



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

**APPROVED**  
**BUDGET ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**  
**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE**  
**MARCH 16, 2022 – 5:00 P.M.**  
**8<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM**  
**100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE**  
**FORT LAUDERDALE, FL 33301**

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>10/2021 through 9/2022</b>	
		<b>Cumulative Attendance Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Brian Donaldson, Chair	P	5	0
Jeff Lowe, Vice Chair	P	5	0
Ross Cammarata	P	4	1
Michael Marshall [arrived 5:39]	P	4	1
Prabhuling Patel	P	4	1
Adam Sabin	A	3	2
Christopher Williams	P	5	0

**Staff**

- Chris Lagerbloom, City Manager
- Tarlesha Smith, Assistant City Manager/Director of Human Resources
- Anthony Roberts, Assistant Director of Human Resources
- Greg Chavarria, Assistant City Manager
- Laura Reece, Director, Office of Management and Budget
- Susan Grant, Director of Finance
- Tamecka McKay, Technology and Infrastructure Operations Manager
- Anthony Fajardo, Director of the Development Services Department
- Al Battle, Deputy Director of the Development Services Department
- Porshia Williams, Assistant Director of the Development Services Department
- Ben Rogers, Director of Transportation
- Phil Thornburg, Director of Parks and Recreation
- Luis Alvarez, Acting Police Chief
- Dr. Kenneth Campbell, Business Manager
- Alan Dodd, Director of Public Works
- Rhoda Mae Kerr, Fire Chief
- Paul Vanden Berge, Public Safety Administrator
- Charmaine Crawford, Budget Department and Board Liaison
- Jamie Opperlee, Prototype Inc. Recording Secretary

**Communications to the City Commission**

None

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting of the Budget Advisory Board was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

**II. Roll Call**

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

**III. Approval of Last Meeting Minutes – February 16, 2022**

Chair Donaldson noted a correction.

**Motion** made by Mr. Patel, seconded by Mr. Lowe, to approve the minutes of the Board's February 16, 2022 meeting as amended. In a voice vote, motion passed unanimously.

**IV. Floor Open for Neighbor Input**

None

**V. Old Business**

None

**VI. New Business**

- **Department Presentations - FY 2023 Business Plans and FY 2023 Accomplishments and Challenges**

**GROUP A**

**i. Tarlesha Smith, Assistant City Manager/Director of Human Resources**

Ms. Smith described the departments functions. Her concerns included:

- The impact the pandemic had on the workforce
- Workforce losing 40% of its employees in the next five years due to retirements
- Need creative funding to attract and retain employees
- Maintaining morale
  - Need to assess what will retain employees

Chair Donaldson asked if the City's entry-level positions paid equal to private sector entry-level positions. Ms. Smith said the starting salary was \$15 per hour, plus benefits. Anthony Roberts, Assistant HR Director, described their recruitment methods and process. He said they intended to increase their advertising budget by \$15,000 this year.

Mr. Roberts said the average employee loss was 5% per year and recently it was 12% per year. Mr. Cammarata wanted to know why employees were leaving and where they were going. Ms. Smith said they conducted exit interviews to make those determinations and agree to provide the Board with a report of her findings from the exit interviews. Mr. Camarata also wanted to see a comparison of employment offers from other municipalities.

**ii. Susan Grant, Director of Finance**

Ms. Grant described the department's makeup and functions. She listed several of the department's accomplishments in the past year and what they planned for the future. She stated in 2023, they were "singularly focused" on the Enterprise Resource Planning [ERP] conversion. Ms. Grant stated the department's greatest challenge was staff retention and morale.

Regarding the impact of the anticipated increase in interest rates, Ms. Grant said the value of the bond portfolio had recently lost 5 basis points but as time went on, they would see more interest income than they had for two years. Mr. Camarata asked why it mattered, since the City held bonds to maturity. Ms. Grant stated they did not hold all bonds to maturity; they had a long-term portfolio and a short-term portfolio. Mr. Camarata wanted to know what percentage of the portfolio the City kept and did not keep to maturity.

Chair Donaldson asked about collecting delinquent utility bills and Ms. Grant stated they had needed to program the system to do write-offs. Ms. Grant said they had not done write-offs in 11 years, so there were many old, inactive accounts. Chair Donaldson wanted to know the number of active accounts that had uncollected utility bills. Ms. Grant described the City's efforts to collect delinquent water bills.

Mr. Marshall arrived at 5:39.

**iii. Tamecka McKay, Technology and Infrastructure Operations Manager**

Ms. McKay discussed the 2021 IT breach of Broward County schools. She described her department's functions and provided statistics on their services. She stated opportunities included:

- Federal funds available
  - Last summer's Summer Enrichment Program
  - Technologies to improve public services

Challenges included:

- Cybersecurity
  - Vulnerabilities due to outdated, unsupported software and hardware
- Recruitment/retention of staff
- The upcoming ERP conversion

Ms. Reece stated the funding for cybersecurity was from the Internal Service Fund, shared by all departments, and the General Fund paid for its share. Ms. Grant said federal grant funds were flexible and could be used for cybersecurity. Chair Donaldson wanted to find creative revenue streams to pay for their cybersecurity needs.

Ms. McKay agreed to send her three-year plan to Ms. Reece to distribute to Board members.

**iv. Anthony Fajardo, Director of the Development Services Department**

Mr. Fajardo described the department's functions. Challenges included:

- Enforcement of some regulatory actions, such as Business Tax collection
- Code Enforcement hours/scheduling limitations
- Recruiting/retaining employees [particularly in the Engineering Division]

Mr. Fajardo said they had few vacancies currently, but they had a high turnover rate. He said their dedicated HR staff person [funded through the Building Fund] was very effective at recruitment. Al Battle, Deputy Director of the Development Services Department, explained that the licensed, highly experienced professionals tended to stay at the City, but intake staff did tend to stay.

Chair Donaldson said they needed to ensure that Code Enforcement was effective and that the department had the tools [technology] and the hours required. This would prevent people from sending complaints to the Police Department. Porshia Williams, Assistant Director of the Development Services Department, described their efforts to address noise issues utilizing a stationary noise device that sent text messages and emails to inspectors. They had also procured two handheld noise devices. Ms. Williams acknowledged that staffing was an issue, particularly in the evenings when staff was diverted to nighttime areas. Chair Donaldson noted the spike in illegal vacation rentals recently. Ms. Williams said the City had approximately 300 registered vacation rentals and they cited approximately 75 unregistered rentals per week.

**v. Ben Rogers, Director of Transportation**

Mr. Rogers described the department's functions. He reported that thanks to the rate increases, the Parking Fund had beaten last year's budget by \$4 million which they were reinvesting in technology and capital improvements. He listed their project goals for the next year. Challenges included:

- Large projects that required major funding that was not yet allocated
- Increasing costs of construction
- Traffic engineering
- Maintenance of assets

Mr. Rogers said most of the traffic studies they requested from the County involved speed and volume studies for stop signs. Mr. Rogers said they had needed to abandon their partnership with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to avoid a conflict of interest and satisfy the requirements for the surtax funds. They were working with the MPO on vetting projects for surtax funding. Chair Donaldson asked how much the City contributed to the surtax fund and Mr. Rogers agreed to provide it. Chair Donaldson thought the City may be contributing 30% of the total surtax revenue but only received 7% to 8% back. Mr. Rogers confirmed that projects eligible for surtax funds must either increase capacity or provide traffic calming. Chair Donaldson noted how challenging it was to increase capacity in the City because there was no room for expansion.

Chair Donaldson asked about synchronization of traffic lights and Mr. Rogers said the County operated the traffic signals on 95% of the streets. They could send requests to the County for changes.

Chair Donaldson asked Mr. Lagerbloom how the City would afford the large projects they were discussing with the public. Mr. Lagerbloom stated they had begun discussing which projects to include in the capital plan, which to discard and how to fill the funding gap. They had learned that they had significant work yet to do and that they must decide if 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue and west, 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue and west or 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue and west were character areas that could go forward without the balance. He said the projects were worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

### **GROUP B**

#### **vi. Phil Thornburg, Director of Parks and Recreation**

Mr. Thornburg described the department's functions. Challenges included:

- Recruiting and retaining employees, especially part-time summer program help
- Maintenance/aesthetics of public spaces and parks

Mr. Thornburg said the summer program served approximately 500-600 kids. He noted the unique challenges of finding people who wanted to work with kids.

Mr. Thornburg reported the Aquatic Center would be opening this fall. The pools could be used in May or June and the locker rooms would be complete by the end of the year. The future event bookings were going well.

Mr. Lowe asked about privatizing the cleaning of park restrooms and Mr. Thornburg said they had outsourced some and they had also increased City staffing. He acknowledged the public restrooms were particularly challenging. He felt transitioning to air hand driers and away from paper products was helping.

Chair Donaldson said the City needed to communicate the prioritizing/planning of parks bond projects to the public.

#### **vii. Luis Alvarez, Acting Police Chief**

Acting Chief Alvarez described the department's functions and philosophy, and their recruiting and hiring efforts. He stated last year, they had lost 41 officers, but had hired 48. Dr. Kenneth Campbell, Business Manager, said of the 48 hires, 60-70% had come from outside Broward County. Acting Chief Alvarez stated most of the hires had experience. He predicted they would have zero vacancies by summer.

Acting Chief Alvarez described the decrease in the overall crime rate during the pandemic but noted shootings had increased. Chair Donaldson had asked for location statistics on all shootings to determine where the Shot Spotter program should be expanded and there was an area identified where that would be appropriate. Acting Chief Alvarez said the

areas where shootings had increase were not the same areas as those that had experienced an increase in sexual assaults. The increased sexual assaults tended to be in the bar area. Chair Donaldson noted that sexual assault had also spiked in 2021 and he wanted to know what they were doing to reduce sexual assaults.

Acting Chief Alvarez stated they had developed a violent crime strategy to address the increase in shootings. He was proud of the City's license plate readers, which were among the best in the Tri-County area. They had also expanded the Shot Spotter and utilized the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network [NIBIN] to link shootings through ballistics. They had received a \$420,000 Department of Justice grant to create a Gun Crime intelligence Center. Acting Chief Alvarez said they had also invested in officer wellness, with a full-time department psychologist and a licensed mental health officer.

Acting Chief Alvarez stated challenges included:

- The search for a new Police Chief
- The new Police Building construction
- Need for new staff because of City growth
- Commitment to officers' mental health

Chair Donaldson asked if there were options for someone to move to a different branch in the organization to avoid burnout and Acting Chief Alvarez said for units that were more traumatic, officers were required to see the department psychologist regularly. He reported the number of officers using mental health services had doubled.

Mr. Williams missed the Neighborhood Action Teams (NAT) and having officers attend their monthly association meetings for the past few months. Acting Chief Alvarez said the Violent Crime Reduction Group was now up and running. Mr. Williams said their association still had no interaction, like they had experienced with the NAT team.

Chair Donaldson thought without an increase in ad valorem taxes, hiring additional Police Department staff may be difficult. If they did not increase ad valorem, he said they must consider how to reallocate positions.

#### **viii. Alan Dodd, Director of Public Works**

Mr. Dodd described the department's makeup and functions. He stated their number one challenge was staff shortages. As of the end of January they had a 13.6% vacancy rate. This meant they could not deliver on projects as they wished and there was substantial overtime to fill gaps. This put providing essential services at risk.

Mr. Dodd said they were working closely with HR to hire people at lower-level positions, knowing they would have to invest in training.

Mr. Dodd noted the progress they had made in the past four years complying with the consent order. This work was also crucial to increasing the capacity for the City to grow.

Chair Donaldson asked where they were in prioritizing projects. Mr. Dodd said the CIP was maxed out for the next five years and there was 10 years' worth of work. In the past, they lacked the asset management system and procedures and policies for program management, they had just been executing projects. They were changing that this year. They were implementing City Works as the asset management program and the water system mapping would go along with the mapping already done for stormwater and wastewater systems. This would give them the tools to ensure they made the right investments first and stayed ahead of development needs.

Mr. Dodd stated they had included in their budget a dedicated cybersecurity person from IT to work with distribution and collection staff and manage the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition [CADA] System to ensure they were not putting the City at risk. This was an important part of using technology for predictive analytics.

#### **ix. Rhoda Mae Kerr, Fire Chief**

Chief Kerr said their mission included three goals: prevention; preparedness, and effective emergency response. Her two priorities were: taking the best care of firefighters and personnel and providing the best service and care to the community. Challenges included:

- Staffing
- Resources not keeping up with growth
- Staff burnout prevention
- Maintenance/unit availability

Chair Kerr noted the explosive growth the City had experienced and was still experiencing. Regarding burnout prevention, she said they did not have a staff psychologist but they had the Chaplaincy Program. Chair Donaldson wanted to sit with Chief Kerr to talk about prioritizing firefighter mental health. Chief Kerr stated they needed more units and had room for them. They had requested two more rescue units in the budget. Ms. Reece explained that the request included new positions associated with the new units. Paul Vanden Berge, Public Safety Administrator, explained that they needed more units from the service standpoint, and they also needed more units to allow them to perform maintenance on the equipment they already had.

Chair Donaldson referred to Chief Kerr's business plan and said he doubted they could address response times, because this was affected by traffic, which was beyond their control. He wanted to discuss Chief Kerr's strategy for reducing turnout times.

Chair Donaldson asked what could be done about transport refusals, which the report indicated happened 19% of the time. He requested a breakdown of total calls, EMS calls, fire calls, how many calls were false alarms, and how many times someone refused transport. Chief Kerr said one of their budget requests was for Mobile Integrated Health

Care, or Community Paramedicine, which was intended to address the citizens who had come to rely on emergency services for health care. This entailed preemptive visits to help these residents with their medications and health care. This would reduce the volume of calls to 911.

Chair Donaldson asked how the hires were doing. Chief Kerr stated they were all doing well and had all taken their six-month test. They had just completed six final job offers and that group would start on April 18.

#### **VII. Communications to/from the City Commission**

None

#### **VIII. Board Member Comments**

Chair Donaldson referred to the meeting schedule and asked if everyone could make the Thursday, April 14 meeting. Board members present agreed to keep the April 14 date and Ms. Reece agreed to check with Mr. Sabin.

Chair Donaldson reviewed other upcoming meeting dates and Board members agreed to them.

Chair Donaldson said the State limited the amount a municipality could raise the ad valorem based on the number of yes votes from the legislative body. In order to get any increase, three of five Commission members would need to approve.

#### **IX. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.