

22-494
ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING REPORT
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2024 @ 6:00 P.M.

Attendees: Council President Isaac “Zac” Bears, Committee Chair; Council Vice President Kit Collins, Committee Vice-Chair; Councillor Emily Lazzaro; Councillor Matt Leming; Councillor Justin Tseng; Councillor Anna Callahan; City Clerk Adam Hurtubise; Finance Director Bob Dickinson; Chief of Staff Nina Nazarian; other participants as noted in the body of this report.

President Bears called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. on February 27, 2024 in the Medford City Council Chambers on the second floor of Medford City Hall, and via Zoom. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed Budget Ordinance (22-494).

President Bears thanked participants for attending. He said that there were five committee meetings on this topic in 2023. He said we have ironed out all of the details. He highlighted work done to date. He summarized the ordinance to date. He said that he would like to see more of our spending included in the summaries of spending to date and that the Council has expressed that as well. He said the latest draft of the ordinance reflects this preference. He said that resources and staffing levels in Finance would have to be increased to achieve some of these goals. He also read a communication from the Chief of Staff with some concerns, which also said that the Administration is close to being in agreement.

Chief of Staff Nazarian said she had nothing on her end at this time. Director Dickinson said that we would like to get the ball rolling but we don’t know how this is going to pan out. He said we want to keep everything moving forward and with something that everybody feels is achievable.

Councillor Lazzaro said that because of the communication from the Chief of Staff, it sounds like there may be a one-year delay to a portion of the ordinance but an understanding that things may come up. She said that there is no penalty. She said there is an understanding that we are all working together and trying to get the most transparent process possible.

Vice President Collins said it’s important not to legislate something that is not within our authority. She said that she wants to ensure that there is a time stamp for a check in on the process throughout the year. She said she is willing to be as formal or as informal as necessary.

Councillor Tseng said that the Council has taken a step back on this and that there is a broad definition of what a report is. He said he wonders if there is a way to reduce any

fear or hesitation that the Administration might have. He said Director Dickinson doesn't know what Council he will be working with in five years.

Chief of Staff Nazarian said she appreciates the collaboration by this committee, the prior subcommittee, and the Council in general on this subject. She said she continues to be concerned and wants the committee to understand that the concerns are that we are not putting future Councils and future Administrations in conflict with each other. She said we are essentially discussing the codification of an ordinance that would create something even though there is no penalty if it doesn't occur. She said that an ordinance is law. She said that the Administration would never intentionally or knowingly try to break the law. She said that there may be no penalty but it wouldn't change the way the Administration operates. She said that the Council shall receive the warrants on at least a quarterly basis. She said she is trying to do it monthly. She said that if the ordinance passes, she will have to drop something in her office. She said she is also presently supporting the Elections Office. She said we want very much to ensure that we keep our promises, but by agreeing to an ordinance like this, we are making a commitment.

Vice President Collins said she appreciates what the Chief of Staff has shared and appreciates the clarity around this. She said she respects the diversity of opinion. She said one thing that makes her feel comfortable is the flexibility of the language of this section. She said that regarding the Elections Department, the Council recently requested a report, and the report the Council received was not what the Council thought it would be. She said that the Council then talked about it. She said she feels comfortable with the language of this ordinance.

President Bears said he would make an amendment regarding the effective date since the original effective date was January 1, 2024. He said other pieces would not go into effect until January of 2025.

Councillor Tseng said that when there was a first meeting on this, everyone agreed that there was a model of what an ordinance should look like. He said that this draft is the result of good-faith negotiations of all parties. He said we've moved forward on the assumption that the committee wants to see all these things. He said it doesn't sound like the committee is ready to toss out any section of the ordinance. He said he would like to see the section work better. President Bears said he didn't think we're far apart but that the Administration has made it clear that it doesn't agree with some of the language. He said that the Council has already removed two sections of the ordinance.

President Bears recommended some technical changes to the ordinance for purposes of timing, and changing the effective date of Article 5.

Vice President Collins asked if the tracked changes version of the document is the one that would be considered.

Vice President Collins moved to accept all tracked changes and also to swap the order of sections 3-102 and 3-103, and to change the effective language in 3-108 so that the article is effective on passage (Councillor Tseng second)—approved.

Chief of Staff Nazarian suggested a cleanup on certain sections of city ordinance regarding some positions mentioned in the new ordinance. President Bears suggested making those changes in the cleanup now.

Vice President Collins said she wasn't comfortable doing this now but that it could be done from the floor later, and President Bears asked the Administration to take a look at things that it wanted changed. President Bears said that each committee would review the ordinances under its purview for updates in language.

Vice President Collins moved to report the paper out of committee to the next Council Meeting (Councillor Tseng second)—approved.

Vice President Collins thanked the Chief of Staff and Finance Director for their work. President Bears and Councillor Tseng also thanked the Chief of Staff and Finance Director. He said he can't overstate how important that is for Medford.

Vice President Collins moved to adjourn at 6:50 (Councillor Tseng second)—approved.

President Bears adjourned the meeting at 6:50 p.m.