

MINUTES

SPECIAL JOINT MEETING

BOARD OF FINANCE AND CITY COUNCIL & WPC AUTHORITY

MAY 1, 2017

A **SPECIAL JOINT MEETING** of the City Council & WPC Authority and the Board of Finance was held in the City Hall Auditorium on Monday, May 1, 2017. Present were Mayor Elinor Carbone, City Councilors Paul Cavagnero, Gregg Cogswell, Daniel Farley, Luisa Noujaim, and Drake Waldron. City Councilor Anne Ruwet was absent. Board of Finance Members present were Mark Bushka, JoAnn Fenty, Laurene Pesce, Joshua Ferreira, Christopher Anderson and Frank Rubino. Public Works Director Jerry Rollett, City Engineer Ed Fabbri, Water Pollution Control Administrator Raymond Drew, Acting Superintendent of Streets Ed Nuzenski, Comptroller Alice Proulx, Deputy Comptroller Gina Casper, Mayoral Aide Timothy Waldron and Purchasing Agent Pennie Zucco were also present.

Mayor Carbone called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. starting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

FY 2017/2018 CITY BUDGET – Tentative Approval by City Council

On a motion by Councilor Waldron, seconded by Councilor Farley, the Council voted unanimously to tentatively approve the \$54,826,373 budget, a 3% increase over last year.

Councilor Farley reported that he received information from the Police Chief regarding the Traffic Department reduction made at the last meeting. He said the parking citations issued annually by the Parking Enforcement Officer equate to \$15,000 to \$16,000 annually, whereas restoring the full position costs \$38,500 including FICA. Mr. Farley said this does not appear to be a revenue-generating position, but noted that what cannot be calculated is how many people are deterred by her presence. Mrs. Pesce noted that citations alone do not count for all the revenue, such as that generated from compliant parking meter users.

Mayor Carbone explained that in light of expected revenue reductions from the State, she has controlled the expenses in the budget as best as she could. Mayor Carbone noted that some budget increases cannot be controlled such as the contractual Pensions and Benefits with a \$1,288,760 increase and insurance with an increase of \$125,134. Contracts are driving the 1.6 million dollar increase, she said.

Councilor Cogswell pointed out that the State may have a 5.1 billion dollar deficit over the next two years, and that a 25% budget reduction has to be considered. Mayor Carbone offered to bring back a proposal showing what that would look like.

FY 2017/2018 CITY BUDGET – Board of Finance Discussion

Mr. Ferreira questioned the health benefits increase. Ms. Proulx explained that the increase is much greater this year because a 54-month trend used for claims determines the allocation. The Board of Education allocation improved, due to teachers' switch to HSA plans, and the City's allocation increased, she said, and this year it will be funded at 110%, whereas last year it was funded at 105%. The increase equates to \$767,000 due to those two changes.

Mr. Rubino asked for Police Dept. staffing statistics. Mayor Carbone said that for the last three years, the budget called for 84 police officers, but a three-year trend analysis showed they always hovered around 77 to 79. She said they were consistently ending the year with a \$360,000 to \$600,000 surplus, so they are now budgeting for 81 officers. Mrs. Pesce said she would like to be assured that our City is safe with these staffing levels.

Council Cavagnero suggested the City Charter be revisited to allow City Council to discuss the Board of Education budget. He said the bigger issue is what we are actually getting out of our educational system, while we fight for the viability of this city as a family-centric city. Our institutions and departments have to consider how to do things differently, he said, since we have rolled a social service and welfare functionality into an education system. Councilor Cavagnero requested a Charter Revision to allow a budget-setting cycle to be more in line with the state.

Mayor Carbone explained that the fiscal year is statutory and a mill rate must be set in time to generate tax bills for July 1st. She recommended that a supplemental tax bill be issued if necessary. She further explained that a Charter Revision Commission cannot be charged by Council to advance any one item, and that the Commission decides and prioritizes what changes are necessary, and then puts it out to the public for a vote.

Mr. Ferreira stressed that the tax base must be grown, and the mill rate cannot increase. Mrs. Pesce agreed, cautioning that there will be a revaluation in 2019 and real estate values have not improved. Mr. Anderson suggested quarterly tax bills.

Mayor Carbone said she will bring a report to the next meeting, showing her best guess on the impact various revenue scenarios can have on the mill rate.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mrs. Fenty, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:28 p.m.

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PUBLIC HEARING

BOARD OF FINANCE AND CITY COUNCIL & WPC AUTHORITY

MAY 1, 2017

A **PUBLIC HEARING** was held by the Board of Finance and the City Council & WPC Authority in the City Hall Auditorium on Monday, May 1, 2017, to solicit citizen input and comments on the City Budget.

Mayor Carbone called the Public Hearing to order at 7:34 p.m.

Asst. City Clerk Carol Anderson read the legal notice.

With no members of the public wishing to speak, Mayor Carbone closed the Public Hearing to order at 7:36 p.m.

ATTEST: JOSEPH L. QUARTIERO, CMC
CITY CLERK

Carol L. Anderson, MMC, MCTC
Asst. City Clerk