The City Council of the City of Charlotte, North Carolina convened for a Budget Straw Votes Meeting on Monday, June 11, 2026, at 5:03 p.m. in Room 267 of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Government Center with Mayor Vi Lyles presiding. Council members present were Danté Anderson, J.D. Mazuera Arias, Ed Driggs, Renee Johnson, Lawana Mayfield, Joi Mayo, Kimberly Owens, and Victoria Watlington.

ABSENT UNTIL NOTED: Councilmembers Dimple Ajmera, Malcolm Graham, and James Mitchell

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ITEM NO. 1: INTRODUCTION

Mayor Lyles said thank you all for being here. I have had the opportunity to watch every one of the videos that were done today, and I just think that the Council did a lot of great work. So, really appreciate that. I'm hoping that we have other people that will have that same level of effort. Today is the day that we're going to start talking about the Charlotte City Council having the meeting specifically for the adjustments that were proposed on the meeting that you had on May 18, 2026. I think that what we really want to try to make sure that we do is that we provide the adjustments, and I know that many of them said, "How do we explore something? What do we do? What is the information?" So, take the time to have that done, but at the end of it, to make sure that we have a budget that we can be proud of, and that we want to do. We should have introductions of all the Council members as well. Alright Marie, this is your day.

Marie Harris, Budget Director said well, thank you and good evening Mayor and Council. As she mentioned, you have a packet in front of you and these are all the items that moved forward with at least five votes from your May 18, 2026 meeting of the items you said you want explored. The front page is more so the sources and that'll mean more to you as we go through them.

Councilmember Graham arrived at 5:05 p.m.

If you turn to page two, Cherie has it up for us, a listing of them as well on the board. Page two, this is each of the items that you asked to be explored and the page reference for those. So, I'm not sure if there's any particular one that you would prefer to start with, or you would like to just start from the top with public safety?

Marcus Jones, City Manager said thank you Mayor and members of Council and thanks Marie. One of the things that we try to do with addressing many of the questions that came up in the previous meeting was to really try to lock into two things. One, to see if we could, within the existing budget, provide you sources for some of the requests that you wanted us to explore without increasing the proposed tax rate. We also tried to look within the public safety budget for some of the public safety related requests that you had, still trying to stay within that 1.89 percent property tax increase. Lastly, with some of the one time sources, ongoing sources, it seems like there's some flexibility with all of the requests that you've had to be able to attempt to fund them within the parameters of public safety being within public safety and some of the one time and ongoing sources that we identified as well as one additional revenue opportunity as it related to Animal Care and Control. So, I just wanted to set the stage Mayor, that there are sources that are available to address many of the items that we were asked to explore.

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ITEM NO. 2: CONSIDERATION OF ADJUSTMENTS FROM THE MAY 18, 2026, CITY COUNCIL BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS MEETING

Marie Harris, Budget Director said as the Manager mentioned, a lot of us get tangled up sometimes. One-time sources, they think, "Oh well we have some money here," but

one-time sources can only fund one-time expenses. So, if it's something ongoing like salaries, it would need to be from the ongoing expense category.

Mayor Lyles said okay. Any questions for her before we start out?

Councilmember Mayfield said so, this is more of a clarifying question because Marie, you're getting ready to go through the recommendations and the PowerPoint in here, but I want to make sure that we're level set because the team did share with Council regarding our proposal around fire. I believe the proposal that I initially made regarding the decrease from 10 percent to seven percent, which would have saved us a little more than $6 million from the fire's pay, that there were not enough Council members to support that moving forward. So, now we're having a different conversation, but I want to make sure that we level set. With the PowerPoint that was sent out, looking at Arlington, Austin, Columbus and other areas, what was not noted is that their starting pay is $5,000 more than what our starting pay is. So, when we're going to have the conversation, I want us to make sure that to the best of our ability, we're having a transparent conversation when we're saying other areas, there's a 14 percent gap, we're not at that. That's true, but also our starting pay is not what the starting pay is in these other areas. So, I'm still, even though four other people didn't join me with looking at that, exploring the 10 percent increase to fire with the reduction from police to offset those funds, I want to make sure that we're being transparent about the dollars. It is a considerable difference with starting pay of $5,000. Thank you Madam Mayor.

Marcus Jones, City Manager said so, I think the biggest item that we will discuss will be the 10 percent increase for fire. I think the easiest way to approach it is to actually go backwards, okay. There was a question about what would happen if we just reinstated steps and put a two percent on that. The reality with that, if you slide over to page three I believe, it's actually a savings to the City of about $5.2 million and it's really because if you start to look at the steps in that table, you would have a number of folks that would have a five percent step with the two percent market adjustment which is about 51 percent of I'll say fire-sworn. So, we're talking about captains, fire fighters, engineers, okay. That would be about 18 folks that would get about a four percent increase, but the key is that this concept of people being topped out, you no longer get a step. So, if the step was five percent, 2.5 percent, 10 percent, 20 percent, you wouldn't get it and what you would just get is the market adjustment, if I got that right. So, in that example, the big savings comes in because 47 percent of the fire fighters, the engineers, the captains would only get that two percent. So, I don't think that's anything that anybody would recommend, but we actually did it. Then there are a couple of options that are in between this, which would provide an opportunity to have maybe a five percent market adjustment with the step as well as a five percent market adjustment with even a bonus so that we can get people up to 10 percent. Those are two options, but I think instead of spending a lot of time on those options, let's go to the request, which was going right to parity, 10 percent and 10 percent, okay?

So, that would be going to page five and as you know, the last time we talked about this, the cost of this is about $4.4 million. What we put in front of you, instead of increasing the property tax to pay for this $4.4 million, we gave you a series of options on the cover page that could get you to some level close to that $4.4 million. So, I think if we use it as a starting point for fire as opposed to going through the other options, because you may just land right here and if you land right here, there are opportunities within the public safety budget to try to fund that.

Ms. Harris said yes sir.

Mr. Jones said if Mayor and Council are fine with starting there, I think starting with the 10 percent increase on page five instead of the seven percent is where I believe Council would like to start.

Mayor Lyles said alright, I saw that we had Ms. Mayfield bring it forward and Mr. Jones has made it possible from what he just explained. So, let's start around. Who needs to start?

Ms. Mayfield said Madam Mayor, I thought what Mr. Jones did was open the door for Marie to now explain it to us starting from the 10 percent. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

Mayor Lyles said okay. Alright.

Ms. Harris said thank you and thank you Council. One important thing I've heard. There's a little bit of confusion where if either the seven percent or the 10 percent, while we're freezing the steps, but there's still the opportunity if you're a fire fighter one moving to a two or a two that's getting a promotion to an engineer, they still go through that promotion process. So, that's still available. So, the steps are still in play even though they're frozen. Then Council, as the Manager said, it would be around $4.4 million and then as he said in the beginning, the 1.89 percent proposed property tax increase, the whole of that is towards public safety. So, we went through and said, based on your feedback, "Can you cut it and please don't raise it more." We reallocated some, and these in this list on this table here, are enhancements that were proposed as part of the 1.89 percent property tax that we would now draw those back and use that funding towards the extra three percent in salaries.

Councilmember Ajmera arrived at 5:14 p.m.

Mr. Jones said okay. So, Marie, could you explain a little bit about the impact of these three items?

Ms. Harris said yes. So, reduce public safety technology investments. So, within the proposed budget for 2027 there is now an ongoing $2.95 million that's for police and fire public safety technology, specific to those service areas. Then for this one, it would be reduced from $2.95 million, and it would be reduced by $1.9 million basically.

Mr. Jones said Marie, just to make sure with the level setting, that's a new item.

Ms. Harris said correct. Well, yes because before they've gotten technology funding but not an ongoing designated pot for them. Correct. Thank you. Then fire. Reduce proposed increase to overtime budget. For the overtime budget, that's a place that really working with fire as far as getting the funding correct and their staffing levels correct. Currently, the budget's projected to be well over budget for overtime. So, we were putting money towards that at $4.1 million. If we did this, they'd probably be short, but we'd also still commit to reviewing and getting that number right and what it really needs to be and doing a study around overtime with fire and internal audit, but right now, it would be reducing that by $2.2 million, and that's reducing the increase by $2.2 million. So, they have roughly $2.6 million in the budget now and then this would be reducing their increase by that much.

Councilmember Watlington said just so I'm clear. Is this just specific to this first item?

Ms. Harris said yes ma'am.

Ms. Watlington said oh okay, well then I will pass for now.

Councilmember Anderson said thank you Marie for this perspective on page six. For the line item about reducing public safety technology, can you just do a double click on what you mean? A different level of specificity? I get that you said there's not been an ongoing investment in this.

Councilmember Mitchell arrived at 5:17 p.m.

Ms. Harris said so, they use a system. When the fire alarm comes through or when a fire call comes through, they have a system that routes. That's an example. They were doing enhancements to that routing system. They have a lot of records management systems, not like the clerk's office type records management systems, but anything technology that's specific. Not for their Microsoft licenses and their regular cellphones

and things that are not unique that are across the City. This is unique needs for police and fire technology.

Ms. Anderson said right. So, was this placed in the budget because it was driven by an ask from the fire fighters or use being proactive?

Ms. Harris said yes, they routinely have more ask and need. As technology advances then we're able to fund. So, this was trying to remedy part of that.

Ms. Anderson said okay, and then for the second line item about the reduction in overtime budget. I just want to make sure. You're saying that in the previous budget, we've had a line item for overtime that hasn't been fully absorbed?

Ms. Harris said it's been more than fully expended. So, it's been run in the red.

Ms. Anderson said so, it's been below what the actual overtime has been?

Ms. Harris said yes. Yes ma'am.

Ms. Anderson said so, reducing this line item out of the budget, I'm not sure how effective that is because the overtime is the overtime. I think that's based upon need. So, if there's a need and we have a history of over indexing the allocated budget for overtime, removing this line item would seemingly put us in a bit of a hole for the budget. That's a question, I'm not sure. I'm just putting that forward to you and the City Manager to answer the question.

Ms. Harris said yes ma'am.

Mr. Jones said I'll take the first shot at it. So, thank you Councilmember Anderson. So, Marie, we have how much in the budget prior to this year for overtime for fire?

Ms. Harris said this current year, $2.6 million.

Mr. Jones said so, $2.6 million. So, this $4.4 million would have gotten us closer. If you go to the little asterisk, closer to the $5 million that we had as an over run for overtime in FY (fiscal year) 2024, FY2025, $7.3 million. So, the concept was to get overtime up because in all fairness to Chief Johnson, that $2.6 million is too low. What I will say, and this is a part of this discussion, is going forward, we'd like to have our internal auditor of budget and fire start to talk about different models when it comes to overtime. We've heard as high as this could be $9 million. What happens as a City is that remember FY2025, we ended the year $10,000 up. It's all of the departments. So, police and fire let's say may blow their budget, but there are savings throughout the other departments which we try to land in the black. So, what I would say is this $2.2 million, I'm not so sure it'll solve our problem for FY2027, but what we need to do is really look at how we deploy our fire apparatus to see if we can get the right number for overtime, and we were trying to get closer to it in the proposal. So, that's where we are.

Ms. Anderson said yes, thank you for that. That's kind of where I was going with the question. I just wanted to make sure we were in the same place, which is I can appreciate if there was a line item of $2.6 million in the budget but then the actuals were approximately $5 million spend on overtime. That's approximately 90 percent of over run of our estimate for the budget. It doesn't feel like this is the right answer, pulling this out in order to get to that 10 percent increase. Mind you, I want to get to the 10 percent increase, but I would be a proponent of this if we had some other space in the budget that could absorb the over run of overtime, but I just want to be good stewards around how we really move around these line items in the budget. That's it for this particular topic Madam Mayor. Thank you.

Councilmember Mayo said Mr. Manager, I'm just wondering with our proposal of a 10 percent increase for fire, do you think that will aid with recruitment so we will maybe not

need this amount of money for overtime if we have more staff? Do you think there's any kind of level setting with that?

Mr. Jones said so, that is a great question and Chief Johnson and I have had this conversation. What is the right way to do this? Do you have to actually have more staff? Let's say it a different way. Fire is different than other department that we have because there's a minimum staffing level every day. So, what some other cities have done is they've changed their minimum staffing level which we have not. We have four people on a truck and they have brown outs. They have all these different ways of trying to reduce overtime cost or the cost of operations and we haven't done any of those. I don't even think we want to explore any of those. What we do have to do is figure out what's the right way to deploy with this minimum staffing level. Do you need to have more people than what you would need to just operate because there's sick leave, there's parental leave? There's a bunch of things that go on. So, it's really trying to figure out. You know, this is a problem and can we be very collaborative in how we do it? I guess what I'm saying is even if you left the $2.2 million in, we're still going to have a problem in FY2027. Now, there's a bunch of things that we could do that we don't have in here. One thing Marie didn't say is that we have a structurally balanced budget not only in FY2027 but also in FY2028. So, that means ongoing revenue matching ongoing expenditures. The only difference with FY2028 is there's no policy decisions around salaries. If we started to play with the dates in which the conversation increase begins, it may have a negative impact on FY2028 and we start in the hole in FY2028. So, the easiest thing to do is just move dates around for when the increase would start, but it creates a problem next year.

Ms. Harris said that's one time funding.

Mr. Jones said that's one time and it creates a problem the next year.

Councilmember Ajmera said first, I just want to recognize the budget staff for putting this together. I certainly enjoyed reading this over the weekend. I agree with Councilmember Anderson's point. I don't know if it's a good idea to reduce the budget in terms of the overtime budget, when we already know that in FY2025 this was $5 million and $7.3 million. So, to Manager Jones' point, I think we do not want to kick the can down the road and start out with a negative balance in the next fiscal year. I think the other option, which is to have an increase deferred by a few months, might be a better alternative, but at the same time, you did provide us some data on various cities. We should consider setting a policy I think, so that we can have more holistic conversations on pay parity and establish some sort of baseline because right now I don't think we have had that conversation. I think this has come up in the previous budget cycle and now. So, we need to have a broader conversation in terms of the policy. As I was reading this modified duty position, I did not know that we currently have a policy for up to five years for sworn staff who are not eligible to retire. I know that you suggested us modifying that existing policy so that we can expand eligibility. I think the current is five-year maximum to 10-year maximum length of assignment, and I think that would address what fire fighters had reached out to us about. So, I think it's more of a policy issue than a budget issue. So, I would like us to explore both of those policy items so that we don't have to keep having these conversations every budget cycle. That's all I have.

Ms. Mayfield said thank you Marie and team for this presentation. Manager, actually one of my questions is going to be directed to you for clarification. So, the way that this was explained, you're saying that the current pay structure if we would look at the hourly pay, the hourly pay could potentially benefit longer term than our step, but they still have the ability to achieve step as they move into different levels whether it's Captain, Lieutenant?

Ms. Harris said tell me if this is what you mean. The Manager's proposal, regardless of the amount at this point, was to freeze the steps and do across the board.

Ms. Mayfield said right.

Ms. Harris said is that what you're talking about?

Ms. Mayfield said right.

Ms. Harris said it would benefit people. So, if I was an engineer, one step away from topping out, now I'm frozen and I get whatever percent, seven percent or 10 this year, but I'm not topping out. So, next year I get another five percent plus any market rate potentially. In that benefit, it's helping people because I'm not topping out as quick.

Ms. Mayfield said so, since we're just asking all the questions right now, I am going back to page three.

Ms. Harris said okay.

Ms. Mayfield said so, not where my colleagues just left off at. So, I'm going back to make sure that I understand what we discussed last week, and that is the example. Right now with the step plan, you can top out.

Ms. Harris said yes ma'am.

Ms. Mayfield said under this proposal, you have the ability to not top out?

Ms. Harris said so, it depends. You're frozen wherever you are. So, if I'm already topped out, I'm still topped out, but instead of just getting a market adjustment like I would typically, I'd get this across the board pay. Is that what you mean?

Ms. Mayfield said explain that for non-budget people.

Ms. Harris said okay.

Ms. Mayfield said so, when we look at these numbers and we have the breakdown of how many full-time employees we have, we're looking at a two percent, 4.5 percent, five percent, seven percent as well as pay adjustments. When our fire fighters in between the little bit of downtime we give them, and they're looking at this, what should they walk away with understanding that, "Okay, I've heard their considering removing the step plan. How would this benefit me if the step is removed?"

Ms. Harris said okay. The big point though, a big, big clarification because like you always say, "Words matter," we're not removing the step plan.

Ms. Mayfield said exactly. That's it. So, this is a great page.

Ms. Harris said they're freezing it for one year.

Ms. Mayfield said right.

Ms. Harris said so, you're frozen in place in whatever step you're in.

Ms. Mayfield said yes.

Ms. Harris said so, the big take away is the Manager was trying real hard to do right by you. If you go back to the chart, percent wise, because everybody would get whatever this percent y'all determined would be versus if I'm topped out, I would only get market adjustment or if I'm not topped out, I get a step in market adjustment, but next year I might be topped out.

Mr. Jones said let me make sure I'm saying this the right way. So, at the top of this chart is the current FY2026 steps.

Ms. Harris said yes, the very top one. Correct.

Mr. Jones said so, these are the steps and what occurred in the proposed, and I'm not defending the proposed, I'm just saying a level set. Everybody no matter what step you're at would get seven percent.

Ms. Mayfield said okay.

Ms. Harris said in your proposal, correct?

Mr. Jones said right. So, that's the FY2027 proposed budget. If you shift back up to what's current, everybody at the end of a step whether it's step five for fire fighter one or step eight for fire fighter two, would only get in a typical year they're topped out, 1.5 percent or two percent.

Ms. Mayfield said okay.

Mr. Jones said okay.

Ms. Mayfield said that's where I wanted us to have clarification on that. Now, when we go back to where we were having conversations, which is page six. Looking at the reallocation, just for clarification, this reallocation that's being proposed of the total reduced public safety technology investments, are we saying we're reducing that from both police and fire's budget? Because if we have first responders, we need to be very clear about first responders. Right now, we're having a very specific conversation regarding fire. So, is that $1.859 million just from fire or is that in totality from police and fire? If it is, for the fire conversation, what is that true number for fire, because if I'm just tuning in and I'm looking at this and hearing this conversation, I would get the impression that we're saying because we're talking about fire right now, reduced public safety technology investments of this almost $9 million, it sounds like it's just coming from fire, but I believe it's coming from police and fire.

Mr. Jones said that is correct.

Ms. Harris said yes, and each year because their needs change and new technology comes up, so each year both police and fire, they give a prioritized list. So, both the chiefs work with their staff and come with a list. You know, usually we can do this, but we were hoping to be able to do more. So, we still work really hard to get their top priorities within what's left.

Ms. Mayfield said so, I want us to be clear in that. Mr. Manager?

Mr. Jones said yes. One thing that I think is important. If we go back to how the budget was built, we talked about public safety. We also talked about core services and what was happening was we would throw all the departments into this one technology bucket and then you prioritize it and something that may be number one for police may end up being number eight overall. So, what we tried to do to shore up core services is pull police and fire out into their own bucket, $2.9 million ongoing, right?

Ms. Harris said yes.

Mr. Jones said so, there are many options. One option is to raise the property tax to cover this. We didn't start with that. We tried to go within the public safety budget to make some reductions, and then budget did a great job of trying to make sure what's ongoing is connected to this increase because the increase is ongoing.

Ms. Mayfield said okay.

Mr. Jones said can I do one more thing? It doesn't hit police cars, it doesn't touch dashcams. Am I right with that Marie?

Ms. Harris said yes, dashcams are special and new, but that kind of technology potentially could be rolled in there.

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Ms. Mayfield said what about the fact that we approved funding for drones to be used because drones are technology? So, I just again want to have transparency in this conversation because if we're attempting to have a real conversation regarding reducing the proposed increase to the overtime budget, I agree with my colleagues that spoke earlier. We already were working within a deficit in the overtime budget. That's the overtime budget for both police and fire. So, unless we're having this same detailed conversation when it gets to police, I still think there's a disparity in this conversation that we're having. If we already know that we have been functioning in the red in our overtime budget, I am trying to understand how there was a comfortable proposal of reducing that particular line item when we already know that there's a challenge there and we have been running in a deficit. Especially when we have approved and in the process of building multiple new fire houses.

Mr. Jones said thank you Councilmember Mayfield. Instead of doing something incremental like $2.2 million in FY2027 and maybe another $1.2 million in FY2028, we tried to get as much of correcting this in year one and that's why we added $4.4 million.

Ms. Harris said just to clarify. None of this is necessarily comfortable. This all hurt because he built a really tight budget that he was standing by. So, kind of yo pick it apart, it's not comfortable. Something's got to give.

Ms. Mayfield said so, Manager, well really for our budget team. Y'all do amazing work when we put a lot of requests and expectations on you all. Manager Jones, you leading us through this and it's difficult. I do not want to be in your position. I just want to make sure that I'm understanding that as we move forward what our actual proposal is because again, we're trying to figure out how to provide access to the resources and the needs, with also challenging you to reduce the tax increase in a very difficult financial year. So, I want to make sure that we have as much parity in the conversation and truth in the conversation as possible, so when we have the language of reducing the proposed to the overtime budget, I want us to be very clear that this is the overall budget for first responders. This is the budget for both police and fire, not just the budget of fire, because if it's just the budget for fire, then with looking at the fact that we have been running in the red with fire, is this the best option? Because if we front load, I fear that what we ran into two years ago when we front loaded some CIP (Capital Investment Plan) and some other things, that we're setting future Councils and future staff and those staff coming up for retirement, up for a challenging conversation as well. Also, thinking about how do we get to the place where we actually can get into Committee the discussion, because ultimately, we do not have an adopted policy regarding pay parity. We need to get that into the appropriate Committees so that we can finally have that real conversation and either make a decision to support or some motion where we can have some specific language around what pay parity looks like and where it is so that we don't, every budget cycle, keep coming back to discussion and trying to figure out how to start from scratch.

Ms. Watlington said let me see. Okay, so I think my questions were along a couple of lines. I did want to follow up to just directly ask. Is the Chief sitting behind me by chance?

Ms. Mayfield said no.

Ms. Watlington said I just want to know, what is in this safety technology investment? Just tell us what they are, because to your point, if you're telling me that these are dashcams or bodycams or firearms or something, that's a very different conversation.

Ms. Harris said it is that type. It's critical.

Ms. Watlington said oh, I thought you said it wasn't.

Ms. Harris said it's not dashcams, but it's that type. Dashcams is a new thing. So, it's a separate pot, but it is to enhance and maintain critical technology. They give a wish list that's far beyond the $2.95 million.

Ms. Watlington said is there a list?

Ms. Harris said that changes every year. So, based on what the funding level ends up being, they work collaborative with each other, police and fire on some of the things and some of them are specific to police and some of them are specific to fire. Then they have a prioritized list, but we don't have that yet, a revised one.

Ms. Watlington said is the Chief sitting behind me? Okay. Sir, do you mind joining us at this podium?

Mr. Jones said so, Marie, I don't know what the answer to this is. This may be helpful. So, when everything was in one pot together, would CMPD (Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department) and fire get $2.9 million of that big pot or would they get $1.5 million of that big pot because that would help level set whether or not even with this reduction, it would potentially be more, less, or the same.

Ms. Harris said so, it varies by year to year and the Chief, sometimes he gets grants. Both Chiefs sometimes get grants, or have different funding sources, or they have such a critical need they might try to carve out from their own operating budget. It varies year to year, but no, they did not necessarily have this ongoing, but they had more than this ongoing as their need list.

Ms. Watlington said okay.

Mr. Jones said the need list is different than what was actually funded.

Ms. Harris said correct, and it varies by year to year, yes sir.

Ms. Watlington said okay, what's on your list?

Chief Reginald Johnson, Charlotte Fire Department said so, good evening Mayor and City Council. I think Marie hit the nail on the head. So, it does change from year to year. This year's focus is going to be on CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) upgrades and technology upgrades at our communications center as well as some of our units getting upgraded with MCTs, Mobile Computer Terminals, etc., so that our units can continue to respond.

Ms. Watlington said is this an obsolescence issue? Is this just an upgrade because for it to be sitting right here, I think I'm understanding, correct me if I'm wrong, that this is a separate list from core operations because you may or may not get this funding?

Chief Johnson said this is an upgrade for our current CAD system. So, we try to maintain at least one or two levels or versions behind so that they can fix repairs and this was an opportunity for us to start looking at CAD and a few other opportunities in the communications center.

Ms. Watlington said this is not base operations? Like, this is not an obsolescence issue, you've got to replace the version today because you don't have [inaudible]?

Chief Johnson said yes, it's not that.

Ms. Watlington said okay. Thank you. The other question while I've got you is I want to make sure I understand this overtime piece. Can you tell me very specifically is it cheaper to run the current org model that you're running with overtime or to make adjustments to hire additional FTEs (Full Time Equivalent)?

Chief Johnson said so the City Manager is right. When we've had those discussions in the past, it's about a staffing factor, and that staffing factor you have to find a balance between hiring a certain number of folks to address a lot of your vacancies, vacations, sick leave, paid parental, injury leave etc., and then using overtime. So, we really need to do a study to actually figure out what that number is.

Ms. Watlington said so, you haven't done it? You can't tell me the difference between two today?

Chief Johnson said I can tell you an older number but we're in the process of redoing that number now.

Ms. Watlington said okay. So, yes, that would be very helpful. I definitely don't want to go into a whole other fiscal year not knowing whether we're costing ourselves more money or not. Okay. So, let's add that to the list that Councilmember Ajmera started earlier in terms of what we'd like to see on the front end of next year because definitely overtime has cost financially but obviously as you well know, it cost y'all in terms of your quality of life and your health. So, if that's not the most feasible model, what do you need to execute that org model sooner rather than later?

Chief Johnson said are your referring to meeting minimum staffing? Is that what you're referring to?

Ms. Watlington said I'm referring to this study to design your organization such that you're running streamline.

Chief Johnson said so, we're in the current process of working on that staffing factor number right now so that we'll be prepared for the next fiscal year as to where we need to be, and also hire those people to address that staffing factor number, depending on where it comes in.

Ms. Watlington said so Mr. Manager, I would love to see that sooner so that if there's an opportunity or a need to pivot in the middle of this next fiscal that we can do that rather than waiting until the end of this fiscal year. That leads me to another question and maybe it's the same question again. So, forgive me if it is. I was under the impression that the reason we didn't have parity between fire and police, though I can see that that is not unusual looking at other cities. I thought it was because we didn't have a problem hiring fire fighters. So, right now, we're running overtime not to cover vacancies but to cover, like you said, vacations [inaudible] and these particular things?

Chief Johnson said so, our vacancies are very different. It takes six to seven months. It's seven months now for a recruit to graduate from recruit class. So, Director Simpson is here now and she may pull our vacancies and it'll show no vacancies, but I may have 40 people in recruit class. So, that's 40 vacancies on fire trucks that we continue to have to fund while they're going through class. So, again, the staffing factor is trying to get us to a point where we're having enough staff to be able to make sure that we can reduce that overtime while they're going through class. Although we don't have the turnover that CMPD does, we have had to run our process two times a year which is something unheard of that we've had to do in recent years to make sure that we're hiring enough folks.

Ms. Watlington said is that because of natural attrition like retirement and things of that nature?

Chief Johnson said yes and also the hundred new fire fighters and stations that you all were giving us as the City continues to grow. So, it's not just attrition, it's also adding your new infill stations and new companies.

Ms. Watlington said thank you for that, and the cost of growth. So, then the only other last thing I would say is as part of this comparison, I see here that we're looking at pay parity across benchmark cities. These are salaries, but when it comes to fully loaded benefits and salary and full compensation together, do we have that comparison? Because I understand the retirement systems are different.

Mr. Jones said Marie, let's make sure I do this right. So, we have the public safety pay plan group and I believe the way we ran it this year is exactly the way that they wanted us to run it in terms of just don't fully load anything just use [inaudible].

Ms. Harris said correct and that data is really hard to get, but Sheila and her team listen to the concerns and then they figure out anything that comes up.

Ms. Watlington said okay. So, just as it goes to Committee and certainly I will support the policy work to figure out where we need to land on these items. I just want to put that into that scope as well that we're looking fully loaded. Thank you.

Ms. Ajmera said so I was going to ask about the public safety technology investments. So, that includes both fire and police, right? So, Chief Johnson talked about the fire technology needs. Do we have someone from the police or do we know what the technology needs that would be addressed under that $1.8 million?

Ms. Harris said so, in broad categories, it's listed on page 305 of your budget book, but this is just broad categories like Chief said, it varies based on need and priority and what new technology or aging technology. It's things like modems, routers in the vehicles, cameras, license plate readers, 911 systems, like he mentioned his CAD system. So, it could be any in that area, but again it's something that's specific to the public safety services.

Ms. Ajmera said I mean that's pretty broad.

Ms. Harris said we don't have that yet, that detailed list. So, what happens is each year they work together with their command staff and their other teams to assess all the priority needs across their different areas because even within police and fire they have so many different service areas. Then each Chief works with technology to help cost it out with procurement and technology and then we work through based on their top priorities.

Ms. Ajmera said so, because it is a broad list, what I'm concerned about is, is there anything that's a high priority within the broad list that we have to get addressed in this year's budget? That's what I'm trying to understand.

Ms. Harris said nothing that's been specifically costed out. Certainly, the CAD system the Chief mentioned and things like that.

Ms. Ajmera said what is the CAD system? I know he did talk about that.

Ms. Harris said that's the call system that routes the cars, right Chief?

Ms. Ajmera said their dispatch system? Okay.

Ms. Harris said the automated dispatch, yes.

Ms. Ajmera said so, I know Chief you talked about the emergency response time at Councilmember Johnson and my townhall. Would that system assist with reducing the response time? I know that is something that is important in terms of reducing the response time.

Ms. Harris said so, that system is in place now. So, it's already doing that and of course we need to maintain it. As the Chief said, it's not mission critical for this second, but it will definitely need to be an investment for the future.

Ms. Ajmera said okay, so would that reduce the response rate?

Ms. Harris said it's responsible now. So, it's computer-aided dispatch.

Ms. Ajmera said okay, it's just maintenance?

Ms. Harris said so, it's the one that says which vehicle is closest and sends it to the location. So, it's already in place. This will be to refresh that system.

Ms. Ajmera said yes, so what I'm trying to understand, with the refreshing or updating the existing system, would that ultimately result in reduction of the response times? Because we do know for priority two calls within CMPD, we are not meeting the benchmark. So, I'm trying to understand if the system upgrade or maintenance does address reduction in response time, it is something that is critical.

Ms. Harris said so, this one was specific to fire. I'm not sure if police also has something equivalent on their list, but we can definitely follow up with you and get you more detail levels on their priorities.

Ms. Ajmera said yes. Okay.

Mr. Jones said so, Councilmember Ajmera. So, I just checked. For the entire City technology in FY2025, there was $1.6 million in PAYGO (Pay-As-You-Go) for the entire City including police and fire. In the current budget for the entire City, $2 million including police and fire. Okay, so this is significantly more. Again, we tried to pull police and fire out because we wanted to make sure we shore up core services. So, I feel comfortable that this is more than typically we would have for police and fire.

Ms. Ajmera said yes. So, when you said $2 million, it says FY2027 proposed for $2.95 million, so almost $3 million.

Mr. Jones said just for police and fire.

Ms. Ajmera said okay. So, you are comfortable with this suggestion of reduction in the technology investments?

Mr. Jones said well, I don't love it, but I couldn't raise the tax and we had to go somewhere.

Ms. Ajmera said yes, I mean obviously.

Mr. Jones said so, I don't feel that this is going to be a cut to police and fire, I just don't believe it's going to be adequate to get us to a place that we wanted to get to sooner.

Ms. Ajmera said so, let me ask you another way. So, this would not result in reduction of core services? This would not result in increase? I guess we were trying to address response times. We wanted to meet the benchmark which currently the fire department does, but when it comes to CMPD, when it comes to priority two calls based on the report that was presented to us, we are not meeting the priority two calls benchmark. I just want to make sure none of these technology improvements would take away from that goal or the outcome of where we want to be.

Mr. Jones said I am not able to answer that.

Ms. Ajmera said yes, I think that's the level of information that I need to be able to say yes I'm okay with this because if it helps us with further reducing or meeting the priority to benchmark, then I think that is something very important because that is a core service.

Ms. Watlington said I don't think they know because the [inaudible].

Ms. Ajmera said I get it, they don't know. So, I think we need more information. I think Councilmember Mayo, you said you wanted to refer this to the Committee, the pay parity and the policy around the modified positions. I mean I did suggest referring it to the Committee. Yes, we can make a motion later, but I guess I'm trying to understand with the whole technology if we can just get more detail on that, what those technology improvements are like. Specifically, when it relates to the response time.

Ms. Anderson said if $2 million was the budget for technology investment this year for all of the City, my assumption is that the number that's in the budget for technology

specifically to public safety is there for a reason. When I'm hearing things like modems in the cars, updated CAD systems, things of that nature, all of those are derivative effects that ensure that fire and CMPD can meet response times. The response time for CMPD has been a challenge from a variety of different angles and certainly we've talked about technology and leaning into technology in a different way uniquely than we have historically have, could help us get to that desired threshold for result times. So, I believe that this is here for a reason and it's driven by specific needs or potential upgrades. That's just my reading the budget and reading this document here, but if there is some potential slack there, okay, but I'm not sure if it's $1.85 million worth of slack.

So, I just want to make sure we're being very clear on this because I don't want to get to this point advance next year and we say, "Oh, our response times haven't improved," or, "They've actually decreased." "Well, we had the investment in the budget but then somehow it was moved around." That's the first point. My final point is you know, we're talking about attrition and whether investing in existing roles versus investing in back filling roles. Most industries have some type of threshold of attrition that's built into their business model. I'm not sure City Manager or Marie if the attrition rate for Charlotte Fire and CMPD is built into the City's attrition rate overall, or if they have a breakout of their own attrition rate, but once they get past that threshold, then you're like, burning money for real because it costs more to fill these roles. So, if this is referred to a committee, I think understanding attrition rates and whether we're over indexing on that attrition rate or under indexing, I think that would be interesting information to inform our decisions around this.

Mr. Jones said so, Councilmember Anderson, I believe we have a zero-attrition rate built into fire.

Unknown said correct.

Mr. Jones said so, no attrition rate at all.

Ms. Anderson said okay. Wow, that's excellent.

Councilmember Driggs said so I think a critical element here is we do not have a policy about parity. Now, in my mind these are two different labor markets. You don't just take a police officer and put him on a fire truck and vice versa. They have in common that heroically they are both willing to risk their lives in the service of the public, but otherwise the jobs are different. The hours are different and in particular, especially since Keith Lamont Scott, public perception is different and therefore I think the right fair amount of compensation in each of those markets is not necessarily the same. It would depend on many things like retention and recruitment and so on. We need to pay enough in order to establish the manpower levels we want and to take care of our employees, but you don't switch our bus drivers with train drivers or whatever. So, that doesn't in my mind create a presumption about what we should do for fire fighters. It just means that I don't see exactly why they should be equal. I think it's a goal that they would like because it's a bigger number, but we really have been avoiding this policy conversation for a long time.

So, if you accept that, then maybe there's a way to do more for fire fighters and not necessarily reach parity with the police. In other words, we're talking almost binary here as if you know, we give them what we originally proposed or we try to achieve this parity. You know, is that the only answer? My other concern is when I look at this diversion of funds from our original intentions, I don't see an excess that we are able to tap into. So, in other words, I think we're reducing numbers that weren't too big before. What concerns me in turn about that is if you look at past years, we always were conservative in our budgeting and then we had something left over that could go into PAYGO or that we could roll forward. It feels to me in a way we're gambling here a bit against that, but you mentioned before that, who knows, maybe we could achieve better results in other places. So, I'm uneasy about spending ahead towards that expectation of a surplus because in prior years, it has also been the case that we needed that

money. So, we used it for PAYGO but then when we did our math, we were looking at a perspective deficit for the coming year each time. So, I missed the discussion last time and therefore I don't know whether there are dimensions to this that I might have picked up had I been here, but I guess I will just say I'm not really comfortable with this proposal. Thank you.

Councilmember Johnson said so for me it's obvious that we would address the pay parity and I didn't understand why this has been such a discussion for so many years since I've been on Council, 2019, the fire fighter's union or association, they've been advocating for fire fighters. It's interesting, Councilmember Driggs, when you talked about the public's perception being different than CMPD because I don't think that it is. Maybe I'm oblivious to that, but I don't think that it is. Nor do I think that it should be. I mean, we could probably ask our fire fighters and I bet it's close to 100 percent who have fought a fire, who risk their lives every time they go out. Where I mean, police officer's jobs are dangerous also, but are they in the line of fire every day or every time they go out? So, I don't know why we would ever think that there would be a difference. I mean the fire fighters, they're running into burning buildings. So, I think that we need to be passionate and advocating for them. Also, we talk about public safety and the tax increase, 1.89 percent. Mr. Jones, did you say all of that was for public safety? So, the tax increase for our residents, 100 percent of that is for public safety? Correct?

Mr. Jones said yes.

Ms. Johnson said and we're looking at cutting overtime dollar. Councilmember Anderson, you're absolutely right. I don't think these numbers were presented by the management staff just because there's some expenditures that would justify this number. So, we're looking at cutting overtime and reallocating funds in the tune of $4 million?

Ms. Harris said $4.4 million.

Ms. Johnson said $4.4 million along with a tax increase for residents for public safety, right? The great news is the North Carolina Supreme Court just allowed cities to use the HTA (Housing and Transportation Authority) funds for public safety, which could mean that we don't have to increase the tax rate for our citizens or reduce overtime and that we're allowed to provide parity for our firefighters and police officers. Have we looked at that? I know that's a recent ruling. Where are we with that?

Matthew Hastedt, Chief Financial Officer said sure, I can start and then the City Attorney can certainly jump in. So, I would say that I think the decision by the State Supreme Court was just last week. So, it is something that the City Attorney's Office, finance budget, are all aware of and are evaluating. That case was specifically about the Currituck Hospitality Taxes because they're all typically local taxes and what they're enabled for. For example, we have taxes that can be used for just the NASCAR (National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing) Hall of Fame, or just the Convention Center, amateur sports and Bank of America Stadium. So, one of the things that I think are still under review right now by the City Attorney's Office is to really sort of see exactly how that applies to our local bills. I believe that there's some time needed to really make sure that one, there are some opportunities to see exactly what is applicable and I'd also say that also brings in some policy level decisions for this Council that may be a little bit tight to try to make on this year's budget as well because it starts to look at management practices. I've had conversations with writing agencies and investors that have indicated that they prefer or like the fact that we don't use hospitality taxes to underpin General Fund expenses because as we talked about it in committee today, those revenues can wane at times and right now, some of the hotel/motel taxes are down compared to last year, but the need is exactly the same. So, if those needs go down, that puts at risk the General Fund having to find a way to pay for those services. So, it's something that needs, I think, some time to sort of evaluate and jump in and evaluate before a decision is made. City Attorney Leslie-Fite, I don't know if there's anything you wanted to add.

Ms. Johnson said before you add, I wanted to know if you can answer which tax would be comparable to the tax the North Carolina Supreme Court just approved?

Mr. Hastedt said I believe theirs was around hotel/motel tax, the occupancy tax. So, right now we have three different occupancy taxes. We have one that's within our tourism fund. That is what helps support the Spectrum Center and the cultural arts area. We have one that is dedicated towards the Convention Center, amateur sports and Bank of America Stadium and one that is dedicated towards the NASCAR Hall of Fame.

Ms. Johnson said so, occupancy tax, do we know the total amount for those three taxes?

Mr. Hastedt said I can find it.

Ms. Johnson said okay.

Mr. Hastedt said it's in the book for projection purposes.

Ms. Johnson said okay. Is it page 241? I have the book open to page 241. If you could just tell the public where that would be, what page it is when you find it? Thank you. City Attorney, did you have something that you wanted to say?

Andrea Leslie-Fite, City Attorney said yes. Yes, Councilmember Johnson. Thank you so much. The case that we're conferring to is Costanzo vs Currituck County and we are analyzing the ruling in light of our occupancy taxes. Of note, with that specific case, there was a tight nexus between their occupancy tax and their plan, that Board of Commissioner's plan to use those occupancy tax dollars to help support the increase in visitors to that community. That community is about 20,000 in population. During those tourist seasons, they balloon to about 60,000. So, the Board of Commissioners in that case was able to highlight that their public safety really needed to increase to support that increase in just visitation from surrounding communities. So, that was a huge emphasis by the North Carolina Supreme Court. So, what we're looking to do right now is analyze if there is such a nexus that would apply. Again, the special legislation that was adopted for Currituck County specifically highlighted that nexus.

Ms. Johnson said okay. Thank you. I know that there are rooms where we're celebrated that we're the number one growing City in the country. So, I think that that is a nexus or could be considered a nexus where we're the fastest growing City in the country, so certainly in North Carolina. Councilmember Ajmera and I, we did have a town hall meeting talking about response times. We know that there's been hold times calling 911 for years. So, if there's a pot of money and the North Carolina Supreme Court has spoken to it, I don't know if it was silent before, but there's a case, I think that's something that we should consider before we cut overtime, before we raise taxes and before we take a look at cutting public safety spending. Thank you.

Councilmember Owens said just very briefly on that topic. I think for me I could more readily see tapping into hospitality dollars for something like the pilot program that we're exploring for noise cameras. Something that's directly related to hospitality, raising for our attention the problems that they're having with their residents and the folks who come in and stay and are having these problems. So, that for me is enough of a nexus where I think you can do that. To do it more broadly than that I think really does put at risk some of the partnerships we've been able to establish with the business community, particularly with the hospitality industry and some of the projects that we've got coming to the area that are dependent on those relationships. So, I just would hesitate to do that. That said, I appreciate the energy around it, and I think that there are maybe some targeted areas that are more specific that are more aligned with the Currituck County's need for their tourist season to be aligned with their goals.

On technology, I just will say I look at the description here of the things that will be affected, and I note that license plate readers are in here as well. Some of the things that in my ride along, I came to appreciate that there were variabilities in the vehicles

that rode in during my ride along with respect to the condition of the vehicle and the access to technology. Someone would have to go use somebody else's computer in their car or whatever. I don't think that we want to be in a situation where our officers are needing to not feel as though they're not fully supported out in the field. So, I do have some real hesitation about that cut, and then I will just parrot the comments of other Council members with respect to the overtime budget. Really, I fail to appreciate how cutting the overtime budget when we already know that we are struggling to meet that makes sense. Now, one of the things that had been thrown out, and this is going to make me exceptionally unpopular, but did we also explore, did this not rise to the level of exploration, a seven percent across the board instead of 10 percent across the board? Did that get mathed out, because I thought that that was a discussion point that we had? I know Ms. Mayfield had recommended that we flip them and that police and fire get 10 percent and the police officers get seven percent, but I thought we had some appetites around a universal seven percent. Did I miss that?

Ms. Owens said it didn't get five? Okay, thank you. Got it. The math is not mathing for me and that's why I wanted to put that out there. That was it for me right now, thank you.

Ms. Mayfield said so one part on the alignment on the line of conversation regarding hospitality and tourism, something that was mentioned to me earlier, but we didn't get a chance to talk about it in Committee was are we even tracking Airbnbs (Air Bed and Breakfast)? So, we have a number of Airbnbs in our City. When you look at hospitality and tourism mainly as the hotels, but those are businesses that are generating a considerable revenue stream, are we receiving the taxes that we should be receiving from those small independent Airbnb businesses? That is contributing to our infrastructure as well as should be identified under hospitality and tourism. Are we even looking at those?

Mr. Hastedt said sure. Appreciate the question and it's been a little bit. So I can certainly talk again with the tax collector, but a year or two ago we have had those conversations. There was no reason to believe that we were not receiving the full amount of occupancy tax from the Airbnbs because that is actually collected by the companies and they are required to send it to us. So, it's not up to the individual homeowner. Because it goes through the app or through the website, it registers where the collection is supposed to go and they are remitting it, but certainly happy to follow up again with the tax collector to make sure.

Ms. Mayfield said are those funds going into PAYGO or into the General Funds?

Mr. Hastedt said they would be collecting the occupancy tax. It would be going into the dedicated funds that they are met for.

Mayor Lyles said I think Kimberly and I probably own one of the [inaudible] where we talk about these bids and the people that have the property. I don't think that they ever actually give money to the City for anything because you know, you get an Airbnb, you just walk in like a hotel and you walk out.

Ms. Mayfield said right. Exactly.

Mayor Lyles said if there was money, I'd like to have it so that we would have something that's first they'd have to do something instead of after because the after stuff is just not working.

Ms. Mayfield said so, what staff just says is that we are getting it, yet I'm not seeing that line item. So, I think that would be helpful for us to know exactly how that is being tracked because it should be tracked under hospitality and tourism. If you're able to earn $4,000 to $10,000 a month off of your Airbnb, I'm going to need you paying taxes to contribute to our City. It would be helpful to know where we're at.

Mayor Lyles said it would be helpful to know.

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Ms. Mayfield said it was mentioned earlier to go to page 305 and look at our PAYGO numbers when we were going through to say where this money is at. Manager Jones, yes, it was an ask for us to have these take home vehicles. What we have identified in here is purchase and replace the police take home vehicles at $2.5 million a year over the next five years which is going to total over $12,300,000. Is that not something that can be deferred for right now? So, we have some take home vehicles out there, but this is $2.5 million a year to not only purchase but also to purchase and replace. Is that a priority right now while we're having this conversation? Because I think what I'm hearing from my colleagues and where I share concern, to even have a conversation regarding the reduction, when we already have the numbers and know that we've been running in a deficit for this overtime budget. When we already know that we have approved the development for additional fire houses that we are going to have to figure out how to staff which means currently we're going to have some of our current fire fighters that are going to have to go over to these other locations. That doesn't fall into technology, but in the PAYGO, is this $2,450,000, is that something that can be deferred just like we had to defer other requests? Do we have other opportunities?

Because I also want us to be clear, when we're talking about technology. It's not necessarily new technology. It's just like our phones, how we have to do upgrades, except when you're talking about governmental upgrades, if we don't keep those upgrades going with these systems, that could be detrimental to our entire system. Remember, the last time we had a bug it was the City of Charlotte staff that caught the bug that managed to make its way through the County. So, I don't want us getting lost in the public safety technology and talking about reducing that, when a lot of that is our licensing and keeping our technology up to date, not necessarily switching over to brand new technology. So, these are two very important line items, and I doubt we're going to get through this budget since we just spent an hour on just number one, but I think that also speaks to how important this conversation is when we talk about public safety. I have no problem supporting the idea that Councilmember Owens just made as far as what would it look like if it was seven percent across the board, or if it was cut. Me, halfway in the middle, if it was eight percent across the board because yes, my recommendation did a switch to try to fill this $4.4 million gap. There was a very specific reason, yet, we didn't receive the five or more. I don't think anyone mentioned the seven percent across the board.

Ms. Johnson said I did.

Ms. Mayfield said seven percent across the board?

Ms. Johnson said yes.

Ms. Mayfield said okay. So, with looking at options that we may have in a very tough season, and I'm not going to say I want us to get a zero tax. We need a tax increase. We need to keep up with the infrastructure investments that are needed. We have too many sinkholes popping up Uptown because we're still dealing with areas that have 150-year-old pipes, but at the same time, some things that we are attempting, are they a necessity right now? It's a good to have and it's a convenient piece for you and it's good for the community to have that take home vehicle. If you live in a neighborhood and you see that your neighbor is an officer, but it's also only as good as me knowing you because if you don't come to any of the neighborhood events, and I don't actually see you, that's not really helping me.

Right now, I'm trying to figure out how to make sure we don't cut this budget around technology and around overtime. That amount is good to have. I would like to know what the number is for the replacement since this is purchase and replace. How many vehicles do we already have out there? You don't have to have that now, but that's something that would be helpful as far as what that cost could be if we're not talking about purchasing and replacing.

Mr. Jones said so, thank you Councilmember Mayfield. So, the two things I think are really really important. So, let me answer your question directly. I do believe that the

vehicle replacement is ongoing. So, a cut to the vehicle replacement would be ongoing if you wanted to reduce that and increase compensation for fire. I will say two things that are really, really important with police and fire, well three things. One, it would be great to have a policy on parity. The other thing which is really important is when the Police Chief came onboard, she asked for three things. It would help her with recruitment because we are, whether it's 300 down with 80 people in a recruit class, or however you want to count it, we're down, and while we're making progress. She said three things, 10 percent increase, take home vehicles and dashcams. So, the other thing that's really, really important, I think if she was here, she'd also tell you she probably needs another 400 officers in addition to what she has now. So, as we start to think about this over the years and we start to think about recruitment for police, those were the three things that she had asked for. The other thing with fire, which is extremely important, is that we're going to build a bunch of stations, we're going to replace a bunch of stations. With that, we're going to have a number of additional fire fighters, which I think is extremely important. So, as we have this conversation around public safety, one of the things we tried to do was to shore up core services around technology and things of that nature. I do believe it's a great conversation for the Council to have about parity and a policy around that because I think it would help us. So, I guess going back to what I said at the beginning. You could reduce the take home vehicle bucket. It would be counter to something that the Police Chief said that would help with recruitment.

Ms. Mayfield said so, thank you for that Manager Jones and I appreciate that the Chief came in with three asks. How many years did we work on getting the burn center?

Mr. Jones said I'm with you.

Ms. Mayfield said okay. So, we had that conversation for over three years to get that burn center which was detrimental for the training based on today's environment with how we build, the type of materials we build, the level of heat and how quickly that heat escalates. So, I appreciate the fact that she came in with her top three. You don't get the sun, moon and stars your first time out. So, this is our first budget. It's a very strong and a very tight period for us. If you get one or two out of that three, I would consider that as a win.

Councilmember Graham said thank you to the staff for what I thought was a very good presentation that you sent over the weekend. I too enjoyed reading it, but after I read the first page it was just fool's gold in terms of the overtime pay. It's just not realistic that we can do that. Also, the investment and technology, I agree with Ms. Mayfield and others, certainly Councilmember Anderson about 30 minutes ago when she outlined specifically what I was thinking when I read it over the weekend that this is not going to work this way. I do want to find a way to help and be responsive to the need and certainly I circled again on my paper that we need a policy to help drive our decision making. I think that's been said over and over again for suse. So, I'm not sure how we get there with this budget knowing that we have to pass it by the end of the month with all of the other stuff that's on our table to consider by the end of the month. There's a lot going on here. I think that's the direction that hopefully we can find our way to, to creating a policy and I'm open to any other suggestions that would demonstrate that I believe public safety is a team sport and the fire fighters are a part of the team and they should feel that way as well.

Lastly, and more importantly, Councilmember Johnson I really appreciate the spirit of which you offered about the tourism tax and the County is probably half of my district that we're talking about. So, there's a significant difference between Charlotte and Currituck County in terms of our needs, our wants, our aspirations and our financial standing with the bond agencies that we have to take into consideration and allow the attorneys to interpret the decisions before we start looking at it for how we can use the funds differently. Now, I'm very flexible. If the Court says we can do it, we should do it very narrowly as it relates to tourism, not very broadly to pay for overtime. So, I think we really need to understand the decision and then as I said before, prior to the decision being made, just because we can doesn't mean that we should. We have a lot at stake, a lot to do that benefits front line workers who work in the travel and tourism industry.

We talk about workers all the time and they're a lot of workers that make a living off our investment in travel and tourism for a wide variety of reasons. Certainly, making sure our travelers are safe while they're in town is consistent with the general reading of the statute, but I just think we have to be really, really conservative in our approach because again, I represent a District of 125,000 and my District is bigger than the whole county. Our preference in how we work and how we utilize our resources and certainly maintaining our bond rating is extremely, extremely important. Thank you.

Councilmember Mazuera Arias said thanks staff and thanks colleagues for your recommendations. I do want to kind of double click on the hospitality tax. I am in favor of moving that towards public safety and as we talk about where to allocate these funds, I do want to raise that I think all residents of Charlotte pay across the board for increased security and often times more increased security in Uptown for their events and no residual benefit of return of investment, residual quality of life improvements. So, I'm wondering Manager Jones and staff really the possibility of increasing the MSD (Municipal Service District) funds that can be used for public safety budget.

Mr. Jones said so, I want to make sure, City Attorney, I want to make sure I'm saying what's right. So, you have in your MSD, and all of your MSDs, there are certain criteria of how they use the money, and I believe within the criteria of how they use the money that there's a possibility whether it's for the built environment or whether it's for safety. I think that it would be open to what's in the certain requirements of the MSDs. They would be only related to the MSD and not City-wide.

Mr. Arias said okay, got it. I only asked that because I am a new member of Council. So, I want to make sure what's on the table and what's not on the table. So, I want to make sure we are looking at all available options, not because I want to penalize one district over another or MSD over another. I'm also very aware of the fact that during the weekends we have a lot of resources allocated to Center City because events are taking place, because people are staying in that area. They're staying in hotels. They're going to our soccer events, our music events, etc., So, oftentimes though, I do hear from constituents that they feel left out where those events are happening because all of our resources, all of our public safety efforts are geared towards that as they should be, but is there a way that the bill isn't foot with everybody else there. Do you know what I mean? Just making sure that's equitable. Thank you.

Ms. Anderson said this is a wonderful presentation, Marie. Thank you for your team's work here, but are we meant to go through this entire packet this evening Mayor, or are we going to just stick with this one topic as it's 6:30 p.m. and we've only addressed one topic?

Mayor Lyles said my understanding was that it was to be about the first item that we had on the agenda.

Ms. Harris said Ms. Anderson, that is the goal tonight to go through whatever you want or whatever you don't want. So, it's for this Council to decide. You have the Manager's proposed budget. So, anything on here that you want to make a motion or make an adjustment to the proposed budget, and then the end of this evening before we leave, to make a motion to direct the City Manager to make the Budget Ordinance based on any of these changes. I do believe this is probably the one with the most variables. So, hopefully after you get through this one, it'll be more straightforward.

Ms. Anderson said thank you. Thank you Madam Mayor, thank you Marie.

Ms. Watlington said okay. So, a couple of things. I do want to just point out Airbnb does pay the taxes. It's automatic. If you have stayed in an Airbnb recently you would notice on your receipt that you pay the taxes. So, just to put that topic to bed, they are paying their share. As it relates to overall policy, I hope that we'll see a motion here in short order on this particular topic, but also for some policy referrals. I do think thought that what we're seeing in this whole conversation and this budget process is a need to now really assess our holistic structure. How are we modeling and analyzing for growth?

How are we looking at our economic development incentives? How are we looking at how our tourism related public safety expenditures are captured and does it pencil out how our MSD is funding particular items? I think that we've got to look at all of those things and we've got to look at them holistically. So, I would like to see a suite of referrals go out to the Committees after this budget season closes, but as soon as possible so that there's time to really take a look so that we're not in a year from now asking these same holistic questions about org models and about use of dollars and particular budgets because we have a better understanding of what we're building for and where we actually are. That is the theme for me in this conversation, is we simply don't have the data to really assess what we need versus what we have.

The other things that I would just mention is that as it relates to revenue opportunities, that's one that has come up in my mind as we're thinking about different places to cut, I do think there's an opportunity to still talk about where we can generate revenue, even if that's conversations that need to be taken to the General Assembly around land value tax or ways that we can partner with private partners or academic partners to test new technologies. We have a whole City that has needs and there are certainly innovators in the private sector that are looking for partners to run those kinds of models or looking for partners with that kind of data. So, I definitely want us to continue to investigate that path of how we can generate revenue from our assets. I did want to just double click on this technology budget. What I heard you say Mr. Manager, or what I took from it was that this budget is basically $2 million higher than it was last year. Based on my questions to the Chief, and certainly correct me if I'm wrong, what I'm distinguishing between are technologies that are required for operations and maintenance and technology investments that may be innovation improvements going forward. There's a very real difference between the two. It doesn't sound like this list has been vetted in the sense that it's gone through any kind of advanced engineering. There are no project justifications. We don't even know what the scope specifically would be to determine how much it would actually cost and what that benefit would be to our operations or to our budget. So, I just want to make a distinction and make sure that I heard you clearly that we're not deciding between keeping the lights on as it relates to this technology budget.

Mr. Jones said absolutely not.

Ms. Watlington said okay, that's what I thought. Thank you for that. So, all of that being said, certainly it sounds like there's some energy around here for, was it the seven percent? So, in order to push this conversation along, I would go ahead and make that motion for a seven percent increase for fire and police across the board.

Ms. Mayfield said that's seven percent across the board?

Ms. Watlington said yes.

Motion was made by Councilmember Watlington, and seconded by Councilmember Mayfield to approve a seven percent increase for police and fire across the board.

Ms. Anderson said I appreciate us landing to a place in this conversation. Given my understanding of the ask from the Chief and our need states with our vacated roles, even the wonderful work that they did last week with the hotel raid on Reagan Drive, took supplemental help from the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigations) along the department, I want to move forward with the Chief's plan that she put forward to most importantly attract and retain the officers that she has with her asks. So, I can't support a position where we are going to reduce the CMPD officer's down to seven percent. I am absolutely leaning into the opportunity to get our CFD (Charlotte Fire Department) officers to that 10 percent level. So, I'm more about getting them there versus reducing CMPD. So, I won't be able to support that, but I understand the motion that's on the floor.

Ms. Mayo said I support the seven percent pay increase across the board. So, excited for us to take that vote in a couple of seconds hopefully.

Ms. Watlington said yes. So, to answer your direct question, I'm okay to support the 10 percent and the seven percent or the seven percent and the seven percent. The motion on the floor is just basically because it sounds like we've got more of a consensus. So, I'm open to either one.

Ms. Ajmera said okay. I wanted to comment on the motion. I agree with Councilmember Anderson. So, at the budget adjustment meeting, we had increased all employees to seven percent and that will lead to minus three percent for CMPD, and it only had three. So, that's why it wasn't on our agenda for today, but I understand anyone can make a motion. I will not be able to support it because of the high vacancy rate that we have and we know at the town hall when CMPD presented, they clearly mentioned the need for more officers. Some of the response times that we were lagging, especially for priority two calls, was because of the high vacancies with CMPD. So, I would certainly be in support of increasing fire fighters to 10 percent, but I would not want to reduce the CMPD down to seven percent. We have an urgency here with the staffing at CMPD and also, we have to ensure that the take home vehicles stay within the budget because that is the number one recruiting tool as well as retention tool as per the Chief. So, I will not be able to support this motion.

Ms. Mayfield said ma'am, I'm a little bit confused as to what we're doing because there was a motion and there was a second. This isn't really discussion if people are just saying, "I can't support it, I can't support it."

Mayor Lyles said so, we have a call on the question.

Ms. Watlington said now we have to vote to call the question.

Ms. Mayfield said Councilmember Graham makes a valid point. We were going around, but we were just going around the room versus just raising your hand. So, if it was speaking to the actual issue, the motion, then Mayor, I support that.

Mayor Lyles said everybody has a chance to talk about this because it is a lot. So, alright.

Mr. Graham said no. I think it's a legitimate thing that we're discussing, but I hate that we're kind of pitting one against the other, fire versus police. We don't want to be here because they're both valuable and they both in their own way provide the type of safety net that our community needs. Listen, we've had a long year going back to last fall with issues related to public safety and we're addressing those issues both in terms of the steps that we made along the way to demonstrate both here at home and away that we're investing and doing the things necessary to keep our citizens safe. Part of that is investing in our police department and getting folks employed. We need more officers desperately. We've got to support our Police Chief and giving her the resources that she needs to get those officers in the door and to stay there when they get here. I went to two Public Safety Committee meetings last week, one for Uptown Charlotte with Center City Partners, the other today actually with Councilmember Anderson. The police officers are engaged. They are motivated. When you have the fraternal order of police and the Council and the community all on the same page in terms of moving in a forward direction, I don't think we should undercut that by reducing the salary for the police officers and the equipment that at least I have pledged that I would be willing to provide them to move us forward. So, I'll be voting no.

Ms. Owens said so, I put this out into the room in large part because I wanted to have an appreciation for whether we had any real feel for how this would affect the numbers. We don't really have that. So, I think it's been discussed that it was maybe seven percent or eight percent. I am aligned with Councilmember Mayfield that you don't always get what you want and those three things, the take home vehicles, I heard a lot about. I think that I would very much like to see that stay. Dashcams for me are

essential, not only for our police officers but also for our residents. I think that's absolutely essential that we are able to capture in real time what is going on with our police stops. So, I wouldn't want to change either of those. So, that really leaves me that third lever which is if you want to align the fire department and CMPD, then perhaps we align them at something less than this 10 percent. Is it seven percent? Is it eight percent? I don't know. So, I don't know where we go on the motion that's on the floor right now without being able to see how that maps out and whether you can accomplish some of the other goals by just taking a little bit off of that percentage. Can anybody canoodle that fairly quickly and put that into the room? I just put that into the room because I knew there had been a discussion point. Do we need to have first, the parity conversation? Is that another motion? We've got a motion on the floor, I'd just like to see what that looks like. So, I'm curious about that. I don't know that I'm prepared to vote for that.

Ms. Ajmera said got it.

Ms. Owens said I want to understand what looking at those numbers does to the rest of the asks that we've got.

Councilmember Mitchell said Mayor and Council thank you. I think some of the comments around the dais are very important as we try to address the budget. Councilmember Mayfield brought up a good point. Someone come in, and do we give them all three the first year? I think we heard loud and clear about CMPD and our staffing of it. So, I had to prioritize which one was more important to me, the 10 percent, the cars or I can't remember her third one, dashcams. To me, we need to have bodies out in the community so this community can feel safe. So, I'm more of a fan of the 10 percent for CMPD and trying to get our fire department the 10 percent. So, I will not be supporting the motion on the floor, but I'm interested, being the Chair of public safety, if there's another motion about 10 percent for CMPD.

Mayor Lyles said alright. So, I know how difficult it is for us to have this, but I want to make sure that if you had something to say, would you want to have the opportunity to say it, that now it is the time.

Ms. Anderson said I just had a very quick follow up. Charlotte is a very unique City where our fire and police train on the same grounds. They co-share their training grounds. Their classes quite often train together. They have a kinship amongst the two that carries on after folks graduate from the academy and get into the line of duty. So, I want us to just be cognizant of that. That they have this unique kinship that we don't see in other cities, and I want to make sure that as we're talking about this conversation, that we're sensitive to not potentially putting one, as Mr. Graham said, against the other because that's not what we want to do at all. We want to make sure that this is Team Charlotte and one team together as it relates to public safety. So, I just want to make that disclaimer around this conversation because that relationship is critically important.

Ms. Johnson said I wasn't going to say anything, but I'm confused how we think that paying one 10 percent and one seven percent doesn't pit one against the other. Seven percent equal, to me does the opposite. It shows that we value Team Charlotte. We're not reducing CMPD's salary. So, words matter Councilmember Graham, like you always say. There is no reduction to CMPD salary. This was a proposed increase. We are proposing an equal increase for our public safety workers at seven percent. If seven percent was good enough for our fire fighters, I think that the message should be that it's the amount that we are suggesting. It saves money for our citizens and it's an equal pay raise for our public safety officers. That's all I have. Thank you.

Mr. Jones said alright. Okay, thank you Mayor and members of Council. So, I wanted to run this number twice. Alright. So, seven percent and seven percent is about a $6.3 million savings, okay. Eight percent and eight percent is about a $2.8 million savings. Nine percent and nine percent is a cost of about $765,000. With all the things that we've discussed today would still be in play if you're at the nine percent and nine percent whether or not you wanted to reduce any of these things, but you reduce them less. I'm

looking one more time because this math doesn't work in my head right now. Are you sure about this?

Mayor Lyles said who's doing the math?

Mr. Jones said the whole team.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said the budget team.

Ms. Owens said can I do a friendly amendment? Can I do a friendly amendment to change the percentage to nine percent across the board?

Ms. Watlington said I'm not opposed to a friendly amendment, but it sounds like we're trying to get the data together to know if that's even really feasible.

Ms. Watlington said well, as the motion maker, I'll withdraw my motion before I rush this decision when they're trying to do data.

Mayor Lyles said I think we have to go through with the staff to give us the time and be able to provide the information to the Manager.

Ms. Mayo said can we ask them to do 8.5 percent? Can they run that while they're at it?

Mr. Jones said I think if you did nine percent, once again, instead of trying to reduce these things by $4.4 million it's three-quarters of a million and whether you take a little piece from technology, a little piece from overtime, it's very different than $4.4 million.

Ms. Watlington said yes.

Mr. Jones said so, I think within everything that we've said to you today, we could sort through a way to get to that $765,000 within public safety.

Ms. Watlington said okay. So, at this point right here, you're confident in that number? You don't look like it?

Ms. Harris said yes. I think it's like more $820,000 but it's right around there.

Mr. Jones said we're good. We're good with the number, okay.

Ms. Watlington said alright. Well, Councilmember Owens, you had a friendly amendment. What was it?

A substitute motion was made by Councilmember Watlington, and seconded by Councilmember Mayo to approve a nine percent increase to fire and police across the board.

Ms. Mayfield said I have a question Manager. So, we just went back and forth on a whole bunch of numbers. What's that new total at nine percent, because where we started out was trying to find savings. So, how do we go from trying to find savings to then being over because you called out if we did seven percent across the board, that would've saved us $6 million and some change. Then they calculated at eight percent, they calculated at nine percent. We started going over the amount. So, what is now the dollar amount that we're looking at?

Mr. Jones said so, about $765,000 in the hole.

Ms. Mayfield said over?

Mr. Jones said over.

Ms. Mayfield said okay. So, we're at $765,000 deficit?

Mr. Jones said instead of trying to solve for $4.4 million, you're only trying to solve for $765,000. What I would suggest if this is what the Council would want to do is to go back into those various pots instead of trying to take $4.4 million out of it, just take roughly three quarters of a million out.

Ms. Mayfield said so, all of that with these latest numbers that the team just ran still is under your original proposed tax rate, that we're still going to have a conversation about, because my colleagues have asked for you to figure out how to reduce the taxes. So, with this new number that we've come up with. This is still in your current proposed budget at the current tax rate that we have asked you to figure out how to reduce.

Mr. Jones said correct.

Ms. Mayfield said okay, just making sure. Thank you.

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

YEAS: Councilmembers Mazuera Arias, Driggs, Mayo, Owens, and Watlington

NAYS: Councilmembers Ajmera, Anderson, Graham, Johnson, Mayfield, and Mitchell

Ms. Ajmera said so, it did not pass. So, I'm going to make a motion to start to defer the increase by a few months.

Ms. Harris said Madam Ajmera, if I may, that's one time savings you're looking at by deferring it?

Ms. Ajmera said right. I get it. Then I will make a second motion after that to do the policy.

Motion was made by Councilmember Ajmera, and seconded by Councilmember Owens to approve a 7.5 percent increase to fire ongoing and 2.5 percent one time increase to fire to get it at 10 percent and refer this item to the Committee to set a policy on pay parity and establishing an appropriate baseline.

Ms. Mayfield said Marie, budget team, breakdown the financial impact of what Councilmember Ajmera just motioned?

Ms. Ajmera said page four.

Ms. Harris said okay, thanks. Just to make sure I captured it correctly, you said 7.5 ongoing across the board and then 2.5?

Ms. Ajmera said on page four, you've got this table and then you've got this 7.5 percent ongoing and then 2.5 percent one time. That results in a one-time cost of $3.9 million ongoing savings of a million, about, $907,000. My motion is to then refer it to the Committee for a policy.

Ms. Harris said okay. So, I'm getting confused with all the options. Are you proposing this table? So, that would give fire 10 percent.

Ms. Ajmera said that's right, but 7.5 percent is ongoing and 2.5 percent is one-time. So, that gives us the time to do work on the policy.

Ms. Harris said so, that's a little bit different than this because this is with the step. So, you're just saying across the board 7.5 percent. So, then everybody gets 7.5, then 2.5 lump for everybody? That's a little bit different than this table.

Ms. Ajmera said no, I'm talking about the fire.

Ms. Harris said yes ma'am.

Ms. Ajmera said so, this table right here. On page four, you've got this second table.

Ms. Harris said yes ma'am.

Ms. Ajmera said you see the last row? Ten percent increase, 7.5 percent ongoing, 2.5 percent one time, and that results in the last box right there where it says one time cost of $3.9 million and ongoing savings. Then my motion is to refer this to the Committee to set a policy on pay parity.

Ms. Harris said just so I explain that table better. It's a little confusing.

Ms. Ajmera said okay.

Ms. Harris said so, that is a 10 percent increase. So, the option two is what equals the numbers at the bottom. So, option two is a five percent market, then get the step and then anybody that didn't get up to 10 percent with those two would get a lump to make it up to 10 percent.

Ms. Ajmera said so, then what's the difference between that? I mean, isn't that the same 10 percent?

Ms. Harris said so, it's just telling you who would get what. So, if you did option two, then there would be 18 employees to get that.

Ms. Ajmera said oh got it, 18 FTEs and percentage.

Ms. Harris said right.

Ms. Ajmera said got it. Okay. That's it.

Mayor Lyles said okay.

Ms. Ajmera said yes, so this is the way we get to 10 percent and it's a one-time.

Mayor Lyles said no. I think Mr. Jones is still trying to figure out the math. So, I don't know.

Ms. Ajmera said is this not correct?

Mayor Lyles said it is not right.

Ms. Ajmera said okay.

Ms. Johnson said Ms. Harris, can you give us the numbers again? You gave us the numbers. The seven percent raise would've saved $6.6 million?

Ms. Harris said you're saying seven percent across the board?

Ms. Johnson said yes.

Ms. Harris said that would save $6.3 million.

Ms. Johnson said $6.3 million and there was another number that saved $2 million.

Ms. Mayfield said at eight percent.

Ms. Harris said roughly $2.8 million, as if they both got eight percent.

Ms. Johnson said eight percent across the board. Then nine percent, put us over by $700,000, right?

Ms. Harris said yes, closer to $800,000, yes.

Ms. Johnson said closer to $800,000. So, why didn't anyone propose the eight percent across the board?

Ms. Ajmera said because that's not what I'm interested in.

Ms. Johnson said I'd like to make a substitute motion.

Mayor Lyles said alright. So, Mr. Jones now has numbers that he'd like to share with us.

Mr. Jones said thank you Mayor and members of Council. So, unlike option two on the board which is spread out really a five percent ongoing with a five percent one time, what Councilmember Ajmera has asked for, 7.5 percent ongoing.

Ms. Ajmera said that's right, the last row.

Mr. Jones said and a 2.5 percent.

Ms. Ajmera said one time.

Mr. Jones said one time. Okay. So, the ongoing is $750,000, just for fire.

Ms. Harris said that's because it's only a half of a percent.

Mr. Jones said okay. Then 3.8 percent is one time.

Ms. Ajmera said that's right.

Mr. Jones said okay. So, what's important about that is one time. If you were to go into any of these options it just applies to FY2027.

Ms. Ajmera said that's right.

Mr. Jones said then the technology would be back to where it was in 2028, 2029 and 2030. The overtime would be back. So, it does work in the sense that's $750,000 is ongoing, but $3.8 million is the one time.

Ms. Ajmera said yes, and I'm going to come back to how to solve the math problem, but I just want to make sure there is consensus before we get to that.

Ms. Johnson said the substitute motion was for eight percent for fire and police and to save our taxpayers $2.8 million.

Mayor Lyles said okay.

Ms. Johnson said then you talk about equal pay for public safety workers.

Mayor Lyles said okay. Take some time and make sure.

Ms. Anderson said there's no second.

Mayor Lyles said do we have a second?

Ms. Ajmera said no.

Ms. Watlington said okay. Can you please restate the motion?

Ms. Ajmera said yes. Marie, if you could just walk us through my motion one more time and the cost associated with it.

Ms. Harris said okay, thank you. So, it would be instead of the Manager's proposed seven percent now in the proposed budget, it'd be an additional half percent. It would be 7.5 percent across the board with an addition of a 2.5 percent one time. So, for this current year across the board, everybody in the fire system, public safety pay plan would get 10 percent. Again, with 7.5 percent being ongoing. The Manager I believe got from my team, that would be still around the $800,000 for ongoing?

Mr. Jones said yes $750,000.

Ms. Harris said then the $3.8 million, we could achieve that from delaying the payment until August.

Ms. Ajmera said I was going to make that separately because I just want to make sure there is consensus before I get to that part.

Ms. Johnson said let me ask a question. You said across the board. So, that's police and fire?

Ms. Harris said no across the board for fire.

Ms. Johnson said so, police are still getting 10 percent?

Ms. Harris said according to the motion, yes.

Ms. Ajmera said yes. This will get us to 10 percent while we discuss the policy for the fire.

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

YEAS: Councilmembers Ajmera, Mazuera Arias, Mayo, and Owens

NAYS: Councilmembers Anderson, Driggs, Graham, Johnson, Mayfield, Mitchell, and Watlington

Motion was made by Councilmember Anderson, and seconded by Councilmember Mitchel to proceed with the proposed 10% for CMPD as well as 10% for CFD.

Ms. Anderson said yes, so keeping the pay parity increase for 10 percent for CMPD as proposed as well as 10 percent for CFD. That's a hard percentage, not just a one-time 2.5 percent one time bump. It's 10 percent for CMPD and 10 percent for CFD.

Ms. Watlington said Chief, can you please come back, because now we're back to the original discussion it sounds like? So, I just want to make one thing very clear in my mind about where you stand. Okay. So, what we're looking at right here, where it says, "funding option." Just so I'm clear. This $4.4 million is the cost. This is not a question necessarily for you. Mr. Manager or Marie, this cost reflects 10 percent for fire and we're already assuming 10 percent for CMPD?

Ms. Harris said correct.

Ms. Watlington said okay. Chief, are you okay with these adjustments here, and if so, why?

Chief Johnson said our number one priority is making sure we have pay parity with CMPD. So, we can continue to work on the overtime as the Manager has stated and the technology components. We have some other opportunities that we can utilize to make

sure that we're getting done what we need to get done. I think there's some questions as to how it will impact us. We'll work through those.

Ms. Watlington said so, you can sleep at night, as long as your folks get 10 percent?

Chief Johnson said I will sleep tonight, yes.

Ms. Watlington said thank you sir. That's helpful for me.

Ms. Ajmera said so, I have a question. This $4.4 million is ongoing cost? Is that correct?

Ms. Harris said correct.

Ms. Ajmera said okay.

Ms. Harris said things are ongoing sources.

Ms. Ajmera said okay.

Ms. Harris said so, it would be fine.

Ms. Ajmera said just wanted to make sure.

Ms. Harris said yes ma'am.

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

YEAS: Councilmembers Ajmera, Anderson, Mazuera Arias, Driggs, Graham, Johnson, Mayfield, Mitchell, Owens, and Watlington

NAYS: Councilmember Mayo

Mr. Mazuera Arias said so it all went back to the original proposal?

Ms. Mayfield said we increased [inaudible]. We increased fire to 10 percent.

Mayor Lyles said we're not done.

Ms. Johnson said fire got 10 percent.

Ms. Harris said just to clarify. I believe I heard earlier consensus for the item on the modified duty positions. Since they're already in place right now, I think I heard consensus around a policy change versus additional positions, but I just wanted to make sure before we move on.

Motion was made by Councilmember Ajmera, seconded by Councilmember Owens, and carried unanimously to refer to Budget Governance and Internal Relations Committee to modify the current policy and program to explore eligibility from the current five-year maximum to 10-year maximum length.

Motion was made by Councilmember Ajmera, and seconded by Councilmember Watlington to explore targeted items to see if there is anything that the General Fund is subsidizing that should come out of Hospitality and MSD funds.

Ms. Johnson said I wanted to ask our budget team. What was the total available in that occupancy tax?

Mr. Hastedt said the total budgeted revenue of occupancy tax across the three funds is approximately $82 million for FY2027, but as we talked about in Committee today, it's always important to remember what commitments have already been made to that such as the Spectrum Center, Bank of America stadium and all of those commitments that we have out there and some of the ones that we know are coming ahead to us. So, I think a policy referal will give us the opportunity to sort of see the impacts of those.

Ms. Johnson said just so I'm clear, that's comparing apples to apples, right, the tax that the other County used, right?

Ms. Harris said that's what we're vetting to see what those rules were.

Ms. Johnson said okay, thank you.

Mr. Driggs said so, as we approach that topic, I just hope that we are mindful of the fact that the hospitality tax is basically kind of a business transaction. So, a tax is levied on the customers of the hospitality industry, and the proceeds are reinvested towards the goal of achieving greater proceeds to the hospitality industry. So, it's a cash-on-cash type of transaction. If we start diverting to our General Fund, that is a use that is different in character and therefore, as I say, I think we need to be very mindful for one of the General Assembly's intent when they gave us the authority to levy these taxes and two, the important role the hospitality industry must play in determining any reallocation of those monies.

Ms. Mayo said thank you. Marie, when we kind of start looking at that policy, I know we talked about the military games having a $23 million ask and some of that being in-kind, and I would suspect some of that will be police time. I wonder if those would be opportunities for us to use that tourism dollar for some of that in-kind support for that type of event and similar events that we're having that are dealing with hospitality? So, I think that maybe something we can think outside of the box with when we know that those events do need police officers, fire fighters, public safety dollars, can we potentially divest some of those hospitality dollars to that.

Ms. Ajmera said I just want to make sure as part of my motion, I'd like to see a list of all the items that are currently being subsidized from the General Fund that we could use the Hospitality Fund source for. So, that is part of the overall policy and to Councilmember Mazuera Arias, if we can also get a list of all of the, if there is any obviously, any General Fund resources that are being used that the MSD source could have been used for.

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

YEAS: Councilmembers Ajmera, Mazuera Arias, Johnson, Mayo, Mitchell, Owens, and Watlington

NAYS: Councilmembers Anderson, Driggs, Graham, and Mayfield

Ms. Harris said okay, thank you. Now to move forward with the items. The next one is for hourly employees. We had to explore four percent increases that are currently proposed. In the proposed budget, it's four percent salary increases, but it's two components. There is a part that's a market adjustment and then another part that's a merit component. Then there was a motion to explore making it all across the board versus any merit component, and that would not have a dollar impact as we're already budgeted for four percent. It's just important to note, like when we worked with HR (Human Resources) to look so far at this year. What's proposed for 2027 is similar to what's current in the current year budget, which was a market and a merit component. On average right now, it's running around 4.3 percent I believe what it was. So, just to let you know, there's a little bit of wiggle room. They're usually able to give a little bit more than the average, and that would be taken away because it would be across the board only, four percent. We did hear from directors about how they would really like that merit component to be able to reward and retain. Like, if you have a five-person

team and you have a superstar and they get the same as the person that's not as super of a star, that might be deflating to them. So, they'd like it as a retention aspect as well.

Ms. Anderson said so, Marie, I just had a question about what you said just now. If there is a removal of a merit-based portion of the increase, what does that mean? Does that mean all employees that receive an on standard rating or a high standard will receive the same merit? Or will all employees, even those that are not at standard or if they're potentially below standard, will they receive this across the board?

Ms. Harris said below standard, no.

Ms. Anderson said okay.

Motion was made by Councilmember Mayo, and seconded by Councilmember Johnson to remove the merit component and provide a 4% increase to all general hourly workers not tied to performance.

Ms. Harris said it's more a pass/fail. So, if you're a "meets basics," then you will get four percent. If you're a super exceeds, you get four percent, but to your point, if you're not meeting the standards, you will be on a performance improvement plan and not get it.

Ms. Anderson said right. So, when we think of our levels at the annual review?

Ms. Harris said I'm double checking my facts with HR. Hold on one second.

Ms. Anderson said okay. No, that's fine.

Ms. Harris said HR just corrected me. Even if you don't meet, across the board you would still get it, no matter your performance. Even if you're not meeting.

Ms. Anderson said thank you. That's the rub that I have with this particular motion, because that's what I thought. Just wanted to verify that with the pros here. Effectively someone who's doing an exceptional job, and they get an exceptional rating, versus someone who is not doing their job and they get a below standard rating, we're saying those folks are doing the same level of work and will receive the same increase. I think that's troublesome for a variety of different ways, just being regular workforce environment, organizational development, creating career ladders for folks to advance, to be encouraged to move forward. I have trouble with that in particular.

The second piece of what I want to say is when you have someone who has an exceptional rating in the work that they do, typically there's an opportunity maybe for a one-time bonus or an additional percentage increase. With this particular motion that we have, there's no real opportunity to reward someone who has spent 365 days of exceptional performance, versus someone who spent 365 days of below standard performance. So, I won't be able to support this motion given that type of interaction with our employees' performance, but certainly want to land at a place where employees are able to receive their increase if they're doing a great job.

Ms. Harris said just real quick, point of clarification. So, if you're an exceeds, typically you'd get more than four percent and you could get up to six and a half percent. A combination with the market, and the merit, you could get up to six and a half percent.

Ms. Ajmera said I want to make sure because there was some back and forth there. So, under the motion that Councilmember Mayo made, even those who are on performance improvement plans would get four percent?

Ms. Harris said everyone across the board, yes ma'am.

Ms. Ajmera said okay.

Mayor Lyles said okay, that's all I have.

Ms. Owens said so, if I could. This is my first rodeo. Did we not just agree that we're going to give, without performance being an aspect, that you could be a subpar police officer and you could be a subpar fire fighter and you still get the 10 percent?

Ms. Harris said I'm not sure. Do they always get their step regardless of performance? Yes? So, it is not pass/fail. It is across the board, yes.

Ms. Owens said okay, I'm just trying to understand.

Mr. Mitchell said Marie, can you say that louder to Councilmember Owens?

Ms. Harris said so, Councilmember Owens, just wanted to clarify while we're talking about this. What we're talking about now as it relates to what we just passed with public safety. Public safety is across the board regardless, just like Ms. Mayo had proposed.

Ms. Owens said so, has public safety ever had a performance component?

Ms. Harris said I'm phoning a friend in HR. Amanda Dillard in the back row.

Amanda Dillard, Human Resources said Kellie may be able to speak to more to what police does.

Ms. Owens said thank you. Do you want me to repeat the question?

Kellie High-Foster, Police Assistant Administrative Director said yes ma'am, please.

Ms. Owens said can you clarify for me. We've just voted on an increase for police and fire that does not seem to be dependent on performance. So, I'd asked the question had that ever been the case? So, we've always had a distinction between performance for City employees but not for police and fire?

Ms. High-Foster said so, if it's across the board pay raise, you have to have a meets PRD (Performance Review and Development). If you don't have a meets PRD, If you have a marginal PRD you're going to go on a performance plan.

Ms. Owens said okay.

Ms. High-Foster said while you're on a performance plan, Sheila correct me if I'm wrong, you do not get that pay raise. Now, if it's across the board everybody goes up. If you go from step one to step two, I'm a police officer, but in a year, I go to step two, I have to get a PRD of meets to go to step two.

Ms. Owens said okay.

Ms. High-Foster said that's your performance. If it's across the board Sheila, everybody gets that pay raise.

Ms. Owens said okay. So, Marie, can you help me out then. You just described the system with City employees differing from that and that was Councilmember Anderson's point that that felt unfair. If you're a high performer, you get the same percentage as a low performing for City employees.

Ms. Harris said yes, if there's a merit component.

Ms. Owens said okay.

Sheila Simpson, Human Resources Director said Sheila Simpson, Director of Human Resources. There are different pay plans designed for different reasons and in police

and fire they are on what's called a step plan. Traditionally if you talk to, I'll use the example of a fire fighter. A fire fighter is paid to do a lot of things and they do it in a big group and they get paid to do that. They can be in a busy station or a not as busy station. So, the philosophy there is you need the unit, that's why they're on a step plan. Police officers are paid very similarly. You need the unit. Now, if they're not performing, that is a management issue and we expect the managers to address that issue and those officers would either stop being officers at some point or they're going to continue to be officers, but when you're on a step plan, they move with the plan because as a unit, when that unit's performing, they are achieving expectations when the unit's performing. If you have an underachieving person, then the Fire Chief and the Police Chief will deal with that, but I will guarantee you that if you have a police officer that is on step two and they move to step three, that police office is rated "achieved overall."

Now, the other plan that you're comparing that to is called a pay for performance plan is what people tend to call it or a merit-based performance plan. They are not designed the same way nor were they intended to be designed the same way. So, in our hourly pay group what happens in the merit-based system is they have two components of pay. The first component is called a general wage increase. Everyone in the hourly workforce, general employee, will receive a general wage increase. General wage increase is not performance based, it's a general wage increase. When you get to the merit component of how they are paid, which I think is in the book for 2.5 percent, then they will have a merit-based system of which is correct. Some of those employees can earn up to five percent for that part of their merit. So, what you're having is a complexity of trying to compare a gala apple to a honey crisp apple. They're apples, but they're not the same apple. So, I would urge you not to compare it in that way. To the point I think was asked. If the managers and directors have to evaluate performance for any of our general employees, our hourly paid employees or a salary paid employees, when you have a general step, it does make it more difficult for the managers to "reward" your higher performers because when you take away the merit-based component of it, that's what happens when you take that component away. So, our hourly pay plan by practice has been designed to look at both sides of that. That's why there's a general wage increase in that sector. There's a general wage increase that everyone would get and then there's another component based on performance.

Ms. Owens said thank you.

Mr. Driggs said so, I think it's really important that we preserve the performance component because what happens is employees get a performance rating, say one to five and then they have a compensation level that they're at relative to their peer group. So, when you get high performing employees that are under earning relative, the manager needs to have an opportunity to rectify that and to recognize it. If you give the same increase to everybody, imagine what it's like? You're there at your job and you think, "It doesn't matter what I do. I get the same increase as that guy." So, I feel strongly that we need to give our managers this tool, we need to have a dynamic pay structure that allows us to compensate for these disparities between performance and comparative pay. For that reason, I would not support just four percent across the board.

Ms. Mayo said I'd like to withdraw my motion.

Mayor Lyles said okay.

Ms. Harris said okay, so the next item is around financial partners. We had two partners that did submit and got rated and they both got five votes to move forward with your consideration this evening. The proposed source for this one, if you look there's a couple of options but one of the proposed funding sources is the Community Investment Contingency. It's also important to note that Housing and Neighborhood Services is going to be holding a competitive process for Community Development Block Grants, CDBG funding in the coming months and For The Struggle as well as other partners are also eligible to apply for money through there.

Motion was made by Councilmember Mitchell, and seconded by Councilmember Graham to approve funding for For The Struggle and Prospera.

Ms. Anderson said I just wanted a point of clarification. So, these two organizations, did they go through the submission of the financial partners?

Ms. Harris said yes ma'am.

Ms. Anderson said why are we voting on them now?

Ms. Harris said they were not recommended for funding just based on the ranking.

Ms. Anderson said so, Marie, if you could, could you tell us what their rankings were and how far below of the threshold they were?

Ms. Harris said yes ma'am. so Prospera scored a 94.0 and there were three others scoring above that was not funded. For The Struggle got an 89.2 and there were 15 others that were ranked above them that are not funded.

Ms. Anderson said okay then. So, within our financial partners that the Committee went through and approved, how many partners were actually approved for financing?

Ms. Harris said I believe seven.

Ms. Anderson said seven, okay. I think both of these organizations do really great work, both Prospera and For The Struggle. We're, I don't know Ms. Mayfield, maybe in our third year now of having a process that I've sat through as a part of just being Pro Tem for the last two years where this Committee has been working diligently to stand up a process and when we get to this time of the year, effectively the process is not honored. I really like the work that these organizations do, but I want to respect the work. This is the third year. So, after the third time, let's try to respect this process that has been tweaked and modified by the Committee. I thank them for their hard work. So, though I appreciate the work that these organizations, do, I don't think I can support this motion because of the honor of respecting the process.

Ms. Owens said I appreciate the opportunity to weigh in and I will parrot the comments made by my colleague from District One. I'm new to the process, but I do think that the process matters. Where I have deviated from that, was my strong support for Safe Alliance because I put them in a different category in terms of when you dial 311 that is who you get. They are so integral to our address of public safety, and I think we need to focus very hard on the things that we do well and I do not view either of these organizations as being as intrinsically wedded to our purpose as Safe Alliance is. So, I will not be supporting these.

Ms. Mayfield said thank you Councilmember Anderson. The other piece regarding your comments of this is the third time and Council voted. Council mandated staff to have a mandatory meeting, an info session. That was online. Staff goes above and beyond with these applications, reviewing all of them, scoring them. We have the opportunity if we don't support the scoring to have a different conversation. I think we need to take into consideration that when we add organizations based off of personal interests versus the actual application process, when we're talking about pay parity and we're talking about how we treat and respect our employees, these are also our employees. They're the ones that's directly working with us on a daily basis. So, we charge budget team, we charge a team to go through the applications, answer questions, review them, come back with a proposal and then when they propose, because Marie shared it, we had over $6 million in requests that came in. We had $800,000 and some change less than $1 million that we can actually allocate. So, out of the seven that were recommended, every time we go against our own policy that we voted for, we're telling staff indirectly or directly that "We're going to let you run through this process, but understand we're going to do what we want to do regardless." So, that's not a good use of their time.

That's not a good use of the investment that we're making in their pay of tax dollars by having them running in circles and then not respecting it. We're not going to agree with everything. I get that. Something might be one or two points off, even half a point, but when we skip five to eight other organizations to pick an organization because of the personal relationship we have with them, versus you write your donation check to that organization and get your friends and partners to also support that organization, it sends a different message to our team. It also sends a different message to the community because why would I go above and beyond to submit an application that can receive 100 or 99 or a 98 when another organization cannot put the same effort in work and score better than me, but they're going to be awarded?

Yes, these organizations do great work. If that's what we want to go by, then we need to have a whole other conversation, we need to vote on it and we need to eliminate the application process altogether and just say, "We're going to pick the organizations that we like." Because to go three years in to this and directing staff to create a process that we voted on, it's challenging to watch and it's disheartening, and while we're having these conversations about how we discuss pay and respect of our employees, I just want us to keep in mind that some of those same employees are sitting in this room with us. Then, when we get to their segment after listening to us be so passionate about fighting for their autonomy in their work and we get to their part, I'm not going to speak for anybody else, if I was that employee, I'd be like, "These so and so's just sat here and spent all this time and now that we're getting ready to come to my part, they completely did the exact opposite and that was 12 hours, 15 hours, 38 hours in a week that I put into this and then this is what they do."

So, I said initially, and I am consistent with it. I cannot support us adding when we've just had so many conversations, about an hour and a half about how do we reduce and how do we save funds. It is not respectful to the process that we as a Council voted on, that we approved and the direction that we gave to staff. I do want to tell staff thank you. We do appreciate all that you do, but in our humanness, we ain't going to act right.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said you know, I agree with the process but a Council we need to also be conscious about when we decide to make the argument for the process and then when we do votes, which this Council has done before where we then say, "The process doesn't matter." We can't pick and choose. We have to be consistent. So, while I appreciate and understand where my colleagues are coming from when it comes to respecting the process, it's not always that way. This Council, you know, we voted on approving a certain amount of dollars for Housing Trust Fund when our category didn't have that allocation and when we wanted to go through the process and send it back to Committee, the Council did not vote to do that. They just voted to approve the dollars immediately. So, I don't think we can make the argument about the process when there are times where you choose and pick the process.

To City staff, I appreciate all the work that you guys do, and I think that is essential. I have not been part of this Council when we created the process for our financial partners. So, this is my first rodeo and when I do look at the list and I see the high scores and then I see other organizations that get very low scores, I don't have a full picture of what criteria goes into that. I would like to also question that process and see if we can make it even better and go through an other iteration. That's why we are here as public body is to make things better and improve them along the way.

I can personally speak, you know, while I don't have a personal relationship with For The Struggle and I know Prospera works in District Five as well, but I don't have personal relationships with those folks, but I think the work is essential and we did do a straw vote to look at exploring these options. So, Marie, I do want to ask. What is the Community Investment Contingency and has that contingency been part of the previous budget or is it a new part of the budget for this year?

Ms. Harris said thank you for that. So, the Community Investment Contingency is a new component. You know we've had very tight budgets lately and we do not have flexibility to address community needs or maybe initiatives that come along at Council's

discretion throughout the year. This was just a little leeway to be responsive to things that come out throughout the year. So, it's new money. It's not already committed.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said so, would you agree, and this is also to the City Manager, let's say if along the process there comes a community investment to be made that did not go through any type of process, a new opportunity showed up, we could use this contingency to fund whatever project comes along our way, right? If the Council so chooses? Okay. No further questions.

Ms. Watlington said I think Councilmember Mazuera Arias asked the question I was going to ask, but I don't think I really heard the answer. Community investment contingency. What is community investment as a program? When I hear contingency, that sounds like room for value added scope on top of base scope. Is this something that's a standalone?

Mr. Jones said yes. So, to Mr. Driggs' point earlier tonight, we used to have routine surpluses, $15 million, $18 million and we would just roll it into PAYGO. We had no surplus last year. We'll have no surplus this year. So, what we tried to do is have something in PAYGO that if we start to struggle with some of the line items, that we would have something.

Ms. Watlington said got you. Okay.

Ms. Ajmera said how much is it?

Ms. Watlington said $250,000. Okay. So, thank you for that. I agree with really much of what each of my colleagues have said, even from differing perspectives. For me, I do think that we do have to give pause to the idea that this very same process almost eliminated Safe Alliance.

Ms. Ajmera said yes.

Ms. Watlington said so, certainly while there's been great work done, we always have opportunity to make improvements or to adjust based on new Council, new values that pop up. It's not that the program or the process itself was lacking, it's just that it may been to be updated to reflect our new approach in particular. So, with this one, I certainly respect everybody's position. I do think that For The Struggle serves the senior population in a way that I didn't necessarily see covered in other areas. So, for that reason I'm open to an exception here, but I'm also very much supportive of taking a look at the process itself and just how we do financial partnerships versus RFP (Request For Proposal) because I see here that even in this note, this particular organization could be eligible for a competitive process through a CDBG grant. So, as long as we are in a position where we trust and have confidence in the criteria and the scoring methodology, then I would be apt to move much more of this work to an RFP process throughout the year myself.

Ms. Ajmera said I agree with what Councilmember Watlington said. Our process almost eliminated Safe Alliance that operates a 24/7 hotline for domestic violence survivors. So, though I worked on the process it is not perfect. What I would like to see is that we take out the qualitative component and we only focus on the quantitative component which is did they submit the application? Did they attend the mandatory orientation? Did they submit the financial package? Do they have all the financial documents, balance sheets and cash flow and so on. So, that way the Council can make a decision on the organizations. Also, I've heard from organizations that scoring doesn't translate into whether they are doing great work or not, but certainly the perception is that. Shirley and the entire team did an excellent job trying to really tighten the process from where we were, but I think you are right Councilmember Watlington. It is time that we devise the policy where we just focus on the quantitative and not the qualitative measures. That's where the Council comes in, where we make decisions based on what we see at the grassroots level. Each District Council member knows the organization that does the work and the organizations that are involved in day to day. So, I would make a motion to

refer the policy to the BGIR Committee to revisit some of these criteria, but I know there is already a motion on the floor. So, I would like us to continue with that, and then I'll make a motion on the policy referral.

Mr. Graham said one of the things that the Manager says at every budget meeting when he gives us his presentation, at the end he says, "It's now your budget." So, that is no disrespect for any staff member or staff that worked on it. It's now in the hands of the City Council to make an appropriate decision and we just went through an hour and a half tearing up his line item related to police and fire. No disrespect for the workers who worked that. Council made a decision. I don't have a relationship with For The Struggle. I know the young lady, she's very sharp. I clearly understand the impact that she's making on the ground. I understand the impact that several other nonprofit organizations. Hearts For the Invisible, Just Do It Movement, For The Struggle and others, I know their impact on the ground, and certainly I did not support the process three years for this very same reason. It's just scoring folks and just didn't really take impact into consideration and knowledge of Council members who see the work.

So, that's why I support For The Struggle and others. I talked to the Manager about this before. Just like we have now embedded the organization dealing with domestic violence into the budget, there has to be a way for us to embed some of these nonprofit organizations that are doing good work, making good impact that they should not have to come back year after year after year, that somehow, they could be embedded into the budget, whether it's a code enforcement or seniors. Those type of things Mr. Manager, that we kind of do on a day-to-day basis. Certainly, Hearts For The Invisible as an example working on our homeless and unhoused population. When we are sleeping, they are working, literally. So, I just think we have to look at it differently and I do accept that recommendation when it comes, to kind of really look at it differently. I think it goes beyond just the scoring. Where do they fit? Are they a strategic partner with the City, and how does that tie into the overall budget? In the big scheme of things, $4.4 billion budget, $100,000 is really not a whole lot of money and they probably should need more to have greater impact. I'll rest there.

Ms. Johnson said I wish as we were having this in-depth conversation about this line item, we had the image on the screen. I've asked Ms. Harris if she could share that so the people can see or that we could even see the ranking because it's not in the book. It would be very, very, very helpful. I did look at it and see that the total number requested for all of the organizations was like $6.1 million.

Ms. Harris said yes. It's $6.2 million.

Ms. Johnson said alright. That would've been a great place to spend $6 million if we had saved it a few minutes ago, but anyway, I digress. I'd like to be able to see and I think both my colleagues are right. Councilmember Ajmera I wanted to ask you, if we looked at only quantitative ranking, how would we choose the organizations? If we only looked at the process, check, check, check, how would we measure the organizations to select?

Ms. Ajmera said that's through District Council members. Councilmember Graham said it. The District Council members know.

Mr. Jones said so, let me add that we do know organizations that are doing the work, but there could be organizations that are doing the work that we don't know about. We do know the ones that are doing the work, but I can't say that I know all of them. Some of them may not know how to market or reach us or be at the level. They could be doing impactful work. There are other organizations in the community that serve domestic violence survivors that don't have the relationships or the know how to reach out to Council members. So, I think that we need to be careful in just looking at the ones that have checked the boxes and then we need to figure out how to know who to select. I think we need the ranking system. My questions for the City Attorney. If we advertise the process and all of these organizations have complied with the process, followed the

rules, did we advertise how they would be selected? Could we open ourselves up for any liability by deviating from our process and skipping over the organizations?

Ms. Harris said while Attorney Leslie-Fite is getting acclimated, just to be clear, we didn't say in advance. We let them know in the scoring criteria. I believe, Cherie, yes? We did not tell them that we were definitely going to go highest to lowest. Did we tell the criteria? Yes or no?

Cherie Smith, Strategy and Budget said no, we do not tell them how we're going to select the organizations.

Ms. Harris said we didn't tell them the criteria in advance, just that they need to link to a strategic priority.

Ms. Cherie said as a part of the information session that the financial partners needed to attend that was mandatory, we explained the importance of connecting their work to Council's strategic priorities. So, we provided links to the strategic priorities, the type of data that the City of Charlotte is tracking to show that we're advancing strategic priorities to ensure that their work is in alignment with that. We then ask that they provide performance measures and those performance measures again had to directly link to Council's strategic priorities. That is what we use as a part of the scoring criteria.

Ms. Johnson said okay. So, can you show me where the two organizations are that we're looking at? We don't have them numbered, right? Okay, I was just thinking the ranking. Okay. So, we awarded the top seven. So, there's For The Struggle and where's the other one? They scored a 94? So, these aren't in any type of numerical order? Okay.

Ms. Harris said these are in order based on the Council priority and then alphabetical order.

Ms. Johnson said in alphabetical order? Right. It would be really helpful if we could see how they were ranked. We're in the meeting now. That's okay, and I can look at the piece of paper. It just would be very helpful to justify. I understand what Councilmember Mayfield and Anderson are saying. How do we justify to the organizations that scored higher than the other organizations without opening ourselves us for scrutiny?

Ms. Leslie-Fite said if I may respond briefly to your question Councilmember Johnson? The process is outlined as guidance, but ultimately, it's always Council's budget and you retain the ability to add, take away, subtract from any of these budget items. What I will say is that these groups, they can expect an objective process particularly at the staff level. Once the budget is turned over to Council, you can look at a totality of circumstances, not the least of which are conversations that happen here in this space that would lend to the legislative process. I will say ultimately, any organization that participates in this process, they benefit from Council's appropriation, but they are not entitled to a certain appropriation.

Ms. Anderson said Marie, just one question for you. On page eight, section five, the second bullet point here. We've talked about For The Struggle and the great work they do in the community. I have always whole heartedly agrees, but there is this bullet point that they might have an opportunity to apply for the competitive process of the Community Development Block Grant. Can you tell me, or maybe lean on staff if you don't know, when does that block grant open up? When does that process grant open up? Is it ahead of us or is it behind us?

Ms. Harris said it's the coming months and Cherie worked with Housing and Neighborhood Services to get the details. I'm not sure if we know the exact date, but it's upcoming.

Ms. Anderson said okay. Well, given the work that they do, I think that we should absolutely undergird them and support the work.

pti:mt

Substitute motion was made by Councilmember Anderson, and seconded by Councilmember Driggs to continue to honor the process that has come out of the Committee with the seven organizations proposed for financing, but allow For The Struggle the opportunity to apply for the Competitive Process Block Grant.

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

YEAS: Councilmembers Ajmera, Anderson, Driggs, Johnson, Mayfield, Mayo, and Owens

NAYS: Councilmembers Mazuera Arias, Graham, Mitchell, and Watlington

Mr. Mazuera Arias said yes, I don't understand the motion.

Ms. Anderson said the substitute motion was let's proceed with what the Committee has presented as those seven organizations that they would like to fund through their process and given the work that For The Struggle does in the community, give them an opportunity to apply for the Competitive Block Grant that's opening in just a couple of months. I just said for commentary, given their good work, I think they will probably bubble right up to the top.

Mr. Graham said there's no guarantee though.

Ms. Anderson said I didn't say it was a guarantee. It was just a commentary.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said can I add something as a comment?

Ms. Watlington said question.

Ms. Leslie-Fite said you voted.

Ms. Anderson said they voted on it.

Ms. Watlington said I have a couple of questions because now that I'm hearing this motion again, I actually want to make sure I understand. What I heard you say was proceed with the recommendations, but Safe Alliance was not one of the recommendations. So, I just want to make sure I understand what you are asking.

Ms. Harris said just to be clear. I should've cleaned that up on the front-end. That one, I think we put it in the write up, but that's separate financial partners. They're being funded through operating and project funds with CMPD. So, they're not in play here. They're getting funded.

Ms. Watlington said okay. So, you're saying proceed with the seven that were recommended and I don't know if we're necessarily giving For The Struggle an RFP opportunity, but they can respond, they're eligible. What is to be made of Prospera? I'm not asking you to justify, I just want to make sure I understand what you're saying.

Ms. Anderson said yes. No, I totally understand. So, Councilmember Watlington, my understanding is Safe Alliance is covered.

Ms. Watlington said yes.

Ms. Anderson said we're not talking about them, we've taken care of them. Prospera will have the opportunity to apply for future grants as well.

Ms. Watlington said got you. Thank you.

Ms. Anderson said I thought we were in the midst of voting, but I don't know, we'll see.

pti:mt

Ms. Leslie-Fite said Councilmember Anderson's substitute motion was voted upon and it passed seven to four.

Mayor Lyles said right.

Ms. Watlington said if you don't mind, can you call out the yays?

Ms. Leslie-Fite said Madam Clerk, do you have the yays?

Ariel Smith, Lead Clerk said I do not. I do know the nos were I believe Mitchell.

Mr. Mitchell said yes.

Ms. Smith said Mayfield.

Ms. Mayfield said I didn't raise my hand for either yes or no.

Ms. Watlington said we didn't call opposed, that's why I'm asking the question.

Ms. Leslie-Fite said I thought she did.

Ms. Ajmera said no, she did. She did.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said I was not ready to vote.

Ms. Watlington said I just wanted to make sure that I put my name in the right slot.

Ms. Leslie-Fite said so, we counted seven hands, well I did. I got [inaudible]. I didn't write down names.

Mayor Lyles said we had seven.

Ms. Leslie-Fite said I counted seven.

Mayor Lyles said yes.

Ms. Leslie-Fite said then [inaudible].

Mayor Lyles said so, when the minutes are done, they would have names on them, right?

Ms. Watlington said I just want to make sure that your hand wasn't counted as a yay.

Ms. Ajmera said even then it's seven. So, his would be six.

Ms. Watlington said I don't [inaudible].

Ms. Ajmera said yes. So, it wouldn't change the outcome.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said thank you Dr. Watlington.

Ms. Ajmera said but he did raise his hand.

Mayor Lyles said alright. So, we have the motion and the motion passed. So, now the next item. So, let's go ahead and see if we can wrap this up.

Ms. Harris said the next item that was up for exploration was around the International Relations Office.

Mayor Lyles said International Relations. Can we make sure that the people that asked for this one to be a part of it.

Ms. Harris said so, Council had asked the Manager to give more of a flavor around the International Relations Manager. What's the current state, what's the proposed and what are we really working towards here? That's the write up you received. I'm not sure if you have any questions around that, but along with that, there was also five votes to add additional staff to this office. So, that was also included on the top of page 12. So, I don't know if there's any additional questions around here or anything you would like more clarifications on.

Ms. Watlington said I just want to make sure I understand these particular funding options holistically. I see a few of the same ones repeating. My assumption at the beginning was it was because those funds were not depleted so that they could potentially be also reduced for other options. I just want to make sure.

Ms. Harris said 100 percent sure. You could've funded everything on the list.

Ms. Watlington said okay, thank you.

Ms. Harris said thank you.

Ms. Anderson said Marie, just a couple of questions. Thank you for this write up here. My question is on page 11. There is the proposed new FTE, International Manager within the Community Relations Group.

Ms. Harris said yes, the office is proposed to be within Community Relations and this is already in the proposed budget. So, the orange is the proposed budget.

Ms. Anderson said so, what is the addition then if that's already in the budget? What was the vote on the last time we met on the budget to have this here?

Ms. Harris said there were specific five votes to look at additional staff beyond that. So, that's what we came up with, an additional staff person based on Council's feedback last time.

Ms. Anderson said so, where is the additional person in this section? I thought it was on page 11 on that first column, but it's not.

Ms. Harris said so, within the proposed budget, there's a brand-new FTE, but Council had asked for an adjustment to add additional beyond the manager and the current staff.

Ms. Anderson said got you. Okay. So, I just have two questions here. The first question is we have a proposed manager in the budget. Ms. Sheila, would you be willing to come up and answer a question about this role for me here?

Ms. Harris said well, I might can help her and she can tag in when I'm wrong.

Ms. Anderson said okay. Alright. So what is the level of this role? Because it says manager, but what is the level?

Ms. Harris said I'm looking at Amanda Dillard right now because she helped create it with Sheila's team. It's approximately a deputy level.

Amanda Dillard, Human Resources Division Manager said [inaudible].

Ms. Harris said assistant, thank you.

Ms. Anderson said so, it's an assistant director?

Unknown said assistant director or a deputy level role.

Ms. Anderson said okay.

Ms. Harris said for right now until it gets fully fleshed out and determine the future need or if there's additional need, it's housed within a department. So, it's the second level of the department director.

Ms. Anderson said okay. So, I can appreciate the work that needs to be done or can be done in the Community Relations Group for that particular area. I don't want to manage inside this group, but for an associate director level being a new FTE, I'm just wondering where that sits on the organizational make up of this team, this group within Community Relations. Is that putting someone or multiple people out of pace?

Ms. Harris said Sheila can definitely speak to that. She and her team make sure we do not create those kinds of issues. So, yes. This is its own office too. It's dedicated to this function, but no it's not throwing other people off within the department.

Ms. Anderson said okay. I think it's just difficult for me to understand exactly. Typically, when you are proposing a director level or a high management level, there's a job description. I understand that's not necessarily within our purview, but just from what's written up here it's hard for me to have a justification that this should be an associate director role. I'll leave that to staff. I think with the level of that role though, coupled with this additional staff role here on page 12, you're talking about carrying cost to multiple hundreds of thousands of dollars for these two roles combined. I'm not sure. In this new role that's proposed here on page 12, where will that role sit? Will it sit in the Community Relations or will it sit in the international business?

Ms. Harris said yes ma'am. So, it's not within the budget. On Sheila's team, she's got somebody that works with language access and community grassroots types of efforts that would also transition to this team. So, it's going to have the office manager and then this position from HR and it's also, this is really important, it's collaborating with Economic Development and their team to help flesh out the future model and the needs.

Ms. Anderson said the future model needs of what?

Ms. Harris said so, the whole international approach. So, right now you have CRC (Community Relations Committee) is going to focus on the grassroots engaging with Shawn and his team, that really focus on the grass tops and the recruitment of international business and protocol.

Ms. Anderson said okay. Well, I'm going to go ahead and pass the mic here, but I will say I personally feel like this is a bit of over rotation given these two roles that will be carrying costs for years going forward, adding FTEs without a real full understanding about how this does actually undergird the ED (Economic Development) effort, especially sitting in the Community Relations team. So, I'm struggling here on the investment of these two additional FTEs. I understand the line item about training and support. I understand that, but the carrying costs of two additional FTEs is where I have consternation.

Motion was made by Councilmember Mazuera Arias, and seconded by Councilmember Graham to approve funding of one FTE position.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said so, I want to really level set here. So, the international affairs manager position was included in the original presented budget that the Manager presented to us. As Councilmember Graham said, there is a formal transitioning from the Manager's budget to then Council to make it their own, right? That is where we all voted on a straw vote to look at recommendations to add one additional administrative officer and training operating support. The immigrant integrations, if you look at page 11, the second light orange position, is already a position. These are already positions. Am I correct Manager? The four here are already folks that are hired fulfilling these roles and these positions, right? Currently, language access and immigrant integration is in human resources.

Ms. Ajmera said you mean community resources?

Mr. Mazuera Arias said currently, as we are operating as a City, the language access is in human resources.

Ms. Harris said yes sir.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said the proposed budget is for it to go to Community Relations where it makes sense, in my humble opinion.

The additional thing is, this is not to subvert economic development because if you look clearly and you read the document, international business recruitment retention will be housed under Economic Development and international protocol will be housed in Economic Development. Positions that are already filled within the Economic Development Department. Am I right Manager Jones?

Mr. Jones said yes.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said okay. That being said, what is simply being asked is that as the 14th largest city in the country, nearing 20 percent or if not already 20 percent foreign-born population, with our peer cities already having a designated international affairs or international relations office of some sort. We're the only ones lagging behind. We're asking for, at least I'm hoping my colleagues see the value in this, one additional administrative officer and one training operating support to help support this because right now, as we see in our current City structure, the capacity, the technical support and the help for these individual staffers is not there. There can't simply be one person doing all the work spreading themselves thin. I mean, we just had a really robust lively conversation about expanding support to our fire fighters, police as well to City staff and all the work they've done. I want us to think about this as something like the Corridors of Opportunity. The Corridors of Opportunity is not housed in just one department. I mean it has, to us, on the 15th floor a set home of course, but Manager Jones, do we not have different City staffers from different departments across our organization and the City of Charlotte operating Corridors of Opportunity?

Mr. Jones said absolutely.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said that's right. So, each one has its own agency whether it's Director Stewart's team working in Housing and Neighborhood Services, whether it's Director Holmes' team working in Planning. They are all contributing to that one effort of Corridors of Opportunity. This designated office under Community Relations of International Relations will be there as a cross collaboration for Community Relations and Economic Development. So, I just want to make it very clear to my colleagues that this is not about taking one person's job, duplicating efforts, going overboard or adhering a cost that is not justifiable. This is us becoming a player in a competitive market. We've already done great work in attracting foreign owned international businesses to the Queen City. We can do even greater work if we have a designated staff and support really fishing out those opportunities. So, I encourage my colleagues to see the potential and the powerhouse that we can build if we respond to the moment and the trends that we're seeing not only in the market, but in our population as well. The last thing I'll add is we just passed a multi-billion-dollar transit mobility plan, right? We saw the workforce gap and the work that we have set out for that plan is there. I won't be political and say we know why it's there, but we have incredible foreign born talent with high skills, high earning degrees in our community right now that would benefit from both the Community Relations and Economic Development work that our City is doing.

Mr. Graham said thank you Councilmember JD. I think his response has been very eloquent in terms of what it is that I support, and I think that we should do to be very intentional about international relations and recruitment and retention, grassroots as well as grass top. I was on a phone call today with an individual from Paris relating to Charlotte. Last week I was at a protocol session with a representative from Portugal.

So, there's a wide variety of opportunities if we are very intentional. There are a number of folks doing the work throughout the City. What this would do is kind of really cement the team and focus the efforts internally, something that I've spoken with the Manager about when I was ED Chairman. How can we be a lot more intentional about really focusing the work. We have an International Relations Committee that is eager to be more visible and more closely aligned with the work that we're doing, and it doesn't make any sense to have a Committee if we're not listening to them in terms of their recommendations. So, I think this is an investment we should make. It houses someone in Community Relations as well as Economic Development. It kind of consolidates the efforts as JD said in terms of a Corridors of Opportunity approach, closely aligns with our International Relations Committee empowering them to help us help our City. So, when folks talk about Charlotte being the 13th largest City in the country, which is true, I think that we are now an international City in the same breaths as Barcelona and Paris and Amsterdam and Berlin, New York, Charlotte. I think if we are focused on our efforts despite the success that we're already making, being more intentional, I think we can have greater results moving forward. So, I hope the Council will support this and even if they don't Mr. Manager, I hope there's a way for us to really look at how do we consolidate some of the things that we're doing so we can identify where the activities are occurring and how we can work together to raise the visibility of the office.

Ms. Mayfield said so I don't know, Sheila, Manager, one of you might be able to answer this. What department is Alexis Gordon currently in?

Ms. Harris said Economic Development.

Ms. Mayfield said how many team members do we have working on international relationships, business relationships within Economic Development today?

Ms. Harris said when you say business, it's a lot of pieces of people within [inaudible]'s team, but to your point, she's the only one dedicated.

Ms. Mayfield said okay. So, I'm asking for clarification. Between the two positions, the request is for an additional person in Economic Development, which is what I'm getting to. I'm trying to understand the logic of why we would create another level of management when we need workers. So, every conversation that I've witnessed either in the community, at international events, at business events, meetings with representatives from Japan, from Germany, from Russia, from India, those relationships and introductions have come through one individual. One individual should not be doing that. Manager, we had this conversation a decade ago. When we first had a conversation regarding a department around international relations, that department, my understanding was a part of your department under the Manager because of the importance, because as our City was growing and we were seeing more and more businesses. As the District rep, I was going to groundbreakings and having meetings with Japanese businesses that were opening up in our warehouse district as well as German and European businesses. We supported a department of international relations that the person who led it had an amazing opportunity for them. We never filled that position. So, we let it sit there.

Now we're having a conversation where we're talking about sending something, creating a managerial position in Community Relations but we still have an interim executive director. Our former executive director who gave this City 50 years of service, that one, should have been an automatic instead of the interim, but to create another managerial administrative position versus a position that's actually going to work, because Alexis Gordon by herself can't do it all. We need someone else that has the relationships and the experience to help grow our international businesses. We have international festivals and conferences and workshops and Economic Development workshops where people are reaching out to us. We don't even have a budget line item to sponsor any of the international events that are happening locally. So, for me, if I raised my hand on this it was because I was under the impression that we were talking about identifying some workers that we need, not another administrative person that's

just going to tell the worker what they need to do. I need clarification on what your vision was with these two positions.

Ms. Harris said this is definitely going to be a working manager not somebody that's sitting in the office.

Ms. Mayfield said I don't need another manager. That's not to be disrespectful, but whoever the manager is, I have not seen them in the community yet. I see one person out in community at meetings, at community events, at International House, at Foundation for the Carolinas, when I'm meeting with these individuals. That's a challenge for me. So, Mr. Manager, you were about to answer.

Mr. Jones said sure. So, I believe there was a study in 2015 before I got here which had a few recommendations about how the City could move forward helping our international community. From that, a couple of recommendations came out. One of the things that we did do is create a position, and the position maybe started off as upward mobility. Then it morphed into maybe upward mobility and immigration, something like that. So, a lot of great things, a lot of this is in the write up, came out of that. What I would say is many of the things, much like SEAP (Strategic Energy Action Plan) have become embedded into everything we do including the policies that you have. You're supposed to put them through a particular lens. When we start to look at what's on the board, and I'm going to go from right to left. That's for Teresa Smith, who is no longer a City employee, but retired. International protocol is a person and as I said before, in cities, international protocol could be in the clerk's office, it could be in the Mayor's office, it could be in Economic Development. Right beside the international business recruitment and retention is I would say a powerhouse of people. So, it's not just one person in Economic Development, it's a good portion of Economic Development. It's the Charlotte Business Regional Alliance, it's the Governor's office, it's the EDAC (Economic Development Advisory Committee). There are a number of people that are involved in international business recruitment and retention. Immigrant immigration, absolutely in this proposal. Language access would move from HR over to Community Relations and then I think what we lost when we lost that individual who helped us with upward mobility was the connective tissue.

So, there isn't someone who is looking at these four pillars if you will and say, "How do we maximize what we have?" In the proposed budget, we were just trying to get some coordination around it. Council, I think you're right. There are some additional resources that need to be a part of this group to accelerate what we're trying to achieve. I think that makes sense. Even being in Community Relations makes sense because what we're trying to do over the course of this next year is develop an office that can address a number of the issues tonight. I think if we polled everybody, we'd probably have different visions of what this would be. So, we don't want to go too far out in crafting something until we are making sure that we can maximize the resources that we have and try to make sure that we supplement where we have gaps.

Ms. Mayfield said Mr. Manager, the individual that was in that position, where was that housed? Was that under one of these departments or was that an independent?

Mr. Jones said it was in office within Housing and Neighborhood Services.

Ms. Mayfield said so, we're going from our office within Housing and Neighborhood Services. How long has that position been vacant?

Mr. Jones said we don't have the position anymore.

Ms. Mayfield said exactly. So, it had been what, four, five years now where we had a position?

Mr. Jones said maybe three or four, yes.

Ms. Mayfield said we had the individual that was doing this work. We let it go dormant. Who stepped in and filled these roles in during the time that we did not have that individual? Did we have two people? Did we have anyone? The relationships continued in the five years that we didn't have the actual individual. That's where we need to be looking. We need to be looking at the individuals who stepped in versus creating yet a new one that's going to have insurance benefits, that's going to have its pension plan, that's going to have all these extra costs around this position. Versus doing what we should be doing, looking internally and creating the opportunity to grow versus just creating something new. I know there are employees out here that have no problem training their replacement. I am not that one. You will not get this information that I have invested into this organization, into this work to just create something new because as you said, we had it in a specific department. At the time, that made perfect sense. Does it make sense to put it in Community Relations? I'm not really sure. I only volunteered on Community Relations Committee for 15 years. So, is that where we're going to see the movement as far as business development and growth? Maybe some things have changed over the last decade. I want us to be intentional, but I am concerned about creating yet another leadership position versus cultivating the leadership that we already have within our City that has stepped in and been doing the work and probably just needs the support to continue to do the work. I definitely agree with the language access being in Community Relations. I'm having challenge with this whole idea of this manager role and not creating the additional role that we need between recruitment, retention and international protocol.

Mr. Driggs said so, when I look at this, I think there is an opportunity in the area of international business development that we have not developed fully. I've talked to foreign businesses, I've had feedback that in comparison with other cities, our performance and just making them feel wanted is substandard. It's not a reflection on any individual, it's under investment. So, I think we should beef that up. The only thing I'm curious to know is the new position here looks like it has more to do with community relations and not with international business development. So, to that extent, that wouldn't be my highest priority. I'd love to see us do more about recruiting international businesses.

Ms. Watlington said a couple of clarifications. I'm sorry if this is a repeat, but this conversation has gone around a few times.

Mayor Lyles said it's okay, we've been doing it for a while.

Ms. Watlington said so, I see four roles here. One of these roles was in the Manager's proposed budget and these are all net new roles here. It doesn't show any existing in FY2026, what's on this paper?

Ms. Harris said the orange is proposed, but there's only one new position. When you look at the dark orange, international business, recruitment and retention, that's pieces of multiple people on Shah's team. To Ms. Mayfield's point, there's only one that's fully dedicated but she's part of a larger team.

Ms. Watlington said okay, that's helpful. So, this is not for roles, this is just buckets of focus, page 12? Well, that's what I was going to ask because I see on page 12 that there's one additional administrative officer, a senior and training operating support, but I couldn't reconcile that with these four.

Ms. Harris said correct, that's not part of the orange. So, that was part of the Council adjustment to the orange.

Ms. Watlington said so, this orange is what is in the Manager's proposed budget? Everything that's here?

Ms. Harris said correct. Thank you. Yes.

Ms. Watlington said okay.

pti:mt

Mr. Graham said but we're asking for more.

Ms. Watlington said okay. So, just so I'm clear then. The three of the four that don't say new FTE, they were in FY2025?

Ms. Harris said so, the ED ones are multiple FTEs, but yes. So, the only new position proposed, this is a new approach, but there's only one new position.

Ms. Watlington said okay. Then there's an additional from Council? I just didn't know if what they were discussing was going to be helpful. So, one additional administrative officer and then this training support. Okay. So, my question then, the new role covers what focus areas that are not listed here?

Ms. Harris said the blue one?

Mr. Jones said yes. So, the new role is something that Council asked for.

Ms. Watlington said yes, understood.

Mr. Jones said so, even here, does it belong in ED? Does it belong in Community Relations?

Ms. Watlington said so, the description is not necessarily scoped?

Mr. Jones said exactly.

Ms. Watlington said okay. So, with that then, here's my thought. Well, one more follow-up question before I go there. I see funding option is reduce field contingency. Is that a one off?

Ms. Harris said that's ongoing.

Ms. Watlington said okay. That's ongoing? Got it. Okay. Alright. So, here is my question. It would seem as though we can just identify what the gap is and then just build the role around it. If we need a PM (Program Manager) to run projects, then make sure we get somebody with at PM skillset. If we need somebody that needs to be out in the Corridors, then we get somebody that's got some community engagement skillset. What I would like to see this person do is really lean in and support the workforce development work for all the reasons that were mentioned before in regards to needing to prep this workforce, particularly a workforce around trades and construction in support of these transportation investments that are coming. It would seem that there is an overlap there. So, I say all that to say that I know we have gaps. So, if we scope this role appropriately, it would seem that there's plenty of value to be had. That's all.

Ms. Johnson said okay. So, what is Alexis' current role? Her title? Do you know?

Ms. Harris said I don't know her title but she's in Shah's team and she's part of the business recruitment. There's a team of them that's in business recruitment.

Ms. Johnson said just a question. Is she a manager?

Holly Eskridge, ED Deputy Director said she is a program manager senior.

Ms. Johnson said okay.

Ms. Eskridge said she is a program manager senior.

Ms. Johnson said okay. Thank you.

Ms. Eskridge said you're welcome.

pti:mt

Ms. Johnson said so, she's a program manager senior and she's been doing the work for at least five or six years since I've been here, right? So, I don't think there's anything that excludes individuals who are currently doing the work, like you said Councilmember Mayfield, to be promoted to that manager. Not saying that we wouldn't have an application process, but I think that we can support a manager and someone who's been doing the work or any of the folks that have been doing the work, already would know how to build that department. So, I see the need for this position. I also support tightening up or really detailing the scope. Mr. Graham thinks it should be in the ED Department. That makes sense. That really makes since as a lot of this is economic development. So, I would support the manager position. I think having a designated manager to lead the department and to coordinate the work I think would take it to the next level. So, I'll be supporting it, but just to respond to what you said Councilmember Mayfield, I don't think hiring another manager is a bad thing. It might be an opportunity to promote when you talk about internal, to promote from within. That's all I have. Thank you.

Ms. Anderson said just a couple of points. One, I just want to be clear that in the motion, and I don't know Clerk if you could repeat the motion, but the motion I believe was in support of the new FTE that was a part of the budget, plus the additional investment that's highlighted on page 12, which is another FTE and an investment in tech support.

Mr. Jones said correct.

Ms. Anderson said is that correct Clerk?

Unknown said [inaudible],

Ms. Anderson said okay. So, is there any aspect of that motion around this additional new FTE where that FTE would be?

Ms. Harris said I believe that would be for the Manager. He would take your input on that.

Ms. Anderson said okay. So, that's where I'm having my struggle here. I too believe that Ms. Gordon does phenomenal work in the community. Not only do I see her out and about, but I hear about her work when she is not present. You know, typically Mr. Manager, we've had announcements of promotions and things of that nature. Creating a role where someone has to then in turn go and apply for it, when they've been doing multiple roles over multiple years, I'm not sure if that's the right way to go about this in particular because this area is so delicate is it relates to international business. Having worked in international business for decades, I understand the intricacies here. So, that's why I'm struggling with the additional FTE to bring onboard to this. I would support a promotion of someone like a Ms. Gordon and then have them identify what their organization should look like with the space for an FTE within the budget that the Manager has already set aside. That could be her existing role, if she gets the associate director role, to determine after she's in that role. So, that's where I'm at Madam Mayor.

Mr. Graham said I think the Manager's recommendation already has one new position housed in Community Relations that will take in consideration grassroots issues, all the things that Councilmember JD said 30 minutes ago. The new position that we're advocating for is in addition to what's already there to be housed in Economic Development to focus on recruitment, retention, protocol, all those things together. Helping us establish a team approach because there's bits and pieces throughout the organization that we want to consolidate and to work with the International Affairs Committee. I think that's the question on the floor and I think that's appropriate. So, I'm not personalizing to any individual. I'll let the Manager figure that out, but I think it should be housed in Economic Development, based in Economic Development with a resource in Community Relations doing the grassroots type of stuff, grass top, coordinating all the efforts in Economic Development with staff support.

Mayor Lyles said alright. So, we're ready to vote. So, all in favor of the motion. I think Mr. Graham covered it pretty well in terms of how it's to help our City move forward and making it possible for another staff person to be available. That's the Manager's determination. He does that. Now is it two staff people or one?

Ms. Harris said one new.

Mayor Lyles said I thought it was one. So, knowing that that would be coming from the Manager's position.

Mr. Graham said in addition to what the Manager recommended.

Mayor Lyles said yes, right.

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

YEAS: Councilmembers Ajmera, Mazuera Arias, Driggs, Graham, Johnson, Mayfield, Mayo, Mitchell, Owens, and Watlington

NAYS: Councilmember Anderson

Ms. Harris said so, the next one, I may turn it over to Dr. Watlington. She's championed more around this, but it's one that received at least five votes to explore $300,000 for transportation modeling.

Ms. Watlington said thank you Marie and thank you to those of you who attended the small groups last week to ask your questions. I think it was informative for you and me, and I left there hopeful because it sounded like a lot of the things that were priorities or things that were baked in to the work, or there was flexibility to bake it into the work. I don't want to necessarily rehash all of that for those that were there, but just for the sake of those that weren't able to attend, wanted to hit a couple of the highlights. As we mentioned before, this has been a development of a partnership between UNC (University of North Carolina) Charlotte and C-DOT (Charlotte Department of Transportation), in particular there are a number of components in this land use and transportation model that I'll cover briefly. Initially when we talk about the conversation we just had with 77, we chose to rescind our support, and I think the question that we owe our constituents is, what's the alternative? What are we going to do now? What's different? How do we know that the next project that comes down the pipeline doesn't have the same concerns? Or, are we going to be able to answer the fundamental questions that we've asked about this project? The only way to do that is to improve our tools and our ability to do analysis and forecasting commiserate with the growth of this City. We just talked about many of the gaps and the needs for data and tools and technology associated with the fire department and that is no different than the tools that we need for land use planning. We've talked for years about zoning and looking at the comprehensive impacts and cumulative impacts. This tool, through its land use and transportation integration which is new to the model, it does not exist today, provides for that coordination. We talk about looking holistically at housing policy and how it's related to transportation and economic mobility. We don't have a tool that allows us to do that dynamically, number one, and in a way that lets us forecast without using data from 20 years ago.

So, there are some significant technological advances that are available to us and we've got an incredible willing team of about 17 over at the University of senior faculty as well as post docs and grad students that are willing to lend their support to support the C-DOT team. We have met with the C-DOT team two or three times now to talk through this scope in detail and specifically understand what support and additional capacity they need to improve the model. So, I'm pleased that we've gotten to a place where it seems like they're excited about the work. I do want to make clear, coming out of some of the conversations from last week because it's a legitimate question about what we would do with the study here. I want to be clear that the six objectives don't only include a study, but it also includes the co-development to make an alternative

model. It also includes partnership with UNCC (University of North Carolina at Charlotte) to run a comprehensive global literature review to see what's out there and benchmark it. It also includes ongoing partnership with intern resources that can help bolster our MYEP (Mayor's Youth Employment Program), as well. So, it's not just land use, it's not just transportation, it's also economic development. It also includes partnership in terms of grant support and grant identification and grant applications. So, we know that there's going to be additional dollars as we go forward, and they are committed to not only helping to identify the technical scope, but also to work with us to chase those State and federal grants and private grants to do this work.

As I mentioned before, our University houses a federal USDOT (United States Department of Transportation) funded transportation research center. So, we have access and we have the best here in our backyard. This is an opportunity for Charlotte to be on the leading edge of that for our nation, which is something that as we talk about international business, that certainly is a differentiator for us. We've gone to plenty of cities. Boston, last year, went to their local universities to talk about connections between the City and the university. We have an opportunity to do that here. So, there are so many things when I look at our Comprehensive 2040 Plan as well as our other pillars that are baked into this work. This investment, I think, embodies a lot of what we're saying about where we've been and where we want to go. So, I would ask that my colleagues please support investing in our future as it relates to this model and this ongoing partnership with our local research one. Thank you.

Motion was made by Councilmember Watlington, and seconded by Councilmember Johnson to approve incorporating this $300,000 for transportation modeling in this year's budget.

Ms. Owens said thank you Councilmember Watlington. I was a participant and I was fairly impressed. I will say that one of the things that comes to mind, this morning at our Housing Committee meeting, we discussed some research that's going on with UNCC around housing, the bond cycle and some of the policy advancements. That process seemed a bit more fulsome in terms of the amount of engagement. So, if I were to approve this, which I'm not saying I don't want to, but I would really want it to be conditioned on a deeper dive on what that scope is, similar to some of the questions that I raised. I'm not fully appreciative of whether something is produced, how useful it is, to what degree will it be deemed by anyone who would use it as being duplicative of something they've already got? I've just got a lot of scoping concerns and because, and maybe somebody can correct me, if we were to approve this, it goes into the budget, because it is a spend that is within the discretion of the City management, I don't get the impression that this would come back before us in the normal scope. Or would it?

Ms. Watlington said I intend and I can adjust my motion right now. Given that it's the budget discussion, I didn't want to do it today, but absolutely intend to request a policy referral that the milestones for each phase come back before the Committee and the Council as we proceed. To your point, and I didn't mention it here but I know that you were on the call, but just for the sake of the listeners, in terms of the scope and the partnerships with UNC Charlotte, they also obviously house the Urban Institute who is also a partner here. The Knight Foundation has also asked to come alongside and be the community connection here. Many of the members of the team on the University side are also working on NCDOT (North Carolina Department of Transportation) projects and we've invited NCDOT to support as well, because obviously we'll need their engagement. Then as we go further, certainly we'll need to begin stakeholder engagement across the region because we don't just house our model. It's a regional model. To your point about what's duplicative and what is not, as it relates to housing in particular, this is specific to the development of this model. So, given that this multi-objective optimization and the way that is being proposed here that also incorporates not only the transportation objectives but our equity objectives, our anti-displacement, environmental, those things, it doesn't exist. So, I wasn't in the Housing Committee meeting this morning, but I would wager that it's not duplicative. That being said, there

is absolutely no reason why, as the conversation goes along, that they couldn't engage with more than just C-DOT to ensure that those things remain.

Ms. Owens said yes. My apologies if I've created the assumption that I thought they were duplicative, it's just that there seems to be a process there that differed a bit from this process in terms of engagement with the local University. So, just a couple of additional comments that I'll put out. I am concerned that we've now already approved something that is reducing the fuel contingency. So, this is another item that would tap into that same fuel contingency right at a time when I don't think any of us knows how long this war is going to last and what fuel is going to continue to do. So, I fear making assumptions around that, but I will say that I'd like to see it referred to perhaps the Transportation Committee. Is that something that you could consider as part of your motion instead of having it back to full Council? Have the Transportation Committee weigh in on the scope of this?

Ms. Watlington said yes if I make sure that I understand. You're saying to fund it?

Ms. Owens said I'm saying I've got a concern about funding but then if we do fund it and we fund it out of the fuel contingency, I'd like it to be scoped within the transit. I'd like a referral to transit.

Ms. Watlington said yes. We're aligned on that piece. I will say that was a question that I had too and we can circle back to it. As far as what's listed here, given that there were some things that were not approved that were going to come out of the fuel contingency, it would seem that that means there's actually a plus of $250,000 given that the Prospera and For The Struggle were not pulled out. So, it's not and on this, it's either/or.

Ms. Owens said well we just funded the position for international.

Ms. Watlington said so, that was my question too earlier, and I think Marie said that all of the things that stacked up ended up still being net neutral, like we weren't going to overextend that budget, but certainly that's a question for you.

Ms. Harris said that's correct.

Ms. Ajmera said so, I just want to make sure. So, to piggyback on Councilmember Owens' point. This is not duplicating the effort of what the City of Charlotte's Transportation Model is and data infrastructure that currently relies on MRM (Metrolina Regional Model), correct?

Ms. Watlington said I'm not sure I understand your question.

Ms. Ajmera said okay. So, the City of Charlotte on page 12, number eight the second paragraph where it says, "The City of Charlotte transportation modeling and data infrastructure currently relies on MRM and a socioeconomic allocation companion." So, what I'm trying to understand. How is this model different than the City of Charlotte's transportation modeling?

Ms. Watlington said so, the scope is to improve this model here.

Ms. Ajmera said so, [inaudible] an existing model?

Ms. Watlington said to build the foundation for a new model that can run concurrently to our existing model that will enable us to do actual scenario analysis based on our values. It's a fundamentally different way to think about projects.

Ms. Ajmera said so, it would be for all infrastructure projects?

Ms. Watlington said transportation and land use. So, it can inform how we choose and select zoning and the transportation. That's not to say that later on we couldn't build on

other types of infrastructure because part of this scope is really looking at all of the data that is available to the City of Charlotte, including quality of life and exploring some of the other things that show up in different departments, and as much as we can, bringing those together into the model.

Ms. Ajmera said so, the way I see it, this gives you an alternative to what we are looking at currently?

Ms. Watlington said correct.

Ms. Ajmera said because currently we only have one model. This will give us another model to look at alternatives.

Ms. Watlington said correct, you'll get improvements to the existing model, one being more live traffic date. Right now, we rely on survey data that's collected every 10 years, and it looks back.

Ms. Ajmera said it's not real time?

Ms. Watlington said correct. So, that's one. It doesn't have the land use information that's in it as well. So, there's a number of things and I can resend you the scope, but there's a number of things within the model review that specifically are low cost and no cost options that improve our current model as it stands. Then they're also going to provide the code and the technical specification for this second model that can run in parallel that can answer that question of, what are the alternatives? That's really, to me, the meat and potatoes of it. If I was to whittle it down, this second model is really about, "Hey, I don't need you to just tell me that 77 can reduce traffic or reduce commute time by x, y, z. I want to know did you look at making improvements across the network and could that deliver a similar benefit?" The way the model is set up now, it's not built to answer that, but this new model that would run in parallel would be focused on that and it would have a public-facing component where people could go in and say, "Well trees are the most important thing to me," or "Affordable housing, or displacement is the most important thing to me." How might that change which investments we make at the CIP and at the STIP (State Transportation Improvement Program) level?

Ms. Ajmera said got it. So, to follow up on that budget piece. I know at some point we had discussed exploring the Foundation Grant.

Ms. Watlington said yes.

Ms. Ajmera said so, where does the conversation stand on that?

Ms. Watlington said so, that conversation right now is really out of sequence if you will with our budget conversation. So, there's a couple of other meetings that we're trying to have with folks. Actually CELC (Charlotte Executive Leadership Council) I think has formed a subgroup to look at this as well. It just so happened our budget conversation happens first, and I do think it's important that we run this model and we are where the experts sit, that we invest here, but certainly there's opportunity to partner with private organizations still. I'll continue to go down that path as well, such that we can recoup that investment and reprogram those dollars if need be.

Ms. Ajmera said got it. So, do we have anyone from C-DOT here or someone who works with infrastructure? Okay, maybe Mr. Manager can answer this question. This is more of an independent analysis. Has C-DOT or other infrastructure teams considered this approach where we can look at alternatives, have multiple options and have real-time data, versus older data that is currently being used?

Mr. Jones said I think Liz is in the back. Shawn is going to get her to address your question.

Ms. Ajmera said okay.

pti:mt

Mr. Mitchell said Ms. Ajmera, are you okay? Can we go to Councilmember Graham while Liz comes in?

Ms. Ajmera said while Liz comes in? Yes.

Mr. Graham said thank you Councilmember Watlington for the work you have put in on this for weeks. I think the vote that we took two weeks ago gives us the opportunity and gives the community an opportunity to take a deep breath and maybe take 10 steps backwards, and kind of evaluate where we are. I really do.

You guys heard me say this before over and over and over again. It's how we process our work that really, really matters. This gives us an opportunity, I think, to kind of reset everything that we're doing. I'm comfortable moving forward because there's been no staff analysis of this, no comments from C-DOT, no comments from planning, really no comments from the City Manager on this. I just think is UNC Charlotte the right vendor? The community is asking for an independent analysis of how to move forward. UNC Charlotte in itself is a State institution, with no disrespect to my friends over at UNC Charlotte, I think this needs to go to Committee because we're going down a policy avenue that the Council has not agreed that we want to do. So, I'm going to probably vote no simply based on the process, and I'll just be quiet and listen to the rest of the conversation. I think the vote that we took gives us the opportunity to take 10 steps backwards and kind of reflect on how we need to move forward and make sure that everybody is going along. So, when you say we, I'm not sure who we is. I just don't know and so for that very reason, I'm going to decline to participate and vote no and I'll listen to the rest of the debate. Thank you.

Mr. Jones said so, before Liz comes up, I just want to address the last comment. I don't believe that this is attached to I-77 south. I believe this is an exercise that will help us with infrastructure and how we go about making sure that we're using the right tools. So, I just want to make sure that if I have that right, those two are separated.

Mr. Mitchell said Liz, please. Councilmember Ajmera had some questions.

Liz Babson, Deputy City Manager said good evening again. Liz Babson, Deputy City Manager. If you could repeat your question, I did not hear it.

Ms. Ajmera said yes, so Councilmember Watlington gave us an overview of what this land use and transportation model would look like because it will use real-time data versus our existing model that uses older data. So, has C-DOT explored this model to ensure that we are reviewing real time data to make infrastructure decisions, and arriving at solutions that gives us multiple options? One thing that I was highlighting in this, this study would provide an independent technical evaluation and it will identify short-term low-cost improvements that can be implemented within the next 12 months. That is very important, because when we are seeing a lot of infrastructure issues, when people call us, they don't want to wait three, five, six years, they want us to address the problem now, or at least in the next six months to a year. I know there has been some challenges in terms of implementing something that is short term that addresses the problem while we work on something long term. So, if you can provide us your feedback on whether this tool has been explored by your team in the past, and whether your team would recommend using this model so that we have more real-time data where we can address infrastructure problems, real time, like deliver solutions in the short term.

Ms. Babson said yes ma'am. Dr. Watlington, happy to tag team on the answer with you. While you have spent a bit more time on this project than I have, I certainly appreciate your input. So, Councilmember Ajmera, let me touch on a couple of things to make sure that I give you the clarity that you're looking for. What is talked about here in the write up as far as identify short term low-cost improvements, that's really with respect to the model. That's not about projects on the ground that residents would see. This absolutely, this model, is foundational in how we identify what our future long-term needs are in transportation. To Dr. Watlington's point, we have a process today, albeit it is slow and there is a lot of data that goes into that model development. It is a good

state of the art model. So, I want to make sure that that's clear so you don't question the model that we use to determine the projects that we implement throughout this region, because we do have one of the best models in the Country. This effort, again is about having a research team do some initial benchmarking and literature review to see what other opportunities might exist across the Country and globally in the space of modeling our transportation system.

Ms. Ajmera said so, would this tool provide a value add in terms of what we are currently doing?

Ms. Babson said so, I think it's always a great opportunity to pause and take a look at best practices and what state of the art work is going on, what innovation might be available out there.

Ms. Ajmera said so, are we currently not doing that?

Ms. Babson said staff does that, absolutely. That's part of how we go about doing our work, but to have a separate and apart effort with a team of, I think Dr. Watlington said 17 professors at the University. No, our staff doesn't have that kind of time and access to information to be able to do that in the say way that this effort could provide that information.

Ms. Ajmera said okay. So, this effort will provide more resources to your staff in terms of the best practices across the globe?

Ms. Babson said yes ma'am.

Ms. Ajmera said okay. So, it is a value add from what I understand from your perspective?

Ms. Babson said yes.

Ms. Ajmera said okay. That's all I have. Thank you.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said thanks Liz, before you go and thank you Dr. Watlington for scheduling and the team for scheduling the working groups. That was very helpful to have that conversation beforehand. Liz, I asked you this during our working group. When was the last time the model was updated that we use now?

Ms. Babson said I might get my numbers slightly off. What I can tell you is I think it was in 2019, 2022, was the last time we did the update. I can verify that and follow up with you. I think the point is, again, this is a model that's really important to how we look at and consider transportation improvements across the region.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said yes.

Ms. Babson said so, we are but one partner in that model development and to make a change requires a lot of coordination and work with other agencies. I say that because I think it's important to note that any changes to that model requires support from those other entities. So, the last time we did an update, it took six years to get through a major model update.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said thank you. I think this is really a forward-thinking approach in my eyes. I think it's a value add. I often times reflect on how we often times give millions of dollars to third party consultants through an RFP process, sure, but sometimes through that RFP process we get out of state consultants that are coming in and telling us how Charlotte should do Charlotte things. I think if we are going to be innovative, if we are going to lead the path in transportation as well as in addition to the Mobility Plan and the projects that are coming through, it is really a rare and unique opportunity to partner with a really great research university and institution in our backyards. I think it would not only help us get to where we want to go, where we no longer have to take trips to

Boston or other cities and say, “What are they doing, right?” We can start investing that now and have those cities come to us and say, “What is Charlotte doing?” I think it’s really unique. I also think that when you compare millions of dollars given to subcontractors to do research, that we’ve done multiple times, $200,000, $300,000 I think it won’t make a dent. I think it really would put folks to work. I think we’re contributing to not only the conversation when it comes to transportation, but we’re also contributing to putting students to work that are living in Charlotte that actually ride our transportation system. It’s not just transportation experts. Well, it is, but they come from different disciplines. They come from urban planning. They come from a data point of view. They come from engineering, sociology. They come from different disciplines that I think it’s great. I oftentimes think, “Should we have academics or academia in policy making?” Well, that’s how a lot of policy is made, through academia. So, I think this is just really us taking a huge leap forward and getting ahead of the curve ahead of time and starting an investment early on that I’m more than sure we’re going to make that investment later on. So, I think this is just us really being proactive and not reactive to research that is going to contribute greatly to our success as a transportation City.

Ms. Mayfield said so I did not support the investigation, or let’s look into it because we pretty much know. Tonight has gone. The concern I have is the fact that we hadn’t gone to our partners first, but I have a question for staff. What was the last research study and partnership with UNC that this City contracted with?

Ms. Babson said I think there are probably multiple opportunities. So, I would have to check with somebody to find out.

Ms. Mayfield said so, that would be something that would be of interest to me.

Ms. Watlington said Ms. Mayfield. Just to follow up. There were, I think, two contracts that were able to be found. They were from pretty far ago. One of them is the Urban Institute partnership.

Ms. Mayfield said the Urban Land Institute?

Ms. Watlington said Urban Institute.

Ms. Mayfield said okay. The Urban Institute.

Ms. Babson said I know we also work with them on quality of life.

Ms. Mayfield said right, because we have a couple of ongoing opportunities.

Ms. Babson said yes ma’am.

Ms. Mayfield said the questions that I asked when we had the check in sessions were one, who would own this information once it was all said and done. The concern I have is if you walk into the Manager’s office, there’s plenty of books in there with studies that we have paid for where the work has not been implemented or we’ve had community members give.

Ms. Watlington said I was actually talking about your question. I was trying to figure out how else to explain that it wasn’t just a study, that it was the model. That’s what I was trying to figure out. I was listening to you.

Ms. Mayfield said so, when I think about multiple times that we have had an opportunity and to be perfectly honest, a lot of the recommendations that came from community and came from experts were good ones that we didn’t necessarily implement them. They would’ve helped prevent some of the challenges that we have today or help mitigate some of them. Yet, for this budget cycle, where we already have financial challenges, honestly Manager, I’m concerned because it seems like we get a different response as far as how we move forward. To hear that, “Okay, well it’s a good idea. Well, let’s find the 300” We have some serious financial challenges ahead of us. This was a great

opportunity between your Manager's office relationship, between the Mayor's office relationships to whether it's Foundation For The Carolinas, United Way, Central Piedmont, I don't care who. We have public-private partnerships that we talk about all the time, to have connected with them to help with this regional opportunity and discussion that we're talking about. We're also talking about potentially 300. What are our regional partners contributing to this? Where is their $10,000, $15,000, $20,000, $30,000, $40,000 towards this model that potentially could help the entire region? We had a conversation earlier today in Housing and Neighborhood Services about looking into a model. What that conversation consisted of was for Committee to have a conversation to give a nod for staff to go and do some more research on the idea of the model and bring it back to us. Not asking for us to identify the funding level of it.

So, as we're looking at the funding option, I have a clear concern that we're playing with the fuel contingency. What we pay in fleet fuel is a considerable amount and it's not like because we're government we get a discount on gas. Even if you use all the apps and you might save 10 cents off here or five cents off there, we are not at a position where we're negotiating gas prices differently than others. Hitting our contingency funds is concerning when we just said this is year two that we rolled into a new budget cycle without having any wiggle room money. We can't keep operating in the space of there's a magical money tree somewhere on these grounds. In 14 years, I haven't found it. So, I'm concerned about allocating that amount and looking at us not having the fuel, because then what happens? What happens when our water trucks cannot make it to where they need to go because we had another spill, and we can't even get out to address it? What happens to fire? What happens to police? What happens to sanitation? What happens to any of our services if we say we don't have the gas? What happens to code enforcement when people are calling about a concern, but we don't have the gas to get you out there because our handful of electric vehicles are already on the road?

So, I want us to figure out a way to support the research so that we can identify a plan to move better. Is that a priority for me right now with the budget? Not if our tax dollars have to pay for it. Is it an opportunity to expand this conversation with our partners? Yes, it is. Is it an opportunity in our Manager's office? Is it an opportunity for our Mayor to hit all of her friends up on her way out and throw all the guilt trip that she needs to for them to just do their job to help us be a better City? Is it an opportunity for our representative on CRPTO (Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization) to talk to his colleagues in the region to say, "Hey, how about y'all contribute $5,000, $10,000, $15,000 towards this and we all do it together since we're all going to benefit." Those are just a couple of ideas I would like to share. I am staying consistent. I said prior to, before it made its way to the budget that I would not be able to support spending dollars on this. I did not raise my hand for it last week. I will stay consistent. Thank you.

Mr. Driggs said so when I first heard about this not that long ago, I was very interested because it thought it might be responsive to some of the objections that were raised to I-77 and help us to find a path forward. I have to repeat. I'm very concerned about the missed opportunity and the consequences of the Council's position on that. That's not what we're talking about tonight. In the absence of that immediate opportunity, it's not clear to me why this can't get done in a much more deliberate fashion. I believe Councilmember Graham made a very good point. We're talking about now, a more longer-term strategic outlook that doesn't have that particular urgency around it and we can give ourselves time to answer the many questions that aren't answered in the material that we have. I believe we should have greater involvement by C-DOT because this research project needs to operate in conjunction with our actual practice and with the practitioners. I know for my son, for example, who worked a couple of internships at Microsoft, and then went back to UNC to finish computer science, that he felt that what the practitioners were doing at Microsoft was very different and further advanced than what a lot of the academic research indicated. Because these are the guys that have to work within the confines of all of the constraints and the various considerations. So, I certainly wouldn't want to go down a path that suggests to them that we think we can get better advice somewhere else.

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Now, on the other hand, in the fullness of time, if we study this, I think the idea of a partnership like this could make very good sense, and if it was value added to C-DOT and to us, by all means. I think trying to fit it into this budget without the benefit of more research and on such short notice is not indicated.

Ms. Johnson said as the University representative who's very honored to serve such a university, the research one. This is an opportunity to show true partnership with a local partner. I know Mr. Manager you said this is not directly related to I-77 and I understand that. However, we do need to do research. We were looking at data from I think 2007, or a long time ago. So, I think it's important. That vote on May 11, 2026, what I said, I think it's important that we look at third party objective data for all of our major initiatives. So, if you look at a problem-solving wheel, some problem-solving wheels gathering the data or getting the information is going to be the first step. So, I think it's definitely something we want to pursue. The Council approved it on May 11, 2026. Is there another alternative funding besides the fuel contingency?

Unknown said [inaudible].

Ms. Johnson said yes. That's one of the reasons, for me, that I didn't approve For The Struggle and the other organization. Can we take a look at that fund for this project?

Mr. Jones said yes.

Ms. Johnson said so, I just think it's important. Again, we'd be supporting the partnership. When you're solving any problem, you want to look at third party. These are students, this is future innovative creativity and I just think it really makes sense that if we're moving forward and solving a problem. We have this resource in my backyard, literally. So, I will be supporting the motion and the funding, the Community Investment Fund. I think, again, we were able to save some money there. That was a tough decision, but this data and this report is very important in the future of our City.

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

YEAS: Councilmembers Ajmera, Anderson, Mazuera Arias, Johnson, Mayo, Mitchell, and Watlington

NAYS: Councilmembers Driggs, Graham, Mayfield, and Owens

Ms. Harris said alright. For our next item, number nine we're on. Increase the 2026 Housing Bond. Again, remember it's an all-time high of $125 million, but Council wanted to explore going even higher at $200 million. So, we did that, but then we also provided a table. If you look at the top of page 13.

Ms. Owens said Marie, can I interject just for a second?

Ms. Harris said sure.

Ms. Owens said I just want to make sure. I voted against it because I wasn't clear that it included that it would go back to Committee for scoping. Can we just make that clear?

Ms. Watlington said absolutely.

Ms. Owens said okay. Then I will vote for it, but it doesn't matter. I just wanted to be very clear that even though it's $300,000, he could just do it, but we would like it to come back and be scoped. I just wanted to be clear.

Ms. Watlington said I agree with you wholeheartedly.

Ms. Owens said okay. Thank you.

Ms. Harris said okay. If I may, is everybody ready for number nine? So, again, there was five votes on May 18, 2026 to explore increasing the Housing Bond above $125 million. So, if you look at the table in blue, that's what it would look like. So, if we went up to $200 million it would be an additional 1.6 cents in the property tax, and you can read the table, $175 million would be an additional 0.11 cent and $150 million would be an additional 0.06 cent on the property tax. Even though the Housing Trust Fund Bond increase would be one time, this tax would not be one time. It would be ongoing.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said so I'm trying to wrap my head around this. I'm all for increasing affordable housing, but I think increasing the Housing Trust Fund dollars, what keeps coming back to my head is, we're increasing the bond or at least this is what's proposed from $125 million to $200 million. Subsequently, in order to increase the bond, we have to increase property taxes, making it more expensive for homeowners to pay their mortgage. So, I think to me those two things are competing and contradictory of one another. So, I want to ask some questions. So, I know this Council is sensitive to a property tax increase and potential impact on low wealth homeowners. I know the County and City created a tax relief fund of $12 million, which is HOMES (Helping Out Mecklenburg's homeowners with Economic Support), to assist burdened owners. Manager Jones, correct me if I'm wrong or more so a question. How much of that pot was utilized after it was marketed?

Mr. Jones said so, I'll start off and they'll be a bunch of people over there trying to make sure that I get it right. I believe we have not been in the HOMES Programs in the current fiscal year. I believe we used some of that money for Faith In Housing. So, we've not been a part of the HOMES Program for a couple of years.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said got you.

Mr. Jones said initially yes, but not in the current fiscal year. Did I get that right?

Ms. Harris said that's correct. I was talking to Cherie, she's our resident expert on that if you have any more questions around it. We did partner, but we're not providing any additional funding currently.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said got it, but the County is?

Ms. Harris said correct.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said the County is. Okay. So, I just want to put that out there that for us to really have a robust conversation, I know it's 9:30 p.m., of us increasing the Housing Trust Fund dollars but also raising the property tax. I don't know where we go from there. I just want to put that out there that it doesn't sit well with me, as much as I want to. I just want to put that out there.

Mr. Driggs said so, I just want to mention the property tax increase pays for this particular issuance. Don't imagine it stops there. I mean we go to $200 million this time, how much is it next time? Other cities have $300 million, and each time it's going to take new increases in the property tax because this increase in the property tax only pays for this once. So, we need to be mindful about our intentions as we go forward in subsequent budget cycles and not kid ourselves that we can do this once and then go back. We have a 25 percent increase in the trust fund right now in the budget as it stands, which is substantial. I would be really worried that, to your point, we set ourselves up for future tax increases, we don't manage the expectations because there will be expectations. People at a minimum are going to want $200 million next time, and it'll probably be $250 million and then we'll have to find more taxes. So, I'm not going to support it.

Mr. Mitchell said I just had to talk to the Chair to see was this topic in her Committee and she told me it was not. I struggle. Yes, we need to supply but, but Council, NIMBY (Not in My Backyard) is loud and clear in our community. I don't know if this is the right time for us to add more burden to our taxpayers with a $200 million housing bond. The

question would come, we had that [inaudible]? Where are we going to build all this affordable housing? Which District? So, for me I don't think the timing is right. I'm going to support the City Manager's one time $125 million and let's really have a conversation. When is our next cycle, 2028? We do it every two years? So, maybe 2028 we'll be in a better position to address some of these hard questions.

Ms. Watlington said similar along the lines of what's been shared, as I look at this, if we're nickeling and diming $300,000, we have to look long and hard at $75 million. I do think obviously, that affordable housing is extremely important. I think though we're going to have to be a lot smarter about how we do everything and we're not going to be able to build our way out. We know that, and we're going to have to take a much more holistic approach because it's not for me. I would go so far as to say it's not even about housing. It's about economic mobility and what role housing plays in economic mobility. So, rather than thinking about how do we build more units, to me it's really about how do we move more people through the socioeconomic ladder and what role do we play in ensuring that housing, in so much as it supports that movement? What role do we play in that? I want to say, and I don't see Sarah in here anymore, but I feel like I remember there were some conversations happening at the State level around looking at the Housing Finance Agency and how we're incentivizing tax increments. I would absolutely implore us to push for reform in that area as well, particularly for being able to invest in home ownership. Whether that's condos, whether that's detached, whether that's single family attached, whatever it is, I just really think we have to mindful that what we're doing here really is subsidizing the transferal of property into the hands of particular housing developers. Not to say that they're malicious actors, but when we really, really think about it, I think there's got to be a better way. How do we ensure that the public money is used for the broadest ongoing public good? For me, 30, 60-year leases in the most promising areas of the City is not necessarily what I would consider generational investment for the broader public. So, I say all that to say I think there's a lot of policy work to be done here. So, I look forward to seeing a more comprehensive approach in the Committee.

Ms. Mayfield said I was making sure it wasn't my colleague, I was checking.

Ms. Johnson said it was supposed to be, but I'm used to it.

Ms. Mayfield said so, what we went over this morning, talked about a couple of bills that are out there, yet I have already shared the concern that I have, which is the concern of my colleagues, that 0.157. So, $0.16 additional that will be added to our tax rate for a one time. Again, I would say we have the opportunity when we look at public-private partnerships whether it's the Foundation, whether it's corporate partners, a way for us to look at match for our community, come together to match our funds in order for us to address it. Because at the end of the day, we can't build our way out of it. What we learned and what some of us were reminded of is the investments that we made in 2024 helped to give the development community direction on where our interests were because they followed the line item. They followed the dollar. I think it would be tone deaf of us to, as my colleague said, create a tax increase that's going to impact our workforce and our most vulnerable in order to tell them we're trying to create something for you. It's a challenge to try to explain that because the reality is we have seen layoffs from our corporate partners in our community, and we have individuals that have been out of work from six months to two years now. We're not having a conversation in this budget or any budget that I know of really where we're trying to figure out how to keep those individuals in their homes, whether it's multi-family or a single-family. That's not really what we do to help with that conversation. We're not having a real conversation about townhomes that we have supported and invested that have HOAs (Homeowners Association) that have $268 to $287 a month HOA fee, and what the impact of that is in community. So, the idea of I know we have partners out there, I understand that the People's Budget has a dream of $200 million. The same individuals that we're trying to assist are the ones who would be burdened by the taxes that would be needed in order to get to that number. I am comfortable with the $125 million. Yes, I asked for staff to tell me between that $200 million to $500 million, what that would look like because I wanted us to have the numbers. You have more data people around our table than

anything else. We want to see what do the numbers show us. Well, the numbers showed us that could be a considerable burden on our residents. I'm not able to support that type of burden when we have the opportunity to do some great things with $125 million, especially if our corporate partners come to the table and match or exceed us.

Ms. Johnson said I'd like to see a comparison of what the tax increase would be on a resident if we approved the $125 million versus the $200 million. I wish we had simplified data in addition to the 1.89 cents tax increase. I want to see what the bottom-line increase or impact is going to be for residents. Additionally, there are some increases in the MSD (Municipal Service District) amount for some residents. So, I would love to see just a simplified version so residents can see how this affects them. Do we have the different amount from $200 million versus $125 million? Then if we can do an average of a $400,000 home instead of a $300,000 because those are hard to find. If somebody can work on that while I'm asking the additional questions. If we could have a bottom-line number just to help us consider. Thank you.

You all also mentioned polices and I cannot agree more. Yes, we need more affordable housing. I had the discussion today during the Housing Committee meeting. We were talking about a model for financing mixed income housing that may or may not exclude 30 percent AMI (Area Median Income) individuals. So, until our policies really, really support affordable housing, I don't think we should burden our taxpayers anymore. We have the opportunity there. Imagine if we used our HTA dollars for public safety. That could free up more money from our General Fund that we could use on affordable housing. Imagine if we incorporated or if the State allowed us to incorporate impact fees or inclusionary zoning. So, there's so much room for opportunity for improvement that the City could utilize the taxes that we're already collecting from residents rather than burden them with things that we should be taking care of. It's almost like double taxation. We also have, I think, the Mayor's Racial Equity Fund. I don't know if we have a counting of that. So, there's just opportunities I think that we can be creative and take a look, rather than burden our homeowners. Do you all have that information?

Unknown said we do.

Ms. Johnson said okay. Thank you.

Unknown said yes. For the 0.16 cents, it's equal to about $6 a year for the median home which is valued at $359,000. For the $400,000 it's closer to $6.40 a year, ongoing.

Ms. Johnson said okay. So, $6.40 and the 1.89 cent is how much on a $400,000?

Ms. Harris said that includes that one.

Ms. Johnson said that does? Okay. So, $6.40?

Ms. Harris said that's just for the increase.

Ms. Johnson said okay. So, then do you have that information?

Ms. Harris said we are getting it. Hold on please.

Ms. Johnson said okay. Thank you.

Unknown said yes, $68.53. It's on page two of your budget book is the 1.89 cent.

Ms. Johnson said per month or per year? Per month?

Ms. Ajmera said per year.

Ms. Johnson said so, $68.53 per year for how much in housing bonds?

Ms. Ajmera said it's 125 right now.

Ms. Johnson said 125.

Ms. Ajmera said on top of that $6.40 it [inaudible]. That doesn't include sales tax or the County increase. [inaudible] increasing taxes.

Ms. Johnson said so, that's the kind of information, because it's very arbitrary when we're just hearing this information. We would like to see what does this mean to our residents. So, we've got all these proposed tax increases on different pages. I mean it really, really, really would help residents if we presented this in a more comprehensive model. If we could see that, that would be great. These ongoing costs, what's the bottom line to our residents at the end of the day?

Ms. Harris said so, just to be clear, what you're asking for is laid out in the budget book and we can get that, but this is something that Council requested, like an impact on property tax to increase it.

Ms. Johnson said right, but I want to see the difference between the $200 million and $125 million.

Ms. Harris said okay. So, you're saying compared to a $400,000 because that's not the median that we used in the budget book, but we could do that.

Ms. Johnson said yes. Please. Okay. So, it's just very difficult because I know that we need housing, and I talk about it all the time. Again, there's options that we as the City and policies that we can improve before we burden the taxpayers. I always say when it comes between the rich and the poor in this City, the poor lose. So, we're not willing to change polices or look at the HTA funds or look at different models. I think increasing taxes should be the last resort.

Ms. Owens said so I do know how to read a room. I know it is late, but I want to bring the voice of OneMECK into the room. I have committed to them from the very beginning that I was really, really very forceful on housing, particularly on housing that does not naturally occur in District Six. We talked today in a variety of issues and I appreciate this. I know that there is no appetite here at this table for the $200 million. I really just want to lift up, I think that our future is around NOAH (Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing). I think our future is around hopefully an expansion of the ADU (Affordable Dwelling Units) program. There are several things that have been proven to work and they will work in Six, but they are more expensive to do in Six and that's why I'm looking for more money in this Housing Trust Fund because we do not get the benefits of the opportunity zones and all of the things that happen along the Opportunity Corridors. All of this does not happen in Six and I've got areas of Six that do need housing, and it needs to be affordable. So, I'm going to put that out into the room. I appreciate that we do have programs that can help people with their taxes, particularly our elders. I do appreciate that those are imperfect. I appreciate that they set a dollar amount that is not really workable for some folks and that needs to be adjusted by the General Assembly. With that said, I would like to put out into the room $150 million.

Unknown said you said $150 million?

Ms. Owens said yes, the $150 million. I'd like to goose it.

Ms. Mayfield said so an additional 0.06 cent increase?

Ms. Owens said yes. That's my position on it, but again, I know the room is not favorable.

Mayor Lyles said I think it's a good try. I really, really want to say that.

Ms. Owens said to Mr. Mitchell's point, where are we going to put it? Stick some in Six.

pti:mt

Ms. Anderson said Madam Mayor, just a point of information. What was that? Was that a modification to the motion?

Ms. Owens said [INAUDIBLE].

Ms. Anderson said okay.

Ms. Ajmera said it was just a statement.

Ms. Owens said it was just a statement.

Ms. Ajmera said when it comes to the housing bond referendum, I understand that the City does make investments, but let's also account for the investments that we are making to our CDBG funds. Thanks to the Mayor's leadership, the private sector also raised the funds. The LISC (Local Initiatives Support Corporation), what is their funding? I know it used to be they used to match the City's bond. Do we know what is their match?

Mr. Jones said oh, you're talking about LISC?

Ms. Ajmera said LISC.

Mayor Lyles said LISC, yes. I have not seen it.

Ms. Ajmera said I think we need to look at this holistically, of all the funds that actually helps support affordable housing. Then there are also the funds that's been raised by private organizations, like Mark Ethridge.

Mayor Lyles said yes.

Ms. Ajmera said I think they have raised $100 million or $200 million?

Mayor Lyles said I think they did the NOAHs on [INAUDIBLE].

Ms. Ajmera said yes. So, I think we need to look at this holistically. I would like really the Committee to look at this issue holistically in terms of how much funding there it, not just from the City, but also from the County. The County is now investing in affordable housing as well as LISC and organizations like Mark Ethridge's organization, Ascent. I agree with everything that's been said by my colleagues. I don't think anyone will say that we don't support affordable housing. I think that is a passion for all of us, but it's how do we ensure that we balance affordable housing supply and increasing that while ensuring being thoughtful about not passing that burden to the very individuals we are trying to protect. So, that's all I have.

Mr. Mazuera Arias said City Manager, I do want to perhaps offline follow up why we no longer participate in the HOMES program. What was the gap there? I really want to understand that or understand why folks didn't apply. With the sales tax passed, and this is more so for the Committee, but I really want to put it on the record, land along the Silver line is currently being bought. So, I understand the need of needing more funding to buy some of it so we don't repeat the same mistakes that we did with the Blue line. That being said, I, as we continue the conversation, would like to know or allow us to do an exercise, and Chair may feel this is probably for as we reevaluate our Housing Trust Fund Policy that we were doing today. What would an additional $75 million, which is what was proposed here, look like as we move forward. Not that I would support it right now, but what that might look like moving forward and how we allocate those funds. Thank you.

Mayor Lyles said so, I want to say thank you for all of that participation on this one.

Ms. Anderson said Madam Mayor, I think we don't need a motion. I think we have had discussion. So, we can just advance.

pti:mt

Mayor Lyles said could I take a moment and just say that I think that the work that has been done by the Council has been exceptional for us as we talk about what we do with our people and to make sure that people are doing well. We've had some of the most, I think, transformative things to happen. You know, you start thinking about what's going to be going up at the Johnson C. Smith and there's going to be housing in those rooms that they're going to have above. So, we have the opportunities. I would just say that we ought to continue to work on what's possible for us, whether it's something small or large. If we get more opportunities, we should just grab them and keep going because that's what's going to make our City better.

Mr. Jones said Mayor and members of Council, I believe that's the end of the additional items that required money. So, from this point on, there is an increase in revenue. There are opportunities to decrease the current proposed property tax rate increase and then there's some additional items for informational purposes. So, I just wanted to say on the final lap, these are the areas that are still for discussion. So, the next one is revenue.

Ms. Mayfield said I want clarification on why we're not putting a motion forward on this when we have done it on every other item so that we don't just have this sitting out there. We need to identify what we're doing moving forward as we have with every other item that had a proposal for an additional in here. So, for us to stay consistent, I'm going to make the motion.

Motion was made by Councilmember Mayfield, and seconded by Councilmember Mitchell to approve the City Manager's recommendation of $125 million for the Housing Trust Fund.

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

YEAS: Councilmembers Ajmera, Anderson, Mazuera Arias, Driggs, Graham, Johnson, Mayfield, Mayo, Mitchell, and Watlington

NAYS: Councilmember Owens

Ms. Johnson said I have a question. Thank you for discussion. I asked for some information specifically, like the numbers so we could compare them.

Ms. Harris said okay. Yes ma'am. So, you asked specifically for a house of $400,000?

Ms. Johnson said $400,000 the $125 million.

Ms. Harris said that would be $75.60 a year.

Ms. Johnson said that includes the 1.89 percent?

Ms. Harris said yes ma'am.

Ms. Johnson said it doesn't include the new sales tax increase, does it?

Ms. Harris said no because it's not applicable. You mean the average sales tax?

Ms. Johnson said yes.

Ms. Harris said no.

Ms. Johnson said okay. So, $75 a year?

Ms. Harris said $75.60.

Ms. Johnson said per year and then $150 million is what?

Ms. Harris said $150 million would be $78 and that includes the 1.89 plus moving it up to $150 million.

Ms. Johnson said so, $3.00 per year?

Ms. Harris said $78 per year.

Ms. Johnson said right, but the difference is $3.00 per year for an additional $25 million?

Ms. Harris said roughly.

Ms. Johnson said per hundred?

Ms. Harris said 240 [inaudible].

Ms. Johnson said so, $78 per hundred for a $400,000 home?

Ms. Harris said based on a $400,000 value, yes ma'am. It would be $78 a year.

Ms. Johnson said so, there's an additional $3.00 per year for $25 million more?

Ms. Harris said $2.40.

Ms. Johnson said $2.40 per year.

Ms. Mayfield said plus County tax, plus fees. So, that $2,000 current tax bill will go up to about $2,400.

Ms. Johnson said the tax bill is going to go up. The only difference is going to be $2.40 for this portion, for $25 million. So, I mean I would support $150 million Kimberly. I would support $150 million if you wanted to.

Ms. Mayfield said well, the challenge is we have a motion, we have a second and just voted.

Ms. Johnson said okay, well I didn't raise my hand either way. So, that was discussion. Okay. We already voted?

Mayor Lyles said we did.

Ms. Mayfield said so, that's it.

Ms. Johnson said alright. So, I'm opposed to the $125 million also. Thank you.

Mayor Lyles said okay. Thank you very much.

Ms. Harris said so, we'll skip on ahead please. So, this is from Councilmember Owens and I believe Ms. Mayfield made mention of it as well. The option of looking at some of our animal care and control fees to help offset some of the additional expenditures we're making in those areas to advance those services. So, staff did collaborate with Dr. Joshua Fisher and his team to determine a balance. You want the animals to be adopted versus revenue, but they feel confident in increasing the fees. If you'll scroll down please to page 14. The bottom of page 14, it says for adult dog, proposed was $30 and they're comfortable moving that up to $50. I won't read them all, but they're confident. Given the provision though, when the shelters do get too full, sometimes they waive the fees as well. That would create an additional $94,000 in revenue.

Motion was made by Councilmember Driggs, and seconded by Councilmember Graham, to approve an increase in fees for Animal Care and Control.

Ms. Owens said so, just briefly for comment. I'll just say I brought this up because of the $12 million that's being spent on an animal shelter with another $10 million to come in the future. I just thought that we should spread the wealth a little bit. So, that's all I have.

Ms. Harris said maybe you can combine these spay and neuter fees. They were comfortable raising those up $15 each as well.

Ms. Owens said yes. Thank you.

Ms. Harris said for a total of $124.

Ms. Anderson said so, Marie, just so that I'm clear. You're saying that Dr. Fisher has signed off?

Ms. Harris said yes, we did collaborate. He is comfortable with it.

Ms. Anderson said I'm glad that he signed off on this because I had some concerns. We hear literally monthly around the overcrowding at the pounds and all the dogs that they have to put down. I would've thought that an increase in adoption rate would have precluded people from adopting, but if Dr. Fisher has said that this is something that he approves of, then I'll approve it, but otherwise I would be opposed to this. Thank you Madam Mayor.

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

YEAS: Councilmembers Anderson, Mazuera Arias, Driggs, Graham, Johnson, Mayfield, Mayo, Mitchell, Owens, and Watlington

NAYS: Councilmember Ajmera

Mr. Jones said Mayor and members of Council, with the exception of trying to find a way to cut the property tax further, the other items are really for additional information. So, I don't know if the Council wants to go through an exercise of trying to cut the property tax more.

Ms. Watlington said no, I trust you.

Mr. Jones said okay.

Ms. Johnson said I had asked about the helicopter hangar. I do want to know about that.

Mr. Jones said okay.

Mr. Jones said [inaudible] I guess by exception, anything else that people want to talk about with the information?

Mayor Lyles said okay. Are there any other? You have the document that you had at the beginning. So, is there anything that you would like to have supported or information from?

Ms. Johnson said yes. You were going to provide information about the $10 million helicopter hangar.

Mr. Jones said yes.

Ms. Johnson said okay. So, you had said we needed to build another one because of the construction. Is that right?

Mr. Jones said yes, at the airport. So, we're losing the site at the airport and we need another facility for the helicopters, yes.

Ms. Johnson said so, the airport is expanding and we're losing the hangar?

Mr. Jones said absolutely. Yes.

Ms. Johnson said we need to build another one?

Mr. Jones said we need to secure another one, yes.

Ms. Johnson said secure another hangar.

Mr. Jones said yes.

Ms. Johnson said okay. So, just for the record this would be a great opportunity for public safety dollars to consider from the [inaudible] funding. Thank you. That's all.

Ms. Anderson said just to comment on the helicopter hangar, which is used by CMPD and you see the usage hours on page nineteen, 1,593 hours with looking at a 40-hour workweek. This hangar was in action for 40 work weeks. So, we have 52 weeks in a year. So, I think we're getting clear usage out of this hangar. So, I absolutely believe we need to replace it so they can continue with these safety efforts.

Mayor Lyles said alright. Is there any further discussion by the Council? So, if not, we're going to begin to close up. I want to thank all of you.

Ms. Harris said Mayor, I forgot one more thing. We need another vote. We need a motion to direct the Manager.

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ITEM NO. 3: CONSIDERATION OF A MOTION DIRECTING THE CITY MANAGER TO PREPARE THE NECESSARY DOCUMENTS AND RESOLUTIONS FOR THE FY2027 BUDGET ORDINANCE

Mayor Lyles said okay. Thank you all and I believe we've given the City Manager direction to move forward with making the approved adjustments to the propose FY2027 Budget, which we will consider for approval at the June 8, 2026 Business Meeting. Manager Jones, is there anything else that you want to talk about?

Marcus Jones, City Manager said no ma'am.

Motion was made by Councilmember Anderson, and seconded by Councilmember Watlington to direct the City Manager to prepare the necessary documents and resolutions for the FY2027 Budget Ordinance.

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

YEAS: Councilmembers Ajmera, Anderson, Mazuera Arias, Graham, Johnson, Mayfield, Mayo, Mitchell, Owens, and Watlington

NAYS: Councilmember Driggs

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ITEM NO. 4: CLOSED SESSION (AS NECESSARY)

No closed session occurred.

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ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Lyles said so, again, thank you all for all of the work and everything today. All in favor of closing?

Motion was made by Councilmember Mazuera Arias, seconded by Councilmember Ajmera, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:07 p.m.

Ariel Smith, Lead Clerk

Length of Meeting: 5 Hours, 4 Minutes
Minutes completed: July 20, 2026

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