there were no delays or issues in completing the audits.

Mr. Flatto gave a brief overview of the OPEB liability changes. He noted that the pension funds pays out more than it takes in as the COLA amounts rise. Mr. Flatto also noted that the Fund Balance was higher this year, which reduces the pressure to have larger surpluses. It indicates that the Fund Balance has improved and is more stable.

Council Member Newton asked about whether the City was using the grand funding appropriately. Mr. Carta said that they had tested two different grant funding records and there were no issues.

Council Member Newton asked if there was a delay in using the State funding. Mr. Carta said that most of the grants are handled on a reimbursement basis. The ARPA funding was different.

Mr. Flatto said that there was a work group that monitors that. He noted that there was an intermodal project that had stalled, but the administration worked with the State to move the project forward. He added that there was also work on moving the Congress Street Bridge forward, but the City does not have control of the funding for that project.

Council Member Newton said that his concern was to ensure there was no bonded funding just sitting in an account rather than being utilized.

Council Member Burns asked about the various assets listed in the report and how the assets are valued. Mr. Carta gave a brief overview on the depreciation formula.

Council Member Pereira asked about information listed on page 40 where there were some budget overages noted in Supportive Contributions. Mr. Flatto reviewed the details and how the funding was transferred for retro raises. Mr. Carta gave Council Member Pereira the adjusted figure.

Council Member Pereira said that the report needs to be very detailed and accurate. Council Member Pereira asked if they had lost \$52.3 million in the pension funds. Mr. Carta confirmed that was so. Council Member Burns said that they were investments that the City had made to pay their pension requirements. The investment has decreased. Mr. Flatto said that two or three years ago, the fund had increased but this past year, the market had decreased.

Council Member Pereira asked for a listing of the investments. Mr. Flatto said that he had provided a listing of the various investment managers, but cautioned everyone that it was not any one given investment that had lost value. It was across the entire market. The investment managers look at three years to spread out the variations of the markets. There are hundreds of investments for the various pension funds.

Council Member Burns asked about the details listed on page 68 and the long term expected returns and the details on page 50 for long term obligations. Mr. Carta reviewed the details with him.

Council Member Pereira asked about the grant testings that were on the Board of Education. She wished to know why no City grants were tested. Mr. Carta explained that the Federal Government have issued instruction to test ARPA and ESSA grants. If something is over \$3

million dollars, it needs to be tested every 3 years. Last year, the testing was done on the CDBG grant funding and a construction grant.

Council Member Pereira said that the Police Department receives large amounts for the COPS grant. Mr. Carta said that he was not sure if it was a Type B grant that would require this type of testing. Mr. Nkwo said that with the COPS grant, the City is required to provide proof of hiring, and benefits. The documents are reviewed by the Federal Government for compliance before the reimbursement is issued.

Mr. Flatto said that last year they had asked if the Committee had concerns about any grants. They can request particular areas to be reviewed next year.

Council Member Pereira said that just because the documentation was submitted, it did not mean that the grant funds should not be audited.

Council Member Burns asked about details listed for Discount Rates on page 60. Mr. Carta reviewed the details with him about the 7% discount rate.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ENTER THE REPORT FROM CLIFTON LARSON ALLEN AS EXHIBIT 02-13-2023-A.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MCBRIDE-LEE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

19-22 Proposed Budget Transfer to FY 2022-2023 From: Department of Emergency Operations Center Salary Account #01290000-51000 (\$80,000) To: Emergency Operations Center Security Services Account #01290000-56225 (\$80,000) for retention/payment of security guards for the rest of FY 2022-2023. CONT'D

Mr. Appleby was asked why there was a mid-year transfer was needed. Mr. Appleby explained that the City had lost two security guards in the fall due to the pay rate that the City was using. This reduced the coverage to one full time and one part time guard to cover three buildings. The administration contacted the State for the current pay rates. There has been an increase in the amount of hours needed and departments that need the coverage. The supervisor is visiting the sites and was a former high ranking official from another town.

Council Member Newton said that many of the employees were in the union and wished to know if the security guards were in a union. Mr. Appleby said that the guards were hired as independent contractors.

Council Member McBride-Lee gave Mr. Appleby a hat tip for realizing that Bridgeport needs to have competitive pay rates. She said that she agrees with it 110%. The guards deserve their pay.

Council Member Pereira said that she disagreed with this. The individuals who should know how to de-escalated the situations are the employees, not the guards. In many state buildings, the individuals who are checking in the visitors are either an armed State Police officer or a police officer. She said that having two guards was a waste of taxpayers' funding. The City department employees are the ones who should be trained. She will oppose the matter when it comes to the Council floor.

Mr. Appleby said that if they see a guard on the phone, they should notify the EOC. Some guards were dismissed because they were disrespectful to visitors.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that regardless of the taxpayers money, the City has to be concerned about the lives of the employees. If someone comes in to cause trouble, they should call the police. If the City complains about not enough employees or overtime, then they shouldn't complain about the salaries.

Council Member Newton asked if this was to change the salary scale or if they were out of money. Mr. Appleby said that they had based the amount on the old scale and now they were running low on funding with the new pay rate.

Council Member Newton asked if they would be increasing their budget request for next year. Mr. Appleby said that they would only be asking for two increased funding items, one is the salary item and the second one is the radio costs. There are now a number of people who are interested in working for the City as security guards.

Council Member Burns asked if the supervisor was receiving a higher salary. Mr. Appleby said that they were also considering having the supervisor conducting additional training.

Council Member Burns said that his concern was that other departments might want to also increase their budget.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM 19-22 PROPOSED BUDGET TRANSFER TO FY 2022-2023 FROM: DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER SALARY ACCOUNT #01290000-51000 (\$80,000) TO: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER SECURITY SERVICES ACCOUNT #01290000-56225 (\$80,000) FOR RETENTION/PAYMENT OF SECURITY GUARDS FOR THE REST OF FY 2022-2023.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**REVIEW OF QUARTERLY STAFFING REPORT OF
BRIDGEPORT PUBLIC SAFETY.**

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED POLICE MANPOWER REPORT AS EXHIBIT 02-13-2023-B.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Burns gave a brief overview of the Police staffing and noted the number of officers who would be eligible for retirement.

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ENTER THE DOCUMENT TITLED FIRE MANPOWER AS EXHIBIT 02-13-2023-C.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER VIZZO-PANICCIA SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Burns gave a brief overview of the Firefighter staffing and noted the number of firefighters who would be eligible for retirement.

REVIEW OF BIMONTHLY BOE FISCAL REPORT.

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED FINANCIAL CONDITION REPORT 2023 AS EXHIBIT 02-13-2023-D.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER HERRON SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Burns noted that there had been a change of Superintendents and that this was the first report from the new administration. He cautioned people about clicking on the link for more details, which would disable the report.

GENERAL DISCUSSION RE: REVIEW OF THE MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORT.

Mr. Flatto said that the monthly report is very similar to the previous month's report. He said that the City was taking advantage of the improved interest rates. He added that he had made a small change regarding the sale of Sikorsky Airport. There are no major variances on the expense side. There are some overtime overbudgets in Public Facilities, along with the Security Services. He said that there were some vacancies that are in the process of being processed. However, the vacancy savings are going to be higher than expected.

Mr. Flatto said that he had provided a breakout on the revenue as Council Member McCarthy had requested.

Council Member Newton said that it was not good to continue on counting on revenue that they do not have. Counting on the airport sale would create a \$4 million dollar hole.

Council Member Burns asked about the budget for the City Attorney's Office. He mentioned that the former City Attorney left and there was an Acting City Attorney. However, one more attorney was hired and another attorney transferred to Labor Relations. He asked for an update on the budget. Mr. Flatto said that they appeared to be doing well in that department.

Mr. Nkwo said the individual who transferred to Labor Relations was still being paid from the City Attorney. He gave a brief overview of the situation.

Council Member Pereira asked about the Building Permits. She wished to know why the City was paying permit fees for Bassick High School. Mr. Flatto said that the City has always done that and suspected that they would have to change the ordinance.

Mr. Nkwo said that the City is responsible for 21% of the cost and the permit is part of that cost. It is a City policy. Discussion followed about the bonding interest that the taxpayers end up paying for. Council Member Pereira suggested that an analysis for the building permits for surrounding towns.

Council Member Burns said that the RFQ interviews have been completed and the estimate is that the full study would take between 4 to 6 months.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Telesco Secretarial Services