



CITY COUNCIL

Committee of the Whole

Wednesday, November 16, 2022

Approx. 5:30 pm

**At the conclusion of the Street Vacation Public Hearing
Hybrid Meeting**

Agenda

The City Council Committee of the Whole meetings are filmed and can be viewed LIVE while the meeting is taking place via the attached Zoom link and dial-in phone number, on Facebook and on the BCTV MAC Channel 99.

Join from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone or Android device:

Please click this URL to join.

<https://readingpa.zoom.us/j/82740856452?pwd=RHR5cmNqMjExSkU3aktXM041TVJHUT09>

Or join by phone:

Dial(for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

US: +1 646 558 8656

Webinar ID: 827 4085 6452

Passcode: 375416

I. Budget Review

- Human Relations
- Mayor
- City Council / City Clerk
- City Auditor
- Managing Director
- Non Departmental

II. Parking Lot 6:15

PARKING LOT

Items shown in orange are related to the 2023 GF Budget or the CDBG Action Plan

October 12th COW

1. Relocation of Downtown Coordinator to the Managing Director's office
2. Meeting to review each public building, its use and condition
3. 2023 Street Paving – funding and plan – See email distributed the afternoon of Oct 26th
4. Overall budget review of the Social Security allocations (appears misaligned with the salary line items in some areas) – Correction Made - understated by \$21,178
5. Overall budget – adjustment to fringe benefits and all insurance expenses
6. Overall budget review of Pension expenses (appears misaligned with the salary line items in some areas) - 2023 pension expense (a.k.a. MMO) is drafted in late-Summer 2022 using estimated 2022 annualized wages, not 2023 wages. Pension MMOs are due to Council by September 30th each year. Any department's allocation could be more than or less than prior year for any or all of the following reasons:
 - a. In this case, overall 2023 O&E pension MMO is about \$100,000 less than 2022; this decrease is allocated among all relevant O&E departments.
 - b. In the 2023 budget, wages include raises for employees, but none of which are counted in the computation of the 2023 MMO; see underlined above
 - c. 2023 position ordinance could contain more, less, or the same number of employees in a department, compared to what was estimated in Summer 2022
 - d. Overall, the 2023 MMOs are about \$1 million less than 2022 MMOs
7. Development of incentives for residing in Reading and/or purchasing a home within Reading (owner occupied)

8. Review purchase and installation of filers/grates over storm sewers to reduce entry of litter and piping to reduce entry of litter into waterways
9. Reconsider \$15 an hour for part-time positions - Not sure why we would do this so soon after it was recently increased.
10. Reestablish P3 meetings
11. Review increase in PT wages in PW budget and decrease in fuel costs

October 17th COW

1. Modification to CD Admin budget & Position Ord – making the PT HARB clerk full-time - Done, will be reflected in updated position ordinance spreadsheet
2. Correction to SWEEP and Property Maintenance salaries – Correction Made after an update from HR.
3. Review of CD Org Chart w/ position descriptions and salaries
4. Explanation re drawdown and use of HOME funding for 2021-22
5. HOME ARP requirements and restrictions + amount allocated and remaining – project deadline July 2023
6. Copies of the HOME ARP applications - This has very personal information regarding our residents. Please explain context of what is being requested here. This would mean hundreds if not thousands of sheets of paper being printed and it's not clear why.
7. Number of Reading families that received rental and utility assistance from the City and the County – From Oct 24th Administrative Report

483 total rent and utility assistance applications were received.

- 358 applications for rental assistance were facing evictions.
 - 5 applications were withdrawn by tenants
 - 9 applications were denied due to not meeting the program requirements

- 20 applicants were not actively facing eviction
- 6 applicants resided outside of the City but within the County

- 78 applications for utility assistance.

- 2 applications were denied for exceeding HUD's income guidelines

- 4 application was denied due to not meeting program requirements

- 1 application was withdrawn by the applicant

October 24th COW

1. 131-133 Schuylkill Ave – update on seeking a partner to maintain these lots re Goggleworks, neighboring property owner, etc. – November 30th CO

October 24th COW

1. Consider increasing hourly salary of civilian tele-communicators in Desk Sergeant area by at least \$2 hr (same as CSC employees) to improve retention
2. Consider adding PT staff to VSU
3. Consider 12 additional Patrol officers – to increase each of the 4 Platoons by 3 officers
4. Eliminate Crossing Guard salaries under Patrol (eliminating expense of approx. \$350K), already covered under Contracted Services
5. Increase Community Police Officers assigned to the downtown for evening and overnight shifts

November 1st COW

1. Whistleblower process
2. Actual costs of healthcare and other fringe benefits
3. Breakdown of the use of the independent board budgets
 - a. Environmental Advisory Council - \$10,000 – The Environmental Advisory Council is charged with studying environmental and sustainability issues. They focus their work on education and community engagement. The EAC has been working for several years on a project to install signage at specific City locations containing green infrastructure to educate residents about its benefits and explain how it functions. They have also worked to engage the community about environmental issues and to educate the public on climate change. The EAC had intended to use their funding on the signage installations but there have been repeated delays. Instead they used the funding to provide a stipend to two interns to assist with community engagement and as a result are building a social media presence and engaging the public at events at the Goggleworks, holding book club readings and films

with panel discussions. The intention for 2023 and the \$10,000 request will continue this work – either for signage installation or to continue community engagement.

- b. Animal Control Board - \$5,000 – One of the duties of the Animal Control Board is to hear appeals by owners of pets that have been declared vicious animals or aggressive dogs. The Board has engaged a hearing officer and has been granted \$5,000 annually so that funding is available in the case of such an appeal.
- c. Youth Commission – **New request of \$15,000** – The Youth Commission has been actively engaged in the movement to reduce youth violence in Reading and have been participating in many City and community events. In order to have more meaningful engagement and to be more visible in the community, the Youth Commission plans to use its budget for the following items:
 - Tripod and microphones to create social media posts
 - Shirts for Commission members
 - SWAG giveaways – lanyards, pens, snacks, etc.
 - Purchase of interactive games for both indoor and outdoor events
 - Sponsorship of open mic nights
 - Meet and greet events

The Youth Commission did not have a budget in 2022. The Mayor’s office purchased a banner for them and the Communications Coordinator designed and purchased business cards to share with community partners. The Commission leadership is currently researching costs and will be frugal with the City’s funds.

- d. Board of Ethics – \$20,000 - The Board of Ethics is charged with issuing advisory opinions and gift opinions in addition to processing Ethics complaints. The entirety of the budget is allocated to legal fees. In addition to the Board Solicitor, the Board engages an Investigative Officer and a Hearing Officer. The cost of the Board is determined

by the number of opinions and / or complaints it receives annually.

- e. **Charter Board – Request increase in 2023 from \$50,000 to \$75,000** – Like the Board of Ethics, the Charter Board issues advisory opinions and processes Charter complaints. The entirety of this budget is also allocated to legal fees. The Board has engaged a Solicitor, an Investigative Officer, and mediators. The cost of the Board is determined by the number of opinions and / or complaints it receives annually. In addition, a new annotated Charter project is moving forward and the Board has indicated that Investigation #54 has been reactivated and it expects that costs in 2023 will rise due to the continuing appeals of this case. During 2021 when Investigation #54 was active, the Charter Board costs were \$77,738.22 which is why the Board has increased its request for 2023.

- 4. Website and City document translation
- 5. Advertising in Spanish
- 6. Update HR and Public Works Director salaries as needed

November 7th COW

- 1. Reduce Retiree Payout to \$0 from \$14,000, as no one in this division is scheduled to retire.
- 2. Correct the 1st Deputy Fire Chief salaries in the Position Ord for 2023
- 3. Increase Suppression Overtime to \$750,000 from \$550,000
- 4. Correct 2023 salaries of 2nd Deputies and paramedics in the Position Ordinance