

The City Council of the City of Charlotte, North Carolina convened for a Budget Workshop on Thursday, May 11, 2023, at 1:44 p.m. in Room 267 of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Government Center with Mayor Vi Lyles presiding. Councilmembers present were Ed Driggs, Malcolm Graham, Renee Johnson, Lawana Mayfield, James Mitchell, and Braxton Winston II.

ABSENT UNTIL NOTED: Councilmembers Dimple Ajmera, Danté Anderson, Tariq Bokhari, Marjorie Molina, and Victoria Watlington.

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Mayor Lyles said we're going to go ahead and get started with the City Council's Budget Workshop. Thank you all for being present. Thank you for those that are paying attention and all the team that makes it possible for us to make these decisions today. You guys are doing a great job. Right now, what I'd like to do is go ahead and call this Budget Adjustments Meeting to order, and welcome everyone who's watching. I think it's being televised on the City's channel as well as on Facebook Live.

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ITEM NO. 2: DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL ADJUSTMENTS TO THE PROPOSED FY2024 BUDGET

Mayor Lyles said I want to start off this meeting. It's one of main times that we work together on one of the most important responsibilities that we have as a City Council, which is to review and discuss the proposed budget. The Manager presented this budget to us, and it's structurally balanced, not just in this year, but in the next year as well. It also incorporates resources towards our strategic priorities. So, what the purpose of this meeting today, and the intent of this meeting, is to discuss any potential adjustments that Council would like to make to the Manager's recommended 2024 Budget.

So, we had the budget public hearing on Monday, which we had the opportunity to hear from several groups of City employees and other members of the community. The primary feedback was around two issues. We heard a lot about hourly employee pay, and the Strategic Energy Action Plan funding, as well as the Public Safety Plan funding. So, for those initiatives, we really do hear from the public, those 20-plus people that came down, that we need to focus on their ideas for those things. We've all had this budget since May 1, 2023. I hope we've had a chance to read through it completely and highlight everything that's necessary that you'd like to discuss today.

I want to actually propose a process for today, so that everyone will have the opportunity to express what their perspective is, as well as anything that they want to accomplish. I suggest that we first recognize each Council member for comments on the budget overall. Then, at the end of your comments, please let us know if you have any suggestion for an amendment or an adjustment to the proposed budget.

So, the Manager will provide an update on the funds available for adjustments, and any additions beyond that amount, or adjustments, will be something that we'll have to discuss. Staff is going to collect and capture all of the adjustments that you make or that are proposed. Then, after all the Council members have been recognized and had the opportunity to speak on the budget, as well as any changes to the budget that they would like to see, it has been our usual practice that we vote on each item on the list of changes that the staff has captured, and that we consider those for what we would like to do as potential adjustments.

So, in the past, what we've done is said, it would take five Council members for votes to move forward any change for the staff to do additional analysis. That is so that we can get the analysis of the cost, the considerations, consequences, and how it can be integrated into the document that has to be prepared that we will vote on at the May 25, 2023, meeting.

So, what we'd like to do is say that Council will have additional information for any changes requested that move forward with five votes. Then at the May 25, 2023, meeting, the Council discusses those changes based on your perspectives and the information, and then we make a final vote of six or more to incorporate it in the proposed budget. So, we vote on this budget on June 12, 2023, at the Business Meeting. So, I hope that this process is fairly familiar to everyone. Are there any questions about it before we start today?

Councilmember Mayfield said thank you, Madam Mayor. I would like for us to consider an amendment to what you just reviewed between now today, May 11, 2023, and May 25, 2023. We just received the responses to our Council questions, and this packet is pretty thick, at 10 a.m. this morning. So, a number of us haven't had a chance to go through this full packet that answers some of the questions, and today would be a good time for us to be able to have the ability for some clarifying followup questions, as we go through and make our recommendations. If my colleagues have recommendations for today, that would be great. I would like for us to consider giving us some time next week if we have additional recommendations, and not just the conversation of only if we get five in support do we move forward for it to go to May 25, 2023. Again, as this was just given to us today, and we may or may not have had a chance to go through all of it, and this answered some very specific questions for us. For me, it also created some additional questions.

Mayor Lyles said so, let me see if I can say that back to you, Ms. Mayfield, and make sure that I can capture it correctly. What you would like to do is to have what we have today, but also to have that same opportunity on the May 25, 2023.

Ms. Mayfield said no. I am asking if we can have the same opportunity another day next week, prior to May 25, 2023, so that we do have time for staff to be able to respond and get us some numbers. If we're looking at recommending any adjustments to the budget, if that recommendation needs a minimum of five of us to move forward to May 25, 2023, conversation, I'm asking if the week of May 15 to May 19, 2023, we can have additional conversation to see if there are any recommendations to the budget outside of today. Basically, I want two chances to today. I wanted to have today, but prior to May 25, 2023.

Mayor Lyles said prior to May 25, 2023. So, I'm not quite sure how this will work, because right now we have only got six people that have attended today's meeting. So, it's really tough to kind of do a date. So, I'm going to ask the Manager, if we had another date, we would have those questions early in the next week? I'm going to try to get my calendar out.

Ms. Mayfield said Mayor, for clarification, what I'm asking is, if we can utilize today to ask some more clarifying questions, since what was in the original proposal, is that if five of us agree, then that's what moves to the May 25, 2023, meeting. What I'm asking is, if we can have a little bit more time to dig in today to get some clarifying questions, especially since we don't have the full Council here, because they might have some recommendations or proposals to the budget as well. If we can find a date next week to add those additional recommendations prior to the May 25, 2023, conversation.

Mayor Lyles said so, when we look at the schedule for next week, is there any objections to having another budget adjustments meeting? So, let's go ahead and just make a proposal about the dates that we have and where we are. So, this is what I think that I heard you say, is if we could ask additional questions today, and that could be a part of your comments about the budget or anything that you want to say. Then, there's also the idea of any change that you're ready to do today. So, what we're looking at is a calendar for next week.

Councilmember Ajmera arrived at 1:52 p.m.

Marcus Jones, City Manager said thank you, Mayor. Thank you, Councilmember Mayfield. So, I'm going to need Patrick and also Brian. I think by law, we have to have

this budget approved by June 30, 2023. I think what you're asking for is more time to have discussions, instead of just today?

Ms. Mayfield said yes and no. I'm just asking if today can be a two-part? I'm not changing May 25, 2023. I'm just saying, do we have another opportunity, prior to May 25, 2023, if we have recommendations, because this came in today and not everyone had a chance to go through all of the answers to the questions that were submitted?

Mayor Lyles said well, we have a Council meeting on May 22, 2023, and most of us would likely have to be here during that time. So, I would just suggest that the date of May 22, 2023, be the time that we would come back with more information if there are questions that you have to submit to budget. Well, if we could get the questions say by Wednesday, May 17, 2023, on May 22, 2023, we could have the same meeting for any changes that would be suggested at that point. I would say that we perhaps do it that day of the Council meeting. Would that be acceptable?

Ms. Mayfield said so, Mayor, do you want that in the form of a recommendation? So, I would like to recommend an amendment to give Council up to May 17, 2023, for additional conversations for us to review at our May 22, 2023, meeting, prior to our budget FY (Fiscal Year) 2024 meeting on May 25, 2023.

Mayor Lyles said right, so May 17, 2023. I guess I want to make sure that, again, if the issue is how quickly you can get the response to make sure that the budget office, if they were due by May 17, 2023, could we get a response over the weekend, I guess, by May 19, 2023? So, if there are questions submitted by Council members on May 17, 2023. What if we do May 16, 2023, and that way it can go out with the packet?

Ms. Mayfield said okay, so we're shortening the time, and I think somewhere in my question, it kind of got lost. We're going to be making recommendations. All I was asking is if we can have additional time for the recommendations, because staff has already given us answers. Now, they're giving me some additional questions, I would like to have the space to ask those questions today. As far as my recommendation, if we have additional recommendations outside of what is identified today with five colleagues, do we have the space to submit those additional recommendations prior to the May 25, 2023, decision?

Mayor Lyles said and that's what I was saying. If you could tell those considerations by the May 16, 2023, for your questions as well as the analysis for them, that would mean that you would have the cost, the consequences, the timeline on the May 25, 2023. If you submitted it on May 16, 2023, and the staff could get it done by May 20 or 21 or 22, 2023 I guess it would have to be the May 22, 2023, meeting, which you'd have additional time to discuss it, and then that would be the two dates that we would have. So, here we are. Let me just make sure. Ms. Mayfield, what you're suggesting is that you submit additional questions, and by May 22, 2023, you can submit changes as well as get the responses to your question?

Ms. Mayfield said yes, and I will acquiesce for the May 16, 2023, in order to give time, and that gives us about an additional five days that would give enough time for staff. So, if the May 16, 2023, will work better than May 17, 2023, then I support that, Mayor.

Mayor Lyles said I think it would give you more time for Council to get the information so that you can have it by May 22, 2023. Then, on May 22, 2023, we'd find out if there are additional changes approved by the Council members.

Mr. Jones said okay. So, the questions that we received, for the most part it was Monday, and so a lot of work went in to make these thorough to talk to the departments and what have you. So, the only thing I would ask is, I think if we get questions on May 17, 2023, we're going to be in the same situation, that we're going to talk to the team and try to get the right answers. I think if I give you something on May 19, 2023, or on that Saturday, we may be in the same position that you don't have enough time. So, I guess what I'm asking is, if we could kind of reverse engineer it and figure out as much

of the questions that you may have this week, so that we can have a little bit of time to work on them, I think to give you more time to review the responses?

Ms. Mayfield said so, Mr. Manager, I agree. I'm just asking for more time for us to submit our recommendations.

Mayor Lyles said so, would you think about May 15, 2023, or earlier, or the Friday? We could do it tomorrow. You could just submit your questions tomorrow. Would that be okay with you?

Ms. Mayfield said no. This packet, and I didn't mean for this to take up this much time. It was just simply a question of, can we have additional time if we have additional recommendations, other than the recommendations that came out today. Because, in here, I'm just looking at one page with these numbers that are presented to me, I have a challenge with when we're having this conversation. So, I don't necessarily have all the recommendations for today, based on what was responded to, but I might be able to pull my recommendations, and maybe my colleagues might be able to have additional recommendations. They might be ready. I'm not. We're getting this, and actually going through it and looking at it. So, I was just asking, can we just have more time for the recommendations? Not really more questions, we're going to ask the questions in here, but just to get our recommendations in before May 25, 2023. Manager, does that make sense?

Mr. Jones said yes. So, if I understand, it seems like it's a two-fold process, that if there are some recommendations that you're not prepared to make today, whether it's next Monday or next Wednesday, you just don't want today to be the end?

Mayor Lyles said yes, right. I'm just trying to pick a date, and I would say, could we have everything in order by May 22, 2023, so May 25, 2023, is an actual decision-making meeting? I think the concern that we should have is how much time does it take staff to actually do, and as you said, five days. So, let's just run it backwards. If we're going to have something on May 22, 2023, on May 15, 2023, you would have to have any changes in for vetting on May 15, 2023.

Ryan Bergman, Budget Director said so, if I'm understanding correctly, we'll get more questions today, which is probably the lion's share of the ones that we've been working on for this next packet. Then, if we can get whatever else is a question by early next week, we should be able to produce something by Friday or Saturday, so that Council would have time on Sunday, into Monday. If you wanted to turn Monday into the, only the five votes go on to Thursday type thing, and then Thursday settle the budget, I think that works from the budget staff. My only concern would be that we're basically going to start analyzing stuff right away, but if there's brand new things on Monday, May 21, 2023, it's going to be tough for us to turn those around. So, that's not what Ms. Mayfield is saying, but getting stuff by early next week and turning it around by Friday and Saturday, questions should be fine.

Mayor Lyles said right, and then any changes, I think, would be on the May 22, 2023, and that would give you just two days.

Mr. Bergman said right, and I'm saying that's okay if there's things we've already analyzed.

Mayor Lyles said the difference is the questions versus the change, or something that you want to do differently. So, I'd just like to make sure that if you have a change submitted, that we have the full data response at least by May 22, 2023, so that May 25, 2023, you have the information.

Councilmember Driggs said what I hear Ms. Mayfield saying, that I agree with, is we don't want to close the door completely today, right?

Mayor Lyles said right. Does anyone have any concerns?

Mr. Driggs said so, it's not primarily about the questions, it's just we're not going to close the door today, which means we have to have a certain time at a future meeting when we're all together where there will be an opportunity to offer other add/deletes, but that has to be done in time for them to be processed before May 25, 2023 when we then do the straw votes. So, the question is, Ryan, when do we have to finish proposing add/deletes, so that you can be ready for the straw votes?

Ms. Mayfield said thank you for clarifying.

Mr. Bergman said yes. What I would say is, questions today, final questions to us for next week, and give us a heads up of any changes you plan on proposing, so it gives us a head start on some of them. Nothing becomes official until that May 21, 2023, meeting where it takes five votes, but that timeframe could work for us.

Mr. Driggs said but we can't miss the step where five of us have to agree on the add/delete. So, the question is, at what point in time can people offer something else as an add/delete? When will be the last opportunity to do that?

Mayor Lyles said I'm suggesting on May 22, 2023, that we do that, because then the final vote would be May 25, 2023. That would be on a Council day that we would start early, and you would have to have your changes, adds/deletes, whatever we are calling them, by May 22, 2023.

Mr. Driggs said, and you can handle getting more add/deletes on May 22, 2023, and being ready by May 25, 2023?

Mr. Bergman said yes. That's what I'm saying. As long as they're things that we got a heads up on, or at least most of them are things we got a heads up on. Most of the things we can do in that timeframe. I can't imagine at that point it's going to be 30 things.

Mr. Driggs said so recognizing you might get a heads up, you might look at it, but it might not get the five votes on May 22, 2023, at least you'd have a head start?

Mr. Bergman said yes, and if it doesn't get the five votes, we just don't talk about it.

Mr. Driggs said yes. We notify as soon as possible of anything we want to try to propose on May 22, 2023, so you can think about it. May 22, 2023, there will be a session in which we have one more opportunity to offer add/deletes, and then it's over, right? I agree with Ms. Mayfield, I think it was kind of hard to process this on such a short timeframe. Thank you.

Motion was made by Councilmember Mayfield, and seconded by Councilmember Driggs that the Charlotte City Council hold a budget adjustment meeting on May 22, 2023, at 1:30 p.m.
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Unknown said could we possibly do it closer to the start of the meeting time?

Ms. Mayfield said that's not going to give enough time.

Mr. Driggs said I don't think we need three hours for the follow up. We should get the work done now. I think it should start later.

Councilmember Ajmera said yes. How about we just go over the Q&A now with everyone being in the room. If Mr. Bergman can just spend an hour to go over all the questions and answers. There are not that many, and some of them are very straight forward. So, if that May 22, 2023, meeting does not work for everyone, this will give us an opportunity.

Mayor Lyles said we went through the process of what we were going to do today before you came in.

Councilmember Winston said I was going to follow up something similar to what Ms. Ajmera was saying. Could we maybe, since we don't know how much time that we'll need and we've spent a lot of time on this right now, can we table this motion, do the work, and see how much time we might need at the end of this session so we can make a better-informed decision about what we want the next meeting to look like?

Mr. Driggs said that sounds good.

Mayor Lyles said I think it was very clear what Ms. Mayfield was saying about what she wanted to accomplish, and now we've got it. So, I think we're really just having a motion, and if you want to change the time of it, then say I want to change the time from 1:30 to whatever. Right now, we have a motion on the floor, that's been properly seconded, for a meeting on May 22, 2023, at 1:30 p.m. for the budget adjustment meeting. So, any further discussion?

The vote was taken and recorded as follows:

YEAS: Councilmembers Mayfield, Mitchell, and Bokhari

Mr. Jones said so, thank you, Mayor and members of Council. What we typically do before we start the budget adjustments is try to give you any updates as it relates to revenue or any updates on the expenditure side. So, just a couple things. I do appreciate the work that the team put together to provide this additional information. I do understand the desire, to Ms. Mayfield and other Council members, to have the information in front of them as soon as possible so that they're not scrambling to make decisions. So, hopefully as we go through this, for any additional clarification, we'll be able to do that, and we have a number of directors in the room in case that that's needed.

So, we typically start off with where we are on the revenue side. If you go into the document, 20-some page document, the first one just really talks about where we start off on the sources side. So, in the budget, there was \$101,000 and some change that was unallocated, and that's something that we typically do in the budget process, and that's in the General Fund. So, think about that as being an ongoing revenue source that could be attached any ongoing expenditure.

Councilmember Anderson arrived at 2:12 p.m.

A little differently this year, we had \$250,000 in Payco, that's also unprogrammed. With that, think about that as really something that's one time in nature, that's in the Payco system, that can be used. I'll tell you that we have a great team, between Budget Finance and everybody on the team. If there's some things we have to do in terms of adjustments, in terms of Payco, General Fund, ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act), one time ongoing, I believe we have the capability of doing that. For right now, I just want to make sure I'm laying out the buckets the right way.

When I started the budget, we talked about \$21 million in ARPA funds that's related to housing. Remember a year ago, we started at \$55 million. You've done some incredible things, initiatives, and we had about \$21 million left. We're only showing \$17 million, because if you do agree to the proposal for the HOMES (Helping Out Mecklenburg homeowners with Economic Support) program, which is a joint program with the City and County, and I fully expect the County to also put money into that program, it would come from the ARPA funds for housing, leaving about \$17 million.

Lastly, I would say that we have \$3.7 million in the ARPA jobs workforce development category that's also unallocated. We did talk to you a little bit about some other funds that's related to payments in lieu, and that is available too. I guess what I'm trying to say is, let's start off with, and I'll just make it simple, that \$101,469 in the General Fund, the

\$250,000 in Payco, and then we have roughly \$400,000 on the ARPA side for City Operations that was turned back into the City. We had it for solid waste services. The process has gone through. Those dollars are available.

Then, lastly, and this is somewhat atypical. On the revenue side, we received sales tax numbers for February 2023 this morning, it's always a lag. We roughly have about \$456,000. That is more than what our estimate is, and we believe that it's safe to extrapolate that out as something that would be ongoing also. So, roughly \$1.2 million in resources that would be available for discussions today. I will say that a couple other things that occurred, and I don't know what's the right way to do this. It was very clear in the public hearing that hourly employees had concerns about compensation, and we really heard a lot of that from you in the meetings that we had earlier this week. There were some concerns about fire and the pay plan as it relates to the public safety police and fire.

Then, I would say lastly, there were discussions around SEAP (Strategic Energy Action Plan), but not necessarily negative, more so, let's say positive. So, as we start to talk about this, and I'll leave this up to you Mayor and Council, that from a principle standpoint, [inaudible] philosophy, it was how can we do as least amount of harm to the individuals who are least likely to be able to afford any type of increases, whether it's property tax increase, or let's say, even utilities.

So, as we started to put all of the information together, while you didn't ask this specifically, at some point we'd like to provide you with maybe a way to address some of the concerns that we heard on Monday night as it relates to our lowest paid hourly employees, to be able to do something more than that 6 percent bump for FY (Fiscal Year) 2024. Again, that's just something that, in the right time, we'd like to be able to discuss that with you.

Then, lastly, one of the things that was asked on Monday is, what's the value of that one cent. If you put one penny on the property tax, and I do believe that's at the bottom of Page 3. So, that one cent on the property tax is worth \$21 million to the General Fund, and the way that we've described this each time that there's a reval, is we do the median home value. So, the impact to the median home value, which is \$349,700 would be \$34 a year. So, I just put that out there because that's something that had been asked, what is the impact if you raise the property tax by one cent? So, you can multiple that by two. If it were two cents, three for three cents, and also what is the impact on, let's say, that median home value? So, Mayor, I just put that out there. Typically, again, we do talk about what has changed since the last time that we met. So, that's trying to get as many resources that's available to you before you start deliberations.

Mayor Lyles said would the Council like to hear the information on the hourly wages and the issues that the Manager says he has information that was not perhaps asked directly in that respect, but would you like to hear that information in advance of the questions?

Ms. Ajmera said yes, please.

Mayor Lyles said anyone objecting to that? Alright, Mr. Jones, why don't you go ahead and provide that information.

Mr. Jones said thank you. So, I'll set it up and then I'll turn it over to Ryan. Again, this is not inconsistent with some of the ways we have addressed some of our lowest paid employees, and thank you so much for allowing us to put it on the table. I think that when we start to think about equity, our hourly employees, and our lowest paid employees, this could be a pathway forward within the resources that I suggested earlier. So, Ryan, if you could talk us through it.

Mr. Bergman said sure. So, it didn't just start Monday night, it also started Monday with some of the discussions that we had with Council members, one on ones, and things

about that for concerns and questions on the budget, a lot of questions about equity, and things of nature.

So, we started looking around at things we've done in the past, things that other cities do. One thing we did in the past a few years ago, maybe about four years ago now, is we set a minimum raise, like a per hour, rather than a percent raise for some hourly employees. Then, taking it a step further, last year we were fortunate to have enough ARPA funds to give out a percentage bonus one time to all employees. We did that in a way where there was essentially a floor, like even if you made less than this, it's still at least \$500 for each bonus.

So, what we did is, if you took the hourly employees, and rather than just saying it's 3 percent in July and 3 percent in January, instead you said it's a minimum of \$1,800 in July or January. What essentially happens is that nothing changes for anybody over \$60,000, but for everybody under \$60,000 you get a reasonable increase from that. At the very bottom, that increase would be over 8 percent for our lowest paid employees, and that would be a General Fund cost of roughly \$480,000. The cost on the Enterprise Funds is negligible enough that it wouldn't have an impact on rate models or anything like that. Then, taking it one step further to protect people at the very bottom as well. Talking to our Economist quite a bit, and one of the ways that he has projected cost of living in Charlotte in the past, is in your packets on Page 5.

Mayor Lyles said actually, you can also see the hourly employee information on Page 4, because it explains a lot about the merit dates, the market adjustments, and the two dates. So, what was three and three, then becomes something around total of eight instead of six.

Mr. Bergman said right. So, what this essentially does, is it uses data points that we have that says no more than 30 percent of your income should go to housing, and it uses the average household in Charlotte, which is 2.47, to project what is needed for a two-bedroom apartment, and it's \$46,200. So, on top of what I just described, for additional dollars, you could by January essentially create that as a pay floor.

So, it's \$46,200 for a 40-hour a week employee, that would be about \$22 an hour. Those two things combined, if done together, would be a General Fund impact of about \$540,000. What it does is the very bottom, the people that only make \$41,600, they would get an 11 percent increase in this budget. The people at about \$45,000, would get an 8 percent increase, \$50,000 about a 7.2 percent increase by January. Then, for everybody \$60,000 and above, there's no change from what was projected. So, I know that's a lot, but that was our attempt to try to address some of your concerns, and some of the other concerns as kind of a possibility.

Mayor Lyles said okay. What we talked about was having everyone have a comment on the budget before, instead of just going through. I just wanted us to get the information out on the table. So, what I'd like to do is go back to our process, and to start comments generally overall on the budget and any changes at the end of your comments overall on the budget.

Ms. Ajmera said let me first comment on what Mr. Bergman presented. I think that's a great idea. Do you need a motion to make that change?

Mayor Lyles said we're going to do motions at the end.

Ms. Ajmera said okay. Well, I'll just say I will support that, and if I need to make a motion at the end, I will, because that addresses some of our hourly employees' concerns around being able to afford to live in our City. So, appreciate the work, Ryan, your team has done to come up with this creative solution to address equity concerns. Also, if you can go to question number 10, where you have minimum \$20 an hour. So, how would that apply in this scenario? Would that apply to our public safety employees as well?

Mr. Bergman said well, it's two different calculations. What I just talked about is the minimum salary needed to live in Charlotte, cost of living, which was \$46,200, everyone in fire would already be above the total. The difference would be, because fire works 52 hours a week before there's any overtime, which is not our rule, that's Fair Labor Standards Act rule, there's a different per hour calculation for fire.

Ms. Ajmera said so, just to follow up on that, Madam Mayor. So, since fire works 52 hours a week schedule, and I'm sorry as Ms. Mayfield said, I agree with her. Many of us didn't get an opportunity to read all of this, review all of this, because this was just sent earlier today. So, I'm trying to do both at the same time. How much would it cost the City to make minimum pay for fire to \$20 an hour?

Mr. Bergman yes. So, first I want to apologize about that. I think as we learned, next year we'll try to schedule maybe budget adjustments two weeks after, then one week after, so we have more time. It was trying to get things done from Monday to Thursday was a little bit problematic. So, what we have here is, if we wanted to bring fire up to \$20 an hour in this upcoming budget, there's two ways that you could do it. So, those are the two bullets that you see on the screen. You can basically eliminate the first step of firefighter one, which is actually similar to what we did in the Police Pay Plan, same concept. There's a little bit of compression where you have different classes together, but they don't leapfrog each other, so it's not as problematic, but that would cost about \$135,000 to do it that way.

The other way you can do it, is leave the Fire Pay Plan unchanged, but basically require that we do not pay less than \$1,040 weekly. So, the Pay Plan would be the same, but some of the people in step one would get a little bit extra money from that. As it is, the people who, in the current plan would be below \$20 an hour, would be the step one firefighters who don't have any education or military incentives. It really only becomes a problem after they graduate from the academy for a four-month period, because while they're in the academy, they're actually 40-hour employees. So, I know it's a lot, but those two steps would both give them the \$20 an hour in different ways.

Ms. Ajmera said yes. I will need to take some time to read through this, but I firmly believe that we have to ensure that we have minimum pay for all our employees, including fire, to at least \$20 an hour. So, I think this is where I would like recommendations from Mr. Manager as to, out of those two options, what would be the most appropriate? So, if you can provide that recommendation. So, I had made two proposals. First was the fire minimum pay to \$20 an hour, and second, pretty much I support Mr. Bergman's recommendations on hourly pay and making sure that we are being equitable in that. Mr. Manager, I know you talked about how many funds that are unprogrammed, especially from the ARPA bucket. So, I just want to make sure I got that correctly. You said \$17 million after the HOMES program with the County?

Mr. Jones said correct.

Ms. Ajmera said so, we have \$17 million from that.

Mr. Jones said and if you chose not to do the HOMES Program, you would have the \$21 million.

Ms. Ajmera said if we do the HOMES Program, then how much would it be?

Mr. Jones said \$17 million.

Ms. Ajmera said \$17 million. So, I would like us to consider how we can leverage \$17 million that we have in ARPA towards one-time bonus to address the concerns that were raised at the public forum from our City employees, especially Charlotte Water and Solid Waste, and I think those were the hourly employees. Pretty much, how can we look at this pool of funding that's available to address some of their concerns around just being able to afford to live in our City? So, if you can provide some recommendations on that.

I just want to give kudos to Ryan and his team. They've done a great job, and they worked around the clock to address some of the questions. I know I've asked many questions, and they have provided answers right away, and I really appreciate the work. Mr. Manager, kudos to you. This is a big lift for you. This is the fifth straight year without a single property tax increase, while continuing to invest more to address our community needs and investing more in our employees. Hats off to you, because you understand that we cannot displace people while continuing to invest in our infrastructure and our community needs, such as affordable housing.

Councilmember Molina arrived at 2:30 p.m.

So, I'm absolutely impressed by your financial skillset, and I look forward to getting some of those questions addressed at a later time. Thank you.

Mr. Jones said thank you, Councilmember Ajmera. I really appreciate it, and the team does too. One thing I want to make sure for clarity. Line 14 and 15 may be in opposition of each other, and just let me tell you why. So, when we started off with \$20 per hour, it was for our general employees who have a 40-hour week. When you look at line 15, I believe all and the proposal earlier would have individuals making \$22 an hour. Once again, that's general employees 40 hours a week. So, I just want to make sure that as we do this, that you don't come back and say, well, that's not what I intended.

So, what Ryan suggested earlier would end up having an, all in, a 40-hour week individual, making a little bit more than \$22 an hour. Your line 14 says have a fire minimum pay of \$20 an hour. If you're fine with that, it's all good.

Mr. Bergman said well, and this to also clarify though, the \$22 an hour General Fund employee, they would make \$46,200 by the end of the year without any overtime. At \$20 an hour, the fire employees would make about \$54,000 a year without overtime. So, you just draw that distinction, and so the hourly rates will be different, the total rates will be different, and it's because of the different hours in the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Ms. Ajmera said so, if I may follow up on that, Madam Mayor. So, with number 15, what would be the hourly pay for fire employees, with the implementation of number 15?

Mr. Bergman said the very trainees who graduate from the academy for that four-month period, would be \$20 an hour if they don't have any education incentives or military incentive.

Ms. Ajmera said okay, so that will already bring them to \$20 an hour.

Mr. Bergman said that'll bring them to \$20 an hour.

Ms. Ajmera said okay. So, what you're saying, ultimately, it's pretty much repeating what we are already doing in number 15, because number 14 has already been covered by number 15?

Mr. Bergman said no, no. I think what the Manager is saying is they're two different things, two different groups of employees with different hours per week. What he is just making sure is clear is, we would be bringing all hourly employees to an annual salary of \$46,200. All firefighters would make more than that. What he is saying is, if you try to do it in an hourly way, our lowest paid hourly employees would make \$22 an hour, and the lowest paid fire employees, the ones that I mentioned, would make \$20 an hour, that's all.

Ms. Ajmera said got it.

Mayor Lyles said Ms. Ajmera, thank you for modeling that behavior of get it out there, make your changes.

Councilmember Watlington said I want to say a couple of things. First of all, kudos, again, I want to agree with my colleagues on that, to the Manager and to Mr. Bergman, because you did great work here. I know we were up against time this year, and message received that you can't make magic twice. So, we know we've got work to do for next year, but I'm very pleased with what I've seen overall for the budget. So, I've got just a couple of comments, and I will keep it brief.

I did have a followup question for our next discussion. In regard to some of the items that we had asked about during this session, and preparing for this fiscal year, there were some items that were going to be baked into the ARPA, whether it was workforce development, those kinds of things. I'm just curious as to how those things ended up in this year's budget, and I just want to make sure that as we're having these conversations again, and with the ARPA dollars that are left, that those things are included. So, that's one I'd like to see some follow up for.

Then, secondly, I'm looking at, in particular, our financial partners, and I wanted to lift up two things. The first one, and I know Councilmember Graham has stepped out, so, I'll pitch it for him in the moment. I noticed there were a couple of organizations that applied, that I didn't see on the final list, and one I wanted to lift up was For The Struggle. I'll leave it to Councilmember Graham to discuss that a little bit more, but that was one I'd be very interested in seeing if there's an opportunity.

Ms. Mayfield said what page?

Ms. Watlington said oh, I'm sorry, Pages 45 and 46. So, what I see here is our summary of financial partners that ultimately made it into the budget, and I'm comparing that against our financial partner application. So, there were just a couple that I don't see listed here, and I know we have a little bit of funds left, so I wanted to lift that one up, For The Struggle. Like I said, I know Councilmember Graham is leading the way on that one, but I just want to offer my support on some funding for For The Struggling, whatever that ends up being.

Then, the second thing I wanted to talk about real briefly was, as we look at our dedicated revenue sources, our MSDs (Municipal Service District). So, I know we've had some conversations around the MSD scope as it relates to beautification, litter, and public safety. So, a lot of us that have districts, in our districts know that we hear from our constituents all the time about policing, particularly over the weekends and when we're having events, and also litter and trash pickup.

So, I want to, and this is really a question for the Manager and for staff, is to understand as we are going to be, it looks like asked to contribute 62 percent of the funding to Center City Partners and 83 percent to University City Partners, what can we expect to receive as it relates to that? This is how I feel about it. If we need to reallocate some of these dollars specifically to our Internal Public Safety, in order to ensure that we've got appropriate coverage, I'd rather make that adjustment. If it's possible to understand what their plans are in order to help support that, then I would be open to that as well.

Mr. Jones said so, thank you, Ms. Watlington. So, I'll use for example, and I think what you're just asking for is additional information. In the scope of services, and you said Center City Partners specifically, there's community safety, housing and neighborhood development, transportation and planning. There's also environmental sustainability, as well as economic development. So, I think there's an opportunity to have a discussion about how those funds are spread across those different categories, and maybe that's something that when the different organizations come to the committees, that there could be some level of discussion about how the allocation works.

Ms. Watlington said awesome, thank you.

Mayor Lyles said so, I want to make sure. Does that mean that we're going to deal with that issue in committee?

Ms. Watlington said yes. If there's anything that we need to make sure that we put our eyes on before on the budget piece, like if we find out that, well, we don't really have the allocations or there's something that needs to be handled from a budgetary standpoint, definitely would like to include it in these discussions. If it's a matter of, we can manage that ongoing in committee, I'm fine with that as well.

Mr. Bergman said we'll reach out to Center City Partners and University City Partners with the question under this scope for them to provide additional information.

Ms. Watlington said thank you.

Councilmember Molina said I didn't see anything specifically that I guess I'm targeting. There's a few things that I care deeply about that I'd like to make sure that we emphasize, and that is workforce development. I came to Council, and the people of East Charlotte entrusted me with raising that up as an area of opportunity for particularly East Charlotte, but I know that it's something that we need to deal with across our City. So, workforce development, and small businesses, because also we have a whole lot of small businesses in East Charlotte, whereas a previous small business owner I remember wanting to get started and not having proper resources and being a one-woman show for many of the years in getting started. So, I'd just like to lift that up.

I also would like to echo both of my colleagues, in saying thank you all for the work that you've done to pull this budget together. I know that this is not easy. I also, while I have the liberty to speak, our workers that came to see us and expressed their concerns, I hope that they know that we hear them. As a Council, I can speak personally for myself, and not for anyone else, but I'd like to see us take a concerted look at what we can do to relieve some of those concerns. I know that inflation and being able to afford to live in our City is becoming more difficult no matter where you are on the spectrum. For those of us who make a certain amount of money it's much harder than for those of us who don't. So, however we can make that easier, I'd like to see us take a good strong look at that as well. So, other than that, that's all I have.

Councilmember Johnson said I'd also like to echo my colleagues in thanking Marcus and your team for the hard work on the budget, and the balanced budget. So, thank you for that. I applaud you. I saw at the beginning the distinguished budget presentation. So, you did a great job with that. So, thank you.

I want to just lift up my support for the increase for the hourly employees, and also for the firefighters. I heard them when they came out Monday night. One of the questions that was asked was to explain the historic difference and pay between the police and fire employees, and the projected cost of maintaining this parity. So, I know that information is listed here in this packet, so we'll have a chance to look at that, but I do think that their pay should be more equal. One thing I thought was very interesting, I saw a unity from the fire department when they came and talked about this. It wasn't just some employees or some groups. This was a unified request. So, I definitely support that.

There was a question about Council having another employee, or support person for us. I noticed the question, the amount to do that looks like we were looking about \$92,000 per person. The answer says to have five more full-time people, it would be about \$400,000. I don't think we're asking for each of us to have a full-time person. I think we would be looking more as a higher-level support person, maybe to do policy research. It wouldn't take five additional people. You and I have spoken over the past few months about the need for me to have additional assistance with all of the zonings. I think our residents expect for a City the size of ours, and part-time Council members, that we would have more than, and to split between two Council members, a support person who checks our emails and schedule. There's so much more to our work. I think our residents deserve so much more attention and responsiveness.

So, I'd support an additional staff member to support Council as a whole, that's one or two people, to do some research around that. Yes, I think it's necessary. The rezoning

coordinations, all of that. So, I wanted to bring that up. I also wanted to ask about the Capital Project in District 4. I know there was an answer. Can you give me just a little update on the Capital Projects in District 4. My question was the status of the existing Capital Projects that were listed as over budget. So, can you give me some detail about that, please?

Mr. Bergman said yes. So, that's on Page 16, which is Question 25. We listed seven projects at the February Budget Workshop that we considered to be overbudget based on some of the inflationary pressures. So, this proposed budget provides \$27.4 million to address all seven of those projects. So, specifically, in District 4, that's \$7.8 million for the Research Drive, J.W. Clay Connector, over I-85 bridge. There's two more projects that we were able to take care of with project savings, which were Monroe Road Streetscape, and then Northeast Corridor Infrastructure program, which I assume that's the District 4 one?

Unknown said, yes, it's on McCalla Drive.

Mr. Bergman said yes, McCalla Drive, the NEICE (National Electric Interstate Compact Enterprise) program. So, to answer your question, the District 4 and the other projects that we listed as overbudget, have been addressed in this budget.

Ms. Johnson said which one is the McCalla Drive?

Mr. Bergman said it's not on the table, because it's being taken care of with existing project savings, but it's the second to last sentence of the write-up right there.

Ms. Johnson said so, does that include the McCalla Extension and Streetscape that includes the light poles and banner?

Mr. Bergam said yes, it's the McCalla Streetscape project.

Ms. Johnson said that includes light poles and the banner hardware, right?

Mr. Bergam said I'm going to maybe defer to Jennifer Smith, I think is probably watching on 280.

Ms. Johnson said and the reason I ask, is because these projects were approved by voters in transportation bonds in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020. So, we want to make sure that we are delivering the promises that have been supported by the voters. So, I wanted some clarification on what those projects included. Also, the Dave McKinney Extension? I know that that's at risk, and J.W. Clay Streetscape that included light poles and hardware, and that anticipated start date was 2016.

Mr. Bergman said yes, the J.W. Clay Connector, that's the second biggest one at about \$8 million of additional funds that we put in. As for the specifics of McCalla, we'll bring up our City Engineer, Jennifer Smith.

Ms. Johnson said okay, yes, because streetscape and bridge are two different things. So, I just want to make sure that we're clear on what's being approved, that's already been voted on. Thanks.

Jennifer Smith, City Engineer said yes. So, the streetscape project, it does include the signs that will be posted on that streetscape project, McCalla Drive. Then, I apologize, I was walking. So, what was the question on the bridge?

Ms. Johnson said J.W. Clay Streetscape?

Ms. Smith said yes. So, that one is funded as well, as part of the NEICE program.

Ms. Johnson said okay. If I can get an anticipated start date, maybe not today, but if you can send that information?

Ms. Smith said yes. I don't have those off the top of my head.

Ms. Johnson said and the date McKinney Extension?

Ms. Smith said so, that one we were coordinating with a developer out in that area, and that developer has kind of fallen through. So, we're evaluating costs for that project right now.

Ms. Johnson said okay. You said the McCalla Extension?

Ms. Smith said the McCalla Extension. So, we hope that all the money that we're getting, we haven't bid that project yet, will cover both the McCalla Drive and the Extension, but we haven't bid the project yet. So, once we bid the project, we'll know more definite costs on the project, but the money that we had requested was to build both segments.

Ms. Johnson said okay, and just the McCalla Drive and the McCalla Extension, that's what was requested and approved in the bond dollars? Is that correct?

Ms. Smith said so, the bonds were for the NEICE program, and several projects were identified out of the NEICE program. The intent of the program was to really go as far as we can on all the projects with the money we have.

Ms. Johnson said okay. Well, I just want to lift those up, because those have been approved by voters. We know that the costs have increased, but that's due to inflation, because of those delays. They were originally requested and improved in 2014. So, I do want to keep those lifted for District 4. Also, those street banners, I know we're looking at the Monroe Road, that's great, but we've been requesting those in District 4 for a while. Also, I wanted to ask about Heal Charlotte. There was a request for Heal Charlotte.

Ms. Mayfield said so for our partners.

Ms. Johnson said yes, under partners?

Ms. Mayfield said give us a dollar amount.

Ms. Johnson said oh, you want a dollar amount?

Ms. Mayfield said yes, that's what you're doing.

Ms. Johnson said okay. I'd like to request \$1.2 million; I believe that was the amount, and I know he submitted a request to provide housing for homeless individuals in one of the hotels on Sugar Creek. Councilmember Mayfield and I had the pleasure of taking Shawn Heath over there, looking at the project. He's doing great work, case management, again, housing homeless and working with homeless families. So, I do want to lift that up, the \$1.2 million for Heal Charlotte.

Mr. Bergman said Ms. Johnson, just a clarification. Are you asking from the housing ARPA funds? Is that what you mean, or does it not matter?

Ms. Johnson said it's not that it doesn't matter. I'll let experts work on that. Yes, they're already working on that, but I didn't see it in the partners, and just wanted to kind of know what the status of that was.

Mr. Bergman said, yes, and similar to how we've done in the past. Our proposed budget-maintained level funding for the discretionary financial partners with the exception of Race Matters for Juvenile Justice, which was the only one that we added. The reason for that is because community relations has worked with them extensively the last few years, and we found ways to fund them within the budget. So, this was more like formalizing an existing relationship.

Ms. Johnson said okay. So, that number is subject to change? I don't want to make that a final number, because Mr. Jackson has submitted a proposal. So, I know that's being reviewed, whatever the most feasible and whatever funds that project, then that's what I'm requesting. I want that to be reviewed. I want to lift up that project publically. Thank you.

Mr. Jones said so, thank you, Councilmember Johnson. Did you actually get a financial partner's request from Heal Charlotte? I think we have two separate things going on. Okay, so what's going on is that Shawn Heath, he has been working with a number of grassroots nonprofits that are trying to help us with housing, and Kenny Robinson is one, as well as what's happening with Mr. Jackson. So, Shawn has concepts that I think you would like, and I think we're queueing you up on May 22, 2023. Is that right?

Shawn Heath, Housing Director said I'm ready for it.

Mr. Jones said, and it would come from ARPA. Part of the \$17 million that's left over for ARPA. So, that is what Shawn has been working on. I think that's why you saw the stairs over there, because housing has been working on it as opposed to budget.

Ms. Johnson said okay.

Mr. Bergman said and then, just so we don't miss it. You had said pay parity for fire as one of them as well that we should put on here, right?

Ms. Johnson said yes. So, then is Heal Charlotte, the \$1.2 million, that's kind of considered differently, or should we leave that up there?

Mr. Jones said I don't know if that's the right number, but I do believe that what's you're saying, is that as you and a number of Council members toured the facility with Shawn, that you believe that's a good investment in the housing realm as it relates to our ARPA funds, and we don't disagree, trying to figure out what that right number is. I don't want you to say a wrong number on me either.

Ms. Johnson said I don't want to say the wrong number.

Mr. Jones said yes. So, I know there's some concepts about a ground lease, and things like that, but Shawn does have that information.

Ms. Johnson said okay. I just believe in investing in that work. It's good soil. Thank you.

Ms. Mayfield said Mr. Bergman and your team, thank you for the detailed information and for getting us the answers to the question. I have a couple of clarifying questions. Going back to Page 4, and thinking about what we started talking about, which is my colleagues, item number 15, I want clarification on that \$1,800 that you mentioned. So, what you're recommending, and if not please correct me, is currently we're saying hourly employees receive two separate 3 percent increases. So, eliminate that. Are we saying \$1,800 total, which is the equivalent, or are we saying two \$1,800 increases, making it actually \$3,200?

Mr. Bergman said basically, as an hourly employee, you would get the greater of 6 percent, or two \$1,800 increases. So, it would be \$3,600 total for the year. The second one would come in January, which is similar to how we did the pay plans last year.

Ms. Mayfield said so, it would still be this July 1 and January 6, but opposed to 3 percent, it would be, we're clear \$1,800 July 1, additional \$1,800 January?

Mr. Bergman said at least \$1,800.

Ms. Mayfield said up to, as long as you make under \$60,000?

Mr. Bergman said yes.

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Ms. Mayfield said okay. Also, this question is really a tag team between you and our Economist. I think you mentioned, when you gave the overviews sticking with the very next page, Page 5, this breakdown that the Charlotte MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) table says what we think one-unit bedrooms are in Charlotte. I really would like some more information on how we came up with these numbers. There are, just doing a standard search, if I was a resident, if I was looking for an apartment right now, there are exactly 56 units that come up that are under \$1,000 for a one bedroom, and 41 units total that come up for a two bedroom for \$1,155. So, help me understand how these numbers were identified, to say that using the two-bedroom estimate, an annual wage of \$46,200 would allow an employee to live in Charlotte. I really want to know how we got those numbers and where you're living?

Mr. Bergman said we'll bring up Ndem. Ndem, the question is what is the data source that produces these numbers?

Ndem Tazifor, Strategy and Budget said so, Mayor and Council, that number comes from Housing and Urban Development They generate the fair market rents. That's where we got the data from.

Ms. Mayfield said so, I actually reached out and checked with the staff in Housing and Neighborhood Development, and that's why I have a challenge. This feels a little that we're undervaluing what's happening right now in the market. These numbers can be very real in 2020, 2019. For 2023, just the standard search on your own, if you were one of our residents, especially since we had employees come to us that spoke to us regarding the fact that they are living in hotels. The other challenge with this idea, is even if you were able to access one of these units at this 46, most apartment complexes in their application process have that you need to make three times the rent that's due. That is a major barrier and a major challenge.

So, if you don't show that you make three times that \$996, and if we're saying that you were able to calculate the numbers, and this is what the salary should be if only 30 percent of your salary is going towards housing, we have a disconnect in real numbers and what we think on paper the numbers should be. So, again, if we can just do basic search on your own, if you were the individual looking for housing, not just taking these numbers that are an aggregate, because a lot of these numbers are aggregate numbers that you all have to use. If we just look at real impact, and there are physically units available less than 60 units, that are at this \$996 price, and that is starting at under \$1,000. I think we have a challenge in what we're saying, especially when in January 2023 we had a report out when we had our housing job submit, where it was noted more than once, that you need to earn at least \$25 to \$27 an hour to afford the cost of living in the City of Charlotte today.

So, for me, when we're looking at this breakdown, I would like for us to pull some real numbers in response to question number five, because the real numbers aren't necessarily going to reflect \$46,200. I'm not saying we have the time to do it now, but let's do a survey with our employees that make that and find out where they're living.

We have employees, based on those who were brave enough to come down and share their stories on Monday, that are living in vehicles, living in hotels, you're paying much more than this in a hotel over a month's period. I want to make sure that we're really being accurate, and if that is not the case, in order to be able to live in the City right now, I don't know what that number is, but that's the number that I'm going to be working on over the next couple of days to be part of my recommendation for if we're going to be moving forward with thinking about a salary, what that annual salary needs to look like and how do we move our employees up.

I have concerns with the proposal of using ARPA as a bonus, without knowing what is that new salary going to be, because giving a one-time bonus, when the cost of living is going up every year, is a challenge. Unless we're going to figure out a way to give everyone a \$5,000 one-time bonus, and also think about what is the financial impact of that. So, if we have employees who receive any additional assistance, we very well

could knock them out the assistance, social security, other assistance they may receive. We also risk the chance of, if we have employees that have a subsidy or any assistance, that might knock them out, not to mention you're putting them into a different pay bracket, potentially for that one year versus what does your ongoing salary need to be and how do we make sure that your salary is growing to the level where it can compensate for health care and the other choices.

So, not trying to pull money from ARPA funds, looking at what is that percentage you presented, which was really wonderful, what would that one cent look like out of those funds? I believe you had that on Page 3. So, on Page 3, the revenue generator from a one cent property tax increase would be \$21.12 million. From that, what would it look like to get our employees at that, instead of \$46,000, to get them to \$50,000, if we need a number? So, instead of \$46,200, what would it look to get. Again, not thinking about those that are over \$60,000, but our lowest paid workers, to get them to \$50,000 if we were to do the one cent, and out of the current dollars, out of our current revenue generating dollars, not using the ARPA funds, because those are one-time funds, what would that look like going forward would be very helpful.

Mr. Bergam said yes, you're correct. I believe that that data source is only updated annually. So, essentially, we're using data from probably seven or eight months ago, that'll be updated again. So, it's maybe not totally representative. So, we'll get you that data at \$50,000. We'll also ask Ndem to do some work on projecting what it'll look like when they do update it and get you that information.

Ms. Mayfield said that would be very helpful for me. Also, when I'm looking at the summary of our financial partners, you can catch me up on this since I wasn't here for a couple of years. So, going to Page 46 in the book, the summary of our financial partners, our dedicated revenue sources. A number of years ago, then Council, we had identified basically a three-year window to receive funds, because we had many discussions about no organization really having to depend on Government dollars moving forward.

So, can we get a, breaking down as Ms. Watlington noted, what's our financial benefit with our current dedicated revenue sources and partners between Center City, because I don't think Government should be 60-plus percent of any funding. If we utilize the same model that we utilized when we're looking a Housing and Neighborhood Services development of that but for, and that but for being 20 to 30 percent, we should be the smallest amount of tax dollars in some of these.

So, it would be helpful to know, as was mentioned, a followup of what is that breakdown. For me, I would also like an update on the General Fund discretionary. How many of these partners are at that three year versus past that three years, and if they've gone past that three year, and if Council had made a change, please provide that language. Because we, as a body, had voted and had a lot of conversation about a window for our partners, because it's better for them so that they're not so reliant on Government dollars. This was to help you get on your feet, create whatever funding sources you need, an update on all these partners. Because ultimately, I don't think Government should be, again, a designated line item for some of these, because we have constant needs and our needs are changing, and that very well could be tying us up from other opportunities that may be coming along.

If the organization is successful and is doing nonprofit work, you're really trying to work yourself out of a business if what is happening is successful. It is not necessarily something you're going to retire from. Yet, at the same time, we want to make sure that we're being consistent, because there were a lot of organizations that were dropped from funding, because they hit their three-year window. I would like to ensure that we're having consistency and transparency in that.

So that update on all of our General Funds, discretionary partners, are they at that three years, and if they're past that three years, why? I don't have, Mayor and colleagues, all of my actual recommendations yet. I will have those into you by next week, which is

unfortunately why my first question was a 30-minute plus conversation. That's all I was saying. I haven't gotten through all of it the way that I would like to, but for those couple of pieces, I want to make sure that, jumping to Page 17 in here, item number 27, when we look at this table showing that City of Charlotte hourly employees, how much they earn and the number of employees at that range. So, we have our employees at \$41,600 to \$50,000. So, we're saying right now, if I was just looking at this table, we don't have any employees right now that make under \$41,000?

Mr. Bergman said that work full time, correct.

Ms. Mayfield said okay. So, we're noting that right now out of all the current full-time employees, we have no employees earning under \$41,600, which is the equivalent of \$20 an hour. So, with looking at the request that I made, what would it look like to get those that are under \$50,000, up to \$50,000, and also recognizing those that are at \$50,000, bumping them up to whatever that same equivalent is? Because it's not rob Peter to pay Paul, it's how do we help people to graduate, because ultimately, I want as many of our employees living in our City as possible, because you're helping with our tax revenue and our tax base along with that.

If I have any other questions, I will make sure that I get them over to you, but those were the main ones for this piece, and I will make sure that ahead of time, I have my budget recommendations outside of what we have with minimum pay. So, ya'll will figure it out, increase minimum pay to \$50,000.

Mayor Lyles said thank you, I want to make sure. I think every Council member, Ms. Mayfield included everyone, to make sure that what's being posted there is really important because it's our representation. Since we voted not to do anything further, this is the adjustment day to have it. So, if it's just I want something like this. So, I just want to make sure that we are in a position, because the motion that we made failed, that we have additional budget adjustments, more questions we can answer. I just want to make sure that everybody gets as much of the information that they need on the table even if it's framed not as carefully as perhaps, we could make that.

Ms. Mayfield said, and I get that, Mayor, which is unfortunately why that 30-minute conversation went left, was that I was trying to give my colleagues more time for us to get things into the budget discussion, if you didn't get a chance to get through this, into this. Even though that did not happen, that's why I am saying publically in this space, there was not enough time to get through all of these responses and match these responses up to what we had in this book.

So, I can only speak for me at this point, that I already know, and I just want to advise the Manager and his team, that I'm going to be submitting the proposal. Because even though my colleagues, we didn't all get on the same page of understanding what that vote was, not everyone is ready to make proposal recommendations if they haven't even had a chance to go through the whole book. I'm speaking for them, but for me going through the book and matching up the answers that was responded, and I hear what you're saying. So, hopefully before everybody goes around, we have a chance to come back around again. Right now, I am not in a position, as one of the representatives of the City, to completely just say I want to add all these extras, because you got to give me the answer on these questions before I can even know what my recommendation is going to be.

Mayor Lyles said that's why I brought it up, because I want to make sure everybody's clear on what the motion was. So, Mr. Baker, in this question we had the motion about additional adjustments, and then that did not pass. So, I just want to make sure that we're following our rules. I understand, Ms. Mayfield, has made a really good point. I don't want the Mayor to be in a position of saying, or the budget office to say, we have this and then we have that. Everybody in this room had this conversation, heard it. It was 30 minutes or more of conversation, and that's what happened. Mr. Baker, I just want to make sure that I'm saying that correctly.

Mr. Baker said that's my understanding, yes.

Mayor Lyles said okay, thank you.

Ms. Johnson said I'll just speak for myself, the earlier discussion. I think that I was waiting on maybe a second motion, because there were at least four of us that we wanted another opportunity, but not necessarily May 22, 2023, at 1 p.m. I think Mayor Pro Tem brought up a great point. If we could wait until after we finished, and at the end of this meeting an opportunity to then, if we want to have another meeting, then we can discuss it. To close the door right now, I don't think Council's onboard with that.

Mayor Lyles said I hope I wasn't saying close the door right now. I was just saying, as we go around this room, there is a time for the decision if we want to do more or differently at the end. I don't want anyone to say that I didn't have my chance to say anything that's up there. I heard what Ms. Mayfield said, but I wanted to make sure that the motion was clear as we're going around through the process.

Ms. Johnson said yes, I think we all agree that we didn't have a chance to review this, because we just got it. So, we all would like more opportunity to serve our citizens, and add to this, that today not be the final day. Also, when I was speaking, I asked for another staff member for Council, and that's not captured.

Mr. Bergman said yes, row 18.

Ms. Johnson said additional research, okay, alright. Thank you.

Councilmember Mitchell said I'm going to echo some of the comments that were made to the City Manager and to the Budget Department, a great job during this tough year, for the fifth straight year no property tax increase. It is always said, Mayor and Council, that your budget should reflect your priorities. So, I do think this budget, from my standpoint, reflects priorities we established on January 31, 2023, when we talked about workforce development initiative. City Manager, you have added a workforce development and human resources for our employees, and more importantly, you're creating a special sister to you, to work on workforce development initiatives.

Secondly, we talked a lot about our small businesses and minority business, and you're going to increase the Charlotte Business INClusion by \$1 million and add three new positions to continue that. I would just like to make a note. During the write up, it talks about AMP Up and NXT | CLT, which are great, but I would like to have further conversations where we're talking about helping small businesses. It's the start of business I think we need to put a tremendous focus on. As we want Charlotte to be more entrepreneur friendly, our start-up community really would need our assistance. So, if we could look at that as another option, I think it'd be great.

Then, of course, Corridors of Opportunity, we're going to put another \$5 million to continue to work on Corridors. Only question I have, City Manager, is to add 37 positions to the UDO (Unified Development Ordinance), that is a lot of new people. I have talked to Alyson Craig of the Planning Department. I do know June 1 is a new world for them, but 37 just seemed to be a lot added. So, I'd like to just get feedback, what would be those new 37 positions as it relates to UDO? Just FYI, let me make sure I have my numbers correct. So, ARPA funds remaining \$17 million for affordable housing and \$3.7 million for workforce development. Is that correct, sir?

Mr. Winston said right.

Mr. Mitchell said good. The only thing I will add, Madam Mayor up here, I agree with some of the items already up here, so I'm not going to be redundant. I would like to add a special one in the financial partners, is the Carolina Metro Reds. Some of ya'll might not be familiar to Carolina Metro Reds. They spend time as a safety initiative. They make sure young men, they help them not only with the game of sports, but literacy. We all know the statistics. By third grade, if you can't read at a third-grade level, then your

path of success is always challenged. Carolina Metro Reds does an excellent job of taking young men who might be struggling academically, introducing them to a sport, keeping them off the streets, but more importantly giving them the skills they need to be successful. So, I would like to add that as a financial partner. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

Mr. Winston said so, I would like to read more about Mr. Bergman's proposal. It does sound good, but I would like to see some context about what the effect of inflation is having on these wages. I hear a lot of good percentages, but you've got to wipe some of those percentages off, or at least mark them down if we're dealing with real numbers, and that's what happening. I think we need to really add that context for the entirety of this budget. I think some of this, that context honestly, has been missing in these discussions.

Overall, I've been less than enthused about this budget and downright unhappy about it. While it doesn't necessarily have a property tax percentage increase, it's revenue neutral, this budget certainly represents a tax increase for, particularly the economically vulnerable members of our community, without generating revenues and resources to adequately fund the priorities that this Council and community has set, not just this year, but over the past several years. So, I'm looking at what our runway is in the long term, and what the effect of this upcoming budget year is going to have on some of the progress that we have been able to make as a strong community partner with other At-Large community efforts.

While some things may be out of our control, my concern is that this budget is actually a step back on our community efforts around equity. To that end, how did staff deploy an equity lens or an equity framework in putting this budget together? I didn't see much of that in the presentation. This budget will broaden the equity gaps and make it harder to live while providing modest resources, especially when you consider the effect of inflation on those resources that these tax increases will provide to combat the growth in those equity gaps.

Is there anything that we can do here, even if it's using ARPA funds to do things? Something, like, I don't know, pilot universal basic income to households who will be facing challenges in this upcoming year? I'm concerned that the gains that we made at narrowing the digital divide will be eroded if we don't do more in this budget to double down on the efforts that we made.

I don't really understand what we are trying to achieve with our public safety spend. Our law enforcement gap, between retirees and hires, has more to do with a lack of long-term planning after federal funds were pumped into the system 30 years ago, and we certainly aren't going to solve that with this budget. So, what is the goal? We've done a lot of work over the years to get the Public Safety Plan where it is, but we seem to be reactive. Again, I don't understand what the outcome is, we achieve some of those outcomes. We're certainly not going to narrow this gap in this budget.

Since our firefighters are happy to pick up more of the slack that our County Medic Service provides, then we need to pay the fire service for that, and not tell them just to suck it up. If we don't, then our community will feel that pain in the future. Transportation is more expensive. If people are going to be displaced, and therefore, going to be living further away from jobs in Charlotte, and cars again when you consider inflation are more expensive, and our public transportation right now is not reliable, and I don't see many strong mobility investments in this budget. I'm asking what more can we do to help ensure people can move between home, work, and school? Is there an opportunity to do something, like pilot an E-Bike subsidy, so people don't have to be burdened by the increased cost of transportation, and be able to move about our City?

I agree with something that Mr. Mitchell just said. Our values have to be in our budget, but it's easy to do that when our cup runneth over but is a real commitment when we do it when times get hard. If the City of Charlotte is really committed in shrinking the equity gaps in our community, we cannot pass this budget as it is. Thank you.

Councilmember Graham said first, let me also lend my voice to Ryan and the budget staff, finance office, and the City Manager, for really years of good work presenting the City's financial picture, outlook, and budget. The fact that we continue to have a triple AAA bond rating, that we continue to have enterprise organizations that perform at a high level demonstrates why the City has the wind to its back and not the wind to our face. That we continue to work within our means, that we continue to fund our priorities, and that we continue to make hard decisions. So, I appreciate the efforts.

After evaluating the budget in terms of its presentation, again, I think the budget is easy to read, easy to follow, and the cliff notes really work. So, I really thank you for that. When I looked at the budget, and thanking the staff for taking my calls as well and answering questions along way, and the Manager and I have really good conversations when we meet, I see a lot of the ideas and recommendations and my thoughts embedded in the budget already.

So, I don't have a whole lot to add to it, other than to just really comment on the things that are really important to me, and I think that are really important to the community and the citizens that I represent in District 2. Certainly, I clearly understand that, why represent a portion of the City? That my view also has to be very broad and wide, as it relates to providing the type of service necessary, and not only for those who live in District 2, but those who live throughout the City of Charlotte. So, I view the budget in that lens as well.

The work that we're doing on the Corridors of Opportunity is commendable. The funding is appreciated. I think that I'm really excited about the steps that we're going to be moving forward outside my own District. I think it's really commendable, the work that we're doing and the hard choices that we're making. That we are somewhat progressive in our thinking, and utilizing the resources in ways that historically we haven't done, i.e., like buying a hotel, and doing affordable housing, and cleaning up the neighborhood which touched on three very critical points, housing, public safety, and empowering neighborhoods and communities. I think that's forward thinking.

The code enforcement and the quality-of-life issues is where I really want to spend a little bit of time on. I clearly get that we focus on big items all the time. That's sexy. That gets the headlines, but the work that we do in the quality-of-life space, picking up the trash, responding to code enforcement issues. Those issues are extremely important, and I understand how we have invested in those areas, and I think that's very commendable. How we treat people that work for us and with us is extremely important as well, and I certainly concur if there's anything that we can do to provide additional resources to the hourly workers, I would love to see us do something in that space as well. If there's also ways to ensure that firefighters feel that they're getting a fair shake, I think is something I would like, again, to see us do anything further if we can, Mr. Manager.

Lastly, Mr. Winston made a number of good points in his presentation. At some point in time, next year, all the COVID dollars are going to go away, and all the ARPA dollars are going to go away. The restrictions that I felt in this budget, based on the resources that we have, are going to be even greater, and the conversation around this table next year around budget time is going to be significantly different than we are having right now. Councilmember Johnson is correct in some cases in reference to infrastructure and making sure that we get ahead of the growth. In many cases, there's a cost to that. Supporting many of the things that Mayor Pro Tem mentioned that he would like to see, in terms of doing things through an equity lens and a wide variety of forward-thinking ideas, there's a cost to that.

Some of the things I think we need to do, relative to those same things, I understand that there's a cost to that too, and we'll be having this discussion next year without the bill to either go to the piggybank, i.e., ARPA dollars, and the COVID funds, they won't be there. The infrastructure issues will continue to increase and grow. You would think growth pays for itself. It does not, in my perspective. So, the conversation would be really, really different. So, I think this budget reflects where we are today, and there will

certainly be different conversations, probably starting after this budget is approved in June, about the budget of tomorrow. There's no way for this community to get around it. I had a conversation with the Mayor on a different subject, and I used the analogy, you can tell people what they want to hear, what they need to know. I choose to tell people what they need to know. Sometimes, that gets me in trouble, but it keeps me honest. I think the citizens of Charlotte need to know that this is a well-run City, that we pay our bills within our ability, that we have the ability to do multiple things at a time on different sides of the City based on our balanced books and our ability to prioritize and pay the bills. So, I just hope that we have the fortitude and the courage to tell our citizens where we're headed next year, and why we need to get there and start that conversation relatively early.

My only addition to the board would be For The Struggle, which is a partner organization based on Beatties Ford Road, grassroot organization, doing tremendous work. I think they deserve special consideration for funding in this budget, based on the work they do in terms of working with our seniors in the community, and making sure that as that community changes, and it is changing significantly every day, that those who historically have lived there and want to call Beatties Ford Road home, have the ability to stay there. More importantly, to live in an environment in their homes that are relative to those of their neighbors, in terms of upkeep, maintenance and home repairs. I think they do a great job, and so I would love to see if there's a way for us to support them.

I don't know if this is out of order. I did not submit Block Love Charlotte that does work with the homelessness in our community. They literally touch them every day, and if there's a way for us to consider funding for them, I would be supportive. I understand that this is out of order, and if we can't do it, I get it. Just in thinking about some of the things that we do at a very high level, that those two organizations based on which For The Struggle does locally on the Corridor and with Block Love Charlotte do in reference to our homeless population. We've got a homeless strategy with A Home For All that's very high level. We should do that. We also should be able to touch people every day on the street, and I think they can do a good job with that as well. So, thank you, Madam Mayor, Mr. Manager, and Ryan and staff for a job well done. Thank you.

Mr. Driggs said I had a quick question about the ARPA availability. How many years do we have to dispose of those funds before the availability lapses?

Mr. Bergman said ARPA funds?

Mr. Driggs said yes.

Mr. Bergman said we have to have them obligated by the end of calendar year 2024, and then spent by the end of calendar year 2026.

Mr. Driggs said alright. I would just recommend that we not hurry to find uses for those, because I think there will be plenty of them down the road. I would comment that I still have some questions about the firefighters and the issues that they have raised. I was concerned by some of what we were told related to the recruitment. I think in the environment we're in, and given the tough choices we had to make, trying to recouple in this budget is probably too much to ask. I don't think we would like the changes we would have to make elsewhere in order to achieve that.

Some issues came to my attention that I would hope we could take another look at. Like, the fact that the SPO-4, I think it is, patrol officers can get paid as much as a captain in the fire department. There are some comparisons there that just don't seem right. So, again, without recommending that we try to recouple, I would like to look at that a little further. Otherwise, in general, I don't have line items, mainly because I have concerns similar to Mr. Graham's and some of the others that have been expressed, of a big picture nature, and I don't think we should get lost in \$50,000 here or there.

If you look on Page 324, for example, you'll see that we have \$115 million of 2024 bonds allocated to transportation. That translates to about \$8 million per district per year. Do you have any idea how little \$8 million buys? Eight million dollars buys a mile or two of sidewalk, a very small amount of road. We have core basic responsibilities to the entire population of Charlotte, and we can't let our commitment to the disadvantaged population eclipse an awareness of the larger picture.

So, my concern is that, as I look at our budget and our priorities and all of these programs for the people who are not disadvantaged, there has to come a time when you kind of wonder, well, what's being done for me? I can't get rid of the panhandlers. I've got litter. I've got this. What are you doing for me? They don't need from us anywhere near as much as this disadvantaged population, and I'm not speaking against our support in that area. I recognize the urgency and the need. I understand where we are today in the country, but I think that this budget kicks a can down the road. It really worries me, because what we're setting ourselves up for here is, as Mr. Graham eluded, a whole lot of pain very soon.

We are not going to be able, even next year, to avoid some big revenue questions or expense questions. So, we're not going to be able to continue our commitment to our social priorities and avoid a tax increase. I think one of my difficulties this year is the appearance is being created that that's possible, that you can have your cake and eat it too, that you can keep doing the \$50 million a year for housing, and the other commitments we're making, and you can keep doing that stuff and that it doesn't cost anything. There's going to be some pain involved in that. What bothers me about that is, when you look down, and we get to the point where it's clear, and the Manager said this, Mr. Graham did, we're going to need more revenue.

So, where does that revenue come from? It comes from a property tax principally, that's the discretionary tool that we have. We know that the property tax is painful at the lower income levels. So, now, we're going to have to resort to a revenue tool that inflicts pain on the same people that we're trying to assist with the investments we make and our social priorities. I think maybe there's an implicit assumption that the sales tax will help us to get out of the hole we're in on infrastructure. Well, the sales tax is not free. Again, if look at the way households spend, lower income households spend a higher percentage of their income on items subject to a sales tax than higher income households.

So, once again, you put the sales tax out there, the percentage impact on the net available income households is impacted. So, I think we need to take a more global view, and I realize in this conversation it's not going to be a line item change. I really feel that, and I think Mr. Graham said this as well, we have got to start thinking urgently how we are going to resolve some of these conflicts, because if we can't raise more money without hurting low-income people, and we're using the proceeds to help low income people, I think we're chasing our own tail.

I would mention in this context too, that in the context of our mobility plan, we have a couple of documents that were created. They show a list of all the projects that have been identified and it's encyclopedic. It's a very useful piece of work, a reference. Just think about how much money it takes to do any of that and where is it coming from. So, I'm hoping that as we move forward, and again I don't want to sound hostile to our social priorities or anything, I'm just an economist, I'm a numbers guy, and I see a situation taking shape that's going to be difficult for all of us.

So, I do, however, certainly want to commend the Manager. This isn't a criticism, the work that was done to create this budget. This budget is responsive to Council priorities, certainly the large majority of Council. You've done your job and you've done it well. The staff has done it well. You made it work. You managed to make it work without a tax increase. So, that's great, but we all have to join in recognition that we're going to have to answer some difficult questions starting in the coming fiscal year. Thank you.

Councilmember Bokhari said I've got a couple items for the board here. Number 1, fire, a chief parity option with CMPD (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department) pay that was described by the budget director. Two hourly workers provide pay increase floor option, that was also proposed by the budget director today. CMPD, their ability to bank comp time in a non-expiring bank, I need a budget implication to that, but I'd like to put it on the board. Also, CMPD incentives for employees on call. I think you know, Ryan, what the details are behind that one, same as the last one. Then, CMPD, the last one there, keep the CMPD helicopter in the CLT (Charlotte Douglas International Airport) airport hangar. I know this is a longer-term budget item, but I want to go ahead and list that in there.

Then, finally, tax relief. I'd like to propose removing the new property tax relief program that was posed in here. It's based on the flawed Aging in Place model that we had had before. I think there are opportunities for us to look at this in a positive way for those being affected by the property tax, yet they are gaining value in their property. There are other financial tools in the market to help with that. I think most importantly, there are other things are going to be coming up outside of the scope of this budget in the next year that are going to be impactful, and they're going to require our help, particularly Title 42 and what's coming from that perspective. I had emailed those items already to Marie. They're up there now. Thank you.

Councilmember Anderson said nicely done, Mr. Bokhari. Greatly appreciate it. I would like to just, contextually, if we look at Page 487 and think about coming out of COVID. Based on our population growth from 2020 to 2022, we grew roughly 39,000 residents in the City of Charlotte. During that same time, our unemployment rate decreased from 4.3 to 3.8, so dropping 50 basis points, while maintaining not raising taxes for the fifth year in this proposed budget and maintaining our triple AAA bond rating.

Mr. Manager, I know we have lots of discussions about you, your role, performance, compensation, but I just want to commend you and the entire team for that large macro view of how our City has, not only maintained through a tumultuous time, but actually has grown and strengthened throughout that time. So, Mr. Bergman, thank you for this budget. It does reflect our priorities. You didn't have to outline them on Page 8, because it is reflected in the allocation. I was reviewing this earlier this morning, and Mr. Bergman actually hit upon what I was thinking about, which is a potential solution to address our lowest paid hourly employees.

Based on your proposal, Mr. Bergman, of what you just walked us through a few minutes ago, if we take the information on Page 5 that says the two bedroom for affordability is \$46,200, so that's what an employee would have to earn. Based on what you're proposing, Mr. Bergman, to touch all of our full-time hourly employees who make \$60,000 or less, and I'm getting this information from Page 17, that's 1,784 employees out of that full base of 2,821, we would be touching in a positive way 63 percent of our regular full-time employees, if we were to move forward with Mr. Bergman's proposal, which I will fully support and advocate for, because I think that's tremendous. Also, realizing that we're not very far off. So, on that same page, if you're looking at every full-time employee for the City of Charlotte, regular full-time employee, makes over \$40,000, we do have a gap, but we're not very far off. I think that's why this creative solution could address that.

I just want to call out a couple of points that I think are important in the budget. Mr. Manager, I think this rapid response model that you are recommending, and Mr. Graham spoke to it, I know from north, south, east, west, within District 1, their citizens are feeling the pains relative to code enforcement, high construction activity which impact parking, and walkability. So, I think this team will do very good work for us.

I also want to call out the efforts in addressing the digital divide, specifically in phases two and three, and particularly in three, that focuses on developing technical job skills while being able to earn technical tools. As we know and we understand that jobs are pivoting, and you have to have a digital lens, a digital skill within your skillset, to be able

to earn dollars in the future. So, I'm glad that we're investing in that program and will continue to invest in that program.

Thank you, Mr. Bergman, for the clarity on question 18 and 19 that I had, because those were my only real clarifying questions. I also am happy to see that we are investing in Race Matters for Juvenile Justice. It's a fantastic program. The curriculum is great. I'm glad we are using that and leveraging that from a City of Charlotte employee perspective, and the continued support for Tree Charlotte, because every zoning discussion we go through we talk about all this growth that's going on and is impacting our tree canopy, and Tree Charlotte, just want to give a shout out to them. They do great work in maintaining and sustaining our tree canopy.

The investment in the five fire departments I think is fantastic. We need that level of infrastructure. I do also believe that we've not done the best job of getting out in front of preparing for this growth relative to our infrastructure needs. So, that means that our rate in which we need to catch up will have to be increased. So, things like investing in fire. I had the pleasure of spending time with our Water Director and going out to the new stow site for Charlotte Water, and that is a significant investment in a way that's going to help, not only Charlotte, but will have a regional impact as well. So, we have to continue to do projects like that, probably at an increased rate, in order for us to be able to sustain the growth that I highlighted as we first began to speak.

The vacancies that you continue to highlight, Mr. Jones, in particular in CMPD, not only from a separation perspective, but from a retirement perspective, I think is something that, I believe it's sitting at 12.7 percent, I think that's going to continue to be in front of us this budget year as we navigate through that. We have to continue to think of creative ways, like we're addressing from a financial perspective, to address CMPD salary and create stickiness, but also attracting talent so we can fill that gap that exists there.

That's all of the comments that I really had. The only one observation that I had, and it's not a huge budget line item. On Page 445, I was just reviewing the nonregulatory fees that we incur from a City perspective, and just noticing I know that our airport is the fifth busiest airport in the world, I believe, and a huge economic generator for the region and the state, but the airport fees are going up. The landing fees, car rental fees, bag fees, are going up at double digit percentage increases, and typically when those go up, they don't go back down. That typically creates a new floor. So, I would like for us to just be mindful of fees and how that impacts keeping the vibrancy of the airport, and not pricing it out, so commuters and Charlotte residents can come in and out of Charlotte and enjoy our City from a Thursday to Sunday tourism perspective. Thank you.

Mayor Lyles said okay, thank you everyone. That has been a very valued experience. I wanted to just check in with the staff. Is there anything that's on this board that you need additional clarification?

Mr. Bergman said I don't think so. I think if we do, we'll reach out, but I was comfortable with the way we wrote everything. I think that would be more for the people who suggested them to make sure we're capturing it okay.

Mayor Lyles said so, I thought that we could start where we had to see if there are any other questions or comments.

Ms. Watlington said I'm hearing around the room, and I agree with much of what I'm hearing in regard to, we've got to start thinking immediately about next year and what that means. I would just offer a couple of things. As we think about our social programs and the investment we have to make, I don't think it's an either or. When you talk about the magnitude of dollars that we need for investments. It's not a question of do we invest in Corridors of Opportunity or do we build roads. They're on two totally different planes. I'm happy, though, that we've got our comp 2040 plan, because it is our North Star and it requires that we aspire to be a City that not only invests in our mobility and our infrastructure, but also all of our people.

So, I think that as we begin to craft the path forward, it's not a question of robbing from Peter to pay Paul, but it's a question of how do we really grow and grow well. So, I'll be looking forward to those continued conversations throughout the year. I know Councilmember Driggs mentioned that we've got a ton of projects when it comes to what kind of work we need to do there, but I think we're up for the challenge, and I think that I hear good alignment around the room that that's what we really need to be talking about.

Every month, every decision we're making, when we talk about rezoning, when we're talking about business incentives. All of those have to tie into whatever the building blocks are going to be for our budget, not just for next year, but for going forward. So, I look forward to doing that work, and I think it's great to be at a place where we all are in a position to be aligned to go forward and do that work. So, I think it's a great time to do that work. I think we've got the right folks on board to do that work and to lead it. So, I look forward to it.

Mr. Winston said I have a question for Mr. Jones or Mr. Bergman, whoever wants to take it. Again, I think context is important. While we can't tell the future, we have heard, I think we should consider that the County is going to be raising property taxes. I believe that's what's coming next week in the Manager's proposal. Can you give some context about how a County tax increase will affect the City tax bill?

Mr. Jones said I'll start off, and then I'll hand it off to Ryan. I think, not even thinking about a tax increase, but think about the resident's tax bill. Roughly a third is the City and roughly two-thirds is the County. So, Ryan, we have for the, I guess the best way to look at it is, it's a median valued home. Even revenue neutral would be a certain increase on someone's bill, and then for the County it would be about what? How would you calculate that?

Mr. Bergman said yes. So, according to the data that the County put out the other day, which included our proposed budget, they had the median bill at revenue neutral going up about \$445 annually. Every cent that they would add on top of that works the same way as ours, where if it's a \$400,000 house, it would add \$40, but maybe to your question, there is a smaller impact as well where our sales tax is determined based on the total tax levy. If they raise taxes a penny and we don't, we would lose the following year not this upcoming year, about \$600,000, but the way that the revaluation worked this time, it looked like we were going to pick up some on that at revenue neutral. So, we'll try to get you some more context around that, and by the next time we talk, we'll have the County's presentation as well, so we can give you real numbers and what it means.

Mr. Winston said again, I think that context is going to be really important in how we analyze and how we be honest with our constituents about what is in this budget and how this is being approached. Again, I fail to see how this is really in line with the priorities and the goals that we've been setting over the past years that I've been on Council, at least. So, if we are just going to take a step back this year and shake the stars out of our eyes and come back next year, let's say that. With the context of everything that's happening, if we want to stay on the path this upcoming fiscal year, we have to take a look back at this, and I won't say start over, but adjust. That's just my feedback.

Mayor Lyles said alright. Any other comments or questions?

Ms. Mayfield said thank you, Madam Mayor, and I appreciate you coming back around. So, since we definitely know if we have any recommendations to the budget, we need to do it now. So, if we can go back up to 21 where I was, and just pop in there. I will ask for my colleagues to consider an organization that has been around since 1993 with the real focus specifically for honestly African American young men, regarding mentoring agriculture and social justice, and that is The Males Place. So, I would like to add The Males Place to this, because we can track their work and the teachings and the young men that have gone on to graduate through scholarships as well. It's for me the biggest

piece, the agricultural and the social justice piece that they have instilled and the impact on community for generations that is helpful. That is also in line with my initial question. With this update, who's in that three year, with being respectful of limited funds that we have? I do want to add that into our discussion. Thank you.

Ms. Johnson said I wanted to ask, the allotment for Crisis Assistance Ministries, I wanted to know how that compared to what they asked for? The reason I ask, you all know I have a nonprofit organization. I work on the front line, working with vulnerable populations and homeless individuals, and I've never reached out to Crisis and they weren't there. Crisis has been in the community prior to COVID. That's the one organization that you can call, unrestricted request. They have furniture, utilities, sometimes rental deposits. So, they have been there since the beginning, and I think they'll be the organization that, when organizations who have restricted funding, they refer you to Crisis. So, I want to make sure that we are supporting Crisis, because they meet a need in the community for so many, and I wanted to know how the allotment compared to what they asked for?

Marie Harris, Strategy and Budget said so, thank you. Again, it's Marie Harris. They actually asked for \$550,000. For the upcoming year's budget, that's how much they asked for, \$550,000. In the current year budget, they have \$425,000 that we fund them for as a financial partner. As we mentioned, all the partners receive the same of level of funding, besides we added Race Matters for Juvenile Justice as a financial partner. Besides the dedicated resources that are based on taxes and numbers like that, everyone else as a General Fund discretionary partner, receives the same in the proposed budget.

Ms. Johnson said compared to what they asked for?

Ms. Harris said they asked for \$550,000 and we gave them \$425,000.

Ms. Johnson said okay. So, I would like to propose an additional \$125,000 for Crisis Ministries. Thank you.

Mayor Lyles said alright. Any other questions or comments?

Mr. Driggs said could we please revisit the question when we're meeting next time? I don't see us needing three hours to follow up. Do we still have the action to meet at 1:30?

Mayor Lyles said no, we don't have that action now. It did not pass.

Mr. Bokhari said can I make a motion to meet an hour and a half before the meeting that same Monday?

Mayor Lyles said you would like instead of on May 26, 2023? I'm sorry, help me remember what meeting we're talking about. We have a meeting on May 25, 2023, and we have a Council meeting on May 22, 2023. So, we were supposed to have this final meeting for preparation on the 25th of May 2023, and that would be where six votes would be necessary to carry anything forward after the staff gets the additional information. I think we are not having a meeting on May 22, 2023, except for our regular Council day.

Mr. Bokhari said I'm going to make a motion, but I just want to see how many of my colleagues, just a finger up or something, still have the desire they had earlier in the meeting, to not close the door right now. I'm glad to make the motion, but are you guys comfortable where we are, or do you want to do that still? You want to still have an opportunity.

Ms. Johnson said I think, for a \$3.3 billion budget, we should still have the opportunity to meet again.

Mr. Bokhari said we voted no, but I think the sentiment was, let's get through today's meeting. I'm good. I've got my items. I was just trying to be helpful, but maybe that shouldn't have been me.

Mr. Driggs said I didn't hear anything that would cause us to change the vote we already had.

Mr. Bokhari said so, I'm not making a motion. If somebody else wants to, they can.

Motion was made by Councilmember Johnson, seconded by Councilmember Mayfield, and carried unanimously to meet at 3:30 p.m. on May 22, 2023, to go over straw votes for any other items that might come up between now, after we've received the information.

Mayor Lyles said it's a two-step process to ask the question and get some information, and then to vote on it. So, you'd have to have one date for the asking of the question, and another date for [inaudible].

Mr. Bokhari said no. Just to clarify, I think you're saying we're going to get feedback from the questions that you've just gotten and maybe a couple other things. The question is, is there one more session, for like an hour or an hour and a half, where people can add to the straw vote items? Are they closed when we're done here?

Ms. Johnson said yes.

Mr. Bokhari said that the two options. That's it.

Mayor Lyles usually when we start our Council meetings, we have about four people at the time that the Council meeting starts. So, we have to figure out an hour and a half, and maybe we can do it in a different room, and then we can come in and go right into the Council meeting.

The vote was taken on the motion and recorded as follows:

YEAS: Councilmembers Bokhari, Graham, Johnson, Mayfield, Mitchell, Watlington, and Winston

Mayor Lyles said okay. So, that would be at 3:30 on Monday, May 22, 2023. Alright, do we have anything else to cover?

Ms. Harris said talking about this [inaudible].

Mayor Lyles said alright. Does everybody agree that they've put on the slide in the block. Is everybody comfortable with where they are?

Ms. Ajmera said do you need five votes?

Ms. Harris said yes, ma'am.

Mr. Bokhari do we need five today, or is that what's done in straw votes?

Mayor Lyles said we do need to have five.

Ms. Mayfield said that's what the next meeting is about, to have two times at this.

Ms. Watlington said but, wouldn't it be great if we could go ahead and investigate these things in the meantime too? Like, we wouldn't want to wait until two days before to look at all of them.

Mayor Lyles said I think what we've done in the past, and I'm sorry that we're not here, but basically what we asked, is there five people to support these? Then, that way we know that we have a foundation that will lead to the straw poll votes later. So, we do need to go through this.

Mr. Bokhari said with the nuance being, it's not like I'm 100% in. It's like, I'm supportive enough for staff to go research it.

Motion was made by Councilmember Driggs, seconded by Councilmember Bokhari, and carried unanimously that we move all 36 items on this list forward.

Mayor Lyles said I know it seems like a lot of process, but it's one that is important, because people have given this a lot of thought. I just really think that if everything is on there that you agree would get some feedback from the staff, we'll have a longer meeting the next time. Any discussion?

Ms. Ajmera said yes, I do. Can you pull all of the changes in one, where we have one item that was removal of the Relief Program. I'm trying to see all the requests. There was one request that was removal of the Relief Program. Is that right? Removal of the Home Grant Program?

Unknown said that's correct.

Unknown said Councilmember Bokhari suggested it.

Ms. Ajmera said okay, I'm not going to support that.

Mr. Driggs said so pull it for a separate vote.

Substitute motion was made by Councilmember Ajmera, seconded by Councilmember Driggs, and carried unanimously to move forward with Items 1 through 35.

Motion was made by Councilmember Driggs, seconded by Councilmember Bokhari to approve Item #36.

YEAS: Councilmembers Bokhari and Driggs

NAYS: Councilmembers Ajmera, Graham, Johnson, Mayfield, Mitchell, Molina, and Watlington

Mr. Bergman said so, just so I can manage expectations here. Is the expectation that by next Friday or Saturday, we give you all of this, or is the expectation that we answer all the questions, have that Monday meeting, and then give you all this and whatever was added Monday, on Tuesday or Wednesday before straw votes.

Unknown said yes, latter.

Mayor Lyles said let me see the way that I recall how we've done this, is that we have said earlier that you answer the questions and get them out as soon as you can. That you would get any new information for new recommendations by May 22, 2023, and then we would vote on that on May 25, 2023.

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ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:11 p.m.

Marquita Moss, Assistant City Clerk/Minutes

Length of Meeting: 2 Hours, 27 Minutes
Minutes completed: June 3, 2024