



FINANCE COMMITTEE AND SALARIES/PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

CITY OF ANSONIA

JOINT SPECIAL MEETING – SEPTEMBER 6, 2012

**Aldermanic Finance and Personnel/Salaries Appeals
Committees**

Call to Order

The Special Joint Meeting of the Ansonia Board of Aldermen’s Finance Committee and Personnel/Salaries Appeals Committee was called to order at 6 p.m. by Alderman Edward Adamowski, Chairman of both Committees. All those present rose and pledged allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Roll Call

Finance Committee Members:

Edward Adamowski, Chairman
Robert Duffus, absent
Jerome Fainer
David Knapp
John Marini
Gene Sharkey
Phil Tripp
6 present, 1 absent

Personnel/Salaries Members:

Edward Adamowski, Chairman
Jerome Fainer
David Knapp
Howard Madigosky
Joan Radin
Charles Stowe
Gene Sharkey
7 present, 0 absent

Others Present:

Mayor James Della Volpe
Corporation Counsel Kevin Blake
Labor Counsel Fran Teodosio
Acting Personnel Director Tara Kolakowski
Grant Writer Eileen Krugel
Rich Bshara, Assistant Comptroller
Rick Sturges, Chairman, Board of Apportionment and Taxation
Francis H. Michaud, Jr., CPA
John A. Accavallo, CPA
Jason B. Michaud

Call of the Meeting

CITY OF ANSONIA BOARD OF ALDERMEN
FINANCE & SALARIES/PERSONNEL APPEALS JOINT COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING

Thursday, September 6, 2012

AGENDA

1. Audit with respect to Office of the Tax Collector
 - a. Discussion
 - b. Take appropriate action

2. Review of the job position of Tax Collector
 - a. Discussion
 - b. Take appropriate action

Alderman Fainer MOVED to switch numbers 1 and 2 on the agenda; SECONDED by Alderman Knapp. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 10-0.

Chairman Adamowski noted that because this is a joint meeting of both the Salary Committee and the Finance Committee, each Committee will vote separately on the item relative to their Committee.

1. Audit with respect to Office of the Tax Collector - Finance Committee

City Auditors:

Francis H. Michaud, Jr., CPA

John A. Accavallo, CPA

Jason B. Michaud

The representative from the Connecticut Tax Collector's Association that was expected to attend was not present.

President Sharkey reviewed the minutes of the Special Meeting to see what we discussed. Our charges were to get names of possible forensic auditors, where do we want our investigation to go, what parameters were we going to use, how many years were we going to go back and research and what safeguards need to be in place. We will have to reschedule another meeting with the Connecticut State Tax Collector's Association.

Mr. John Accavallo explained the steps that his firm takes when they do their detail testing in the Tax Collector's Office. He spoke at length to the issue of an audit of the Office of the Tax Collector. He explained, that the only way they would find issues would be through inquiry and observation; they would ask questions, and if the Tax Collector said, "no, we don't do that," then unless we actually see it being done or hear from another party that it's being done, then we wouldn't look deeper into it. From that standpoint, we either see it or we hear it to test it. There is no other way to test what we call "management override." That is what we have in this situation, "management override."

Mr. Bshara, the Assistant Comptroller, noted that he would be able to generate specific lists in order to begin cross-checking the City records with the DMV

FINANCE COMMITTEE AND SALARIES/PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

records, using in-house staff. He also would be able to look for data manipulation on the computer system. If somebody owes taxes from '05, '06, '07, '08 and they have a car registered in 2012, then we have to look at that. He noted that there are reports available in the system that would enable him to print out the void history or the reversal history.

Several of the Aldermen expressed concern about the checks not being deposited in a timely manner. Mr. Accavallo stated that this could be an item that is included in future testing by his firm in the audit.

A lengthy discussion was held about those taxpayers that are paying interest, and those that are not. It was noted that anybody could look online and see who is paying their taxes, and who is not. The Aldermen asked Mr. Accavallo if their firm could compile an accurate list of those individuals that have invalidly gotten clearances to provide to the DMV.

Mr. Accavallo explained that they could put together some kind of procedures to assist in that - depending on the City's information, and the DMV information. You would have to cross reference the information. Mr. Accavallo recommended putting into place standard, pre-printed pre-numbered forms that somebody could track from number one to whatever, and every year the starting number would change with the year, and it could be controlled and logged. The City auditor could then audit that quarterly.

To the question of compiling a list over the last five to 10 years of who got an invalid slip, Mr. Accavallo questioned the benefit of that, and the cost of that. He stated, you will know right off the bat with this that the people still owe the money because they're still on the list. The only thing these people got over on you was that they were able to register their vehicle. Mr. Accavallo recommended moving forward and putting the log in place, interviewing the Tax Collector from Fairfield and getting the procedures moving forward, and not worrying so much about what has already occurred.

Mayor Della Volpe noted that the Tax Collector from Fairfield recommended going back just a year to start with and not five or 10. If after reviewing a year you see the need to go further, then you do so. He will come in and explain this to the group here at a future meeting.

Mr. Accavallo stated, we can do a sample selection from the previous year and get the names of individuals, and then expand on that of possible individuals, and then do a random and see what we can come up with while keeping costs to a minimum. We would be happy to act as consultants on it to keep our time down.

A lengthy discussion ensued about the computer program that is used in the Tax Office, safeguards pertaining to same, and the reports that can be generated. The suggestion of starting with a list of City and employees, board and commission members would be a good place to start.

Mr. Bshara noted that the City will receive the updated file from the State DMV after October 1 to begin the comparison process.

President Sharkey stated, in summary, I think we still have some questions that are open but we need the person from Connecticut State Tax Collector's Association to come and give us some ideas about the office downstairs itself. I think we will also get some of the other answers from the former Fairfield Tax Collector. We probably want Rich Bshara to generate whatever lists he can for whatever dates he can so we can spread them all out and start looking them over. We will have to wait until October 1st for the other list to come in. I would like to schedule another meeting with the Connecticut Tax Collector's Association representative present.

Attorney Teodosio noted that in addition he had contacted a gentleman from the firm Connecticut Forensics LLC who, with a little more notice, would be willing to attend a future meeting and speak with the Committee.

The Aldermen discussed the cost of a forensic audit. Mr. Accavallo explained that the cost would depend on the scope - a one year audit may run between \$20,000 to \$40,000 and upward.

Chairman Adamowski will call another meeting of the Finance Committee for 6 p.m. Thursday, September 20, 2012 in the Erlingheuser Room at Ansonia City Hall. Representatives from the Connecticut State Tax Collector's Association, the former Fairfield Tax Collector, and the Connecticut Forensics LLC will be invited.

Finance Committee Members:

Edward Adamowski, Chairman
Robert Duffus - absent
Jerome Fainer
David Knapp
John Marini
Gene Sharkey
Phil Tripp

Alderman Sharkey MOVED to adjourn; SECONDED by Alderman Marini. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 6-0.

2. Review of the job position of Tax Collector - Salary Committee

Alderman Knapp asked, on page one, under "Essential duties and responsibilities" about halfway down, "...and monitoring of payment plans." Do we know what that is all about?

Labor Counsel Teodosio replied, I don't know what it's in reference to specifically with regard to your job description, but there is a distinction between a payment plan that is negotiated based on outstanding real estate issues and a payment plan with regard to something like the motor vehicle taxes, because regardless of whether there's a formal payment plan in place or not, if somebody pays part of their taxes and then pays more of their taxes the next month and the month after that, they are effectively on a payment plan. There are times when foreclosures result in payment plans that are monitored by the Court and collect 18 percent along the way. That is a task of the Tax Collector's Office. You might want to clarify within the real estate context and not anything else.

Alderman Marini stated, put a caveat in, "payment plans in connection with real estate taxes." It would be prudent to include that here, just delineating what payment plans they're supposed to be monitoring.

Alderman Knapp suggested adding, "to include Court-ordered payment plans."

President Sharkey stated, I noticed some of the responsibilities. "Desired minimum qualifications." When we're looking at Municipal Tax Collector - what job description do we want in place. We realize from the statement at our Board of Aldermen meeting that whatever we do, if we change this, it is subject to collective bargaining. The Salary Committee should have something that they really want in place to hire a new one - the educational requirements, everything else. Ours already says that the Tax Collector has to be certified, within a three-year period. We need to think about, would we hire one that isn't certified, and give them three years to become certified. Our would we change it that the person must be certified and go out looking for a certified Tax Collector.

Acting Personnel Director Tara Kolakowski distributed a job description for Tax Collector for the Town of Brookfield, as well as a job description for an Assistant Tax Collector from the Town of Enfield. These towns are currently advertising to fill those positions.

Labor Attorney Teodosio explained that if there are going to be any changes to the current job description, we have to go back to the Collective Bargaining for the changes to be agreed upon. You can go to the Collective Bargaining group, and on your side of the table, say "this is what we want the Tax Collector's position to be, what is your opinion?" They could just as well agree with you.

Possible educational requirements were discussed. It was also the consensus that an experienced person would be preferred, a bachelors degree in the business or financial field, plus the certification. CCM has been contacted to gather more information, including possible salary range comparisons.

FINANCE COMMITTEE AND SALARIES/PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

President Sharkey suggested the Committee have a workshop, look at all of the comparisons, and put it all together into draft form.

Ms. Kolakowski stated, the Connecticut State Tax Collector's Association's website has a lot of information. It's there for everyone and it may be a good source for the workshop.

Mayor Della Volpe stated, I have been talking to a retired Tax Collector from Fairfield - he may be willing to come in and overlook our situation. He is willing to assist in the selection and training of a new Tax Collector, including helping us draft a job description. That would be a good resource for us, to get him on board and then schedule the workshop and have him there also. He has also been past president of the Tax Collectors' Association.

Alderman Sharkey MOVED, subsequent to them bringing on board a temporary person to assist in the Tax Collectors Office right now, and that we use that person as a resource at a workshop to go forward and generate a good working job description for the City of Ansonia; SECONDED by Alderman Fainer.

Personnel/Salaries Members:

Edward Adamowski, Chairman
Jerome Fainer
David Knapp
Howard Madigosky
Joan Radin
Charles Stowe
Gene Sharkey

Corporation Counsel Blake noted that when you say "workshop," it should be posted it as a regular meeting for the purpose of having a workshop.

A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 7-0.

Adjournment

Alderman Sharkey MOVED to adjourn; SECONDED by Alderman Marini. A voice vote was taken and the MOTION PASSED 6-0.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia M. Bruder, Secretary
Ansonia Board of Aldermen

SEPTEMBER 6, 2012

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
JOINT SPECIAL MEETING
FINANCE COMMITTEE AND SALARIES/PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

Page 7