

City of Fort Lauderdale

City Hall
100 N. Andrews Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301
www.fortlauderdale.gov



Meeting Minutes - DRAFT

Thursday, September 12, 2013

5:00 PM

Budget Workshop

City Commission Chambers

CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP

FORT LAUDERDALE CITY COMMISSION

JOHN P. "JACK" SEILER Mayor - Commissioner
BRUCE G. ROBERTS Vice Mayor - Commissioner - District I
DEAN J. TRANTALIS Commissioner - District II
BOBBY B. DuBOSE Commissioner - District III (not present)
ROMNEY ROGERS Commissioner - District IV

LEE R. FELDMAN, City Manager
JOHN HERBST, City Auditor
JONDA K. JOSEPH, City Clerk
CYNTHIA A. EVERETT, City Attorney

The meeting was called to order at 5:07 p.m. by Mayor Seiler.

DISCUSSION - FISCAL YEAR 2014 RECOMMENDED BUDGET

There were no questions concerning the proposed assessment for the **Beach Business Improvement District**.

Fire Assessment

In response to Mayor Seiler, the City Manager confirmed that the \$90 fire assessment increase is exactly what is needed. In comparison with other area cities, Mayor Seiler observed this increase would only move Fort Lauderdale some just ahead of the city that has been just above Fort Lauderdale in services cost. Moreover, this is assuming that city does no adjustments this year. He provided a copy of the comparison information published in the Sun Sentinel on September 8, 2013 that was made a part of the record. Vice-Mayor Roberts pointed out that Fort Lauderdale ranks twentieth of the thirty-one cities in the county. With the \$90 increase and Cooper City does nothing, Fort Lauderdale would be nineteenth. Mayor Seiler pointed out that Cooper City must absorb \$900,000+ from the Broward Sheriff's Office.

Commissioner Rogers expressed concern over a first time imposition of this assessment on the non-profit organizations at this point in time. He thought that their budgets have likely not recovered from the economic downturn. It equates to about \$500,000. Mayor Seiler emphasized the increase has to do with cost recovery. Commissioner Rogers suggested phasing in the security camera program. Mayor Seiler indicated perhaps phasing could be done, but he would not support not doing anything. Commissioner Rogers noted that when this was at sixty percent or \$135, the subsidy came from the general fund. He was concerned about the timing of imposing this fee. Commissioner Trantalis felt everyone is still recovering from the economic crisis. He was not willing to take away from other items.

The City Manager explained a camera program for the Northwest Community Redevelopment area (CRA) is in the process of being implemented. From police and fire staff standpoint, security is needed for large special events. He mentioned examples of the air show and New Year's eve. The goal is to pinpoint issues before they happen. It will be in the \$700,000 to \$1 million+ range. For Commissioner Trantalis' benefit, he explained if CRA funds were used, the cameras could not be used citywide. Commissioner Trantalis asked if the Beach Business Improvement District (BID) has been approached to see if they want to contribute. The City Manager advised no. Mayor Seiler commented that non-profits operate youth programs that give the City headaches. They pay no taxes. He felt if this is not approved this evening, it will never get accomplished. Vice-Mayor Roberts did not want to complicate the action from a legal standpoint. He would not object to a phasing over the coming year and noted that the bill is not actually due at the beginning of the fiscal year. In response to Commissioner Rogers, the City Auditor referred to an advisory opinion from the Florida Attorney General addressing fire assessments and advising that they must be uniform in the proportionality. The City Manager advised that the original assessment ordinance only exempted institutional property used wholly for the benefit of the public, therefore the City has been doing this incorrectly. With a full cost recovery approach, the City would now have to make the payment on their behalf. In response to Commissioner Trantalis, the City Manager advised that non-profits are charged for water and sewer and the Wave assessment as well as incidental charges such as false alarms. This assessment is analogous to the water and sewer service. Commissioner Trantalis saw the fire assessment fee as payment for insurance. The City Auditor offered the idea of a grant program with a declining scale for non-profits. The City Manager clarified that when a church or governmental properties, for example,

undertakes commercial activity, that portion is not exempt. Commissioner Rogers indicated that with that clarification he no longer has a concern.

There were no questions concerning the proposed **City millage rate**.

Commissioner Trantalis advised that he has outstanding issues, but realizes his voice is in the minority.

Concerning the **Lauderdale Isles Water Management District assessment**, Mayor Seiler believed the issue has been resolved. Commissioner Rogers provided more detail of how it was addressed.

There were no questions concerning the **Sunrise Key Neighborhood Improvement District millage rate and budget**.

Concerning the **City budget**, Commissioner Trantalis explained that the Commission is being asked to vote when there are outstanding unresolved items. During the closed door sessions on the compensation packages, he did not think they got to the meat of the matter. Cities across the state continue to wrestle with how to reduce their obligations in order to make ends meet. He did not think this has been addressed head on. He has not accepted representations made by the unions. His constituents are unwilling to accept the type of money that the City pays. He complimented the police and fire personnel. However, there is only so much that the City can afford and it has reached that point. The City has been tapping into its reserve fund. He believed that the police department is stretched to its limit and more personnel is needed. There needs to be a discussion on reallocation of resources.

Commissioner Rogers indicated that he concurs with most of Commissioner Trantalis' comments. However, the Commission does not yet know what will be in the contract. Four years ago, there was movement and a reality check in making it sustainable and fair. He felt meaningful concessions were made by both unions. A millage rate increase could have been used. It will be reassessed every year. Costs can come down. He was hopeful of reaching a sustainable and fair budget that covers both wages and pension. He felt it sends a better message to constituents when the full Commission is on the same page. Commissioner Trantalis was concerned about leaving money on the table while negotiating. The extra money is the fire assessment fee. The City Manager believed that both unions understand that the budget he has presented has no money to pay for anything other than what currently exists. There is no cost of living (COLA) included. Vice-Mayor Roberts thought Commissioner Trantalis may be pleasantly surprised during the course of the year. Everyone on the Commission shared this concern. Progress has been made in the past four years and he is looking forward to more. Relationships were different with the previous Commission. He also is hopeful. Mayor Seiler recalled the difficulties and challenges the current Commission faced from 2009 forward and the raises that occurred with the previous Commission. He explained the logic about use of reserves and that it was an intentional targeted way during an economic downturn. In the last round of negotiations, the City accomplished concessions equating to millions of dollars. He also is hopeful. He felt the City managed the economic downturn better than most cities. He felt issues raised by Commissioner Trantalis are legitimate. He referred to the fact that Fort Lauderdale has previously been subsidizing the Broward Sheriff's Office and those funds were likely used to subsidize contract cities. This is now being revealed. He concluded by saying that he would have liked to keep the fire assessment fee lower, but the Budget Advisory Board recommended an increase in the fee as well as the millage rate. Commissioner DuBose arrived at approximately 5:59 p.m. during Mayor Seiler's concluding remarks.

The meeting concluded at 5:59 p.m.