

## FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the standing committee on Finance was held on Monday September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 7:00PM in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 45 School St., Brockton, MA. The meeting was called to order at 7:09PM with all eleven members present and Councilor Rodrigues presiding.

President Rodrigues began the meeting by acknowledging the Mayor of the capital of Cape Verde, Francisco Carvalho. Councilor Asack then presented Mr. Carvalho with a citation from Mayor Sullivan.

Meeting then entered Recess.

1. Acceptance of the minutes of the August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Finance Committee Meeting.

Accepted and placed on file.

2. Acceptance of the minutes of the September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Finance Committee Meeting.

Accepted and placed on file.

3. Appointment of Ms. Irene Giannopoulos, of Arlington, MA, 02476 to the role of Auditor for the City of Brockton for a three (3) year term.

Invited: Interim City Auditor Irene Giannopoulos

Ms. Giannopoulos began by briefly explaining her background with the city, and her position as interim city auditor.

Councilor Tavares wanted to congratulate and thank Ms. Giannopoulos.

Councilor Thompson began by acknowledging although this has no reflection on Ms. Giannopoulos herself, he is extremely disappointed that the mayor was not able to be present for his appointment of the new city auditor. Councilor Thompson then mentioned that the City Council was never given Ms. Giannopoulos' resume, and then asked what auditing background and education she has to which Ms. Giannopoulos responded that she has a bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. She then became the project cash manager for the City of Cambridge as well as all of the knowledge she has learned over the last two years or so with the help from the

D.O.R and a gentleman named Mark Abrahams. Councilor Thompson then asked if she is planning on taking any further education courses to which Ms. Giannopoulos responded that she would absolutely need to take courses as she still needs to receive certain certifications, with the plan to hire an assistant auditor to help take some of the work load for her to take said courses. Councilor Thompson then asked if to her knowledge, the position was posted to the public to which Ms. Giannopoulos responded that it was posted to the public. Councilor Thompson asked Ms. Giannopoulos if the Auditing Department keeps track of the School Department's expenses to which she responded that all of that is kept on file in Munis, but the issue is that they can only record and keep on record what is given to them, as well as explained that one of the main reasons for the deficit is the fact that people outside of the Auditing Department had access to the general ledger which is highly illegal, and that during the switch between Ms. Giannopoulos and her predecessor, they cut off that access to others. Councilor Thompson then asked if Ms. Giannopoulos' had plans to re-introduce blanket Purchase Orders to the city, to which she responded that the major issue with the blanket PO's is that often times money gets lost and left over, and when they closed them all there was a realization that many departments had some PO's with money still available that were open since as far back as 2010.

Councilor Minichiello asked if the Munis budget now matches the School Department's budget to which Ms. Giannopoulos responded that it is now, but was not in the past, and acknowledged that it is up to the School Department's CFO to enter their own budget into Munis. Councilor Minichiello stated that it seems Ms. Giannopoulos has learned a lot quickly in her brief time in the position and to keep up the good work.

Councilor Nicastro asked Ms. Giannopoulos what her goal would be for the first year of her three-year term. Ms. Giannopoulos responded that her goal would be to fill the vacancies within the office as well as finally finishing the audit. Councilor Nicastro then mentioned that although her colleague brought up the lack of support from the mayor, the Mayor was not on the agenda or invited to the meeting.

Councilor Derenoncourt asked what the educational background is of the Auditing Department. Ms. Giannopoulos explained that there are requirement depending on position, such as an Associates Degree for Administrative Assistant II's and Bachelors Degree's for those Administrative Assistant III's. Councilor Derenoncourt then asked if anyone has a CPA to which Ms. Giannopoulos responded no. Councilor Derenoncourt explained that he feels it is detrimental for an Auditing Department not to have a CPA. Councilor Derenoncourt then asked if there is a list of internal controls that exists over financial activities and reporting and Ms. Giannopoulos explained that that is accessible through the budget, and she can have it emailed to the council. Councilor Derenoncourt then asked what type of auditing experience she has prior to this to which she responded that her prior experience is with the City of Cambridge for about 14 years. Councilor Derenoncourt then asked if as the city auditor, she believes someone in the office should have a CPA, to which she responded not necessarily as the Auditing Department has an accountant with 20 years of accounting experience, and explained that functions vastly differ between the accounting done in the public sector compared to the private sector.

Derenoncourt then asked if the internal auditing department have a flow diagram that illustrates the process risk and controls that exist over financial reporting for the city and school departments to which Ms. Giannopoulos responded, that that is not in hand but can be created for the council. Councilor Derenoncourt then asked who is responsible for reviewing system access review in budget approval level in Munis to which Ms. Giannopoulos responded that it is herself and the City IT Department.

Councilor Farwell asked Ms. Giannopoulos to explain her plan on examining issues within the finance issues within the city. Ms. Giannopoulos went on to explain the necessity of sick and vacation time to be tracked effectively and in a normal way which the School Department's is not being done in such a way. Councilor Farwell then asked about an outside CPA being used to which Ms. Giannopoulos responded that we could as we have access to do so, but that contract has expired and they have not renewed one yet. Councilor Farwell then went on to explain that he believes there are people taking accountability regarding everything going on as the Mayor was the one who requested the outside audit and investigation be done, and that very few politicians would do such as it will expose all failures.

Councilor Farwell then used a Purchase Order from May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024 from the School Department as an example to highlight the work and detail of work Ms. Giannopoulos has as if it was not for her, there would have been a PO for \$3, 781.60 which was for a retirement party.

Councilor Asack began by stated she supports Ms. Giannopoulos' appointment to City Auditor as she feels anyone else would've ran based on the past year this city has experienced. Councilor Asack then stated that she feels like the accounts committee should be a joint committee between the city and the school, and also acknowledged that she isn't sure why there is always a divide, as they are all part of one city. Councilor Asack also asked who Pam Wood is to which Ms. Giannopoulos stated that Pam Wood is a Munis Consultant who services many departments.

Councilor Tavares wanted to thank Ms. Giannopoulos again, and also acknowledge how well she always presents herself in a calm and collected manner as well as highlighting that she doesn't believe the Mayor was needed to be here tonight as the appointment is about Ms. Giannopoulos and her hard work, not the Mayor.

President Rodrigues acknowledged that the discussion is about the appointment of the City Auditor and not the Audit/Investigation that was conducted, and that those questions can be asked later to the City Solicitor.

Councilor Teixeira acknowledged all of the help Irene has given him over the past nine months working with the Accounts Committee and he stated that the "resume" that everyone is concerned about not receiving, is right in front of them as she has gone above and beyond with her work on her time here, and that he knows the paper resume will be fine.

Councilor Derenoncourt stated that he only asks questions that are necessary due to being an elected official by the people of the city.

Councilor Thompson asked if she could provide a state of the school transportation accounts and the condition of its appropriation.

Councilor Asack motioned to recommend favorably. Motion was properly seconded and carried by a hand vote.

4. Ordered: In accordance with the General Laws of Massachusetts, Chapter 44, recommending that the City Council approve the expenditure of \$31,889.50.

FROM: DPW WATER- PURCHASE OF SERVICE \$31,889.50

TO: WEST GROUP LAW \$31,889.50

Invited: City Solicitor Megan Bridges  
Chief Financial Officer Troy Clarkson

President Rodrigues stated that he was given word that CFO Troy Clarkson requested this to be postponed to the next Finance Committee Meeting.

Councilor Asack motioned to postpone this item to the next Finance Committee Meeting. Motion was properly seconded and carried by a hand vote.

5. Resolve: WHEREAS, The city council will consider zoning changes for the area known as the Brockton Fairgrounds, and,

WHEREAS, This area constitutes 66 acres possibly with mixed-use development on the property, and,

WHEREAS, Fire safety is critical in areas where residential, commercial or other development projects take place;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

Brockton Fire Chief Brian Nardelli and such staff as he deems appropriate be invited to a meeting of the council to discuss the fire safety issues related to a large development project and surrounding residential and commercial properties, including issues affecting fire operations.

Invited: Fire Chief Brian Nardelli and/or designee(s)

Fire Chief Nardelli explained that there are specific issues that need to be discussed regarding the zoning of the area of the Brockton Fairgrounds such as making sure an industrial area is not located right next to a residential area. Chief Nardelli also explained that streets nearby need to be widened, water flow must be looped, and as well as mentioning the space between buildings must be substantial to make sure all safety is ensured.

Councilor Farwell mentioned that this is not your average zoning issue, and that many things need to be considered with this project.

Councilor Asack motioned to recommend this item favorably. Motion was properly seconded and carried by a hand vote.

6. Resolve: Be it resolved by the Brockton City Council to invite City Solicitor Megan Bridges to appear before the Finance Committee to discuss the City conducted audit and investigation for the FY23 school department financial deficit.

Invited: City Solicitor Megan Bridges and/or designee(s)

President Rodriguez explained that the City Solicitor is not the author of the audit, and that the questions should only be regarding her summary.

Councilor Thompson stated that he believes there should be no questions asked because they would be putting the City Solicitor in a position where she would continually tell the council that its probably not in the best interest of her to answer those relative questions.

Councilor Derenoncourt stated in confusion that he is unsure why the council should not ask questions about this as it is regarding such a significant matter.

President Rodrigues then stated as the chair of the committee, he is empowered to state that they will be listening to the summary that is provided, and that the councilors may speak and make statements but cannot ask questions.

Councilor Farwell then asked as a point of information, if no questions are to be made, why is the City Solicitor here to present to which President Rodrigues explained that this is a way to lay out the summary of the audit for the public who have been unable to read the audit itself.

City Solicitor Megan Bridges presented a brief PowerPoint providing a summary of the investigation/audit that was done regarding the deficit.

Councilor Asack motioned to recommend the item favorably. The motion was properly seconded and carried by a hand vote.

Councilor's Recognition

Councilor Asack mentioned the Greek Festival located at 457 Oak Street which is held through Thursday September 19<sup>th</sup> to Sunday September 22<sup>nd</sup> and the Lebanese Festival at 343 N. Main Street which runs through Friday September 20<sup>th</sup> to Sunday September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Councilor Derenoncourt discussed issues regarding the Presidential debate, and was disturbed about comments that were made about the Haitian community.

President Rodrigues wanted to briefly provide his support of Derenoncourt's displeasure with these statements and he would co-sign a letter condemning the statements as well.

Councilor Farwell acknowledged that there are members of the School Committee who are not able to accept criticism, and he also acknowledged that they failed to properly prepare for a meeting as well as plan to hold an executive meeting to discuss certain matters regarding the Mayor, as well as to mention that all the councilors must work together in order to change the trajectory of this city's politics.

Councilor Minichiello wanted to echo Councilor Derenoncourt's outrage and passion regarding the words of the Trump administration and wanted to state his support of the Haitian community.

Councilor Tavares wanted to briefly state that all humans have feelings, and that there is no place for those type of comments from the Trump administration at the time of the debate.

President Rodrigues adjourned meeting at 9:51pm.