BURLINGTON BOARD OF FINANCE
SPECIAL MEETING
BUSHOR CONF. ROOM, FIRST FLOOR, CITY HALL *OR*
REMOTE MEETING WITH CALL-IN NUMBER
BURLINGTON, VERMONT
MINUTES OF MEETING
DRAFT
January 29, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Karen Paul Ali Dieng Joe Magee (via Zoom) Mark Barlow Miro Weinberger
OTHERS PRESENT:	Katherine Schad Jared Pellerin Jordan Redell

1.0 CALL TO ORDER and AGENDA

1.1 Motion to amend/adopt the agenda
Mayor Weinberger called the Board of Finance meeting to order at 4:45 PM.

MOTION by Councilor Dieng, SECOND by City Council President Paul, to adopt the agenda.

VOTING: unanimous; motion carries.

2.0 PUBLIC FORUM

2.1 Verbal Comments
Solveig Overby asked when the City's audit will be released for FY23. She also asked about the City's proposed strategy of reducing non-public safety spending and what that may entail. She also asked an expected increase in revenue related to GR/LOT/FF. She also asked how much it cost to move the Burlington Telecom equipment from Memorial Auditorium, or whether that will be included in this year's budget. Mayor Weinberger replied that staff will compile answers to these questions.

Sharon Bushor expressed concern about raising the public safety tax cap. She said that she would not be as concerned if she were still working, but she expressed concern about the cumulative impact of this tax and the school's requested budget increase and associated tax implications. She recommended phasing this tax increase to blunt the effect of cumulative increases on taxpayers.

Romeo von Hermann said that it may be prudent to have a public forum-style meeting to invite the public to weigh in with their input regarding the public safety tax cap increase prior to the Council voting on it.

3.0 FOR APPROVAL AND RECOMMENDATION TO THE CITY COUNCIL

3.1 Resolution: March 5, 2024 Annual City Meeting – Increase In Public Safety Tax Rate For Fire And Police Purposes Authorized
Mayor Weinberger noted that prior discussion around the proposed increase in the pubic safety tax cap had included questions around the benefits of a proposed tax cap increase, and he provided a summary of what these benefits could entail. He noted that an increase on the tax cap would allow the City to fully fund its rebuilding plan by budgeting for 77 officers, continuing recruitment incentives, and continuing to offer competitive compensation for police officers. He said that it would allow for retention of new professional staff, including 11 CSOs, 6+ CSLs, the CAIP Assistant Director, the Urban Park Ranger positions, and the Recruitment Coordinator, Redaction Specialist, and Public Information Officer within the Police Department. He said that it would also allow for a $250,000 flexible response fund, body camera upgrades, and training for EMS and mental health resources (the latter two within the Fire Department).

Mayor Weinberger provided more detail on expenses incurred for outside, private security for FY23, in responses to a Councilor request. He noted that the major areas for hiring private security were in the Parking & Traffic Department ($198,000), City Hall ($193,000) and the Library ($109,000), for a total of approximately $500,000. He noted that the City continues to include these amounts plus inflation in the FY24 budget and has planned to include them in FY25 as well.

City Council President Paul noted that the revenue coming from the Airport's enterprise fund into the General Fund for funding police officers at the Airport had previously included 6 officers but now includes 8. She asked how the City can fully fund 8 officers, rather than 6 or 7. Mayor Weinberger replied that given the recruitment challenges, it is unlikely they will have 8 officers at the Airport. Councilor Barlow noted that he recently spoke with Aviation Director Longo, who said that the number of police officers at the Airport should remain at 6. Chief Administrative Officer Schad noted that there is upcoming federal regulation that would increase the City's need for an increase in officers at the Airport, and that the projected 8 officers was based on prior, more optimistic estimates from the Police Department about the number of officers that could be devoted to the Airport. She confirmed that the number of officers at the Airport for FY25 will be 6.

City Council President Paul requested the full spreadsheet details of the ARPA funding prior to voting on this item.

Councilor Magee said that he plans to support this, though he has concerns about increasing the tax burden on residents, given anticipated tax increases related to the School Budget. He said that with regards to the conversation about the number of officers at the Airport, if the federal government is requiring additional officers, the federal government should be providing the funding for those officers. He said that if this becomes a more serious conversation, the City should engage with its federal delegation to express these concerns. Mayor Weinberger replied that the Airport pays for any police officer presence there, and that if there is some increase in officers, that burden does not fall on Burlington taxpayers. He said that during this time of extreme limited capacity, the City has made efforts to redistribute officers from the Airport to the downtown, where possible. City Council President Paul noted that if the number of officers at the Airport decreases from 8 to 6, it impacts revenue.

Councilor Dieng said that given that the budgeted target of 77 sworn officers have not yet been reached, he suggested delaying this proposed tax cap increase ballot item in order to have a better idea about where the City is. He said that there are many other items up for increases, such as the school budget. He suggested delaying and continuing to work with the Police Department. Mayor Weinberger noted that a mid-year adjustment to the tax rate isn't permissible, so the options are to either have the proposed increase on the ballot now or have a special election (which would incur additional costs) between March and June, or delay the proposal for a full year. He said that he does not believe it

will be possible to sustain the public safety items without this additional $1.8 million in revenue that would be available as a result of the tax cap increase.

Councilor Grant requested a thorough write-up on the amount and details about remaining ARPA funding. She acknowledged the sensitivity of the issue around the number of officers at the Airport, saying she is interested in having a fuller understanding of the 6 officers versus the 8 officers. She asked about the equipment request for the Police Department, noting that she would like to have a better understanding of their needs, given that Axion is in arrears.

Councilor Barlow said he would like an estimate of when the operational assessment will be completed, given that they are relying on estimates of budget efficiencies from that assessment to fill in some budget gaps, and knowing when a firmer number will be available will be helpful. He also noted that a more precise number would also impact the amount that the City would need to raise the public safety tax cap. Mayor Weinberger replied that they expect significant additional guidance from the operational study in time for further budget work. He also noted that they would not necessarily need to increase the public safety tax up to the cap, but that they would have the authority to do so.

MOTION by Councilor Barlow, SECOND by Councilor Magee, to recommend that the City Council approve the attached resolution.

VOTING: 3-1; motion carries (Councilor Dieng dissenting, City Council President Paul absent for vote).

4.0 ADJOURNMENT

4.1 Motion to Adjourn

With no further business and without objection the meeting was adjourned at 5:24 PM.

RScty: AACoonradt