



City of Malden

Malden City Hall
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Meeting Minutes - Final Rules & Ordinance Committee

Councillor Linehan, Chair
Councillor Crowe, Vice-Chair
Councillor O'Malley
Councillor Sica
Councillor Simonelli

Tuesday, April 23, 2024

6:15 PM

215 Pleasant Street
Room 105
Malden, MA 02148

Joint meeting with Finance Committee

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

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Roll Call

Rules and Ordinance Chair Linehan and Finance Chair McDonald called the meeting to order at 6:22 PM.

Members of the Finance Committee in attendance were Chair McDonald, Vice Chair Condon, Councillors Colón Hayes, Spadafora, Taylor, and Winslow.

Also in attendance representing the City were Alicia McNeil, Charles Ranaghan, Dan Grover, Nate Cramer, Maria Luise.

Present: 10 - Carey McDonald, Paul Condon, Karen Colon Hayes, Craig Spadafora, Ari Taylor, Stephen Winslow, Amanda Linehan, Peg Crowe, Ryan O'Malley and Jadeane Sica

Absent: 1 - Chris Simonelli

Minutes to be Approved

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Minutes for the meeting of April 2, 2024

On behalf of the Rules and Ordinance Committee, a motion was made by Councillor Crowe, seconded by Councillor Sica, that the Committee Minutes be approved. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

On behalf of the Finance Committee, a motion was made by Councillor Winslow, seconded by Councillor Taylor, that the Committee Minutes be approved. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Business

Committees will hold a brainstorming session on ways to generate revenue for the city in collaboration with Treasurer Grover, Controller Ranaghan, and Assessor Cramer. All Councillors are invited to participate.

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Order: That the City Council explore a range of options, and consider making recommendations, for increasing revenue to support the long-term sustainability of city finances.

Sponsors: Amanda Linehan, Carey McDonald and Karen Colon Hayes

In preparation of this year's budget, Councillor McDonald and Councillor Linehan created an opportunity for all the Councillors to be involved, offer constructive suggestions, and ideas they can use to address the long-term revenue needs of the city without getting too deep into the actual budget.

Controller Ranaghan talked about the ongoing efforts of doing a deep dive into our current fees. The idea has been to go department to department to figure out where we are undercharging or even overcharging when compared to other cities. These are the actual finances we have control over, and the sheer volume of these undercharges are going to add up. It's important to show the comparisons against surrounding cities.

On behalf of the Finance Committee, the idea of tag fees being revenue neutral was brought up by Councillor Winslow. Regardless of whether that is the case or not, Winslow states that we still must make sure we don't have less revenue from the tags than we are getting from the blue bags. Those fees are not keeping up with the cost of trash, a potential crisis that Councillor Winslow believes will hit us in 7 years or so.

Councillor Winslow questions how we can increase revenue regarding collection of back owed taxes. Treasurer Grover discussed that we can't increase revenue with the tax rate, as it is pre-set. However, our collection rate of back owed taxes is at 98% which is strong—with our tax levy process being consistent, our collections have increased as well, meaning we can't really make any major changes there either.

Councillor Colón Hayes asks the difference between an override and a debt exclusion—she asks if we can use a debt exclusion to help the garages. Treasurer Grover explains that a tax exclusion is a temporary fix. Councillor McDonald suggests—and Treasurer Grover agrees to—collect data from surrounding communities on their experiences with overrides and debt exclusions.

On behalf of the Rules & Ordinances Committee, Councillor O'Malley brings up placing tax titles on vacant properties that have high unpaid taxes. Treasurer Grover explains that this wouldn't be beneficial since the City, in essence, already owns the vacant property. If there is a piece of land that is of actual value then the tax level process that we already have in place—putting a tax title in place, then, if the owner does not pay the taxes necessary in land court, we are issued a "win" and go into foreclosure—is already the most beneficial process. Treasurer Grover explains that the City does not usually auction off a property—an idea that was brought up by Councillor O'Malley—instead the City is usually just seeking the initial money the owner owed. Going about eminent domain instead of our original process, would not really generate revenue for the city—which is the final goal Councillor O'Malley had in mind when introducing this potential option. Our current process we have put into place has the public's best interest in mind and gives the city the most revenue.

Councillor O'Malley questions who controls the fees, Controller Ranaghan states that it is dependent on the fee as to the department that controls it—as a solution Ranaghan will provide a list, next meeting, of what fees are set by what bodies.

Councillor Linehan brought up questions regarding the fees for parking and

transportation. Not so much thinking about the cost of the garage but instead thinking about what we charge for our monthly rates and comparing the prices of permits and meters to surrounding cities/towns. She acknowledges that the City is obviously not looking to spend additional money on studies but believes it wouldn't hurt to do a deeper dive into everything under the parking and transportation umbrella. Controller Ranaghan states that the parking meter and permit fees are included in the upcoming assessment of fees he spoke about earlier in the meeting. The garage is a bit trickier to analyze, but Controller Ranaghan agrees that it is a conversation worth having and will speak to Ron Hogan regarding the situation. Controller Ranaghan agrees that the garage is bringing in a lot of revenue for the city, but the overarching question is, are we leaving money on the table?

On behalf of the Rules and Ordinance Committee a motion was made by Councillor Sica, seconded by Councillor Crowe, that the Order be tabled. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

On behalf of the Finance Committee a motion was made by Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Winslow, that the Order be tabled. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

Other Business

Adjournment

A motion was made by Councillor Sica, seconded by Councillor Crowe, that the Rules and Ordinance meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

A motion was made by Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Winslow, that the Finance meeting be adjourned. The motion carried by a unanimous vote. Both committees adjourned at 7:05 PM.