



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

APPROVED
BUDGET ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
MARCH 15, 2023 – 5:00 P.M.
8TH FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
100 NORTH ANDREWS AVENUE
FORT LAUDERDALE, FL 33301

Board Member	Attendance	10/2022 through 9/2023	
		Cumulative Attendance Present	Absent
Brian Donaldson, Chair [via Zoom]	P	2	0
Jeff Lowe, Vice Chair	P	2	0
William Brown	P	1	1
Ross Cammarata	P	2	0
John Rodstrom	P	1	0
Christian Macellari	P	1	1
Michael Marshall	P	2	0
Prabhuling Patel	P	2	0

Staff

- Greg Chavarria, City Manager
- Anthony Fajardo, Assistant City Manager
- Susan Grant, Assistant City Manager
- Alan Dodd, Director of Public Works
- Christopher Cooper, Director of Development Services
- Carl Williams, Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation
- Stephen Gollan, Fire Rescue Chief
- Tamecka McKay, Director of Information Technology Services
- Jerome Post, Director of Human Resources
- Linda Short, Director of Finance
- Laura Reece, Director of Office of Management and Budget
- Patrick Lynn, Police Chief
- Ben Rogers, Director of Transportation and Mobility
- Milos Majstorovic, Deputy Director of Transportation and Mobility
- Charmaine Crawford, OMB Department and Board Liaison
- Jamie Opperlee, Prototype Inc. Recording Secretary

Communications to the City Commission

None

Motion made by Mr. Brown seconded by Mr. Patel to allow Chair Donaldson to attend via Zoom. In a voice vote, motion passed unanimously.

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 Meeting Minutes – January 18, 2023

Motion made by Mr. Cammarata, seconded by Mr. Brown to approve the minutes of the Board's January 18, 2023 meeting. In a voice vote, motion passed unanimously.

New Board member John Rodstrom introduced himself.

IV. Floor Open for Neighbor Input

None

V. Old Business

None

VI. New Business

- Department Presentations
 - FY 2024 Business Plans
 - FY 2024 Accomplishments and Challenges

GROUP A

- i. Christopher Cooper, Director of Development Services

Mr. Cooper described the department's divisions and locations. He noted the increase in online permitting and plan review since implementing LauderBill. Currently usage of the online system was 60% and he anticipated this would increase to 70% by the end of the year. This had resulted in reducing reviews taking more than 180 days from 11.8% in 2021 to 9.4% in 2022. Mr. Cooper wanted to identify more efficiencies and implement SMS text inspections. He said the boat for Code and Waterway Enforcement had greatly improved their ability to identify issues from the waterways. The four Nighttime Code Enforcement officers who started in January helped with noise complaints, party houses and short-term rentals. Mr. Cooper said they were working on implementing the Commission's workforce and affordable housing policy, focusing on the mixed-use corridors. Mr. Cooper reported the Business Tax revenue had gone up 16%, \$439,000, in the past year due to an increase in enforcement. He said Nighttime Economy was conducting a study concerning expansion of the Beach Business Improvement District to increase the revenue stream and keep up with development on the beach.

Chair Donaldson asked about updating the rate structure for the Business Tax and Mr. Cooper noted there were State limits to raising the tax.

Mr. Patel recommended someone from Code Enforcement attend HOA meetings to educate the community. Mr. Cooper agreed to conduct this outreach to civic associations. He noted that they could send the nighttime Code Enforcement officers to these meetings. In the past, they would have paid an officer overtime to attend a meeting after hours.

Mr. Macellari asked about workforce/affordable housing incentives and Mr. Cooper described the incentives and said they also offered a “payment in lieu of” option and the City could leverage those funds to help finance low-income projects.

Chair Donaldson asked about a new noise ordinance and Mr. Cooper said there was a committee working with a consultant to conduct studies and draft a new ordinance.

ii. Linda Short, Director of Finance

Ms. Short described the department’s divisions and responsibilities. She noted the City was positioned to issue \$1 billion in debt in the next 18 months. She reported implementation of the ERP system was going well. One process they needed to streamline was procurement, where they wished to reduce cycle time. She stated the utility billing system was in need of a modern replacement. Ms. Short said Phase 2 of the ERP implementation, for payroll, was scheduled for September. She discussed the successful P-card program, from which they received approximately \$1 million in rebates. She hoped the City would find a new vendor next year with better rebates. Ms. Short said as they considered funding large projects, they must consider the employees needed to support those transactions.

Mr. Cammarata asked about the utility billing system and Ms. Short described the challenges with the current system. Ms. Grant noted they were starting the automatic meter reading technology this year, which would help efficiency. It would also allow customers to monitor use on a daily basis. Ms. Short said they had not contemplated replacing the utility billing system when they issued the RFP for the ERP. She said there was great software available for utility billing and they hoped to replace it in the next year or so. Chair Donaldson asked that when Ms. Short returned with her module requests, she discuss costs and efficiencies they could gain from a new system.

Mr. Brown asked about goals and benchmarks for procurement. Ms. Short stated they were still developing benchmarks and performance measures.

Mr. Patel suggested the City start charging processing fees to residents who used credit cards to pay utility bills. Mr. Patel’s suggestion could reduce the impact for rate payers. Chair Donaldson noted the higher collection rate since instituting online fee-free credit card payments. Ms. Grant said the fees were already embedded into the rate structure;

the City was recovering those fees. Chair Donaldson noted that only the City Commission could change this policy.

Mr. Macellari asked if staff accountants were rectifying journal entries and Ms. Short said they currently were, but they had considered having some help at year-end with audit preparation.

iii. Stephen Gollan, Fire Chief

Chief Gollan said they had experienced an increase in call volume and response times and noted it took additional time to send resources to the beach and airport areas due to traffic and density. He noted there had also been a 50% increase in special events held in the City, putting additional stress on resources, specifically staffing. Chief Gollan stated it took approximately six to eight months to vet a new employee and vacancy gaps resulted in more overtime. Employees were also taking early retirement, creating additional vacancies. Chief Gollan said Station 88 should open in July. The Heron Parking Garage opportunity would allow them to improve service to the downtown area and Las Olas Isles. They have also seen an increase in fire prevention. He looked forward to implementing the RFID System, which would help with inventory control. They had also instituted the Mobile Integrated Health system, starting with a paramedic, and were in the process of hiring a social worker. He said they had identified grant opportunities to help fully staff rescues with three people. Chief Gollan said he was short 13 FTEs now, and he hoped to fill the vacancies by July or August. He anticipated being completely staffed by the end of the fiscal year.

Mr. Brown asked about addressing homelessness and the financial impact on the budget. Chief Gollan said they needed to fully implement the Mobile Integrated Health unit and noted that homelessness needed to be addressed Citywide, not station by station.

Chair Donaldson asked about the 20% refusal rate for EMS calls and Chief Gollan stated the Mobile Integrated Health system and actions of the Strategic Communications Division would communicate to the public when it was appropriate to call 911.

Chair Donaldson asked if the portable, temporary facility in use for station 54 would be used while station 13 was in process. Chief Gollan said they were considering now what the best route would be.

iv. Jerome Post, Director of Human Resources

Mr. Post discussed Human Resources Divisions and functions. He stated they were “largely in a rebuilding mode” and would likely be so for the rest of the fiscal year, due to losing six key employees. They had also lost their Labor Relations Manager. Their accomplishments this year included two union contracts, with Federation and Teamsters employees; they had maintained recruitment levels; they had hired 222

positions and would hire a total of 532 over the course of the fiscal year; they had also hired a Classification and Compensation Manager and an HRIS Program Manager; they had facilitated regional recruitment with the Fire Rescue Department; they were relaunching compliance training; they planned to initiate harassment discrimination training for executive staff; they had update all job descriptions. Mr. Post reported they were currently negotiating contracts with the IAFF and FOP. He said the ERP implementation kept him up at night. He hoped to be able to implement ERP in the new fiscal year.

Chair Donaldson asked about the increase in the number of employees not making it through the probation period. Mr. Post was investigating this and said there may be hiring and/or training issues.

v. Tamecka McKay, Director of Information Technology Services

Ms. McKay described the department structure and responsibilities. She was proposing a reorganization for the next fiscal year to reduce silos and encourage collaboration. Her three biggest concerns were cyber security, digital modernization, and human capital. Ms. McKay stated they had begun phase one of the IT infrastructure upgrade/consolidation. Phase two would be upgrading the network. Their achievements in the last year included reducing vacant positions from 17 to two; creating a culture of inclusion and cooperation; completing cloud migration; preparing to provide better support and modernization; improving cyber security; dedicating four employees to ERP support; hiring a new leadership team.

Mr. Brown asked about the two system failures in the past few months and Ms. McKay said they were directly related to the legacy systems, which were being phased out over the next two years. Chair Donaldson asked about outsourcing cybersecurity and Ms. McKay said they were taking advantage of the State-issued cybersecurity funding to contract with the State's recommended vendor.

GROUP B

vi. Carl Williams, Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation

Mr. Williams described the department's responsibilities and said they had 360 FTEs. He announced they had recently opened the new Aquatic Center, which had recently hosted its first event. He stated they were using Parks bond funding to address smaller projects first and working to address the larger projects in the parks system. Mr. Williams said they were challenged to attract and retain talent. They had surveyed pay rates in other cities for part-time employees and found the City's pay scale to be lower. They were looking for ways to hire and retain these employees. Mr. Williams said they were holding more events but had been informed that the quality was not as high as in the past, so they may need to consider additional funding. He noted that higher construction costs were a challenge that reduced what they were able to provide to the community. Mr. Williams said they also administered the City-owned cemeteries. He acknowledged it was challenging to find staff for this niche market.

Mr. Brown asked about the special events budget and Mr. Chavarria noted there were very strict budgets for special events. He said they needed to create formal policies and ordinances for sponsorships. Chair Donaldson thought they needed to evaluate the list of events and if they could not afford to produce them to the public's expectations, they should eliminate them.

Mr. Macellari agreed they should seek private sponsorships for events.

Chair Donaldson wondered how long it would take to pass an ordinance to allow branding events. Mr. Chavarria stated they would consider what other municipalities did. They also needed buy-in from the City Commission to proceed. Chair Donaldson noted they should determine which events were the most appropriate for sponsorship and provide examples to the City Commission.

Mr. Lowe also wanted to look at the donations the Commission approved for non-profit entities such as the museum. He requested a list of current contracts and events. Chair Donaldson said the City Commission donated more to non-profits than the City spent on events.

Chair Donaldson asked if the new Aquatic Center would begin to break even or make money instead of losing money every year as it had been. Mr. Williams noted that aquatic centers typically did not make a profit but they were considering ways to generate revenue, such as naming rights. Mr. Chavarria agreed to look at the upcoming programmed events and report back. Ms. Reece stated the Aquatic Center was funded with Beach CRA funding, Park impact fees and Parks bond monies. Mr. Williams noted that holding more events at the Aquatic Center would make the facility less available to the community.

vii. Patrick Lynn, Police Chief

Chief Lynn described the burden put on Police by the special events and said this must be considered regarding staffing. Chief Lynn admitted he had made some incorrect assumptions about the City: he had assumed there were patrols for the most popular tourist areas such as the beach, Riverwalk, Sistrunk, and Las Olas. He said two complaints were constant: the public wanted to know why they did not see officers in their neighborhoods and why it took so long for officers to respond. He said there were always calls on hold in the City, sometimes for hours. To ameliorate this, they needed more staff, and he noted hiring had not kept up with the increase in call volume. Chief Lynn was concerned the City was not prepared for the development coming online in the next few years and said they must develop a plan. On a positive note, he stated they had reinstated the NAT Teams as Community Support Units, increasing community engagement and crime prevention.

Mr. Cammarata noted that the Board agreed additional Police staff was needed and asked Chief Lynn his estimate of how many employees would be sufficient. Chief Lynn

said they should institute a downtown district and then determine how to staff it. He believed this dedicated district would need 75 new people. This would benefit the entire City by making more officers available everywhere else in the City.

Mr. Lowe referred to the Police vacancy report, which indicated 63 vacant positions for an average of 197 days. Chief Lynn explained civilian versus sworn vacancies and said they were considering which positions must be done by a sworn officer or could instead be done by a civilian. He noted the strides made with hiring in the past year.

Chair Donaldson asked if Chief Lynn felt the Shot Spotters and License Plate Readers were worth keeping or expanding. Chief Lynn said they were effective tools that were definitely worth keeping and expanding.

viii. Alan Dodd, Director of Public Works

Mr. Dodd reported they had received significant funding last year to address roads, asphalt, and sidewalks, but even with the additional funding they were not keeping up with proper maintenance. Once they had a maintenance plan, he would need to return to request additional funding. Mr. Dodd reported that of the City's 53 bridges, 18 were functionally obsolete, 23 required replacement and 17 needed repairs. They were seeking grant funding to help pay for this and were prioritizing the most high-risk bridges. Mr. Dodd noted the City was the epicenter for climate change impacts and they must continue to adapt to avoid flooding issues. They must raise seawalls to prevent flooding in neighborhoods and improve beach resilience to protect the barrier island. Mr. Dodd said they had made a huge decision to move forward with the Prospect Lake Clean Water Center, a \$666 million investment. He stated they needed to re-prioritize due to the increase in costs and had shifted funds into the operational budget. Ms. Grant explained they were considering six different scenarios for financing the new water plant. They would bring the scenarios, and the new rates, to the BAB in June. Mr. Dodd said they were approaching permitted capacity at the TTL Treatment plant. They believed that 50% of water going into the plant was from inflow and infiltration, not from water use and they were shifting funding to address that. Mr. Dodd said they had received \$24 million in State grants for stormwater projects in the Dorsey Riverbend and Durrs neighborhoods and they were already moving forward in Edgewood and River Oaks. Mr. Dodd reported they had just transferred bulk trash services over to a contractor, which would save the City \$1 million per year.

Chair Donaldson said capacity was a major concern and asked what would happen when they hit the permitted limit at the waste water treatment center. Mr. Dodd stated the plant could actually serve twice the capacity that was permitted. They were looking for ways to improve efficiencies and considering the City's long-term needs.

ix. Ben Rogers, Director of Transportation and Mobility

Mr. Rogers said the City Commission had prioritized transportation initiatives in the last few years. Last year they focused on the Las Olas Mobility Plan and will be designing

the western portion of the project over the next year. The LauderTrail masterplan had been approved and they were hiring a consultant to design a model project. They would soon receive County surtax funds for the one-way pairs project. Mr. Rogers said they were looking at ways to improve traffic congestion in major corridors in the next budget cycle. The Commission had authorized adding a new position, and Mr. Rogers introduced the new Deputy Director of Transportation and Mobility Milos Majstorovic. Mr. Rogers said the Circuit pilot program had been extended for a full year and expanded to District 3. They planned to expand to District 1 next. Regarding special events and congestion, Mr. Rogers said they were working on strategies such as discounting parking rates downtown. Mr. Rogers said they were working on parking improvements and had hired a new project manager. They were also working on an EV program.

VII. Commission Prioritization and Goal Setting Workshop Outcomes

Chair Donaldson said they would discuss this at the next meeting.

VIII. Infrastructure Task Force Update

Mr. Marshall said they had been discussing the new water treatment facility and they were moving to discuss a broader range of infrastructure issues.

IX. Communications to/from the City Commission

None

X. Board Member Comments

Chair Donaldson noted the Revenue Estimating Committee would hold meetings on March 22 and March 28 and Mr. Cammarata would attend.

Chair Donaldson noted it would be difficult to talk about budgeting for Police if they were still negotiating with two unions and did not have concrete numbers. He had attended the recent negotiating meeting and discussed the current bargaining situation. Mr. Lowe was disappointed they were still negotiating and agreed it would not be possible to consider the budget without numbers from Police and Fire Rescue. Mr. Cammarata said the departments could make requests without specific numbers as they did last year. Ms. Reece said last year they had used three- or five-year averages. She recommended that this year they use what they had on the table because it was higher than any prior year.

Chair Donaldson reminded everyone that the next BAB meeting was on Tuesday, April 11.

XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.