



MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL  
FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
TELEPHONE CONFERENCE  
WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS  
JUNE 10, 2021 AT 7:00 PM

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the City of Westfield Finance Committee will be conducted via remote participation. Specific information can be found on the City of Westfield website at [www.cityofwestfield.org](http://www.cityofwestfield.org). For this meeting, members of the public who wish to listen to the meeting may do so by tuning into Channel 15 or Channel 12 or online at [westfieldtv.org](http://westfieldtv.org) or online at Youtube.com - Westfield Community Programming Channel. No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the City's website an audio recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

Access information for the meeting is as follows:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://cityofwestfield-org.zoom.us/j/85334226242?pwd=dFNlRmVpUVZYY2lVRVl3c2NFRlEpXdz09>

Meeting ID: 853 3422 6242

Passcode: MFp=@+g2

Dial by your location

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Meeting ID: 853 3422 6242

Passcode: 53818351

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by President Bean.

The Clerk called the roll. Councilor Allie was absent.

Upon motion of Councilor Onyski, it was

VOTED: That Councilor Figy, Chair of Finance, be President Pro Tempore.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

Richard Sullivan, Jr.	Yes
James Adams	Yes
Dan Allie	Absent
Brent Bean II	Yes
John Beltrandi III	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes
Ralph Figy	Yes
Dave Flaherty	Yes
Cindy Harris	Yes
Bridget Matthews-Kane	Yes
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Morganelli, Jr.	Yes
William Onyski	Yes

President Pro Tempore, Councilor Figy presented the Agenda for the budget hearings for tonight as follows:

#### Fiscal Year 2022 Budgets

June 10, 2021 7:00 PM	Law Department	Vote
	Assessor Department	Vote
	Treasurer/Collector	Vote
	School Department	Vote

The first budget hearing was for the Law Department. Attorney Reed was present to represent the department. She informed the Council that a level funded budget was submitted at approximately \$532,000 and last year's budget was \$530,000. She listed the items in the Purchase of Services account as follows, contracts with outside Counsel for titles, arbitration costs, depositions and mediation. Items for Intergovernmental are Registry of Deeds recording fees. General Expenses covers subscriptions to Lawyers Weekly, continuing legal education and BBO renewals. On the salary side there are three full time Attorneys and one part-time Attorney, Clerical two full time employees and Stipends of \$3,500 for Public Access Officer and \$2,500 for Hearing Officer. The office did 460 public record requests this year. Councilor Sullivan questioned if there are any potential settlements coming down road that are included in this budget. Attorney Reed responded there is nothing specific, it's for small claims due to potholes, mailboxes hit from plows. Anything big like a sewer back-up the Water Department would transfer funds to the Law Department. Councilor Figy questioned if \$95,000 is going to be sufficient in Purchase of Services. Attorney Reed informed the Council that you never know when you will be sued, therefore, it runs the gamut from \$130,000 to \$49,000 and that the \$49,000 was during COVID so there were not a lot of Courthouses open to hear cases. Attorney Fitzgerald and Attorney Garber handle the cases, but sometimes outside Counsel is needed. Councilor Bean questioned what the tipping point is to hire more Attorneys or use outside Counsel. He recognized that the Law Department has been

inundated with public record requests, requests from department heads and the need for outside Counsel. Attorney Reed informed the Council that years ago there were only two Attorneys and the analysis used to request more Attorneys is that it is more cost effective to have in-house Counsel rather than outside Counsel and with the department being proactive instead of reactive it has cut down on lawsuits. And that the decision for more Attorneys is not her call. Councilor Flaherty asked Attorney Reed what her title in the department is. Attorney Reed responded that she is the First Assistant City Solicitor. Councilor Flaherty questioned why she is not the City Solicitor. Attorney Reed responded that the City Solicitor is co-terminus with the Mayor's term which is a two year terms and that the First Assistant City Solicitor's term is three years and under ordinance she has full power of a City Solicitor. Councilor Flaherty expressed his concern that when there was a City Solicitor there were a total of four lawyers and now there are only three. He informed the Council that the City Council should be assigned their own independent Counsel. Councilor Morganelli questioned the decrease of 18.71% in the full time salary account and the increase of 6.92% in the full time hourly account. Attorney Reed replied the decrease was due to the passing of City Solicitor Attorney Phillips and the increase was due to changes in the clerical staff.

Upon motion of Councilor Sullivan, it was

VOTED: That the Law Department budget, as submitted, be APPROVED.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

Richard Sullivan, Jr.	Yes
James Adams	Yes
Dan Allie	Absent
Brent Bean II	Yes
John Beltrandi III	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes
Ralph Figy	Yes
Dave Flaherty	No
Cindy Harris	Yes
Bridget Matthews-Kane	Yes
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Morganelli, Jr.	No
William Onyski	Yes

The next budget hearing scheduled was for the Assessors Department. The Media Specialist informed the Council that City Assessor Robin Johnson was having trouble logging into the meeting.

Upon motion of Councilor Figy, it was

VOTED: That the rules of the City Council be suspended in order to take items out of order of the Agenda.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

Richard Sullivan, Jr.	Yes
James Adams	Yes
Dan Allie	Absent
Brent Bean II	Yes
John Beltrandi III	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes
Ralph Figy	Yes
Dave Flaherty	Yes
Cindy Harris	Yes
Bridget Matthews-Kane	Yes
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Morganelli, Jr.	Yes
William Onyski	Yes

The next budget hearing scheduled was the Treasurer/Collector's Department. Mr. Matt Barnes, City Treasurer/Collector was not present at this time.

While under suspension, Councilor Figy took the School Department next.

Superintendent Stefan Czaporowski was present to represent the School Department. He informed the Council that the total School budget is \$64,396,647.00 which is an increase of \$2.35 million over last year's budget, but that it was not as much as an increase as it appears because the School budget was cut \$2 million last year and then there was money that was put back in the budget from the CARES Act. Councilor Adams questioned if there would be any monies that would be returned back to the City due to any savings from busing. The Superintendent informed the Council that it is uncertain as to how much will be returned, but that if there is any money left over it will go to the fixing of the pool at Westfield High School. Shannon Barry, Business Manager, added that were the transportation costs were doubled for special education out of district. Councilor Adams questioned what the contract says if the buses are not running. The Superintendent responded at the cost if the buses do not run is 50% of the total because the company still has to pay for insurance and the lease of the buses. Councilor Flaherty informed the Council that he plans on making a motion for a stabilization account for any savings that become available from this year to be able to be used next year. Councilor Flaherty questioned the status of the Angela Holmes building located next to the Middle School on West Silver Street. The Superintendent responded that the building is not structurally sound and therefore is not being used. The plan was to sell St. Casimir's building and move all the storage out of there and into the Angela Holmes building but due to the fact it is not structurally sound nothing or no one can go into the building so they are still working out a plan for that. Councilor Flaherty questioned how the virtual academy impacts the budget and how many students will participate. The Superintendent informed the Council

that this is a unique opportunity for Westfield students and it's hoped that it will become self-sustaining and it can serve 200 students and there are 100 letters of intent submitted. Councilor Flaherty expressed his concern that the cost per student is higher than the typical cost per student. The Superintendent informed the Council that it has not been decided yet if there will be a full time Principal or a full time nurse so those assumptions of cost per student may be erroneous. Councilor Flaherty questioned if there is a building for the virtual academy to call home. The Superintendent responded that an RFP will be going out and it's a work in progress. Councilor Flaherty questioned if the enrollment from last year of 4931 has increased. Superintendent informed the Council that at this time the enrollment is at 4980 and it will go up because there were some students that left to go to a completely virtual school because they did not like the hybrid model, there were a lot of home schools last year and it's anticipated there will be an increase in English learning students. Councilor Flaherty expressed his concerns of the addition of 30 new employees which will be a 6.1% cost in dollars per full time employee. Superintendent informed the Council that there is a staggering number of students suffering from mental health due to COVID and most of the positions are for adjustment Counselors and that now is not the time to cut those positions. Councilor expressed his concern that Chapter 70 money is supposed to fund 50% of the School's budget and that is not happening. He expressed his concern that the School budget is big piece of the City's total budget and that it is important to the City but Police and Fire as well as other departments are important as well. He informed the Council that he will be offering a cut of \$300,000.00 from the School Department to go back to projects such as the master plan and flood control projects that were cut due to the fact the School Committee refused to cut their budget as requested by the Mayor. Councilor Flaherty thanked Superintendent Czaporowski for all he did for the students this past year and that it was truly appreciated, but that he is looking at the big picture for the City.

Upon motion of Councilor Flaherty, it was

VOTED: That \$300,000.00 be cut from the School Department budget.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

Richard Sullivan, Jr.	No
James Adams	Yes
Dan Allie	Absent
Brent Bean II	No
John Beltrandi III	No
Michael Burns	No
Ralph Figy	No
Dave Flaherty	Yes
Cindy Harris	No
Bridget Matthews-Kane	No
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Morganelli, Jr.	Yes
William Onyski	No

President Pro Tempore Councilor Figy declared the motion LOST.

Upon motion of Councilor Flaherty, it was

VOTED: That the vote on the School Department budget be TABLED.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

Richard Sullivan, Jr.	No
James Adams	Yes
Dan Allie	Absent
Brent Bean II	No
John Beltrandi III	No
Michael Burns	No
Ralph Figy	No
Dave Flaherty	Yes
Cindy Harris	No
Bridget Matthews-Kane	No
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Morganelli, Jr.	Yes
William Onyski	No

President Pro Tempore Councilor Figy declared the motion I.O.S.T.

Councilor Morganelli expressed his disappointment for the motion to cut and the motion to table and that this cut could have helped the taxpayers. Councilor Matthews-Kane informed the Council that as a parent she personally witnessed how difficult the COVID pandemic had on the students and statistically, across the state, students need to catch up and more personalized instruction will be needed and she spoke in support approving the School Department as presented. Councilor Harris informed the Council that she speaks for the taxpayers, parents and grandparents that they have children and grandchildren in the school system and that the mental health issue is immeasurable and that if this money is needed to prevent one death or to save a child who has suffered this past year the taxpayers would support this. Councilor Bean asked that the School Department as well as Councilors put political pressure on Boston to get a new high school built. Councilor Mello thanked the School Department for their visuals in their budget presentation and that in this budget there could be money be found from other sources such as contamination funds and supports the budget. Councilor Adams expressed his concern on how much more it will cost at this time to build the new elementary school due to the increased construction costs and his concern on the cost of fixing the pool. He supported the adjustment counselors and hopes that it will help and that his wife has provided grief counseling for the past 17 years for no cost to the School. The Superintendent thanked Councilor Adams' wife for her services and reiterated that the needs of the students in this area are increasing. Councilor Flaherty agreed that the students need these services and that the State social services should be providing the services, it should not be the responsibility of individual schools and he supports fixing the pool because it is important to get kids in the pool swimming at an early age. Councilor Figy informed the Council that the repairs to the pool and the tearing down of the two houses for the new elementary school will be funded by schools funds and it will save the City \$1.3 million in bonding.

Upon motion of Councilor Sullivan, it was

VOTED: That the School Department budget, as submitted, be APPROVED.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

Richard Sullivan, Jr.	Yes
James Adams	Yes
Dan Allie	Absent
Brent Bean II	Yes
John Beltrandi III	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes
Ralph Figy	Yes
Dave Flaherty	No
Cindy Harris	Yes
Bridget Matthews-Kane	Yes
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Morganelli, Jr.	No
William Onyski	Yes

With the City Assessor now logged into the meeting, the Assessors Department was taken next. City Assessor Robin Johnson was present to represent the department. She informed the Council that the increase in her budget was due to the fact that the computer system for assessing, Vision System, is now included in her budget whereas it used to be included in the IT budget and the other increase is for a new car for the department. Councilor Figy questioned the reduction to the Assessor's department that was just recently sent to the Council as an amendment to the budget. City Assessor Robin Johnson informed the Council that she was not aware of an amendment. City Auditor Vicki Moro informed the Council that there will be an increase of \$9,650.00 to the Building Department budget due to an oversight of the current part time local inspector and an oversight to the Building clerical overtime of \$1,000.00 and a decrease to the Assessor's department Full Time salary account of \$2,363.00 which was entered incorrectly and a decrease of \$8,287.00 to the Health Insurance budget which leaves a net zero effect. Councilor Bean expressed his concern that the department head was not made aware of the amendment. Councilor Flaherty questioned what the new growth would be for this year. City Assessor Robin Johnson informed the Council that it will be higher but doesn't have the exact number and the increase in residential values is up 5% and commercial is not changed. Councilor Flaherty questioned if there would be big personal property payments this year. The City Assessor answered that it will not be as big as last year because the big payment came from Eversource and the City won't see that again. Councilor Flaherty asked the City Assessor to explain what personal property is. City Assessor Robin Johnson explained that a business that is not a manufacturing business or an incorporated business must pay taxes on their personal business property on all of their equipment used to conduct the business. Councilor Flaherty questioned the City Assessor what her plan was for retiring as her name is on the severance budget line item. She informed the Council that her plan is to retire in February and that one of the Assistant Assessor's is planning on leaving in either March or April and that the other Assistant City Assessor Ashley is interested in the City Assessor's position.

Upon motion of Councilor Sullivan, it was  
VOTED: That the Assessor's Department budget, as amended, be APPROVED.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

Richard Sullivan, Jr.	Yes
James Adams	Yes
Dan Allie	Absent
Brent Bean II	Yes
John Beltrandi III	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes
Ralph Figy	Yes
Dave Flaherty	No
Cindy Harris	Yes
Bridget Matthews-Kane	Yes
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Morganelli, Jr.	No
William Onyski	Yes

City Treasurer/Collector Matthew Barnes was present to represent the Treasurer's Department budget. The City Treasurer/Collector informed the Council that not a lot has changed in the Treasurer's budget. The out of state travel went to zero, the training went up in case there was something that comes up for MUNIS training. Councilor Flaherty questioned the increase in Social Security of 3%. The City Treasurer/Collector informed the Council that Social Security is based on the City's payroll for the total number of City employees and at the time of doing the budget it was not known completely the number of employees and all of the step and contractual increases. Councilor Flaherty informed the Council that when labor contracts go up 3% it is really a 50% increase for benefits.

Upon motion of Councilor Sullivan, it was  
VOTED: That the Treasurer's Department budget, as submitted, be APPROVED.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

Richard Sullivan, Jr.	Yes
James Adams	Yes
Dan Allie	Absent
Brent Bean II	Yes
John Beltrandi III	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes
Ralph Figy	Yes
Dave Flaherty	No
Cindy Harris	Yes
Bridget Matthews-Kane	Yes
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Morganelli, Jr.	No
William Onyski	Yes



City Treasurer/Collector Matthew Barnes was present to represent the Collector's Department budget. The City Treasurer/Collector informed the Council the increases were due to contractual obligations. Councilor Flaherty questioned how the lockbox was working. The Treasurer/Collector informed the Council that there will be changes in the utility account billing for the July bills and that Lighthouse lockbox will be used, with no charge to the City, but in case the transition is not as quick there is money in the lockbox account. Councilor Flaherty questioned how people are 30 days delinquent on utility bills. The Treasurer/Collector responded that he did not have that information with him. He only had information relative to the budget. Councilor Flaherty questioned if the City or collection companies are chasing down people that don't pay the balance of what the insurance company didn't pay for ambulance fees. Councilor Flaherty questioned if there was an ordinance that the City had to accept the insurance company's payment and could not go after the residents for the balance. The City Treasurer/Collector informed the Council that he would have to look into that. Councilor Flaherty questioned if there will be any changes made for electronic payments and auto-pay of payments for utility billing. The Treasurer/Collector that the current Unipay system could be set up for reminders and that he is looking at that as well as other vendors and that auto payments can be set up with personal bank accounts. Councilor Burns questioned how the collections are going this year. The Treasurer/Collector responded that the collections are up about \$1.8 million over last year.

Upon motion of Councilor Sullivan, it was  
 VOTED: That the Collector's Department budget, as submitted, be APPROVED.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

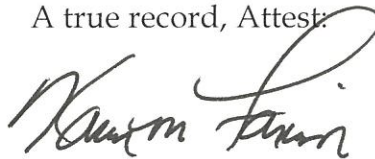
Richard Sullivan, Jr.	Yes
James Adams	Yes
Dan Allie	Absent
Brent Bean II	Yes
John Beltrandi III	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes
Ralph Figy	Yes
Dave Flaherty	No
Cindy Harris	Yes
Bridget Matthews-Kane	Yes
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Morganelli, Jr.	No
William Onyski	Yes

At 8:27 PM, and upon motion of Councilor Flaherty, it was VOTED: To ADJOURN.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

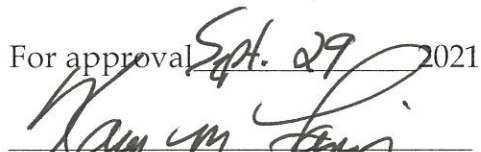
Richard Sullivan, Jr.	Yes
James Adams	Yes
Dan Allie	Absent
Brent Bean II	Yes
John Beltrandi III	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes
Ralph Figy	Yes
Dave Flaherty	Yes
Cindy Harris	Yes
Bridget Matthews-Kane	Yes
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Morganelli, Jr.	Yes
William Onyski	Yes

A true record, Attest:

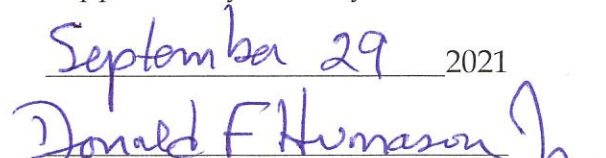


Karen M. Fanion  
City Clerk/Clerk of the Council

Presented to the Mayor

For approval Sept. 29 2021  
  
Karen M. Fanion, City Clerk

Approved by the Mayor

September 29 2021  
  
Donald F. Humason, Jr., Mayor