



Allentown

435 Hamilton Street
Allentown, Pa. 18101

Minutes - Final

City Council

Tuesday, July 9, 2024

6:30 PM

Council Chambers

Special Council Meeting

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Courtesy of the Floor: None

Reschedule regularly scheduled Council Meeting

A motion was made by Ed Zucal, seconded by Daryl Hendricks, to reschedule the regularly scheduled Council meeting and meet on July 17th to July 24th.

Yes: 7 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Ce-Ce Gerlach, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

Meeting Announcements:

Due to the holiday and other conflicts, council needed to change their July Schedule. Someone needs to make a motion to reschedule the regularly scheduled Council meeting on July 17th to July 24th.

Council President Notes:

On July 17th, City Council will have a special meeting to discuss Bills 64 and 65, being introduced this evening; and to discuss and act/vote on a Resolution Affirming the City of Allentown's Commitment to Equitable Use of Public Spaces, Protection of Human Rights, and Compassionate Approaches to Addressing Homelessness - a copy of the proposal is on the agenda and website; and Council will review and take testimony on issues relating to managing the problems in the park system that have recently been in the news.

Co-Responder Meeting: Councilperson Gerlach

There will be meeting on July 17th at 5 PM, to discuss co-responder models and their approach to public safety and public health.

Budget and Finance: Chair Napoli, Hendricks, Gerlach

The Committee is scheduled to meet on August 28th, time to be determined, to discuss the city's budget parameters with the Finance Department and Financial Advisor. If another meeting is needed prior to this date, that will be arranged.

Community and Economic Development: Chair Hendricks, Mota, Napoli

The committee is scheduled to meet on July 17th at 6 PM.

Human Resources, Administration and Appointments: Chair Affa, Napoli, Santos

The Committee has not met since the last council meeting; the next meeting is not yet scheduled.

Parks and Recreation: Chair Santos, Affa, Gerlach

The Committee is scheduled to meet tomorrow at Bucky Boyle Park at 5:30 PM, to look at legislation being introduced this evening and getting a briefing from the EAC on their projects -especially the Youth Climate Action Program.

Public Safety: Chair Zucal, Hendricks, Mota

The committee has not met since the last council meeting; the next meeting is not yet scheduled.

Public Works: Chair Gerlach, Affa, Zucal

The Committee has not met since the last council meeting; there are no future meetings schedule.

Rules, Chambers, Intergovernmental Relations, and Strategy: Chair Mota, Napoli, Gerlach**The committee is scheduled to meet July 17th at 4:30 PM.**

[15-7059](#) A Resolution Affirming the City of Allentown's Commitment to Equitable Use of Public Spaces, Protection of Human Rights, and Compassionate Approaches to Addressing Homelessness

Sponsors: Administration, Gerlach and Santos

Attachments: [Homeless.doc](#)

RESOLUTIONS FOR FINAL PASSAGE (To be Voted On):

[15-7054](#) R116 Appointment of 5 Police Officers

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [R116 - Police Appts](#)

Assistant Chief James Gress stated good evening everyone. Before Council tonight, they have five names to bring before them. The first one is Colin Linsenman. Colin is an Allentown resident. He is 48 years old. He is a graduate of Michigan State University College of Law. He was a practicing attorney in New York City for many years. He has sold his practice and decided to go into police work, relocated to Allentown and he is starting the academy. The next person is Patricia Ortiz. She is also off the Civil Service List and is 34 years old. She is a graduate of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and currently employed by the Lehigh County District Attorney's office. She will need to attend the police academy as well. The next one is Sharron Nelson, she is off the Civil Service List. She is a graduate of DeSales. She will need the academy and currently works for the Lehigh County Court of Common Pleas as a court reporter. The next one is Christopher Bear from Coplay. He is off of the Civil Service List and is a 45 year old graduate from Dieruff and LCCC. He is currently a city of Allentown Public Works employee. He stated sorry Mark, the police are pulling him over to their department. Ans, lastly, Lucas Blatt from Hamburg. He is a 20 year old male graduate of Penn State. He currently works for Landis Logistics and he would need to attend the academy as well. He stated that would conclude their current Civil Service list. The new Civil Service List was approved by the board on last Friday, July 5th. The police department will be pulling from that one shortly.

Dr. Cynthia Mota thanked Assistant Chief Gress and stated go ahead Mr. Hendricks.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks asked Assistant Chief where does that bring our total

number.

Assistant Chief James Gress stated 218. He stated that they had two retirements in June and with the retirements, and adding these five, they are at 218.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that he did not hear the number.

Assistant Chief James Gress stated 218. He thinks there are budgeted at 233 or 232. They are working towards that.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated thank you.

Dr. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any other comments or comments from the public.

Yes: 6 - Cynthia Mota, Daryl Hendricks, Ed Zucal, Natalie Santos, Candida Affa, and Santo Napoli

No: 1 - Ce-Ce Gerlach

ORDINANCES FOR INTRODUCTION (To be referred to Committee with public comment prior to referral)

[15-7055](#)

Bill 62

Amending the 2024 Capital Fund Budget to provide for a transfer of Seven Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$700,000.00) from the Residential Street Construction capital account to the City-Owned Building Repairs capital account. This will transfer the unused funds from the Residential Street Construction project to the City-Owned Building Repairs capital account.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [Bill 62 Public Works Transfer](#)

Dr. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

REFERRED TO THE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

[15-7056](#)

Bill 63

Amending the 2024 Capital Fund Budget to provide for a transfer of Eight Hundred Seventeen Thousand Dollars (\$817,000.00) from the General Fund Unappropriated Cash Balance to the Administrative Order capital account. The debt will be paid back with 4.250% annual interest in full no later than May 31, 2029, pursuant to the Annual Debt Service presented in the annual report required will allow the Administrative Order (AO) fund to have the additional funds needed to complete the City's requirements under the Concession Lease Agreement.

Attachments: [Bill 63- Public Works AO Fund Transfer](#)

Dr. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais or the public.

REFERRED TO THE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

[15-7057](#)

Bill 64

Amending the 2024 General Fund, Rental Fund, and Risk Fund budgets to accommodate the upgrading and retitling of positions to allow various departments to operate at a level more in line with the job responsibilities currently assigned, to support City functions. This will ensure that departments are operating more efficiently, inequalities are reduced, positions are correctly classified, and employees are appropriately compensated for the work they are performing based on a correctly classified position which enhances job satisfaction.

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [Bill 64 - Department Reorgs](#)

Dr. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated to President Mota that he would like to make a motion to table this until budget time. Looking over some of these, unfortunately, this is a whole complete package that kind of messes things up for some people. He stated that they just heard from Mr. Mehmet that they need two ambulances. We need a fire station and a police station. He understands there is a \$6 million deficit and doesn't think that they should be discussing this at this time. They need to wait until the budget.

Mr. Santo Napoli asked if he is able to go.

Mr. Ed Zucal asked if there was a second.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that he can ask a question before that, right.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated no. She stated they have their lawyer here.

Attorney Charles Smith stated that they had recently permitted discussion prior to a second. He stated that he has to be consistent.

Mr. Santo Napoli asked Ms. Kistler first and has two questions. One, for Chief Agosto and unfortunately he was unable to make it. The second he has is for Ms. Kistler. The total for this year was \$11,000 and change for the difference. He stated that he is confused about what it would be for 2025 based on these changes and how it would affect the 2025 budget.

He stated that he is sorry he did not see that clearly here.

Ms. Bina Patel thanked Mr. Napoli for that question. What you are seeing the \$11,464.00 is for approximately five months. If you take that, the full year cost.

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated that it is about \$25,000.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that the impact for when they talk about budget in a few months, what they are talking about here would be an impact of \$25,000 total.

Ms. Bina Patel stated yes and want to make sure that Councilpersons understand is what they are doing is taking either existing positions and eliminating them and reorganizing or retitling to make sure they are staying competitive at the job market. What is happening is that some of the staff have been in the same position for so many years that they are not competitive with the outside job market. They are in different departments are losing employees to outside of the city. To hire new employees and training them, they are losing the knowledge that the city has invested so much into these employees. That is the main reason for doing this retitling. As you can see, combining the departments, they are trying to make sure that it is easier for the Councilpersons to see it. If they would have brought the ordinances separately to them, it would have been five different ordinances and complicated to follow. Since you are already used to Budget Memo I style, they just made that easy for them to follow to what the current title is and where they are paid from, what the new title would be and what the new salary would be. Just to simplify things combining them into one. The total impact is what you are seeing there for the rest of the year and then because of the elimination of the positions in each department you will see the department is eliminated positions or giving up some thing to bring this change to you.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated understood. Just to be transparent, his question to Chief Agosto was going to be how the Deputy Fire Chief what happened two nights ago, how that would affect his role going forward. He stated that again, they can asked that at a committee meeting. He would like to learn more about the impact that it would to his department, but again, it is not for tonight. He stated that he has other questions and respectfully ask his colleagues that these are questions that should be flushed out during committees and knows there is a special meeting planned for Wednesday and is a great opportunity to ask questions about all these changes and if they make sense or they don't make sense.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that the Chief is on Teams.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that he is sorry and asked if Chief Agosto is online.

Chief Efrain Agosto stated that is ok and is available. He asked if they can hear him.

Mr. Santo Napoli stated that he is sorry and did not realize. He stated to Chief Agosto he had a quick question regarding the incident two nights ago. The Allentown Fire Department did a magnificent job. The EMTs and everyone involved in public safety. Thank you. The position of the Deputy Fire Chief that is detailed in here and asked if he could please elaborate. He stated that he is just curious how that would have affected if they would have had that position two nights ago.

Chief Efrain Agosto stated that right now one of the biggest concerns that they had especially last night, is that they did not have an individual to be able to perform the duties of PIO in the fire department. Right now, they have the Captain of Public Affairs and have not been able to fill that position. Even with the combined Deputy Chief and the Emergency Management Coordinator would allow them to draw from somebody within the fire department that is more aware and more available and understanding of what the city and how the city operates versus hiring someone from the outside to fill that vacancy. Plus, it would provide them with another administrative role that would come into the offices and provide more administrative assistance with the 146 employees that they deal with within their department. He stated that last night was a tough night. It is one of those things where he doesn't think anybody truly understands how important that role between PIO, EMC and Deputy Chief is to this department and to the city as they continue to grow and continue to move forward with this department. Right now, they have been asking for this for many, many years. He goes back to every time they go to the budget presentation and he talks about 1975, there was one Fire Chief and two Deputy Chiefs. This is not asking about a new position. He continues to state the same exact thing over and over again. This is about restoring the use of when it was active back in 2006 when Bobby Scheirer who eventually became fire chief actually took over that role and some how or another got eliminated by the previous administration previous to the O'Connell administration. He stated that he is not asking for something new, he is asking for a position to be restored to continue to help administer what they need to administer throughout the department and provide the services that they continue to provide to the city even being shorthanded as they are. He stated that he is always thankful and grateful that Council has provided the opportunity to for for the SAFER Grant and add it to the firefighters and staff here. He stated that they are still short then where he started when they had 150 firefighters on the department

and they are still short one administrative position that should have never been taken away.

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated that she will also like to add if she may that all of them in the cabinet fully understands Council's concerns about budgetary issues and concern about how they are going to move collectively together. Please know that in putting this together, they are doing their best to cut as many expenses as they can and to align positions to add other duties to them in order to get work done without adding positions. She stated that she knows that it may not always feel that way when they have repetitive requests, but they are doing their best to cut as much. She stated that she thinks that really speaks to the fact that they actually had a surplus last year because they understand how to hold the budget as tight as they possibly can. They have retain qualified credentialed individuals they have to be able to recruit, but the other piece to it is that if they can combine duties together and do an \$11,000 change, it saves them from adding a position to meet things like grant requirements or the requests and demands that Council has during an improved service delivery. They are really doing the best they can and really ask that Council vets this through committee and hears the descriptions that are in the paragraphs for each of these positions in order to make the decision.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated isn't it true that a couple of months ago or maybe two to three months ago that both your departments came to Council for upgrades and they gave them to you.

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated no, she told Council she was coming for the upgrades. She stated that they don't have them yet.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that a few months ago the Finance Department got upgrades.

Ms. Bina Patel stated that Finance has not brought any upgrades to you.

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated since last year, she believes. She stated that they did a reorg where they eliminated positions and retitle them.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that is what he is referring to.

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated that was in the budget. She only has one where she combined two positions and one person had a nominal increase in last year's budget. She stated that they came to Council for positions that were grant funded, absolutely. She stated that was through the budget process.

Mr. Michael Hanlon stated that Ms. Patel gave you an ordinance and then

you took it off the agenda.

Ms. Bina Patel stated yes, this is the same request that was brought to you maybe a month and a half ago.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that he too understands Mr. Zucal's side here, but he also sees Mr. Napoli and the reason why he wants to look into this further. He too would like to look into these positions more closely. Some of them are getting over a 10 percent increase stating that to him is a little excessive. Unless, they can show there is a reason why, but again he would like to look at these things further. He would not like to table this and push it to committee so they could go to each individual position.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that he withdraw his motion.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that he appreciates that.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she agrees with Mr. Hendricks and don't see why they should table this. There are some positions here that she would like to hear from the paramedics. There are so many positions here that she would like to have them come up and speak to Council about it. She thinks they should send it to committee and agree with Mr. Hendricks. Learn more about it, but not to table it.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated to Mr. Zucal you withdrew your motion. She stated that she too would like to hear more and do agree about Mr. Hendricks. She added that there is a position here that would be getting an increase of \$40,000 more.

Mr. Vicky Kistler asked if she could please address that one. She stated that if they look down at the bottom, there is a \$33,000 somewhat reduction. That person is getting less than a \$10,000 change. Far less. She asked Dr. Mota if she sees the \$30,000 negative down at the bottom that is coming from the rental fund.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated that she sees that and sees that it is deleted.

Ms. Bina Patel stated that the position is shifting from one fund to another. That is why it look there is an increase of \$40,000. Actually, if you subtract the \$33,000 that's in the rental fund.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated that she would like to hear more about these upgrades and why are they upgrading and not waiting for the budget for budget time. She thinks this is the time to congratulate as Mr. Napoli said the Fire Department for the great job they did. It is amazing that there was

no death. She stated that she would like to commend the Fire Department, EMS, the Police Departments. Really good job.

Ms. Candida Affa asked if she can ask a question about the Deputy. She stated that they always had one with Pawlowski they always had a Deputy.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that they are asking for a second one.

Ms. Candida Affa asked if they ever had a second one before.

Mr. Ed Zucal stated that his concern also is that when Mr. MacLean was here, there were screaming about they needed an Emergency Management Coordinator and now all of a sudden they don't need one. They want to remove that.

Chief Efrain Agosto asked if he could correct that. It is not saying that they are removing it is removing the Emergency Management Coordinator, the Deputy Chief that would be assigned would have the responsibilities. At this time, he is asking for an Interim Emergency Management Coordinator which means that he will be taking care of any emergency management duties that are assigned to him that includes up to like anything from daycare safety plans that are coming in and reviewing them and signing off on them. The county also finds out simple things like that and managing any kind of large incidents which were managing any of that and has two Deputies EMCs that are associated with that and Deputy Chief Christian Williams. That role would cover both the EMCs and the Deputy Chief. There will not be a Emergency Management Coordinator position. It would be eliminated.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that she is a little confused here. She stated that the ex chief had this job at one point. They knew it was very important at that time, especially with that explosion they had and different things like that. She stated that she thinks Council voted for it at that time. She asked what happened to that position.

Mr. Daryl Hendricks stated that it never got through.

Chief Efrain Agosto stated that if someone can answer that question, that would help. He does not know why it was eliminated.

Ms. Candida Affa stated that it is an important position.

Dr. Cynthia Mota thanked Ms. Affa.

REFERRED TO THE SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING ON JULY 17TH

Attorney Charles Smith asked President Mota to please ask for public comment before you refer it.

Dr. Cynthia Mota stated for the record is there anyone that would like to have public comment.

REFERRED TO THE SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING ON JULY 17TH

Ms. Vicky Kistler stated thank you.

Ms. Bina Patel stated thank you.

This Bill was withdrawn.

[15-7058](#)

Bill 65

Authorizing the Lehigh County Board of Elections to place the following question on the November 5, 2024 ballot for the Allentown electorate that would amend the Home Rule Charter, Section 807, Revenue, to delete the Deed Transfer Tax from Section 807 (B).

Sponsors: Administration

Attachments: [Bill 65 - Deed Transfer Tax](#)

Dr. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any comments from the dais on Bill 65 or any comments from the public.

REFERRED TO THE SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING ON JULY 17TH

Dr. Cynthia Mota asked if there were any other comments.

ADJOURNED: 6:55 PM

[15-6577](#)

Reference Materials:

Council Rules
Procurement Code
Ethics Code

Attachments: [Procurement Code](#)

[Ethics Code](#)

[Rules](#)