

(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, March 17, 2016, in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 6:47 P.M. by the Chair.

Present Councilman Steven A. Stycos, Chair
 Council Majority Leader Paul H. Archetto, Vice-Chair
 Councilman Michael J Farina
 Councilman Mario Aceto
 Councilman Donald Botts, Jr.
 Council President John E. Lanni, Jr.

Absent: Council Vice-President Richard D. Santamaria, Jr.

Also Present: Councilman Christopher G. Paplauskas
 Robert Coupe, Director of Administration/Acting Personnel Director
 Christopher Rawson, City Solicitor
 Robert Strom, Director of Finance
 Salvatore Saccoccio, City Assessor
 Anthony Moretti, City Council Internal Auditor
 Maria Medeiros Wall, City Clerk
 Rosalba Zanni, Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees
 Heather Finger, Stenographer

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING:

On motion by Councilman Farina, seconded by Councilman Aceto, it was voted to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last meeting and they stand approved as recorded. Motion passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE:

OLD BUSINESS:

- 1-16-02 Ordinance in amendment of Chapter 3.04 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled "Fiscal Provisions" (Audit Committee). Sponsored by Councilman Stycos. [\[click to view\]](#) (Cont. 2/11/2016).**

Chair stated that he has not heard back from Mr. Quinlan regarding this Ordinance and asked that it be continued.

On motion by Council President Lanni, seconded by Councilman Farina, it was voted to continue this Ordinance. Motion passed unanimously.

- 1-16-04 Ordinance in Amendment of Title 2 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, entitled "Administration and Personnel" (Minimum Wage). Sponsored by Councilman Stycos. [\[click to view\]](#) (Cont. 2/11/2016).**

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

Under Discussion:

Chairman Stycos stated that after speaking to Mr. Strom, he feels that it would be more affordable to amend the minimum wage amount to \$12 per hr. and he will be making an amendment reflecting this change. He also indicated that the Ordinance excludes high school students and summer help.

On motion by Councilman Stycos, seconded by Councilman Aceto, it was voted to amend this Ordinance as follows: line #28, delete "\$15" and add "\$12, effective July 1, 2016 and \$12.50 effective July 1, 2017".

Under Discussion:

Mr. Strom stated that currently, there are 150 temporary employees that work summer and some in the winter. He would consider increasing this for permanent part-times and most are at \$10.10 per hr. Going to \$12 per hr., there would be financial impact of approximately \$71,000 increase. This is up to the City Council, but this would be an issue for budgetary.

Councilman Farina stated that he does not disagree that these people deserve an increase, but we are doing it through Ordinance making it a law. He would prefer doing this through the budget process.

Council President Lanni stated that these people have no benefits, no paid holidays and they have been working the \$9.60 per hr. for years. We are only talking about \$71,000.

Councilman Botts stated that a person takes a part-time job knowing that they are not going to get benefits or paid holidays. He agrees doing this through the budget process.

Mr. Strom stated that there may be people making less than the \$10.10 or \$12 per hour and would not get an increase. In his opinion, this would not be fair.

Councilman Aceto asked if these people are in a collective bargaining unit. Mr. Strom stated, no they are not.

Ed Garcia, Library Director, appeared to speak and indicated that the library supervisory rates would be higher than \$12 per hour and so the rates for these people would need to be raised \$2 per hr.

Councilman Farina asked Mr. Strom if the \$71,000 would take what Mr. Garcia stated into consideration. Mr. Strom stated, no.

Roll call was taken on motion to approve the above amendments and motion passed unanimously.

Roll call was taken on motion to recommend approval of the above Ordinance as amended and motion passed on a vote of 4-2. The following being recorded as voting "aye": Councilman Stycos, Council Majority Leader Archetto, Councilman Aceto and Council President Lanni -4. The following being recorded as voting "nay": Councilmen Farina and Botts -2.

- **Discussion of need to update impact fees to reflect inflation since their establishment (Chairman Stycos).** (Cont. 2/11/2016).

Chair stated that the Code states that the Building Inspector is to review rates and report to the City Council every budget year. He has been on the City Council five years and this never has happened. He asked Administration to respond to this.

Solicitor Rawson stated that in researching the Statute, Section 45-22.4-4, this is Impact Fees just on the actual cost, not inflation.

Chair asked if the City Council will get a review of the Impact Fees from the Building Inspector with the budget. Mr. Coupe stated, yes.

Councilman Aceto asked if the report could be provided to the Council ahead of time so it can be reviewed by the time the budget process starts. Mr. Coupe stated that they will try.

- **Discussion of an energy conservation program for City buildings – Kenneth Filarski (Chairman Stycos).** (Cont. 2/11/2016).

No one appeared to speak.

On motion by Council President Lanni, seconded by Councilman Aceto, it was voted to continue this item. Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS/NEW BUSINESS:

Ed Garcia, Library Director, appeared to speak regarding proposed Ordinance 1-16-04 and stated that the Library Board of Trustees discussed this and agreed that the part-timers are underpaid. He also stated that if this Ordinance is passed, no matter what amount, his budget cannot cover it.

Hagop Taraksian, 17 Asia St., appeared to speak regarding proposed Ordinance 2-16-02 and stated that right now, a Senior Citizen receives more of an exemption than a Disabled Veteran. He also stated that he was told that the City has to obtain enabling legislation from the General Assembly if the City decides to do this.

Jess Karazian, Betsey Williams Dr., appeared to speak regarding proposed Ordinance 1-16-04. She stated that she works at the Hall Library and this has been a good job for her and it was never meant to make her a lot of money. She also stated that a raise is not a deal breaker, but a raise would make the part-timers feel more secure.

James Martino appeared to speak in favor of proposed Ordinance 2-16-02 and asked that the Council, when considering this Ordinance, consider all the sacrifices the Veterans made.

Michael Soscia, 24 Lambert Lane, Edgewood Hockey, appeared to speak and stated that he and other members of Edgewood Hockey are in the process of taking over the Ice Rink. He and others are present this evening for a number of reasons:

- Why the rent is being raised to \$265.00
- Why all these improvements are being made since they are in negotiations at this time
- There are safety concerns in the Rink
- The Rink condition is horrible and disgusting and needs to be addressed
- Piping system needs to be addressed
- Heating system does not work
- Septic system fails
- Bathrooms need to be addressed, they are disgusting
- There are no lights around the outside of the Rink, which is a safety concern
- Boat trailer has been parked outside for months
- Broken glass out in the parking lot
- Toilet removed from Rink behind a container outside

Mr. Soscia stated that this used to be the best Rink in the State. Unfortunately, right now, it is the worst Rink in the State. They are present this evening to see what is going on in the process and what the Council can do to help.

Andrew Giuliano, President of Edgewood Youth Hockey and Mr. Soscia's partner, appeared to echo the remarks made by Mr. Soscia regarding the Ice Rink. He also stated that they want to turn the facility into a top notch facility. There are major structural repairs that need to be addressed. In terms of the rates, theirs is above all the other rates for other facilities in Rhode Island. There is no justification for this.

James Forcier, 173 Wheeler Ave., parent of a seven-year old who attends the Ice Rink, appeared to speak and stated that he can honestly say he is scared to leave his child at the Rink due to the lack of upkeep of the Rink and nearby parking lot. He asked that the Council visit the facility and see the issues there and see what can be done to help the children.

Jeff Stevin, Assistant Coach for Edgewood Hockey, appeared to speak regarding the issues at the Ice Rink and stated that as a parent, he sees absentee management. He thinks this is something that really needs to be addressed. He also stated that the Bubble Rink is something that should also be addressed because of safety issues.

Nicole Ponteneau, parent of a hockey player, appeared to speak regarding the issues at the Ice Rink and stated that the bathrooms are dirty and disgusting. She also stated that the Rink is not safe and not healthy.

Jeff Millett appeared to speak and stated that his child attends the Ice Rink and the bathrooms are disgusting and there is mold. He also stated that there is no one there managing the facility.

Valerie Schuele, 27 Farm St., appeared to speak regarding proposed Ordinance 2-16-02 and stated that we cannot do enough for Veterans. She asked that the Council do whatever they have to do to make this happen for the Disabled Veterans.

Paul Valletta, President of Firefighters Union, appeared to speak regarding proposed Ordinance 1-16-02 and asked that this not be approved as drafted. He also stated that the Council Auditor does not belong on that Committee. He also spoke regarding proposed Ordinance 2-16-02 and asked that the Council show the State and the Country why Cranston has a heart, by approving this Ordinance.

Richard Ploude, 63 Plymouth St., Vietnam Veteran, appeared to speak in favor of proposed Ordinance 2-16-02 and stated that he is currently a mentor for veterans at Veterans Court. He asked that the Council take into consideration all the men and women who sacrificed their life for this Country.

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

On motion by Councilman Aceto, seconded by Council President Lanni, it was voted to recommend approval of the above list of Tax Abatements. Motion passed unanimously.

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

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

- **Tax Assessment Board of Review Decisions as of December 31, 2014** [\[click to view\]](#)

No action needed.

- **Tax Interest Waiver Approvals** [\[click to view\]](#)

On motion by Council President Lanni, seconded by Councilman Aceto, it was voted to recommend approval of the above list of Tax Interest Waiver Approvals. Motion passed unanimously.

2-16-02 Proposed Ordinance in Amendment of Title 3 of the Code of the City of Cranston, 2005, Entitled “Tax Exemption Totally Disabled Veterans – Councilman Archetto, Co-Sponsors: Councilmen Botts, Paplauskas and Aceto. [\[click to view\]](#)

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

Under Discussion:

Council Majority Leader Archetto stated that after this Ordinance was introduced, it was brought to his attention that a Resolution needs to be passed asking General Assembly to pass legislation. This Ordinance could be passed and Resolution could be passed at the same time.

Council President Lanni questioned if the Council can pass this Ordinance without General Assembly approval. Solicitor Rawson referred to Statute 44-12, Section (c) and stated that State Legislation gives a specific number so we would need enabling legislation. Council President Lanni stated that \$405 is almost a slap in the face to every Veteran. It is not right and not fair. He will work with every member of the City Council and every member of the State Legislature to get this done.

Councilman Farina stated that if this is going to be done, why not do no taxes for a Disabled Veteran and do a three-year phase in.

Councilman Aceto stated that if this is done, he asked what that would be over three years. Mr. Saccoccio stated, \$21 million at \$21 per \$1,000, approximately.

Councilman Paplauskas stated that he would like this Ordinance amended to include spouses of deceased Disabled Veterans.

Councilman Farina stated that based on what Mr. Saccoccio stated, he would go with 50% and 5-year phase in.

Chair asked if Council Majority Leader Archetto, Councilmen Paplauskas and Aceto could draft a Resolution for next Thursday to be passed at the March 28th Council meeting.

On motion by Councilman Farina, seconded by Councilman Aceto, it was voted to amend this Ordinance as follows: line #24, after “exemption”, delete “equal to fifty percent (50%) of the value” and add “exempt \$50,000 a year aggregated for five years up to \$250,000”.

Under Discussion:

Council Majority Leader Archetto stated that this is a step in the right direction.

Mr. Strom questioned why not just look at a dollar figure rather a percentage. Councilman Aceto asked Mr. Saccoccio what his opinion would be to do this. Mr. Saccoccio stated that this is the way it is currently being done.

Mr. Taraksian stated House Bill 7194 is in the Finance Committee of the House.

Roll call was taken on motion to amend this Ordinance as stated and motion passed unanimously.

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

Discussion: IAFF Local Union No. 1363 If any existing employees will opt for the alternate retirement plan in Resolution No. 2016-6. [\[click to view\]](#)

Chair asked if a member can stop paying on their pension and go into the 401K, thereby getting two pensions. Mr. Strom stated that they would not be able to opt out. If they are continuing to work, they have to remain in the State Pension system. Basically, it would be just a new employee as of July 1, 2017.

Mr. Valletta stated that the existing employees cannot opt out if they want to go into the 401K, they would forfeit their pension from the State. This would really affect new employees. This is a onetime deal.

Cranston Ice Rink Negotiations - Administrative report on status. Council President Lanni.

Mr. Soscia stated that he toured the Ice Rink on Monday and urged the City Council to tour the Ice Rink and look at all the issues there:

- Debris everywhere.
- Rubber mats with holes in them. This is a safety issue.
- Ice on the walkway.
- Boat trailer stored outside of the building.
- Storage area for propane tanks outside not locked for months. This is an OSHA violation.
- Black mold on the walls. This is a class case of mismanagement.
- Money collected at the door placed in a box. This is not a safe.

Mr. Strom stated that the box used for the money collected is placed into a draw that is locked. Every Friday, Management of the Rink comes into his office with all the checks, cash and receipts and are all reconciled. This has been done every week since the City took over the operation.

Council President Lanni indicated to Mr. Strom that he is reconciling every week but not reconciling every dollar that is taken in. Mr. Strom asked Council President Lanni how he plans to have this done. Someone can't be placed at the Rink every minute to oversee what they do. He indicated that since the City took over the Rink, we have generated a profit. Council President Lanni questioned the statement made regarding Management never being at the Rink. Mr. Strom stated that as to the Manager being there physically, he does not know, but he receives emails from him every day in regards to the operation. As far as he knows, he is very involved with the operations.

Councilman Aceto asked if the Ice Rink is part of Parks and Recreation and if Mr. Liberatore, Parks and Recreation Director, oversees the Rink. Mr. Coupe stated, no, there is a Manager of the Rink who works under the supervision of Director Strom. As to the condition of the Rink and statements made earlier, he disagrees strongly with Mr. Soscia's comments. Councilman Aceto asked how negotiations are going with the Ice Rink and if an update can be given. Mr. Coupe suggested holding an Executive Session for an update.

Council Majority Leader Archetto stated that he received a flurry of calls from parents of kids who use the Rink in regards to deplorable condition of the bathrooms. He asked if there is a custodian on hand at the Rink. Mr. Strom stated, no, the people that work there are all part-timers. Council Majority Leader Archetto asked if a City Inspector could be sent to check into the debris outside. He asked Mr. Strom, who oversees Management, to implement a valid counting system of the ice time.

Councilman Farina asked if anyone in City Hall has received complaints in regards to the bathrooms. Mr. Strom stated that he received approximately three to four emails in the last four to five years and he immediately contacted Management. He has never received complaints directly.

Councilman Farina asked how free ice time is calculated. Mr. Strom stated that he would have to check, he is not sure. Councilman Farina asked for this information for the next Council meeting.

Councilman Aceto asked who is responsible for maintenance as far as picking up trash. Mr. Strom stated that it would be the City's responsibility.

Chair asked Mr. Strom if he is aware of black mold. Mr. Strom stated that this is the first he has heard about it this evening. Chair asked if there are issues with the septic system as stated by previous speakers. Mr. Strom stated that the septic system is really old and outdated. Chair questioned the boat trailer being left outside for months. Mr. Strom stated that he is not aware of that. Chair asked who the leagues should contact with any complaints. Mr. Strom stated that they can contact Mr. Bucci, the Manager, and if they would like, they can email him also.

Mr. Soscia stated that he helps out sweeping and picking up trash. He is not trying to cause problems. He is trying to make this a better facility for the kids. He would be happy to sit with anybody to address these issues.

Chair asked Mr. Strom for a report at the next Council meeting on all these issues that were addressed this evening:

- Black mold
- Regular cleaning of bathrooms
- Boat trailers and toilet outside
- Broken glass outside
- Propane tanks containers not locked
- Pipes covered with ice under the floor door

Mr. Strom stated that of all the organizations, Edgewood Hockey is always late in their payments. Council President Lanni asked Mr. Soscia how late they are in their payments. Mr. Soscia stated that they do pay their bills, maybe a little late. He does not take care of the bills, but they never miss a bill. Mr. Strom stated to Mr. Soscia that his organization represents about 70% of the ice time, but they do owe for February and March now and that is considered being late.

Council President Lanni stated that if the City Council would like, he can schedule a special Council meeting for next week for a status update on the contract negotiations of the Ice Rink.

Councilman Farina suggested doing that prior to the regular City Council meeting.

Council President Lanni called for a special Council Meeting in Executive Session prior to the regular Council meeting on March 28th at 6:30 p.m. to discuss contract negotiations between Edgewood Hockey and the City of Cranston and also to address why it has not been agreed upon yet.

Council Majority Leader Archetto asked that the Economic Development Department be asked to attend the next regular Finance Committee meeting to address Citizens Bank leaving Cranston to go to Johnston.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees