



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

APPROVED
BUDGET ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
AUGUST 4, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.
Commission Chambers
100 North Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301

Board Member	Attendance	10/2020 through 9/2021	
		Cumulative Attendance Present	Absent
Brian Donaldson, Chair	P	10	0
Jeff Lowe, Vice Chair	P	10	0
Ross Cammarata	A	8	2
Catherine Graham	P	10	0
Michael Marshall	A	7	3
A. Abidemi Oladipo	A	8	1
Prabhuling Patel	P	10	0
Adam Sabin	P	8	2
Johnnie Smith	A	7	3
Christopher Williams	P	8	2

Also Attending

- Chris Lagerbloom, City Manager
- Laura Reece, Director, Office of Management and Budget
- John Herbst, City Auditor
- Charmaine Crawford, Board Liaison
- Jamie Opperlee, Prototype Inc. Recording Secretary

Communications to the City Commission

Motion made by Mr. Sabin, seconded by Mr. Patel, to move forward with the budget as proposed to the Budget Advisory Board. In a roll call vote, Motion passed 6-0.

Purpose: To Provide the City with input regarding the taxpayers’ perspective in the development of the annual operating budget; to review projections and estimates from the City Manager regarding revenues and expenditures for upcoming fiscal year; to advise the City Commission on service levels and priorities and fiscal solvency; and to submit recommendations to the City Commission no later than August 15 of each year regarding a budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

I. Call to Order

The meeting of the Budget Advisory Board was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

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

III. Approval of Last Meeting Minutes – July 21, 2021

Motion made by Mr. Patel, seconded by Ms. Graham, to approve the minutes of the Board's July 21, 2021 meeting. In a voice vote, motion passed unanimously.

IV. Floor Open for Neighbor Input

None

V. Old Business

None

VI. New Business

A. Budget Advisory Board Recommendation to City Commission regarding the FY 2022 Proposed Budget

Mr. Lagerbloom said when the City Commission approved the tentative millage rate of 4.1193 in July, it was based on the preliminary budget. He mentioned items a Commission wished to be considered as they brought the budget to hearings in September:

- Obtain a boat for Code Enforcement use
- Office space for the City Clerk to free up space for an additional commissioner on the 7th floor
- Additional non-profit funding for 10-12 organizations

Regarding the Fire overtime budget, Mr. Lagerbloom said a recruit class of 24 firefighters would begin soon for 10 weeks. Once they completed training, this should significantly reduce the overtime. He and Fire Rescue Chief Kerr had discussed other cost-saving measures.

Mr. Lagerbloom reported State revenue would be \$1.3 million higher than they had anticipated. They could prioritize these funds for one-time capital projects or use them to offset the cost of the Presidents Day Holiday the Commission wanted added to the budget. The additional \$112,500 a Commissioner had requested for non-profit funding could come from the additional \$1.3 million in State revenue if the Commission agreed.

Chair Donaldson was concerned about the policy and procedure regarding the non-profit funding. He was upset that a Commissioner had added a group of “these are my favorite non-profits and I want the City to give them money” after the BAB had vetted the non-profits and determined that these programs did not warrant funding.

Mr. Lagerbloom said one non-profit the Commissioner wished to fund was Bonnett House. Chair Donaldson recalled Bonnett House’s application, and said he had informed their Director that the Board did not feel that giving Bonnett House \$10,000 for their walkie-talkie system to help employees communicate was the best use of taxpayer money because it was not a service that would benefit the public. Chair Donaldson thought the majority of the BAB were “almost offended” that a Commissioner suggested funding non-profits “without having looked at any of the detail.”

Chair Donaldson thought it may also seem like favoritism when a Commissioner requested the funds after the BAB had not recommended funding the organization. Mr. Lowe felt this took transparency out of the process. Mr. Lagerbloom pointed out that any changes to the budget would be presented to the Commission for approval; no individual Commissioner had the power to unilaterally add items to the budget.

Mr. Williams said vetting the non-profits had been a “colossal undertaking” on the Board’s part and he was very troubled. Mr. Sabin thought the process needed more work. He noted that Nova had already been added to the list after the Board had not recommended funding them.

Mr. Patel felt “completely outraged and betrayed that somebody can just come in from behind and destroy the process just like that.” He said any such action should happen in public view. Mr. Lagerbloom stated this was not happening “in some secret back room somewhere.” It was not public yet because the Commission had not met since the request had been made. It was public now, and the City Commission would discuss it when they met at a public meeting. He stated, “This won’t make it into the budget until it meets the sufficiency of public input.”

Ms. Graham recalled the Board had focused on the Commission’s priorities. She thought next year, perhaps the City Commission could provide a list of non-profits that they definitely wanted funded first and the Board could vet the remaining applicants. She said the Board needed to feel that they were making a difference and were helping, but it did not seem like that now.

Chair Donaldson agreed with Ms. Graham that the Commission could decide on organizations they thought must be funded before the BAB reviewed the remainder. He also suggested setting stricter criteria for applications before they would be vetted by the Board, such as a minimum number of residents the non-profit’s program would benefit.

Mr. Patel recalled Chair Donaldson informing the Board that the City of Miami had millage dedicated to CIP. He thought this was an excellent idea and wanted to push this concept forward. Chair Donaldson thought they should wait until the next budget cycle to discuss this with the Commission. He was going to stress to the Commission that this year's CIP projects had been funded with Federal money and by Mr. Lagerbloom using one-time expenses. Chair Donaldson said as a taxpayer, he would be in favor of raising his taxes, "if you were giving me something tangible, which are CIPs." Mr. Lagerbloom stated at the August 17 Commission Conference meeting, staff was presenting the City's unfunded CIP projects, at the Commission's request. He thought discussion of a funding source may be a natural fit for this agenda item.

Mr. Williams asked how long it had been since they City had budgeted for NCIP and Ms. Reece said it had been four years. Mr. Williams explained the NCIP program, wherein HOAs invested 50/50 with the City on community CIP projects. Ms. Reece said this program had become very expensive because not all communities had been able to raise the 50%, so projects had sat for years unfinished. Also, some HOAs were not maintaining the projects, per the agreements, and the City had repurposed the money to fund a Parks crew to maintain those projects that neighborhoods were not. Then the City had sunsetted the program.

Chair Donaldson discussed the impact COVID had on the Fire Rescue vacancy rate and overtime last year because they could not have a Fire Academy. He anticipated an improvement in Fire overtime next year after the Fire Academy resumed and assumed this would be reflected in next year's budget. Mr. Lagerbloom said he did not want to present the City Commission a structurally unbalanced budget. He stated there was no sense in underfunding something, only to watch it be overspent. He said Mr. Herbst would take an independent look and would advise him.

B. Joint City Commission Workshop Preparation

- Tuesday, August 17, 2021; 11:30am – 1:00pm

Discussed earlier.

VII. Communications to/from the City Commission

Motion made by Mr. Sabin, seconded by Mr. Patel, to move forward with the budget as proposed to the Budget Advisory Board. In a roll call vote, Motion passed 6-0.

VIII. Board Member Comments

Items for September agenda

Chair Donaldson wanted to discuss strategies for non-profit vetting. Mr. Williams wished to start laying the foundation for increasing the millage rate next year. Mr. Sabin agreed, and wanted to allot more time to dealing with the budget. Mr. Sabin suggested a deeper dive into a possible tax increase and to devote less time to the non-profit reviews. He

wanted to alert new Board members about items that came up repeatedly, like Fire overtime. Mr. Patel wanted to discuss dedicated millage for CIPs. Ms. Graham wanted to review the big, key issues, such as the CIP. Mr. Lowe wished to discuss the formatting, detail level and frequency of the reports they received from staff. Chair Donaldson agreed, and asked Board members to consider what data they wanted to see every month.

IX. Adjourn

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

Minutes prepared by J. Opperlee ProtoType Inc.