



BUDGET ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
MARCH 20, 2024 – 5:00 P.M.
Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport
Red Tails Conference Room
6000 NW 21st Avenue
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309

Board Member	Attendance	10/2023 through 9/2024	
		Present	Absent
Jeff Lowe, Chair	P	3	0
William Brown, Vice Chair	P	3	0
Ross Cammarata	P	3	0
Michael Marshall	A	1	2
Melissa Milroy	P	3	0
Prabhuling Patel	P	3	0
John Rodstrom [arrived 5:06]	P	3	0

Staff

Greg Chavarria, City Manager
 Susan Grant, Assistant City Manager
 Anthony Fajardo, Assistant City Manager
 Laura Reece, Director, Office of Management and Budget
 Alan Dodd, Public Works Director
 Stephen Gollan, Fire Chief
 William Schultz, Police Chief
 Jerome Post, Director of Human Resources
 Ben Rogers, Director of Transportation and Mobility
 Linda Short, Finance Director
 Tamecka McKay, Director of Information Technology Services
 Christopher Cooper, Director of Development Services
 Enrique Sanchez, Deputy Director for Parks and Recreation
 Alfred Battle, Deputy Director of Development Services
 Porshia Garcia, Deputy Director of Development Services
 Juan Rodriguez, Administration Division Manager, Development Services
 Clarence Woods, CRA Director [via Zoom]
 Charmaine Crawford, OMB Department and Board Liaison
 J. Opperee, Prototype Inc. Recording Secretary

Communications to the City Commission

Motion made by Mr. Cammarata, seconded by Mr. Patel to send a communication to the City Commission that the Board recommends the City look into changing the ordinance to make the landlord the ultimate guarantor of delinquent utility bills, which currently total \$7,439,054.15, which is 29% of all utility receivables as of March 29, 2024. In a voice vote, motion passed unanimously.



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I. Call to Order

The meeting of the Budget Advisory Board was called to order at 5:05 p.m.

II. Roll Call

Roll was called, and it was determined a quorum was present.

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 21, 2024

Mr. Brown noted a change to the minutes.

Motion made by Mr. Brown, seconded by Ms. Milroy to approve the minutes of the Board's February 21, 2024 meeting as amended. In a voice vote, motion passed unanimously.

IV. Floor Open for Neighbor Input

None

Ms. Reece showed a video inviting public input regarding the budget. Mr. Cammarata suggested adding a QR code and quick links.

VI. New Business

- **Infrastructure Task Force Update**

Mr. Marshall was not present.

- **Department Presentations**

- FY 2025 Business Plans
- FY 2025 Accomplishments and Challenges

GROUP A

- Alan Dodd, Director of Public Works

Mr. Dodd reported they had a \$730 million need for roads, sidewalks, bridges, asphalt and seawalls but they only had \$45 million in the CIP.

Mr. Dodd noted they were one of the few water utilities on track to meet the pending EPA regulations regarding PFAS. There were ongoing challenges regarding wastewater capacity and overflows during heavy rains due to inflow and infiltration. They had \$73 million in the current CIP for that but needed more to keep the flows under control. Mr.

Dodd said they were struggling to meet their regulatory obligations with the DEP. He stated DEP had also noticed the number of boil water notices and were concerned about the age of the water pipes. They therefore needed to increase the pace at which they replaced the pipes. He said after the April 2023 flood, they had initiated the Fortify Lauderdale Program accelerating the pace of stormwater investments. They had expanded from eight neighborhoods to 25 and the cost was \$500 million. He believed the bonding they had in place would support that but they would also need additional management and operational personnel. They also needed to advise homeowners of ways they could protect their properties better and were considering developing a personal resilience program.

Mr. Dodd stated their biggest accomplishment this year was the awarding of the water plant and the recovery from the April flood event. They had also completed construction in the first two stormwater neighborhoods.

Chair Lowe stated the City had been awarded \$1.5 million from the state for sidewalks and ADA upgrades and Mr. Dodd said this would be worked into the existing program and budget.

Mr. Brown asked about bonding for the \$700 million. Mr. Chavarria noted they needed staff first. He said he was looking at what other municipalities were doing, including partnerships.

Mr. Cammarata asked what had changed to make the wastewater issue worse and Mr. Dodd said as the City grew, they were adding one million gallons of need per day. He said if they did not address this now, in five years they would be unable to continue development.

Ms. Milroy asked if federal funds were available and Mr. Dodd said they had received significant grants for stormwater but for wastewater, there were loan programs that needed to be paid back.

- Stephen Gollan, Fire Chief

Chief Gollan discussed the City's growth and said they were challenged in recruiting and onboarding new firefighters to meet demand. He stated he worried most about having the staff to keep up with the City's growth and special events. He described the impact the events had on fire/rescue and said there were times when they were completely out of rescue units.

Mr. Brown said there were 54,000 annual calls for service and in five years it was projected to be an additional 26,000. Chief Gollan said 7.8% of calls were related to homelessness or repeat callers. He recalled the Mobile Integrated Health System program they had initiated last year to address homeless medical issues and said they wanted to expand this to include social workers.

Mr. Patel asked about the difficulty of retaining people because the cost of living here was so high. Mr. Cammarata suggested using CRA housing but Mr. Chavarria stated there were income requirements for that housing. Ms. Milroy asked if the City could build housing for City employees. Mr. Chavarria stated the City had received a P3 for developing the land next to the new Police Headquarters. He said the proposers were open to giving priority to public service professionals and this could be a requirement. Ms. Grant stated they must see if the proposal required further evaluation after the City examined it, after which it would be brought to the City Commission and opened to other proposers.

- William Schultz, Police Chief

Chief Schultz said the most important thing on his mind was the well-being of Police Officers and ensuring they had the necessary tools and training to interact with the public effectively. He agreed that recruitment and retention were two of their most worrisome challenges. There were also technological advances they must deal with, such as digital data management, advances in DNA and bullet casing collection and testing. He said Shot Spotter, the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network, the Real Time Crime Center, the license plate reader program, and their surveillance camera program were crucial to combatting the increase in the City's gun issues.

Chief Schultz said he had worked with Vice Mayor Beasley-Pittman on a 10-week action plan with partners, during which they took 40 violent felons off the street and confiscated 40 illegal firearms.

Chief Schultz said according to Pacer AI analytics data, every 24 hours, between 565,000 and 580,000 people passed through the City. He remarked on how this increased demands for Fire and Police and affected traffic congestion.

Chief Schultz noted the number of festivals and events in the City that were attractive targets for catastrophic incidents. Municipal and county facilities, transit hubs and infrastructure were also vulnerable. Chief Schultz stated cybercrime required constant vigilance and technology to prevent and address. South Florida was also seeing an increase in human trafficking. Chief Schultz wanted to ensure the Police Department remained well equipped and well trained to meet the challenges of today and the future.

Mr. Rodstrom thanked Chief Schultz for his creative actions to control Spring Break. Chief Schultz discussed how they had begun a campaign to control Spring Break about 10 years ago called "Organized Fun," which continued to work. They also recruited for Police, Fire and Lifeguards on the beach.

- Jerome Post, Director of Human Resources

Mr. Post described the Human Resources divisions and activities. He explained how they had filled some critical positions that were lost last year and said there were still a few key positions to be filled. He lauded staff for continuing to provide all services after losing their

offices to the flood in April 2023. Mr. Post said their biggest accomplishment was implementing the new ERP system in December 2023. He reported they had completed the bargaining process with IAFF and FOP.

Mr. Post said his biggest concern was hiring and retention. Ms. Milroy asked if there was a national campaign to recruit employees to the City. Mr. Post said they had created a nationwide campaign starting a couple of years ago. He noted how people who moved here from other states discovered that housing was more expensive than they anticipated.

Chair Lowe asked about the vacancy report and Mr. Post said December 2023 was the last report available.

Mr. Patel asked about the cost-of-living index and if they should consider a significant change to compensation. Mr. Chavarria described how they needed to adjust salaries for existing employees to meet salaries offered to new employees. He had asked staff to consider contracting out to vendors. He noted that the benefits they provided employees in order to recruit and retain, such as vacation time and sick time, had an impact on performance.

GROUP B

- Ben Rogers, Director of Transportation and Mobility

Mr. Rogers recalled that the Board had supported the micro transit project last year, which was still in operation. He said they were aligning their grant funding requests with the City Commission priorities. They had also put some staff resources in place that had been lacking in the past and begun communicating with Broward County and FDOT. They now needed to put financial resources behind initiative to address traffic congestion and overall mobility. He stated with the Parking Fund, they were focusing on technology, such as developing real-time parking availability, the ability to pay for parking with a phone and interconnected wayfinding.

Mr. Brown asked about the City's percentage of the surtax, comparing what they contributed versus what they received back. Mr. Rogers stated he had heard the City contributed approximately 35%-40% of total surtax dollars and said they submitted three applications per year. They had six to seven active projects from previous years and were awarded two more last year. Mr. Rogers reported they did not currently have staffing issues.

- Linda Short, Director of Finance

Ms. Short described Finance's divisions and responsibilities. She said she had recommended last year that the City pass the credit card fees onto users and that should be implemented in May. They had also secured financing for the water plant at a great rate, issued bonds for the water plant and stormwater and secured a low interest WIFIA loan from the EPA to help fund stormwater projects. Ms. Short stated they were currently busy implementing Phase II of the ERP system.

Ms. Short said their challenges included internal controls, which she felt should be evaluated with the new system to ensure they had the proper controls built in. She noted that the new ERP system provided a tremendous amount of data that must be reviewed, reconciled and posted by staff. They were also experiencing staffing challenges, and she noted that people were not studying accounting anymore. Ms. Short informed the Board that last year, they had approximately \$545 million in purchasing but in the first six months of this fiscal year, it was already \$744 million. Ms. Short stated they must update the utility billing software, which was 15 years old.

Board members discussed water billing and delinquencies and Chair Lowe noted that some cities required that the property owner must be responsible for the water bill.

- Tamecka McKay, Director of Information Technology Services

Ms. McKay stated in FY 2023 they had started a multi-year, multi-phase technology modernization strategic plan, based on human capital, cybersecurity posture and modernization. Despite setbacks and disruptions caused by the April 2023 flood, they had made significant progress. She listed the accomplishments of the last 18 months: migrated ERP to the cloud; refreshed storage infrastructure; refreshed network equipment; replaced, upgraded or isolated almost 100 servers for posing cyber security risks; migrated most departments onto the Microsoft Office 365 cloud. They were also in the process of migrating Police Department users onto Office 365. Regarding human capital, Ms. McKee stated they had the opportunity to leverage outsourced services.

Mr. Cammarata asked about the \$1.2 million fraud and Ms. Short said this was not an IT issue, it was a human issue. Ms. McKay stated this had been handled by the Police, since it was not a cybersecurity issue.

- Christopher Cooper, Director of Development Services

Mr. Cooper recognized Deputy Directors Alfred Battle and Porshia Garcia, and Juan Rodriguez, Administration Division Manager. Mr. Cooper described the department's divisions and responsibilities. He reported one of their biggest accomplishments of the last year was going completely online and digital with permitting and plan review. They had also taken on the consolidated call center Fix It FTL, created a lien amnesty program, worked on the mixed-use code, and created affordable housing programs.

Mr. Cooper said one of his biggest concerns was creating affordable housing, and said they were implementing several programs and policies to encourage it. There were also challenges attracting and retaining employees. They did not have a vacancy issue but they were working on succession planning and encouraging employees to stay to prevent the loss of institutional knowledge.

Mr. Cooper stated they had some new performance metrics this year, including proactive code enforcement, making the business tax process easier, and affordable housing.

Mr. Brown asked about the permit fees and Mr. Cooper said they reviewed them every two to three years and amended them according to the cost of service.

Mr. Cammarata asked if there were internships available for college students and Mr. Chavarria stated they had a fellows program, which they had cut last year in order to help bring in more Police and Fire Rescue personnel. They also had a program for high schoolers over the summer. Mr. Cammarata requested data on those programs, including costs and Ms. Reece agreed to provide it.

Ms. Milroy asked about increasing fees or adding fees for development. Ms. Reece noted that the State limited what they could charge for; if it exceeded the cost of service it was considered a tax.

- Enrique Sanchez, Deputy Director for Parks and Recreation

Mr. Sanchez said the bond program was gaining steam with projects under construction. He noted there were over 100 City parks and 341 full-time equivalent employees, but a total of approximately 500 employees including part timers and summer workers. The Parks Department also oversaw aquatics and cemetery maintenance. He reported DC Alexander Park was coming online in the next few months.

Mr. Sanchez admitted they had personnel issues, which had gotten worse since the private sector had increased wages. There were also competition issues with skilled trades. Mr. Sanchez stated their main concern was preventing incidents or issues in programs and special events.

V. Old Business

- Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) NW Progresso Flagler Heights Area - Financial Impact of Sunsetting versus Extending – Follow Up

Mr. Fajardo recalled the Board had asked about funding from the last five years from the CRA to the Flagler Village area. He stated there were two projects in that area: Quantum at Flagler Village, which had received \$500,000 and the Galleria at FAT Village that had received \$2.5 million, most of which from the CRA.

Mr. Rodstrom stated Vice Mayor Beasley-Pittman indicated she favored extending the CRA and Broward County Commissioner Robert McKinzie had informed him that the County might be interested in extending it. Mr. Rodstrom said the CRA had done a lot of great work for this area and he would support an extension.

Mr. Brown requested more information on the non-profit that was created to take over after the CRA sunsetted. Mr. Chavarria agreed to report back.

VII. Communications to/from City Commission

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Mr. Brown was troubled that the City had cut internship programs while increasing contributions to non-profits. Chair Lowe said this was one of the things he would address with Commissioners when he met with them individually.

VIII. Board Member Comments

Chair Lowe wished to reschedule the May 8 meeting to May 29, so they would meet May 15, 22 and 29.

Mr. Brown suggested making the other two meetings longer instead of holding a third meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Cammarata, seconded by Mr. Rodstrom to reschedule the May 15 meeting to May 29, so the May meetings would be on May 8, 22 and 29. In a voice vote, motion passed unanimously.

Chair Lowe reminded everyone of the Reimagining City Hall workshop on March 23 at 9 AM at the Beach Community Center to discuss financing and procurement.

Mr. Brown asked if they should inform the Infrastructure Task Force that the BAB was looking at financing for the new City Hall. Ms. Reece agreed to put this on the Board's next agenda.

Ms. Reece reminded everyone to take the Reimagine City Hall survey. Ms. Milroy suggested putting this up on the Galleria Mall digital billboard.

IX. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.