

(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, August 11, 2016, in the Council Chambers, City Hall, Cranston, Rhode Island.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order at 7:35 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
 Council President John E. Lanni, Jr.

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

Also Present: Council Minority Leader Michael W. Favicchio
 Carlos Lopez, Chief of Staff
 J. Patrick O'Neill, Assistant City Solicitor
 Robert Strom, Director of Finance
 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 Aceto, seconded by Council Majority Leader Archetto, 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:

- **Resolution authorizing the City of Cranston to consent to mutual aid agreements with the Town of Coventry, Town of Johnston, City of Providence, Town of Scituate, City of Warwick and Town of West Warwick.** Referred back from City Council 7/25/2016.

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

Under Discussion:

Colonel Winquist appeared to speak and stated that when he became Colonel, there were a few agreements that were about to expire. Most of what this Mutual Aid is for is for road work detail when we do not have enough detail. Last year, we had two requests for Mutual Aid. This year we had eighteen, which were all from our Canine Unit. Those Officers are already on duty so there is no Overtime cost.

Councilman Aceto asked who would be liable if someone is hurt on the job. Colonel Winquist stated that if someone comes into our City, they remain under their City or Town Agreement. RIGL 45-42-2 states that whichever City or Town the Officer is from is responsible for him.

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS/NEW BUSINESS:

Paul Valletta, President of Fire Union, appeared to speak regarding the diversity issue, which is listed on the agenda this evening. He stated that the Union also feels there is an issue that needs addressing, but he does not want his department and the City to be looked at that they have not tried. Reasons he feels that we have seen decline in sign-ups in the tests are:

- The job has changed as to the hours
- The pension changes
- EMT/CPR course – cost of \$725, which is a four month course
- EMT/Cardiac course – cost of \$1,535, which is a five month course
- Agility Test – cost of \$105, which is good for one year.

Mr. Valletta stated that there is an EMT Revolving Loan Fund, which the person would have to be in the top 50 of the list and he does not think anyone has ever taken advantage of this. The issue we are facing is the enrollment. He thinks that people just don't have the money or the time to take these classes and if they do not get on the force, these certifications are not any good to them. This is an issue that needs to be discussed to see how this can be fixed. He indicated that he knows for a fact that the Chief has gone to minority organizations and schools, but we are just not getting the numbers to sign up. He also stated that past Administrations have also tried to attract minorities.

Council President Lanni asked if the City picked up the costs for the certifications and applicant just took the physical test and psychological test, and if the person passes and the takes the

courses, would that streamline so we would get more applicants? Mr. Valletta stated that that is what they used to do, but the problem was Overtime because if the person was on the job and he had a class, that would cause Overtime. That would help the process, but the Overtime would be the factor of that. He also indicated that we have a training academy.

Council President Lanni asked if the person attended the training academy, could take the classes at the same time? Mr. Valletta stated that they could. Council President Lanni stated that the concern is the demographics of Cranston is changing.

Al Cabral, 126 Armington St., appeared to speak and asked why we can't bring the courses in house. He stated that CCRI and the high schools are the first step. Diversity is a major issue in the City with the department. The cost is a barrier. The question is how do we get over that barrier. As to recruitment, he and his brother can help with that.

Len Cabral appeared to speak and stated that he has seen the change in diversity in the City in the last thirty years. We have to start at the high schools, maybe have the kids take classes and also utilizing community colleges and maybe we can keep the kids in our City. We have a very large diverse population in our schools and he thinks it is the best spot to start recruiting.

John Swenn, 8 Kensington Rd., appeared to speak and stated that these jobs are excellent jobs and he cannot believe there is not one woman or a person of color on the force. He thinks this is a crisis. This is something that cannot continue. There is tremendous talent out there because we are not looking at the right place or recruiting in the right place.

- **Real Estate Tax Abatements**

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.

- **Motor Vehicle Tax Abatements**

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 Interest Waiver Approvals**

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

- **Discussion regarding lack of diversity in the Fire Department and how that can be corrected.** Chairman Stycos.

Chief McKenna appeared to speak and explained the application process. He stated that of the 191 applications, as of the end of September, we had 19 people signed up for this department. We have never been so low. Seven did not pass the written exam.

Council President Lanni asked if there were any minorities out of the 191. Chief McKenna stated that he believes there were ten minorities, including women. Council President Lanni asked Chief

McKenna if this Council directs the Administration to pick up the cost for the testing, would the applications increase. Chief McKenna stated that he would probably say no simply because this is happening in other communities. Council President Lanni stated that he would think it would either double or triple. He stated that we have minorities on the Police Department and the Fire Department should have minorities. He would hope that the Chair of the Finance Committee set up some type of Committee to address this.

Councilman Farina questioned why recruitment is down so much. Chief McKenna stated that this is a national problem and schools are being targeted.

Council Minority Leader Favicchio stated that in terms of education, that is part of it. Kids have to be encouraged to go into this career. Maybe we could speak to School Administrators to start recruitment process at a younger age.

Councilman Aceto suggested that the Mayor and City Council form some sort of Diversity Committee to look into this issue since Mr. Valletta is present and the Cabrals are present this evening.

Mr. Lopez agreed that we need to address this issue. We already have a Diversity Committee that exists. We can certainly make that Committee active again and look at the members and see if we need to appoint more members. He stressed that this Administration has made very strong efforts to reach out to minorities. He also stated that they reached out to not only City agencies, but Statewide and Chief McKenna has attended various Latino festivals to try to recruit. We welcome people like the Cabrals to join us in helping us with ideas and suggestions.

Chair questioned a report regarding diversity members. Mr. Lopez stated that that may be through the Department of Labor. Chair stated that he would like annual report for various City departments for the last eight years.

Chair stated to the Administration that the current Diversity Commission is great, but it is not the City Council Diversity Commission. He would like to form a City Council Diversity Commission with members of the City Council, Chief or Deputy Fire Chief and members of the community.

Council Majority Leader Archetto stated that we need to do a collaborative with the schools and need to do more with the school level as to recruiting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:25 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,



Rosalba Zanni
Assistant City Clerk/Clerk of Committees