

Common Council
November 9, 2023
Finance Committee Meeting
Common Council Chambers

Committee Members:

Christopher Briggs, Chairperson

Donald Russell

Adam Biggs

All Committee Members present

Christopher Briggs called the meeting to order at 6:01PM. Chair Briggs mentioned that this was the third meeting of the Finance Committee and highlighted the two previous meeting with Department Heads and suggested that the Committee was at a point now to possibly be making changes to Annual Estimate/Budget.

Chair Briggs mentioned that one of the items in the proposed Annual Estimate was the Mayor's salary and asked if Mayor Keeler would like to discuss.

Mayor Keeler said he would like to address the proposed Salary increase. The Mayor went on to say that he would like to discuss the raise on three levels.

First he stated, when developing the 2020 Budget that he said he didn't want a raise from the previous year's amount. He went on to say that he was not aware that per the City Charter the Mayor's salary was fixed for a four year term. He went on to say that the proposed Salary increase to \$99,500.00 was fair and still less than other surrounding Cities and less than other employees in the City of Cohoes. Secondly he believed the amount was justified on a merit basis and commented on some of the actions that were done over the past four years. The Mayor mentioned the LED Street light project and the expected saving over 20 years, addressing Police Department concerns, money saved in the renegotiated Music Hall contract and the recycling contract. The third point that Mayor Keeler mentioned regarding the proposed raise is that you would not attract the talent for future Mayoral candidate at the present Mayor's salary.

Council Smith asked about the LED Streetlight saving and why the Mayor is referencing 20 years. Mr. Durocher answers that the 20 year reference is what the contract referenced in their bid to install and additionally stated that the City saw a savings of \$250,000 in electrical cost last year.

Councilman McCarthy mentions that the 27% salary increase looks terrible but when you listen to it starts to make sense and that you (Chair Briggs) have some numbers that would be less and it's important to listen to both sides. Mike Durocher mentioned that there was a similar raise in Mayor Primeau's 2015 budget for the new incoming Mayor Shawn Morse.

Chair Briggs mentioned that it was Mayor Keeler's decision to not take a raise in 2020 and not the interim Mayor's (Briggs) decision to not increase the salary for the Mayor. Additional Chair Briggs expressed that he had a philosophical difference between Elected Official salaries and City employee salaries and that Elected Official compensation is more about serving and giving back to the community versus the money. At that point Chair Briggs handed out an exhibit that he prepared showing what a 2% salary increase over four years revises or an 8% increase would look like.

There was discussion supporting both sides of the salary topic. Councilman Russell proposed a salary number which was 2% compounded over 8 years resulting in a \$13,440.00 increase raise the Mayor's salary to \$91,750. Chair Briggs asked the committee and other Councilman present if that was a compromise that seemed reasonable and stressing that it's important to pass a budget and move on with doing the business of the City versus being at loggerheads. At that point Chair Briggs asked Councilman Russell if he wanted to make a motion to increase the Mayor's Salary to \$91,750.00 which

will be then voted on by the Council in a future meeting. The Motion was made by Russell and seconded by Briggs, Vote was asked for with Russell a yes, Briggs a yes and Biggs a no. Motion was carried 2 to 1.

The discussion then moved to the City Clerk's Salary. Chair Briggs had mentioned the only employee that the Council had a direct oversight is the City Clerk and Chair Briggs, in reviewing the City revenue items, that City Clerk fees were trending lower from 2021 and part of the City Clerk's compensation is that they receive a portion of fees collected; like dog or marriage licenses. Mr. Durocher explained how the City Clerk receive that money but he could not give the exact numbers because that was part of the W-2 for the City Clerk but said he could provide them the next day. It was then discussed that if indeed it was the case that the fees were trending lower that a \$1,000 increase be made to the Clerk's salary. A resolution was motioned by Councilman Biggs that if it was found that the fees collected was trending down that a \$1,000 increase would be made to the line item in the Annual Estimate/Budget and seconded by Councilman Russell. A vote was asked for and the resolution was passed unanimously.

The next topic was the Turnout Gear for the Fire Department. Chair Briggs mentioned, in years past the topic of replacing aging Turnout Gear was hotly discussed, excuse the pun. The topic was discussed and it was mentioned that Turnout Gear should be replaced every 10 years. The Department was on a better schedule replacing the gear but it was thought that maybe additional funds could be added to the department equipment line to accelerate the process and defer some inflation pressures of the cost of the equipment. It was decided that \$6,750 would be added to the Fire Departments equipment line. The \$6,750 amount was the resulting difference between the original Board of Manages Mayor salary increase \$21,190 versus the change to an increase of only \$13,440 to the Mayor's salary and the \$1,000 increase in the City Clerk's salary. Councilman Biggs made a motion to increase the Fire Departments Equipment Line by \$6,750 and seconded by Councilman Russell. A vote was asked for and the resolution was passed unanimously.

Chair Briggs told Mr. Durocher that he would send an email to him regarded the three changes and hoped that a special meeting could be scheduled next Tuesday, November 14, 2023 so the changed could be voted on.

Chair Briggs thanked everyone for their time and asked for a motion to adjourn and the meeting was adjourn at 7:30 PM.