



# *Committee on Finance*

March 10, 2014 – 7:03 PM - **Minutes**  
Chambers of the City Council, Room 214

**\*\*View Agenda\*\***

**MEETING: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**  
**DATE: MARCH 10, 2014**  
**TIME: 7:03 P.M.**  
**PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLORS LINDA MORAD, CHAIRPERSON; JOSEPH LOPES, VICE-CHAIRMAN; DAVID ALVES; HENRY BOUSQUET; NAOMI CARNEY; BRIAN GOMES (7:23); STEVEN MARTINS (7:13); JAMES OLIVEIRA; DANA REBEIRO; KERRY WINTERSON**

**ABSENT: COUNCILLOR DEBORA COELHO**

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Councillor Morad called the Finance Committee Meeting to order and took attendance. She informed the Committee that Councillor Gomes called her and he is on his way. The Clerk read two Communications into the record, Councillor Coelho would not be in attendance due to a family issue and Councillor Martins would be late due to his attendance at a UMASS Dartmouth Board Meeting. These Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Bousquet.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Alves, Bousquet, Carney, Coelho, Gomes, Council President Lopes, Councillors Martins, Morad, Oliveira, Rebeiro and Winteron, requesting, based on the Mayor's recent statement that the "City continues to be fiscally strapped", that the Committee on Finance meet with a representative of the Administration to discuss the status of contract negotiations with all City and School Department employees to determine the financial implications of said negotiations on Fiscal Years 2014 and 2015, to determine the status of the AFSCME lawsuit and implications of the order to compensate employees for lost wages during the furlough period, to determine the financial implications of the pending layoffs projected in the current School Department turn around proposal; and any remaining settlements or judgments that are currently pending against the City of New Bedford (Ref'd 2/13/14) was received and placed on file by Councillor Alves and seconded by Councillor Bousquet. (1)

Councillor Morad explained that her original intent was to go into Executive Session in order to ask questions of, and receive answers from, representatives from the Administration regarding ongoing contract negotiations and potential lawsuit settlements. This is in order to be better prepared to handle the upcoming FY budget proposal. However, in conversations with the City Solicitor, it appears that it is the administration's perspective to meet with small groups of Councillors instead of discussing this matter all together in Executive Session.

Councillor Lopes asked Attorney McDermott why it is “ok” for the School Committee to go into Executive Session regarding such matters, but, in her opinion, it is not for the City Council. Attorney McDermott replied that the School Committee’s function is to negotiate and strategize for contracts, while the City Council’s role is to merely fund or not fund contracts when presented to them.

Councillor Lopes then asked the status of lawsuits regarding AFSCME and contract negotiations. Attorney McDermott replied that she would not answer such questions, whether in open or executive session.

Several Councillors asked various questions regarding contracts and the status of on-going negotiations. For example, Councillor Alves asked Ari Sky what dollar amount the Fire Union opened up with as their request in negotiations. Mr. Sky said he was not going to answer that question or questions like that; and Attorney McDermott stated that she did not know.

Councillor Alves then asked if the administration is considering overriding the Tax Levy. Mr. Sky replied that there will be no need to do so, due to the Stabilization Fund and Free Cash reserves that the city has.

Again, Councillors expressed frustration and asked why it was so difficult to receive pertinent information from the administration regarding the city’s finances. Several Councillors expressed willingness and a desire to work with the Mayor. However, the idea of meeting with the Mayor in small groups of 3 or 4 Councillors did not seem wise to many of them, as they raised concerns that some groups would receive different information than others.

Councillor Gomes expressed frustration that this is the first time, in a very long time, that an administration absolutely refused to share financial information with the City Council regarding upcoming contracts and court liability matters. He asked where the balance and trust are in city government.

Councillor Rebeiro stated that she and her colleagues need more information if they are to honestly and intelligently answer questions from small business owners and other tax payers in the city, many of whom are asking the Councillors questions as to what is going to happen to their taxes in the coming year.

Councillors asked if anyone has looked at what the impact might be of a potential casino in the city. Both Mr. Sky and Attorney McDermott replied that they are not aware of any at this time.

Councillor Morad asked specific questions regarding ongoing contracts and when they expire, to which she received dates of expiration, but no answers were provided as to what ongoing negotiations might result in.

Councillor Gomes made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Lopes.

This meeting adjourned @ 8:32 p.m.

ATTEST:

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Clerk of Committees