

(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 Thursday, October 16, 2014, in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 P.M. by the Chair.

Present Councilman Steven A. Stycos, Chair
 Councilman Mario Aceto
 Council Majority Leader Paul H. Archetto
 Councilman Donald Botts, Jr.
 Councilwoman Sarah Kales Lee

Absent: Council Vice-President Michael J Farina, Vice-Chair
 Council President John E. Lanni, Jr.

Also Present: Council Minority Leader Michael W. Favicchio
 Gerald Cordy, Director of Administration
 Evan Kirshenbaum, Assistant City Solicitor
 Robert Strom, Finance Director
 Anthony Moretti, City Council Internal Auditor
 Maria Medeiros Wall, City Clerk
 Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees
 Tracy Sheperd, Stenographer

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

On motion by Council Vice-President Farina, seconded by Councilwoman Lee, it was voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting and they stand approved as recorded. Motion passed unanimously.

Chair that at 7:00 P.M., this Committee will not have a quorum because he and Council Majority Leader Archetto have campaign events to attend. He stated that if there are no objections, the Committee will hear and act on the Ordinances in regards to the School Contracts first and then if time allows, the remainder of the items on the agenda will be taken up.

CORRESPONDENCE:

PUBLIC HEARINGS/NEW BUSINESS:

- 9-14-02 Ordinance ratifying School Committee's collective bargaining agreement with the Cranston Teachers' Alliance, Local 1704, AFT (Teachers' Unit – Fiscal Years 2014-2017). [\[click to view\]](#) [\[click to view Fiscal Note\]](#)
- 9-14-03 Ordinance ratifying School Committee's collective bargaining agreement with the Cranston Teachers' Alliance, Local 1704, AFT (Teacher Assistant/Bus Aides Unit – Fiscal Years 2014-2017). [\[click to view\]](#) [\[click to view Fiscal Note\]](#)
- 9-14-04 Ordinance ratifying School Committee's collective bargaining agreement with the Cranston Teachers' Alliance, Local 1704, AFT (Technical Assistants Unit – Fiscal Years 2014-2017). [\[click to view\]](#) [\[click to view Fiscal Note\]](#)

Public Speakers:

Superintendent Judith Lundsten appeared to speak regarding Ordinances 9-14-2, 9-14-3 and 9-14-4. She stated that she sat in on all three contract negotiations and it went on for eighteen months.

Liz Larkin, President of Teachers Alliance, appeared to speak and asked Council for support of all three contracts.

Jeffrey Gale, School Committee member, appeared to speak in favor of all three contracts.

Matt Sheridan appeared in favor of the Teachers contract.

On motion by Councilman Aceto, seconded by Council Majority Leader Archetto, it was voted to recommend approval of Ordinance 9-14-02.

Under Discussion:

Mr. Strom asked if the Adopted Budget includes these increases. Joseph Balducci, School Chief Financial Officer, appeared to speak and stated that in the three year analysis he did, he included a 1% increase in all salary line items; 2% raises for 2016-2017 will have to be addressed when those Budgets are taken up.

Mr. Strom indicated that the School Department states that they have not been properly funded. He takes issue with that. They had a surplus last year and it looks like they will have a surplus this coming year and they were properly funded.

Council Minority Leader Favicchio asked if there is a net gain or loss for the teachers with this contract. Mr. Balducci stated that for the three years, it is a plus for the teachers and a cost to the district.

Chair asked when the last time the teachers received a raise. Ray Votto, School Chief Operating Officer, appeared to speak and stated, 2010-2011.

Mr. Moretti stated that in reviewing the fiscal impact statement, he is in agreement with the fiscal impact statement, but just as a statement. He continues to be critical of the manner in which it was prepared by the City, not just the School Department. He also stated that by the time you get to the end of the contract, that will be the total amount you will spend. Mr. Strom addressed Mr. Moretti's comment and stated that he concurs with the same way Mr. Balducci presented it. In his opinion, you have to look at it from a year to year basis.

Roll call was taken on motion to recommend approval of Ordinance 9-14-02 and motion passed unanimously.

Discussion took place on Ordinance 9-14-03.

Superintendent Judith Lundsten and Liz Larkin, President of Teachers Alliance, appeared to speak.

Sam Parente, 15 Lauren Ct., appeared to speak and stated that the taxes and the people paying the taxes are at their limit. He asked that the City Council keep in mind and think about what this is going to do to the tax rate in the City. Does this mean that taxes will be going up again.

Richard Tomlins, 400 Farmington Ave., appeared to speak.

Mr. Strom stated that after reviewing this contract, he feels this contract is fair and the Administration is in full support.

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

Under Discussion:

Councilman Botts asked what the rationale is behind eliminating the holidays. Mr. Balducci stated that they tried to mirror the teacher's contract. They tried to get consistency across the board.

Mr. Strom asked if this contract and the Technical Assistant's contract is retroactive to July 1st. Mr. Balducci stated that it is retroactive to August 31st, since that is when their contracts run.

Councilman Aceto asked that for the next Council meeting, he would like to know the following: with these increases, does that percentage stay the same from the old Fiscal Year or does that percentage for salary and benefits go up. Mr. Balducci stated to Councilman Aceto that he will e-mail this information to him.

Roll call was taken on motion to recommend approval of this Ordinance and motion passed unanimously.

Discussion took place on Ordinance 9-14-04.

Ms. Larkin appeared to speak.

On motion by Councilman Aceto, seconded by Councilman Botts, it was voted to recommend approval of this Ordinance. Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS/OLD BUSINESS:

08-14-1 Ordinance Renewal of lease for the Pastore Center to the YMCA [\[click to view\]](#)

(Referred from Ordinance Committee and tabled 9/11/2014 for discussion with Administration, School Dept. and YMCA regarding Bain's use of premises)

On motion by Councilman Aceto, seconded by Councilman Botts, it was voted to recommend approval of this Ordinance.

Under Discussion:

Mr. Cordy stated that according to the Director of the YMCA, he has been in discussion with the Schools to try to make the Center available to them.

Solicitor Kirshenbaum stated that in reading the emails between Bain and the Center and the School Department, it seems the School Department was addressing this issue and had been discussing this issue with the Center prior to the Council becoming aware of it.

Council Majority Leader Archetto stated that at the last meeting, the Council asked that the Director of Administration meet with the Schools and the YMCA Director to come up with possible uses of the facility. He asked if this has been done. Mr. Cordy stated that the day after the last meeting, Solicitor Rawson reached out to the Director of the YMCA and indicated this issue and his response was that he had been working with the School for months pro-actively to utilize the Center. Council Majority Leader Archetto asked if that communication has been forwarded to the School Department. Solicitor Kirshenbaum stated that he does not know that. He can ask Solicitor Rawson to ask the Director of the Center to contact the School Department.

Council Minority Leader Favicchio questioned the fact that the School Principal has not communicated with anyone about this and is not present this evening to address this issue. He also indicated that this item is on the agenda this evening and the Superintendent and her staff was present earlier and if there was an issue, they could have stayed and addressed it.

Roll call was taken on motion to recommend approval of this Ordinance and motion passed on a vote of 3-1. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Lee, Councilmen Botts and Aceto - 3. The following being recorded as voting "nay": Council Majority Leader Archetto -1.

Chair left meeting at 7:15 P.M.

Councilman Aceto nominated Councilman Botts to conduct remainder of the meeting. Councilwoman Lee seconded the nomination. Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS/NEW BUSINESS: (Cont.)

- **Real Estate and Tangible Tax Abatements** [\[click to view\]](#)

On motion by Councilman Aceto, seconded by Councilman Botts, it was voted to recommend approval of the above Real Estate and Tangible Tax Abatements. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Motor Vehicle Tax Abatements** [\[click to view\]](#)

On motion by Councilman Aceto, seconded by Councilman Botts, it was voted to recommend approval of the above Motor Vehicle Tax Abatements. Motion passed unanimously.

- **Tax Assessment Board of Review Decisions assessed as of December 31, 2013.**
[\[click to view\]](#)

No action needed.

- **Report from administration on the effects of two Council initiatives:**

1. **Notice to delinquent taxpayers that the city can attach their state income tax refund.**
Councilman Aceto

No discussion was held.

2. **Eligibility for elderly homeowners property tax exemption**
Requirement that motor vehicles be registered in Cranston. Councilman Stycos

Matter continued at request of the Chair.

- **Sidewalk cost/share program – formation of sub committee**
Status of \$100,000 sidewalk capital project (Councilman Stycos)

Matter continued at request of the Chair.

9-14-02 Ordinance ratifying School Committee's collective bargaining agreement with the Cranston Teachers' Alliance, Local 1704, AFT (Teachers' Unit – Fiscal Years 2014-2017). [\[click to view\]](#) [\[click to view Fiscal Note\]](#)

9-14-03 Ordinance ratifying School Committee's collective bargaining agreement with the Cranston Teachers' Alliance, Local 1704, AFT (Teacher Assistant/Bus Aides Unit – Fiscal Years 2014-2017). [\[click to view\]](#) [\[click to view Fiscal Note\]](#)

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The above four Ordinances were discussed and voted on at the beginning of the meeting.

9-14-06 Ordinance to amend the property tax exemption regarding tangible property valued less than \$10,000.00. [\[click to view\]](#)

No one from the public appeared to speak.

Councilmen Botts and Aceto both asked to be added as co-sponsors of this Ordinance.

Council Minority Leader Favicchio appeared to explain this Ordinance and stated that after speaking to the Tax Assessor, the total we would be losing in Revenue would be approximately \$138,000, however, there is a position open in his office.

Mr. Strom stated that the figure he obtained from the Tax Assessor is \$188,000 and the effect of approximately 270 accounts. He personally would like to do a little more research on this.

Councilman Aceto stated that maybe as part of that research, we could check the tax bills sent out to the businesses to see if they have a license with the City to do business. At least we would have a mechanism of tracking them. Mr. Strom stated that he can have this information for the Council meeting.

Council Majority Leader Archetto stated that he would like to see testimony from the Tax Assessor. Until he hears this testimony, he will not be voting in favor of this Ordinance. Mr. Strom stated that the Tax Assessor is out of the Country and will not be back in time for the Council meeting, but he will meet with his replacement to try to obtain this information.

Roll call was taken on motion to recommend approval of this Ordinance and motion passed on a vote of 3-1. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilwoman Lee, Councilmen Botts and Aceto - 3. The following being recorded as voting "nay": Council Majority Leader Archetto -1.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees