



Village of El Portal  
Budget Workshop  
Date: 09/5/23  
Meeting Start: 7:02 PM  
Meeting End: 9:29 PM  
Meeting Length: 2:27:18

**Mayor Omarr C. Nickerson:** The virtual El Portal budget workshop for 2023/2024 fiscal year is called to order on Tuesday, September the 5th, 2023 at 7:02 PM. Let's stand for a moment of silent meditation followed by the pledge of allegiance.

**[pause 00:00:26]**

**Council Members:** I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you very much. Madam Clerk, may I please have the roll call?

**Village Clerk Yenise Jacobi:** Roll call. Mayor Nickerson?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Here.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** Vice Mayor Pirela?

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Here.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** Councilperson Urbom?

**Councilperson Anders Urbom:** Present.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward.

**Councilperson Dr. Anna E. Lightfoot-Ward:** Here.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** Councilperson Martin.

**Councilperson Darian Martin:** Here.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** Also present for the record, Yenise Jacobi, Village Clerk, Christia Alou, Village Manager, and the CFO.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you very much, Madam Clerk. I appreciate that. Next is the approval of the agenda. We only have one thing on the agenda. Do you have a motion to approve the agenda?

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** So moved.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Moved by Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward. Do I have a second?

**Councilperson Martin:** Second.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Second by Councilperson Martin. All in favor say aye?

**All speakers:** Aye.

**Mayor Nickerson:** All opposed say nay? Hearing none, moving along. Good and welfare. This is the time right now if anybody has something to say about the budget itself, that's the agenda item. Now's your time to come and do so. You will be able to speak while we go through the budget also. Just keep that in mind. If you have anything to say about the budget right now, you can come and say so if you want to say your piece and go sit down.

Hearing, seeing none, moving right along. Agenda items, we are at the proposed budget. Let's open up our budget packets either digitally or if you guys have them in hard copies. We went through this once before. This is the second time we'll be doing this to gather you all. The same way we did it last time, which is this is the workshop, this is the proposed budget. This is not the budget hearing. The first budget hearing will be next week.

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Being this is the proposed budget, if there's any areas, any line items that we are in disagreement about, we'll go through a voting process and the majority vote will win for that line item as far as it will stay the same or change or adjust, that way we'll get through it quickly. Okay? Sound good? I know we have our CFO here. We have the manager here also. We'll go page by page, you guys. There's going to be something that point out also. If you have any questions, just ask on that particular page maybe things I point out also as we go through.

Let's go to page two. Page two is a budget summary. I want to keep in mind right here the one thing that sticks out is the ad valorem taxes. You guys know our millage rate. You see there on the general fund it's 8.3. There's something to that. I was on a meeting earlier today. We were at a meeting with Mayor Levine Cava, there was a Zoom meeting. She was just going over the county budget. I know Vice Mayor Pirela was on there, I know Councilperson Martin was on there. Councilperson Martin asked a great question during the meeting. I felt proud. I was like, "That's El Portal right there." I almost unmuted myself madam manager and said it. I almost said, "That's the El Portal right there." I appreciate it, Councilperson Martin. Manager Alou was there also. She was saying at one point something else to this also, and at this point, we can't do this, and I'm not saying that we should do this even in the future, but I just want to put things in perspective.

They were going through the county budget, and I don't know if you guys remember, she got to the part about the millage rate, and it was showing different county departments when it came to the millage rate, but it said the county budget overall they went from 9.6 something to 9.5 something, the county budget. Remember you guys the last time we had our meeting and we were talking about the millage rate, and I was saying that Biscayne Park was 9.0, and they were one of the highest, 8.9 or 9.0? I had a meeting with the Biscayne Park Mayor a couple of weeks ago, and I stand corrected. Biscayne Park is 9.5.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Are they bigger than us?

**Mayor Nickerson:** No. Biscayne Park? Biscayne Park is the same size.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** They didn't grow?

**Mayor Nickerson:** They're 9.5. I'm just saying that just as a opening to say that I just really want to say thank you to you all as a council. I want to say thank you to the manager, to the clerk. Thank you to CFO Taubenfeld because we do a lot more with a lot less with no wiggle room. We're 8.3, and for Biscayne Park to be 9.5, and for the county to be an overall, 9.6 that drops to a 9.5 something, is huge, you guys, that we're able to with the little that we have, we're able to really continue to grow things, which you'll see as we go through the budget.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Mayor, doesn't Biscayne Park have a commercial district larger than ours?

**Mayor Nickerson:** They have no commercial district, as a matter of fact, they're landlocked with no commercial district.

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**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** What is that on Northeast 2nd Avenue? I'm driving up there all the time. They have Pizza Hut.

**Mayor Nickerson:** It's North of Miami. Once you hit North Miami, that's what that is. Right after Biscayne Park, you hit North Miami.

**Vice Mayor Luis Pirela:** They stop at 120.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** They stop at 120. All right, I'll take a better look, but it seems to me they have more commercial than we do.

**Mayor Nickerson:** No. When you see the commercial start, you've hit North Miami.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** The cemetery is not in Biscayne Park?

**Mayor Nickerson:** No. Biscayne Park is if you're going up NE 2nd or 6th? If you're going up 6th, there's the church right there where you see the street splits. As you go north, those are the signs that say like, "Don't even think about speeding," or something like that. That's all residential as you see there, and then you'll get to the commercial and you've hit North Miami.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Pizza Hut isn't in Biscayne?

**Mayor Nickerson:** What Pizza Hut are you talking about? Which one are you talking about?

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** The pizza place.

**Speaker 1:** It's before. It's in front of the school. That's in front of the school.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Miami shores? You're talking about Miami Shores where Dr. Charter is, right?

**Speaker 1:** No. Country Day.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Country Day, that's where it is. That's Miami Shores, yes.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** I stand corrected.

**Mayor Nickerson:** It's Miami shores. Biscayne Park starts when you pass Country Day, the street curves a little bit and then that's where Biscayne Park is off to the right side. Right there. I just want to say thank you to everyone here, because we wouldn't be able to-- I always tell people when I go to meetings, you guys, with the mayors, I always say we do a lot more with a lot less. I always tell them if we had the money coming in that you all had, we would bypass everybody here. If we had what they had, we would shoot past them with everything because we do so much more with a lot less. You guys have any other questions for page two?

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** 8.3 will be the millage rate, correct?

**Mayor Nickerson:** 8.3 will be the millage rate, yes.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** We have had, and will we be discussing about the salary levels in this budget workshop?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Those things are in here. Absolutely.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** That's it, mayor.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you very much Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward. We go to the next page, that's notice to the proposed tax increase. This right here you guys is

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also about property values. It shows the breakdown. Everybody good on that? Any questions?

**Councilperson Martin:** I do have a question.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Yes.

**Councilperson Martin:** Our millage rate has stayed the same from last year to this year and the property tax is increasing, can someone just explain that to me?

**Mayor Nickerson:** I can explain it or Harry can explain. You want to go ahead?

**Harry Taubenfeld:** The simple answer to that is just the increase in property value.

**Councilperson Martin:** The amount that we're taking in, you're anticipating to take it more, but it's not that we're levying more of a tax?

**Harry:** Exactly.

**Councilperson Martin:** Okay, thank you.

**Councilperson Urbom:** I agree. I understood it to be increase in tax revenue, however, residents reading this are going to be like, "What are you talking about tax increase?" Anyway, I agree.

**Councilperson Martin:** Completely.

**Mayor Nickerson:** We're 8.3, and we didn't raise the taxes. We've been 8.3, you guys.

**Councilperson Martin:** No, for sure. It's just I know a couple of people that read that and took it as councilmember Urbom and I. Just wanted to make that clear.

**Harry:** Sure, if I could just add, I guess the best way to explain it would be is that we don't control it, right, we control the millage rate and then everything else is factored, is based on the state property values, and that's determined by the state. Yes, there is an increase, but that's strictly based on the property value. We have no control. Again, the only thing that we can control is the actual millage rate.

**Councilperson Martin:** For sure. The wording was just-

**Harry:** I got it.

**Councilperson Martin:** -a little ambiguous, but I completely get the concept. We're saying the same on our millage rate and taking in more revenue because property values have increased significantly. I get it. Thank you so much.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** We didn't do that.

**Harry:** No, ma'am.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Make that clear, we did not do that.

**Harry:** We did not.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** That's the questions that I was getting comments is, why am I paying more taxes? What's the value of your home, dear?

**Mayor Nickerson:** All right, thank you very much.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Yes, we have to understand that the county is the one that actually raising the, exactly, the assess value. That's the way for them to get a little extra money. We all get affected by them, and mine is going to go up this year about \$300 if they adopt the proposed budget. I got a letter saying that. The difference in

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taxes this year is going to be about that. This probably reflects more of the last year's property-- the sale of properties there are now in the 800s and million and \$2 million, and that's probably where the revenue comes in.

**Harry:** Yes, the other thing I want to add also is that there's a dollar amount represented on this sheet here, assumes 100% of collections of the ad valorem taxes. By law, we're only allowed to report 95%. When you look at the funding on the next page, you'll see that it's actually 95% of the actual amount on the previous page. There is also the ability of collecting more than what's actually budgeted. There's a potential, I guess, surplus there for that.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Mayor, the benefit of people that don't know, there's got to be a way that we explain to the folks that have been here like me, 30-something years, why are they-- I bought my property for 68,000. I don't accept the 225,000. I don't accept that. It's paid off, but I don't accept that. Who told them that if I was selling it, I have to sell at that. It sounds like there's something going wrong in that equation. I bought it for 68,000, 2.1 million.

Is that one of those carrots, you're just shaking out there? Because we already know those of us that have lived at least 50 years, we already know that a snake rattles and a bear bites. We already know that. Why in the world are you going to make it seem like I get more advertisement of what you getting on your street? We get more advertisement, I'd love to sell your house. Come on now. That's my idea. Don't plant that.

I'm just talking rhetorically because it's not making any sense. A \$68,000 house 30 years later is 2.1 million and they come around, literally the realtor comes around with this carrot, I can sell your property, but who knows? I know what happens when the tax season comes in next year, therein is the, "What? Are you serious?" Yes, that's what you got to pay. That's my commentary, Mayor.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you very much, Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward, I appreciate that. Anybody else, you guys, before we go to the next page? You good? Okay. page three. This page right here, you guys is the revenue. This is the fun page, this is the good page. [laughs] This should be the page that makes us all smile. Do you have any questions about the revenue page, you guys? This is money coming in, not going out.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Yes.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Go ahead, Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** First of all, congratulations to us all. That's the first thing. Secondly, is it enough?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Enough for us to continue our services?

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Is it enough for the village?

**Mayor Nickerson:** I would say, me personally, I would like more cushion, but I would never raise the millage rate. Now, do I think it should be higher? Maybe it should be 8.5, considering that Biscayne Park is 9.5, maybe it should be 8.5. Maybe

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that'd give us a little bit more cushion. I think, like I said, I think we do a lot more with a lot less compared to everyone around us. Listen you guys, as elected officials, we could always wish that there was more of a cushion for emergencies or a hurricane or anything that we might need. I think it's enough, but I would always wish in a perfect world for more of a cushion, but I never want any of us to have to pay more money or residents.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward: [unintelligible 00:15:51]** on the chart itself, it says what we adopted in '23, and now we get to look at it in 2024. It looks very nice. I mean, look at it. We adopted it at 2.8 million, right, fiscal '23, July 31 at 3.4 million. Department requested 3.3, thank you, City Manager and the village proposed 3,312 lease of 16.90%. Makes it a 16.90%, kind of high. It sounds like it's working with the trend 16.9% difference between one year and the next year. Yes, Mayor, am I saying that right? That's the difference.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes, you were looking at, which line are you looking at, ma'am?

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** I'm at the bottom, total general revenue.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Oh, the total. Yes, that's the increase.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** You see how we end the year in '23 and how we begin the year, that's department requested. Kudos to the departments, Madam City Manager, kudos.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Absolutely. Thank you very much. Anybody else for a revenue page?

**Councilperson Urbom:** Yes, just one question to follow up on Dr. Lightfoot-Ward. Are we looking at being 600,000 over for this year and next year's budget we're requesting \$100,000 less than what we'll come to a total of this year. Is that what I'm looking at?

**Mayor Nickerson:** At the bottom, you're looking at that we're over, yes, we're 3.4, next year we're looking at 3.3. You guys got to understand that. Go ahead Harry.

**Harry:** I'm sorry, Mayor, I'll answer that for you. The reason being is that at the current fiscal year, the village received \$538,000 in federal funding for Irma, I'm sorry, so obviously we're not anticipating any of that for next year. Hence the large number for '23 and the reduced number for '24.

**Mayor Nickerson:** All right. All right, you guys. Anybody else for the revenue? Remember when you guys look at the 2024 proposed, that's because we're looking at what we got this year, but we're looking into what's going to be reoccurring, and therefore we make our projection for next year. We're good on the revenue page? Okay. All right. Council page.

Everything pretty much stayed the same as far as the departments requested. Communication and freight, that stayed the same, everything. The discretionary, the awards year-to-date, memberships year to date. Any questions about the council page?

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**Councilperson Martin:** I do have a question. I haven't used my discretionary funds for last year, so I'm just wondering why how year to date is 10,000. Also, I had a question earlier that the manager kind of addressed is that if you don't use your \$1,000, that does not roll over, you just get an additional \$1,000. I know that I didn't use my \$1,000, so is that a typo?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes, we can correct that.

**Village Manager Alou:** Also, I stand correct you get two--

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Whoa, whoa, you're killing me over here. You know I'm an alien, you're killing me.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** On that note, we need to get it on board so that should be in the budget. That's what he's telling me.

**Village Manager Alou:** I stand corrected. It's \$2,000 you get for discretionary. Not \$1,000.

**Councilperson Martin:** Oh, you get \$2,000. Oh, okay. Yes. I haven't used a dime for my 2000. I guess that is a typo and not know that I have it.

**Harry:** I'll look into it. Sorry about that.

**Councilperson Martin:** Thank you.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** What do we need to have funds for? Just tell me. 236 is what we deposit in the whatever, that is just free money like that. It's not increasing, is it? Is that what I'm hearing?

**Councilperson Martin:** No, it's not increasing. I was just saying it reflected that it was all used and I'm saying I haven't used mine.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** I haven't used mine either.

**Councilperson Martin:** Yes. There seems to be some discrepancy on that.

**Harry:** I'll take a look at it again. My apologies.

**Councilperson Martin:** Thank you.

**Harry:** No worries.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Appreciate it.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** I haven't used mine either.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Well, whether I use it or not it goes in the bank.

**Councilperson Urbom:** I just have a quick question. That is, is the awards budget correct in terms of year-to-date?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes, the awards budget is correct in terms of year-to-date.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Though you only spent \$1,181 the proposal is still back at \$2000?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes. There is a couple more awards I'm going to be buying also and I think I have one receipt that I haven't put in there yet. All right?

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** All right.

**Mayor Nickerson:** 2,000, I think that's good. Councilperson Martin is correct, I think part of the confusion was last year's informational exposition which I use discretionary from Vice Mayor, from Councilperson Urbom, from Councilperson

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Lightfoot-Ward, but that's the confusion. Because that took place, even though the pay for it came through this year-

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** What it was last year's.

**Mayor Nickerson:** -but the actual event took place the last Saturday of September, but some of the bills came in for this year. They told me that I could use those discretionary for that.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** That's smart.

**Councilperson Martin:** That also wasn't me. I didn't authorize that. I just want to make clear, what I'm using and what I'm not using and I haven't touched any city funds, including those discretionary funds available to me.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Fair. Absolutely. Anybody else for the council?

**?Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** No.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Administration and Finance. Take your time to go over it. Any questions about this? Councilperson Martin.

**Councilperson Martin:** I need a minute to check my tabs.

**Mayor Nickerson:** No problem.

**Councilperson Martin:** It's too digital for me at this point. I do see on executive salaries, there's an increase from 124 to 134. I just want to know what that is. I'm not saying that that's an issue, just want to know what's the increase.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Executive salaries is the manager's salary.

**Councilperson Martin:** Okay. That is a salary that's based on the evaluation? I'm sorry I missed last Council meeting where we spoke about staff evaluations.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes, that's based on [unintelligible 00:23:52] and also will be based on that, and I have the evaluations with us. I didn't bring it with me tonight. What I'll do is I'll drop them off at your house. I'll drop all of the three things at your house.

**Councilperson Martin:** Okay. Don't be alarmed by the screaming children, you're safe. It's fine.

**Mayor Nickerson:** No problem. [laughs] I'll do like I used to do with my door hanger, I'll hang them over.

**Councilperson Martin:** No, they'll be on the window screaming at you.

**Mayor Nickerson:** I'll do that for all of you. I'll hang them onto your doors.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** I don't mean to interrupt with the best way of distribution it'll be through my department. When it comes to anything that you guys are going to be voting on or discussing when it comes to any of us. Just clarifying.

**Councilperson Martin:** That seems to make sense.

**Harry:** I just want that also, the 134 represents the contract as well, but we have the village manager. It's assuming that everything is going to come to fruition and the manager will receive her part.

**Councilperson Martin:** This makes sense. Of course, we love our manager, all will work out, but just want to know that it's cost of living increase, and it's also the

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anticipated glowing report and review that you will have and that's why we're increasing. That's good to know.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Also, you're no longer a contract employee, you're public employee, right? Manager?

**Village Manager Alou:** No, I have a contract.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** That's-

**Village Manager Alou:** That's an employment contract.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Yes. I'm concerned about that. We didn't give her a whole lot of-- If we all got wiped out, the manager might have a problem staying because they're going to say she's a contract city manager, not a permanent staff. That keeps rolling in my head. I don't want anything negative to happen to the council. Mayor, that's your staff, that's your projection, that's yours.

With the work that our staffs members have been doing, they don't need to be concerned about being dismissed, just because their contract. That bothers me, that bothers me a lot. Because that's not fair. It's not fair at all, but if you are a contracted employee, then you stand like that. This does not happen. Because you don't fire a civil servant, you don't do that.

You got to go through a real process for civil servants, but for contracted, you got to look into that, because I won't be here all the time and that would just rub me wrong and I'd be right up here in this council, raising all kinds of cane because a new set of people came through and decided that the manager had to go because she's a contract employee. That doesn't sit well with me. I need her. She's been that loyal to us. I need her permanency to be acknowledged, and not under jeopardy by no circumstances. Just try. I'm just saying.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes, thank you, Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward. I think I'll have a Manager Alou come in. The contract, yes, per charter, but the contract also provides her with some, like safety nets, because Florida's an at-will work state, so you can fire somebody for no reason, you can fire somebody just when you want to fire somebody, but the contract, with a contract also lays out in the contracts for all of our contracted employees that we have for charter what the contract does is that it says things like, if you do want to get rid of this person, you have to do it by majority, three votes or majority of a council vote.

Those things are spelled out in the contract for safety purposes. I understand what you're saying Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward, but it's just, you have to look at from both ways because if Florida wasn't an at will work state, which Vice Mayor Pirela knows because I know he's a manager of a large commercial chain. I know whenever, when his employees don't do right he's like, "Hey--"

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Private sector.

**Mayor Nickerson:** In the private sector, but manager that you might want to come in, but we have to be really careful about her safety.

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**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** That's right. That's what I'm talking about. I don't want any negative, anything to happen. This manager has been in place. She does the work just the way over time and all of that other stuff. That's the manager, but when I read it every single year, I just get totally, I know that. Listen, you all know I was a city manager for 20 years, I saved a lot of people's jobs because they couldn't just be fired out of a whim. We got a different Council up here, the manager may be gone. I'm through talking about this subject.

**Councilperson Martin:** I don't want to add more fuel, but I'll just say I appreciate your sentiment and I understand what you're saying Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward, but do know that it is the standard in this industry that all managers have contracts and most political appointees in our positions have to have an employment contract and our village clerk has one, our attorney should have one. Our CFO should safeguard, I guess any other issues. Again, you're--

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** You're telling me you got a contract too?

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** It's going to come up next month just heads up because my contract, yes. We're charter officers. The charter at any work at the pleasure of the council, me, Manager Alou. What the contract does is protects us as some way because like, Mayor Nickerson was saying, it's that we're at the will but hold on a second we are also employees. We have certain things that-- It just doesn't come that. The good thing is that it has to be the majority of the votes but we're still at the pleasure of the council. If three of you decide and that this no longer works for you, this no longer works for the city then we're gone, but what protects us is the actual contract.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Now, I do have a-- I'm sorry to say or a question most likely a question for the manager. The regular salary over here, that regular salary is for--

**Mayor Nickerson:** Mr. Perez.

**Village Manager Alou:** Office administrator. Sorry this microphone [crosstalk]

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Office administrator. It's that person, David?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** He's your assistant or is he what?

**Village Manager Alou:** No, he's a full branch office administrator but he does the day-to-day-- so accounts.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Accounting and--

**Village Manager Alou:** Accounts payable [inaudible 00:30:51].

**Harry:** David handles a lot of the day-to-day accounting as well as assist the manager with a lot of her administrative functions as well.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Administrative functions.

**Village Manager Alou:** Yes, as it relates to county. [crosstalk]

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** I'm asking that question because and again is just I looked across a few budgets that, actually, this year's budget workshop for a few cities and

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I've seen that. Of course, I didn't read there-- I didn't see any of the contract, but on the manager side the increase was about 5% the most.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** That's right. That's exactly right.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** 3.85%, the highest was Pinecrest at 5%, 5.8%. I understand those places they're all-- even Biscayne Park, they have their manager assistant, and you are pretty much doing the job yourself. That's what I want to clarify about these are the salary, these are the position here. Whether it was some sort of your assistant, or because when we talk about 8% every year when it gets to a certain point it's going to get to the point that it's going to be--

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** It's going to be too high.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** It's going to be too high.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** It's going to be too high.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Yes.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** I don't want the back door to happen to you. I don't want that back door. I don't want the back door to happen to you. I don't want that. If a person's been here long enough and they can retire, they're going to be real comfortable, but they don't need to be threatened if you got a new council. None of our staff needs to be threatened with a new council, and they will be been in this business a long time. When I contracted out for someone it was temporary, but when I noticed that the person is working toward where they need to be, they were permanent. They would take an act of God to fire a person that I hire, as a public servant not a contracted employee.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Now another thing is let me ask you to the CFO. I forgot I'm sorry.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** It's okay, that's the last birthday

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Now when those salaries, those are basic salary like the county or in this case the the municipality pays for all the 100% for all the benefits right?

**Harry:** The Village--

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** It's not like in the private sector that your salary is 100,000 but then you get all the deductions for Medicaid, Medicare, retirement, this and that and all of that good stuff. Here it's a basic salary and the municipality, actually, pays everything else. Insurance.

**Harry:** Yes the village pays salary plus insurance, health insurance and then there's also a--

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Nothing comes out from the employee.

**Harry:** Nothing comes out of it from the employee. Then I'm sorry there-- let me rephrase that. There's a base standard coverage that's offered to the employees only that's covered by the municipality. In addition, the village covers the cost for the retirement benefits which is the FRS pension plan.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** We do have an employee. We have an employee, we have a state employee. Come on guys, we've been doing this a long time.

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**Councilperson Urbom:** If I can I'm going to remind the counsel that the reason that the FRS was set up was so that Mayor Cubillos could give herself extra retirement benefits, and that it created a problem regarding whether people were employees or not. I'm just going to tell you right now and remind this counsel Claudia Cubillos put us in this situation so she could get extra retirement benefit, and that's why there's now a discrepancy about who's an employee and who's because of that, and because of the previous administration and specifically her.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** I wasn't going to bring up that but thank you. I wasn't going to bring up that. I'm only talking about today. He's right, he's absolutely right.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** You have to be vested.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** I'm talking about just what I'm talking about and it's no joke. A contract employee is just that a contract employee. If we all get wiped out today, our city manager would not have a leg to stand on. If you got a contract too, you wouldn't have a leg to stand on. If the whole council just left out, you would not because it's not a government employment, it's a government contract.

**Councilperson Martin:** I have a question and I definitely value what you're saying. I think that's just how the structure is constructed and it allows for some movement because maybe a new body would not do well with this manager, and they need to have the flexibility to decide who serves them. I think in every municipality that's the setup, and that might be the reason, but I understand how much you appreciate the manager's work and how much you want her to continue to be the manager for the village.

For sure, I just don't think that that's something that is contemplated by the structure of the thing that we are functioning under. I do want to move on if that's possible to the legal retainer portion because in that section I don't think that we have a contract with our current attorney. I have serious questions as to whether or not we're ensuring a benefit in this bargain, because from my understanding there is no real way for us to quantify how many hours is being spent on village work, and therefore no way for us to determine how much per hour we're paying.

Because we don't have an existing contract, I think this would be a great time for us to think about whether or not we want to bid out for these services, just to see whether or not we are getting a benefit. Maybe the attorney we have is a really awesome deal, but I don't know how he would surmise that because from what I was told there is really no way to see how many hours he is spending on village business.

Therefore I think no way for us to quantify how much we're, actually, paying him per hour. The fact that he has not even constructed a contract for his own services gives me pause as to how much of a fervor there is to complete village business. Just wondering whether or not we could look to see whether or not there is someone else that is willing to provide legal services to the village.

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**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Thank you. She's right on point, but I happen to know works for a company. Joe Geller does not work for Joe Geller. Joe Geller works for a company, I just can't think of the name of, but it's a very--

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** Greenspoon LL--

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** There you go, Greenspoon. That's why he is where he is. He has a job but he works through that company, and that is not the same thing as what our manager works through. I was here when we got him. I'm here now and it's the same company. That really is what gave me, he's got job security at the company. He don't have to worry about us but we've had him for so long because he knows the village. Matter of fact he changed the parameters under which we operate so smoothly now. That's why we've had him so long.

**Councilperson Martin:** My question is whether or not we should continue to have him, and how we can go about looking into that. I do understand it's not Joe Geller, it is Greenspoon Marder but this is a large chunk of the budget. \$96,000 it's nothing to sneeze at. If we can get those services cheaper, that makes sense to me. If there is a young attorney, a young municipal attorney that would take a lesser salary and just dedicate themselves to village business, I think that would be better for us. If there's a firm that could provide us with at least responsive legal representation and presence, I think that would be a better way to spend this \$96,000. Just looking at this budget to me this is the glaring area where we can figure out how to either make our dollars work harder for us or to spend less dollars. I think that's the question as far as how quickly could we put something out to see what other legal services we could retain?

**Village Manager Alou:** May I answer? Councilperson Martin, we actually did do an RFQ for this with the members of the council, the more senior ones here; Councilperson Urbom, the Vice Mayor, and Mayor Nickerson to get legal services at a time when the village was going through a big transition and the new council came on board. Mr. Geller won that award.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Yes, he did.

**Village Manager Alou:** This was four years ago.

**Councilperson Martin:** I do, I think I remember, and I also think we had what, like two submittals?

**Village Manager Alou:** We had three.

**Councilperson Martin:** Three submittals. Yes, I don't know. The climate might be different and there might be some additional bidders. Or in the alternative, we just need to talk about how to get the representation that we have to work. Because I think that not even having a contract through which governs your own employment with the body that you are employed to represent, I think that's problematic. I think the responsiveness as far as village issues and items that we want to put forward, it's problematic.

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I think the issues with the ordinances that we say are done and have glaring issues in them and laws that cannot be in any way enforced, I think that is all problematic. I think to pay \$96,000 for that is atrocious. I'm just saying that maybe we need to put it out again and see who else responds, and I would love to see how we go about doing that, and also how we advertise that to figure out, hey, who's responding? Or maybe look at just having a village attorney that's dedicated to El Portal.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Yes. I'll say I largely agree with Councilperson Martin. It will have been five years into 2024. I mean, every five years is a general rule, would probably be a good idea to evaluate this type of service any anyway. I voted for Greenspoon Marder, but I do also think the climate is different. It's been almost five years, four years, three and a half at least [laughs].

**Councilperson Martin:** Enough.

**Councilperson Urbom:** By the time anything would come to fruition in terms of respondents to an RFQ and going through that process and voting for it easily, we're into the fourth and fifth year. I certainly echo the concerns regarding not having a standing contract, at least with measurable clauses, so to speak.

**Village Manager Alou:** If it's the will of the council, of course, I will follow your lead. The village attorney falls under your purview. He's not under the administration. I just believe that this is just paid through administration and finance, so that if it is the desire of the council to do an RFQ--

**Councilperson Martin:** Well, I know. It's my desire. I don't know about everyone else, but--

**Councilperson Urbom:** Right. It's got to be a motion from a full council meeting.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** If his job is going to be discussed amongst you guys, it has to be in a meeting where it's advertised so that other-- the public can also have input.

**Councilperson Martin:** Yes, I don't think that's a problem. I think we should discuss it. Also, Greenspoon Marder can also submit for the RFQ. I mean, we're not saying that we are dismissing him--

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** [crosstalk].

**Councilperson Martin:** -we're saying we want to see what else is out there.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes. Are you saying Madam Clerk for us to decide to even go forward with the RFQ, it has to be at a--

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** This meeting is only a budget workshop to discuss the budget. I mean, you guys can have this discussion as she had it. This is an open, but to move forward with it, you have to-- it has to be in a meeting where you bring it up and it's an item.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Okay. The item would be Legal services RFQ, it would be legal services RFQ for the next council meeting.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** We've already had it with the attorney position before and had to be brought back because it was not done appropriately.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** That's right.

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**Councilperson Martin:** No worries. I'll, definitely, sponsor the item.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** Yes. I'm just doing it for everybody's knowledge.

**Councilperson Martin:** No, for sure. I appreciate you making sure that, procedurally, we're sound. I have no problem being the one to sponsor the item for the next council meeting where it is available to us to put those new items on the agenda.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Yes. As a discussion plan, right?

**Councilperson Martin:** Yes.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** As a discussion--

**Mayor Nickerson:** Well, not a discussion it, it would just be-

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** Discussion of possible action.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Yes. Okay. For legal services, then I will say accountant services too. Sorry to say but the numbers I see here, [laughs] I think we need to do something about it too so we'll go to that line later. Yes.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Is everybody-- okay, so in the September meeting, in a few weeks, we'll have legal services RFQ discussion and possible item.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** Possible action.

**Mayor Nickerson:** All right. I'll make sure that's on the agenda.

**Councilperson Martin:** That sounds amazing. Thank you so much.

**Mayor Nickerson:** All Right. Thank you very much. Councilperson Martin. Anybody else for the legal services, you guys before we move on to Vice Mayor Pirela?

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** No.

**Mayor Nickerson:** All right. Vice Mayor Pirela, what were you saying?

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Oh, no going down the list, well, we're going-- I don't know if anybody has any more questions about any profession. The lobbyist is one item that I've been saying that we-- right now, I don't think it's-- I don't know if it manager, I don't know if you think it's of any advantage to us or any-- does any good for us to have-- Since most of the grants and everything are 50/50 match and we don't have that ability of having any-

**Village Manager Alou:** I can say there is a benefit to having a lobbying team, but I mean, we can also look at during an RFQ as well for that. Because these things change as well. Political climate's change constantly in Tallahassee. We love Richard and Eli, but we may need a new group with some different kinds of relationships to champion El Portal town.

I have an RFP draft ready. All we have to do is see if that's the route we want to go. Yes. I think there is a benefit to having a lobbyist team, but I would like to see more action and we, we do a lot, even without the team, we are always-- I know that looks like, well, we don't really need them, but we do need someone there who's representing the village.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Right. Okay.

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**Councilperson Urbom:** Yes. If I could, on the topic of lobbyist, I'll just say that I believe that we need a consistent presence in Tallahassee regardless of what the climate might be. Sure, we could switch companies, switch lobbying groups or whoever might be a better fit for us. I do feel strongly we should have a consistent presence in Tallahassee without any type of gaps to that effect.

Those personal relationships in terms of at least people in Tallahassee hearing the phrase El Portal, Village of El Portal, El Portal, Village of El Portal repeatedly, ad nauseam in Tallahassee does have a benefit. I would not want to see us lose lobbying altogether.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Were you done?

**?Vice Mayor Pirela:** Yes.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Okay. If I could, then the next line, the professional fees, if I could just get a rundown of what manner of professional fees those entail. It's just right below professional fees lobbyist. It's just a generic professional fees. [silence]

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Mayor, while they're trying to figure it out, it just doesn't seem right that we should be increasing everything on this budget. I mean, come on people, we don't have to increase everything on this budget. We're working ourselves out to a zone of no return. Everybody has to have an increase.

I'm glad you brought up the lobbyist person. Because when we see a lobbyist, we just see a lobbyist and they come and they go, if the session is out, that's it. Why are we increasing everything? Probably ever think about where this money comes from, taxpayer's money. That's where this stuff is coming from.

Why do we have to change everybody? Why do we increase everybody? I mean, you got 2023 adopted, for example, a lobbyists \$30,000, \$32,000, why? Why you got to increase everything? We see them, what? Two, three times a year? Some of this, you don't need all these increases. I'm not understanding all these increases.

**Harry:** May I interject for a second? What you have here is the forecast, right? It's a budget, so it's based on historical information. These fees can fluctuate month to month. Based on historically, they have gone up. When you see a slight increase year over year, you're factoring a couple of things. One, you're factoring in inflation, right? Cost of living adjustments year over year, right? Inflation year over year is up almost 3-4% just over year over year. From the last couple of years, some people say it's up 12-13%. There's a real factor as far as cost being increased. The other thing you need to note also, these are estimates. Some of these line items are estimates. You see \$32,000 it's protec--

Again, it's making an assumption that yes, there will be an increase based on what I just described the number may come in at \$26,000 it may come in at \$34,000.

There's really no way of knowing, that's what a budget is, a budget is a best-guess estimate. Something that you can guide yourself and manage your operation so that you have something to work with as a guide, to guide you and navigate you through the uncharted waters.

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**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Did I miss out something? Did I not say I was city manager? I know what this is about. I know why we do it. I'm asking a little question. The question is, is it necessary? We see the lobbyists maybe four times a year and they got to get an increase? Everybody's got to get an increase just because? Or can we just simply be more monetarily sane about what is necessary and what is not? If we keep going down that train on that railroad track, we're going to find ourselves past our 8.3.

We're going to find ourselves in situations that future council members are going to go back and say, "What the world were they thinking about?" Every year you don't have to increase everything, especially if it's a contract. Because people out there bidding all the time trying to get in, rather than trying to get out. Four times a year is not satisfactory for thirty-some thousand dollars. You come in four times a year, here in this place? I took notes, yes. It just doesn't make sense to me. Why are we increasing pretty much every single--

Let me tell you something. I'm not insensitive about the work that was put in place to put these numbers. I'm not trying to be ugly. I know it takes time to put this stuff together. That's what I did for 30 years. I know it takes time, but when I come back and realize we just giving everybody raises, come on, people. I like my staff properly with salaries. I like my staff properly, but all these other things, no.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** Councilman, to answer your previous question as it relates to the professional fees, I didn't get back to you on that previously. Are you referring to the proposed or the year to date?

**Councilperson Urbom:** I have a question about the line item. Adopted 10, year to date 8875, which seems to be on a schedule. Then request it next year down to five.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** Sure. The proposed line item that you see there were the fees associated to refinancing the note with Synovus Bank. That's what the 8875 represents. Again, placeholder for next year, funds coming in. There's a possible refinancing that maybe have to happen again since we did receive these funds from the state. Again, as a placeholder, preparing, making sure that there's a line item and money is available if that expense does come to fruition in the upcoming fiscal year.

**Councilperson Urbom:** The full tab to Synovus? No?

**CFO Taubenfeld:** One more time.

**Councilperson Urbom:** There we go. Yes.

**Village Manager Alou:** No, let me answer.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** I'm sorry.

**Village Manager Alou:** No. There's another fee that was associated here. A contract needed to be made between the village and the village of Miami Shore. I had to get outside counsel to write the contract.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Okay. [silence] I do have a question on the next line if nobody else has a question about professional fees. Okay. For accounting and

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audit, then below that contracted accountant. To Dr. Lightfoot-Ward's point, the accounting and audit, we have budgeted \$31000 this past year, we spent \$32,000, and the next year projected \$35,000. I would expect to see the projected next year less because we did multiple audits this year. Just run down how.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** The fees that you see here are for one annual audit. The municipality is paying roughly \$30,000 to \$35,000 per year for an annual audit. The backlog audits were recorded in the prior year. Most of that work was done in fiscal '22, and most of those invoices were paid in '22, whatever we could charge back to '22 at year-end, we did that as well.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Then in terms of the fee charged per audit is that set by you?

**CFO Taubenfeld:** That's set by the auditors.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Set by the auditors?

**CFO Taubenfeld:** Yes, covered by the auditors. I'm sorry, they're an independent third-party auditor that comes and audits the municipalities.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Have they notified us that the fee would increase next year by \$20,700?

**CFO Taubenfeld:** Again, I have not received notification. Again, historically looking at the numbers over the last three years and seeing a nominal increase, the expectation is another increase. We haven't focused on '24. Obviously, the work up until now is trying to play as being catch up which we've done. We're finalizing '22 so we haven't really focused on '24. I'm trying to stay on point in getting this thing done so that we can finally catch up.

**Councilperson Urbom:** The years are lagging, right? The budget from '23 pays for the '22 audit. The budget from '24 pays for the '23 audit, correct?

**CFO Taubenfeld:** Correct.

**Councilperson Urbom:** All right. I have a question on the next line. If nobody else has a question for accounting audit-

-

**Councilperson Martin:** I have the same question, but I'll let you-- [chuckles] I think we have the same question.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Go ahead.

**Councilperson Martin:** Oh, I just wanted to know why the increase from 72 to 96?

**CFO Taubenfeld:** You want me to speak for myself or?

**Councilperson Urbom:** You can speak for yourself. I know that--

**CFO Taubenfeld:** I mean, I've had numerous conversations. I have no problem sharing you with my thoughts.

**Councilperson Martin:** I would love your thoughts.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** Sure. First of all, this would be my first potential increase since I started, right? This would be the first increase in three years that's being proposed for this position. In addition, one of the things that I did mention to the mayor at the

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will of the commission, to make everyone more comfortable, I have no problem freezing this rate for the following fiscal year as well, kind of blend it in to hold the cost. There are no increases for future years. Main reason for this is honestly, it's the amount of work that it took to get to where we are today.

The three audits over a 15 to 18-month period, to be able to get the municipality-- When I first arrived the municipality was on a blacklist with JLAC, funding from the state was cut off. At that point in time the municipality was not receiving its local income tax as well as its revenue-sharing.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Talk about how much money we were losing [crosstalk]

**CFO Taubenfeld:** Absolutely, on a monthly basis you were probably looking at somewhere between \$20,000 and \$25,000 a month of lost revenue. I jumped right in and within six months, I was able to get that flag released. Putting in the extra hard work and the extra hours needed to get it done, I was able to get the red flag listed and get the revenue-sharing portion of the holdback delivered to the state within 6 months. Within 12 months was able to get the local option tax as well.

Unfortunately, the municipality did take a hit over that time, but I think with my hard work and the dedication I put in and with the work with the manager and the staff here, we were able to quickly turn it around and get the Village back on track. In addition to that, I'm also working internally with staff to streamline processes so that we can get to the 21st century. There were some major challenges as it relates to the backlog of the audits. That's going to require a lot of internal work where we're going to have to put policies and procedures in place to help clean up these infractions.

Some of them we've started for example, payroll, right? There were some internal control issues that we had as it relates to payroll. We corrected that issue by taking that out of a manual situation, where everything was being manually entered and manually calculated, to a systematic third-party dedicated software ADP where everything is tracked properly. Managers are signing off on everything. Everything is being tracked. All managers are signing off before everything is being processed. Everything is being reviewed and analyzed before anything gets processed.

Also helping the village manager on additional audits. We had a CCCITT audit as well that I'm handling to try to resolve that issue. Also working with the manager over the last 15, 18 months. Worked with the manager and again with some of the county policies that the financial policies that were needed to be updated in order to work with her in hopefully securing some grants in the future.

**Councilperson Martin:** Thank you for that. [chuckles]

**CFO Taubenfeld:** I know it's a lot.

**Councilperson Martin:** It's real comprehensive. You're a good representative for yourself.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** Thank you.

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**Village of El Portal  
Budget Workshop**

**Date: 09/5/23**

**Meeting Start: 7:02 PM**

**Meeting End: 9:29 PM**

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**Councilperson Martin:** Your argument on the work that you've done previously doesn't really move me because you bargained for that amount. You had a contract knowing how much work it would take you bargained for a certain amount and you did the work within the confines of that amount, correct?

**CFO Taubenfeld:** Yes, and no. I'm more than happy to have the debate with you. I say yes and no. I didn't know but at the same time, didn't know the work that it entailed. Yes, I knew we were multiple years behind in our audits. Willing to take on the risk and the challenge to get it done right but no, did not know what it took because I was thrown into it. Said, thrown into it, accepting it not knowing what it was because of the need and demand of wanting and needing somebody and jumped right in and really took care of the situation for you.

**Councilperson Martin:** For sure. I think the word you used is the pivotal word is risk. You look at a problem, you say how much you're willing to be paid to solve said problem and sometimes that inerts to your benefit. It's not that complex of a problem. Sometimes it's more complex. I'll pause you before you jump in there. Your argument about the future, what you are planning to do, the procedures that you're willing to enhance and improve.

I find that persuasive as far as maybe you'll look at the Village and you'll say, "Hey, my price has gone up. I know the lay of the land. I know what I need to do and this is how much it will cost me to do that for you guys." I get that one is persuasive. The work that you've already done does not persuade me. Although it has been good work. It has been good work but once you bargain, once you say, "Hey, this is how much you pay me for this service," you don't get to go back and dip in that well and say, "I should have charged." That's just what I'm saying.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** Understand.

**Councilperson Martin:** The second part of that is, I think this dovetails into my bigger question about the employee evaluations. When we look at this proposed expenditure for the attorney, for the CFO, are we saying that it is that amount if we do these evaluations and this employee gets stellar reviews? Then they, I suppose get that increase or that bonus or are these numbers telling us this is how much we will be paying this employee from jump without the evaluation? Which is it? I'm a little lost.

**Village Manager Alou:** The second one. The CFO. Our CFO did not have a contract. We had proposed a contract but we never could get it resolved with the attorney. He proposed another contract and this one had the increased fee in it. I did several RFPs. I even hired a headhunter to find a CFO when we were really struggling at our worst. Mr. Taubenfeld was the only person who responded and qualified, who was qualified to do the work. We had to take that chance and we did and worked out. Thank goodness he got us where we needed to be.

I understand \$72,000 was lower and that's why we didn't get responses. Small municipality, I explained all that to him and he was willing to take us on. I do

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understand that now he wants to present his contract and he feels like this is what is appropriate for a CPA. I have asked at other municipalities like Miami Shores has full-time CFO and they're starting salaries \$140,000. I see that need and when he presented it to me-- Because it was such a high number concerning what we had been paying, I brought it before the council because it's really is something that we should look at as a general body.

**Councilperson Martin:** This is also, I find this persuasive as well as far as whether or not. I'm sorry I made you a charter officer just--

**CFO Taubenfeld:** I told you.

**Councilperson Martin:** That just means that you're doing something well. You were not a charter officer. This, I also find persuasive whether or not we are able to find someone else to do an equal level of work in this climate, I find that persuasive. If you are saying that \$96,000 is a fair amount for what you do and the manager is also saying, "Hey, based on what we need and the performance I've seen, this is justified. I can take that."

**Councilperson Pirela:** Again if you go by what the whole situation we have with the audits and all of that and being done in the past two years and you took on that project and finished it. Bring those back on track when it comes to all of that. I echo--

**Councilperson Martin:** Councilman Martin.

**Councilperson Pirela:** Councilman Martin sentiment about-- you don't go back and do retroactive and what you should have charged or anything like that. I go more with Biscayne Park because they're very similar and the taxes and the budget and the number for the budget around three point something million dollars as opposed to Miami Shores that's \$20, \$30 million. Their finance accountant they going from \$65,000 to \$71,000 and again, it's 5% increase. I don't know what that would entail, but I assume it's to be the same.

I don't know if the accounting is something that is full-time because again, we don't have track of times or anything. Those are contractors. You get to do it in your office. You don't have to actually come to the Village. Nobody knows how many hours you put it into your work. The fact that you get things done, that's what matters. I don't know. Again, and it's a question to the manager. Do you think from now on is this something that we need a full-time? Because this amount to me is excessive going from \$72,000 to \$96,000.

**Village Manager Alou:** I understand. I was bringing Mighty Shores up because that's a full-time CPA or full-time CFO. Our CFO is part-time. Understanding, I'm sure same with Biscayne Park. I know that there's work. I don't think we have enough work for a full-time CFO. I don't think we can afford that. Part-time is--

**Councilperson Pirela:** This is a part-time at \$72,000.

**Village Manager Alou:** This is a part-time job.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** What you talking about \$72,000. This says \$96,000.

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**Councilperson Pirela:** No, also [crosstalk]

**Village Manager Alou:** Currently he's \$72,000.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Oh, you talking about last year's budget, but it came in at \$60,000.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Yes. Year to date.

**Village Manager Alou:** Year to date.

**Councilperson Urbom:** We're at the end of it.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Yes, we are at the end. Come on, don't play games like that. Just, Hey, \$72,000 is different from \$96,000. \$60,000 different from \$96,000. People, we're talking about taxpayers' money. We're talking about what we want, how we want to build this Village later. We're talking about long-term, we're talking about longevity. We're not talking about just a year. We're talking about longevity. Who's willing to stay with us because they're not trying to chew us and then spit us out? Village is not big.

This is a bunch of hockey puck in more ways than one. The only reason I'm bringing it up is because we keep thinking that we going to grow bigger. We got a bunch of people up in here that's making a lot of money, but until that money materializes inside of this budget, we're just guessing on what will and will not happen. You did a good job. You got us. Ain't nobody going to minimize that. You got us from a place that we didn't know how we were going to leave. Right now we're trying to make sure we don't come back and start telling the residents we over budgeted, we thought.

Silly stuff like that. When we're sitting here trying to make sure we have what we need not what we want.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** If I may, I believe that this budget has everything that you need and we haven't gotten there yet. I don't want it say for the mayor, but when you get to later in the budget, if you haven't noticed it. Even with all these additions, potential additions, there's still a contingency line item.

**Mayor Nickerson:** That grew.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** That I believe gives the village the cushion it needs for any potential uncertainties.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Now let me just jump in here really quickly. I hear everybody and then I hear what you all are saying. You want to go?

**Councilperson Urbom:** Yes. Just super quickly, super quickly. The contingency budget right now says it's 50,000 and Hurricane Irma, the contingency budget sat at 790,000. Our contingency budget sits at 50,000 right now. Until that cushion from pre-Irma is restored, I refuse to be satisfied with a contingency budget of less than \$800,000.

**Councilperson Martin:** That's a really great perspective to have, that's a really great strong point. I'm going to let the mayor finish, but the jump is concerning for sure.

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**Mayor Nickerson:** Let me just put things into perspective. The contingency line, here today already at 63. Almost 20,000 over. We grew that with all of these budget recommendations, we still grew the contingency from 47 to 63. I don't know if you guys remember, but when I first came in as mayor, the contingency was 11,000, I believe. When I first came in as mayor, it was 11,000 and we've grown it steady ever since. We grew up to 47 and now we're growing it up and it's already at 63 year to date. We're trying to do what we can to continue to improve.

**Councilperson Pirela:** The problem is, if you add all these increases, you'll go almost \$300,000 in increases in one year.

**Mayor Nickerson:** I understand what you're saying. I'm just saying that the contingency with the proposed increases would still grow. We're still growing it, is one of my main points. I do want to say also that, and maybe because I'm not going against what anybody here said, but maybe because I did work with the situation so closely. When I came in I was the one that had to deal with the people from Tallahassee. I was the one that had to deal with the phone calls. I was the one that had to deal with the letters.

I just remember distinctively how we were taking that hit every month. I remember those letters coming in. I remember when at that time, which was CFO, Chris Wallace, and I remember how he wouldn't do anything. It was painful and I didn't really talk too much about it, but all of the money from the state we were losing. I remember I used to speak to a manager Alou and Clerk Jacobi, about that money that we were losing and to, in other areas, still be able to do things like get the digital marquee we still got the police cars we still were able to improve on things.

We were still able to just move forward and take care of our residents, take care of our community so that we still continue to move forward in every way that we could. We were really struggling, you guys, we really lost out on a lot of money because of our last CFO and how the audits weren't taken care of and how the audits weren't right. I guess I view it in a different way where not that-- I guess I really don't view it as CFO Taubenfeld is reaching back to make up for the work that he did.

I see it as he came in and did a great job with three audits in one year instead of one audit per year, which is normal with stopping the bleeding to where those letters I was getting every month and all the money that we were losing. Myself and the manager and CFO Taubenfeld and Clerk Jacobi, we could have just said, we have a built-in excuse. We were losing \$250,000, 25 here, 25,000 there. All those letters we were getting in, I could say it's a built-in excuse. People could've said, "We don't see anything happening to Albert Tower. Albert Tower's falling."

I could've said, "You know what, because of my predecessor, we were losing all this money." We didn't do that. We really worked hard and improved in every area that we could with the deficits that we were having. I understand what you guys are saying, but I think I just look at it from that point because we really [crosstalk]

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**Councilperson Pirela:** That also falls into the manager's position because it's a financial responsible for the village's finances. That's the position that the manager supersede. Then that's a position that you actually oversee. That's the word. Thank you. In a way it's nobody else's responsibility, but if you know that employee is not doing their job, you don't let it go for one year to another to another.

**Mayor Nickerson:** You're talking about the previous CFO?

**Councilperson Pirela:** The previous CFO, yes.

**Mayor Nickerson:** I think when she recognized how bad it was, that's why she replaced him with the current CFO who's been here since 2021. You guys have to understand-

**Councilperson Pirela:** That is correct.

**Mayor Nickerson:** -we all came in, in what? 2020 then in 2021? That changeover seemed like a long time because if you remember Vice Mayor Pirela and Councilperson Urbom, we were already here. Like we were already here for a little while. That change overcame pretty quickly and that's why I say also the manager's done a wonderful job also. I think CFO Taubenfeld really has done wonders for us also.

**Councilperson Martin:** Can I-- oh, go ahead.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** If I may add just one thing in hearing the mayor speak, and thank you, mayor. There's one thing I do want to add, and I take what you both, Council Martin and Vice Mayor about not calling back. The one thing I failed to mention, and the mayor reminded me is that I got zero. When I mean zero, zero support from the previous CFO. That was not factored in, in my calculation in what I needed to do. My expectation was to come in, have somebody with me, guide me so that I can take the reins and run with it.

I got zero, I got none of it. Zero, zero, zero. Countless e-mails, countless phone calls, totally unresponsive. I literally walked into a black hole and really had to just go page by page and try to figure it out, that I did not expect.

**Mayor Nickerson:** We threatened a lawsuit multiple times. Councilperson Martin, I'm coming to you right now. We threatened lawsuit to the past CFO multiple times because he just wouldn't give any of the passwords or anything up. He had to do that from scratch. Council person Martin.

**Councilperson Martin:** I completely take the points. It was super difficult, which you walked into and you did a really good job. I don't think anybody can take that away from you. Certainly, I want to say thank you and I don't minimize what you and your staff have done at all. This is just strictly about the numbers. You came in and you did this thing that was super difficult to do and in circumstances that were not enviable or conducive to success, but you pulled it out. What the village did was we paid what we agreed to pay you, and that was it.

In addition to that, we've said, thank you for the work that you've done and recognized that it was an amazing job, well done. I think that is that its chapters

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close. Now, when we look at the 96,000, we say, what do we want you to do in the future? Next year will you do \$96,000 worth of it? Then when the manager mentioned the CFO in Miami Shores, I'm assuming that's a full-time position. The 140 versus the 96 for part-time, that changes the analysis for me a little bit. For sure, 72,000 might not be enough, but I think we need more information as far as what is the \$96,000 going to get us, especially if we have you part-time.

I think that's the question that I need to have answered, what are we getting next year that would justify the 96? Because it is a significant jump. Not saying that there doesn't need to be a jump. Just saying that this is a really big jump. To everyone else's point, if we save on some of these salary increases, that bottom line as far as the amount that we have in the reserves looks better and better. I guess I want to know, what do we get for the 96? Could you just walk me through it?

**CFO Taubenfeld:** You're pretty much getting everything that you're getting now, with the commitment of continuing and staying the course and being compliant with Miami-Dade County and with the state of Florida. Like I mentioned previously, there is a lot of work that still needs to be done. There's been a lot of catch-up and cleanup. Catch up, I should say. Now we're at the point where there needs to be some cleanup and implementation, and that's really where the next 6 to 12 months is going to come into place. We have no choice but to become compliant.

Just to make everybody aware, what the audit does, if you have a third party company come in and does an audit of our books, and what they're looking at are internal control-- looking at various factors, one of them being, let's call it internal controls. In the years prior to me, my predecessor for lack of-- we'll say that the internal controls were not 100%, and the auditors did find what they call audit findings. Every year the auditors prepare a report and they give what's called audit findings.

Audit findings are-- They're stating that the financial information is-- They're validating the financial information, but they're saying some of the procedures that they're doing need to be tightened up, tighten the loopholes. Going back to the example I used previously with payroll. They wanted to make sure that there was a supervisor signature on timecards.

Back in 2018, 2019 and 2020, that wasn't happening. It just didn't happen. Because of that, it's called an audit finding. There's an audit finding. These audit findings need to be corrected.

The municipality, I believe, as of 2021, and I'm waiting for 2022. We should be getting shortly, I want to say anywhere between 8 to 10 findings. Each one of these has to be worked on, and each one of them has to be cured. That's what my commitment is in addition to everything that I'm doing on a day-to-day and a weekly basis, this is an added task that now needs to be taken on to make sure that we are compliant with the state because if we're not, then we can revert back to where we were back when I first started in 2021.

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**Councilperson Martin:** Thank you for that. Also, you're working with a firm, correct? It's not just you.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** I have my own company.

**Councilperson Martin:** Okay. Do you guys represent other municipalities at all, or are we the only?

**CFO Taubenfeld:** You are currently the only one. I was the former finance director at the Town of Pembroke Park.

**Councilperson Martin:** All right. Thank you.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you, Councilperson Martin. Anybody else for the administration and finance sheet?

**Councilperson Pirela:** Yes.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Go ahead.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Again, some of us have been through this in the past together, I suppose but in terms of interim positions. An interim position by my thinking should automatically trigger some sort of RFQ/RFP process, some process to find the best candidate to replace that vacancy. As I've said in the past about all of these issues regarding any type of a interim position, that is the opportunity to put the net out and see what you can find. I live most of my life on tips as an adult. Straight up.

I am inclined when I go out to tip 30%. I'll tip 30%. Terrible service, I'll still tip 20, but maybe have a comment either to the server themselves or to the manager, whoever might benefit from it the most. I always appreciated when people would say something when I was managing. Understanding that I would love to be able to toss a 33% tip your way, but to Dr. Lightfoot-Ward's point, this is not my money. I always tip with my money. I'm inclined to say understanding the onion. We've now peeled the onion apart a little bit and we understand the layers a little bit better.

We certainly appreciate being able to understand that better. I'm of the opinion that we should remain at 72 for now, talk to the manager about issuing an RFQ to find if there would be any small firms that could handle this part-time. I have no doubt we'd have one applicant already to that, and that any adjustment that would be required in the following fiscal year could be dealt with at that time in terms of hiring procurement of the position. Then if it came out in the wash at that point to be \$96,000, then we should be able to address that at that time. That's my two cents.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you very much, Councilperson Urbom. All right, so a couple of things. First of all, correct me if I'm wrong, is CFO Taubenfeld part interim?

**Village Manager Alou:** No.

**Mayor Nickerson:** He's not interim. He was hired to be--

**Village Manager Alou:** Through [unintelligible 01:25:54].

**Mayor Nickerson:** I don't think he's interim. [crosstalk]

**Councilperson Urbom:** I, certainly, apologize. That would be my misunderstanding. I'm sorry about that.

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**Mayor Nickerson:** No problem, Councilperson Urbom. You know I love you, my brother.

**Councilperson Pirela:** How long is that contract for? No contract?

**Village Manager Alou:** No. The contract is not [unintelligible 01:26:12].

**Councilperson Pirela:** There's no contract?

**Village Manager Alou:** No.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** A contract was presented to the Village attorney and it's sitting at his desk.

**Councilperson Pirela:** You're saying this increase is attached to that contract?

**Village Manager Alou:** No, not to that was the original--

**CFO Taubenfeld:** The initial contract was sent to the attorney.

**Councilperson Pirela:** No. What I mean is the increase.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** I'm going to explain to you. The initial contract was sent to the attorney and was--

**Councilperson Pirela:** No. What I mean is the increase.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** I'm going to explain to you. The initial contract was sent to the attorney and was never finalized. The \$96,000 that you see here represents a potential new contract.

**Clerk Jacobi:** You've also sent in [inaudible 01:26:51]. There was a contract that was sent to me to be up for the next agenda.

**Village Manager Alou:** That's [inaudible 01:26:57], but presently we do not have a contract.

**Clerk Jacobi:** Presently there is no contract.

**Village Manager Alou:** The contract was never finalized by the Village attorney.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Mayor, this didn't look like we're going to get this through. We already getting real late on this one. Are we going to go forward because you've had three recommendations already. It just seems high. Just seems very high. We appreciate what you did but that's behind us now. If you maintain it, that's more gravy. \$96,000 when I do the ratio it will come out to about \$76,000. Take the three salaries, divide them, you have about some \$76,000. My colleague here is right. Bring us back because we are a little bitty village and we're sitting here thinking we're a bigger size than we are.

This is taxpayers' money and we got to do it right. Mayor, we've spend enough time on this one, we got to move on.

**Mayor Nickerson:** We'll move on, but I just want to get just procedure-wise, you guys because he's not a chartered officer, so he doesn't have necessarily a contract that comes before us and the council hires him. We're going to have to-- [crosstalk] We have to talk through the manager.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Clerk Jacobi are you saying that--

**Clerk Jacobi:** I did receive a contract to vote for the next agenda.

**Councilperson Urbom:** From the attorney bearing this position specifically?

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**Clerk Jacobi:** Yes.

**Councilperson Urbom:** To be discussed at this month's general counsel meeting?

**Clerk Jacobi:** I think the manager was in copy. He was in copy, and so was the attorney. I did receive a contract for next month.

**Mayor Nickerson:** To me that would be the wrong--

**Councilperson Urbom:** For September or for October?

**Clerk Jacobi:** September.

**Councilperson Martin:** Is the move that we're just going to add this to as a discussion item on the next council meeting in September, move forward?

**Mayor Nickerson:** This is the budget and we got to get it sorted out before then.

**Councilperson Martin:** The 96, I don't think that's working for anybody.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** No, it's not.

**Mayor Nickerson:** All right, so we can do this. There's a couple of things we can do. I just really think there's something procedure-wise about that because if that would be the case, then we're really dipping into the manager's oversight because then that would mean that now the code enforcement, everything about him has to come before the council and everything about the human resources has to come before the council and everything. We're basically taking the manager out of the position and saying all her individuals up under her, like the front desk, we would have to decide.

They have to come before the council and we decide who works at the front desk. We're really getting into murky waters there when it comes to charter when it comes to manager oversight compared to council.

**Councilperson Martin:** I see completely what you're saying and I'm not purporting to set the fees because this is the manager's budget. All of this. We're just saying to the manager, "Hey, when we see this \$96,000 expenditure, we're saying, whoa this doesn't look kosher."

**Mayor Nickerson:** Maybe say to the manager-

**Councilperson Martin:** This is on the manager work out what that number is. As it stands, the 96 isn't-

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** It's not working.

**Councilperson Martin:** -working.

**Mayor Nickerson:** We'll leave that up to manager Alou to decide that I don't-- I guess manager Alou and CFO Taubenfeld, I don't know, will speak about it. Before--

**Councilperson Martin:** Because this is the workshop, right?

**Mayor Nickerson:** This is the workshop. The budget hearing is next week, next Tuesday. By next Tuesday--

**Councilperson Martin:** Yes. Maybe by then, the number might look better.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes. You guys can speak to the manager between now and then.

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**Clerk Jacobi:** This is where you guys make the recommendations if you agree or not. I put it on the thing with the administration or if you have any suggestions, this is where it happens. If you have any suggestions where you think it might be different, it might be more, it might be less or whatever, this is the moment.

**Councilperson Martin:** Official suggestion. This needs to be lower.

**Village Manager Alou:** I understood that to be the suggestion.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** About \$20,000 lower.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes. I disagree with you guys, but we'll speak to the manager.

**Councilperson Martin:** We can't always agree.

**Mayor Nickerson:** We can't always agree, but I love you, my sister. All right.

Anything else on the administration, finance underneath that line item? CFO Taubenfeld, you want anything to say before we move on from your item just to close it up?

**CFO Taubenfeld:** No, I just want to say thank you for all your comments. A little disappointed, to be honest with you on full disclosure but I take to heart what everybody has said, and hopefully the manager and I will work something out.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Mr. Mayor, with that, said, and you said something about moving on, I don't see any problems with the next set of numbers they're consistent and we might be at the end and don't even realize it.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Yes, but I do have one more comment on this. I was waiting to moving down to repair and maintenance budgeted last year, 5,000, nothing expended 2,500 proposed. I understand how why of all of that. Something that was brought up earlier regarding the contingency line item further in the budget. Are these able, regardless of whether they are or not, now, I guess my ultimate question is, are we able to roll these things over? We didn't use the 5,000, can we roll that over to repair and maintenance?

Now the budget's 7,500, 2,500 that we have proposed plus the 5,000 that we didn't use from last year, although I'm guessing you're going to tell me that we used that 5,000 somewhere else.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** To answer your question right now, the way the budget is prepared, the assumption is that there is no rollover from prior years. Now, if you want to carry stuff over from one year to the other, theoretically we can, but you're just taking-- Remember, so you have a budget. In order to have the budget balanced. We have an estimate of what our revenue is. The budget, our expenses have to come in line. If we're going to increase our line item here by let's say that 5,000, we're going to have to take the 5,000 from someplace else in order for the budget to stay in balance.

**Councilperson Urbom:** The reason I'm asking is because it is wonderful that the repair maintenance budget wasn't tapped into, it's wonderful that the contingency plan has grown and not shrunk. However, specifically with things like repair and maintenance, these are always surprises, frequently big-ticket items. If there was

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some way to build a rolling savings plan into the budget, I'm just curious to know if there's any mechanism that would be available like that.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** We do have a separate line item, and this is where most of the repair and maintenance does fall in. I believe it's in public works on the repair and maintenance Village Hall. There's a decent number there.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Let me ask you, Madam Manager, in terms of your budget, admin, and finance what manner of things are the repair and maintenance, like this \$5,000, what would it be going to, what types of repairs and it?

**Village Manager Alou:** It could be the repair of the air conditioning? It could be--

**Councilperson Urbom:** That wouldn't fall under public works, it would fall under--

**Village Manager Alou:** No some of this is just the village hall. It could be a number of things. These come up all the time like this.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Yes, I'd definitely be curious to know if there's any way to create some type of long-term savings plan for things like-- It's in the budget it wasn't used that's great. If it could be rolled over and added to a larger coffer for the future that would be-- I bring that up because I had this really interesting conversation with, I want to say he was a former mayor of Key Biscayne. It shouldn't shock anybody to know that Key Biscayne is the only municipality in Miami-Dade County that has an actual savings plan.

When I say savings plan, I mean a climate change savings plan. No joke, we're talking war chest because they're not fools. They know what's coming. They have some of the highest educated people on earth living on that island. When they all get together, they came up with the same logical conclusion, "We should have a war chest to go to battle when no one else is going to come help us. The ocean is on our doorstep." In terms of a smaller shrunken down version of that in terms of handling an HVAC system, it goes out right, I would love to see the village have some type of growing specific to repair and maintenance.

Specific to, I don't know, when I see that, I'm thinking, can we save that for the future or is it just gone forever?'

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you guys. There's something we're going to get some more about the line items you guys and why even if we don't spend it, we might not want to get rid of it. You'll see that. I'm going to make my point in a couple of more slides.

**Councilperson Martin:** I hate to do this to you guys. I have one more question on IT consulting services. What are we anticipating spending that \$42,000 on?

**CFO Taubenfeld:** The cost is that's the monthly maintenance contract for the-- I'm sorry. It's annual price for your monthly maintenance for IT, for the entire village.

**Councilperson Martin:** That's just gone up? Yes, because everything's gone up.

**Village Manager Alou:** We're also gone digital in most departments. Remember we are still scanning building department, but we hope to get everything online as opposed to paper. That also increases our IT's [crosstalk]

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**Councilperson Martin:** That's exciting. Good to know. Thank you.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you very much, Councilperson Martin. Anybody else from administration, finance? All right, moving on. Planning and zoning. Any questions here?

**Councilperson Urbom:** I just have one question. We had discussed in a previous meeting about an alternative smaller format planning consultant to pick up some of the small pieces while pre-Serbia focused on the larger pieces. I was curious to know if there's anything reflected in this budget that would allow us to, if we find a candidate that would work for us in the next fiscal year, is there anything in this budget that would allow us to pick up another consultant basically?

**Village Manager Alou:** The desire was actually to have the Corradino Group do those smaller planning, not to hire more planners.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Thank you.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Any other question or comment?

**Councilperson Pirela:** If I remember the question also was to create and have a comparison to see whether it was worth it for us or not because it's actually \$20,000 more having two planning consultants as supposed to one.

**Village Manager Alou:** When we brought them on. I did say I wanted to see that and I know Councilperson Martin, asked for it as well. I'll be providing that to you later this month, with that comparison of what those costs have been. It's been a slower summer, but we still have projects. There are things happening and I'll be preparing that and giving that to you.

**Councilperson Pirela:** Yes, because the problem I see now I see an increase of \$21,000 and most of the the revenue that the planning zoning generates is actually through the building department. We're not getting none of that money because it goes straight to the contractor.

**CFO Taubenfeld:** One of the things that we were able to identify in the audits is something as it actually relates to the planning and zoning fees. Again, what are the things that we're planning to do for the upcoming year? I've, actually, started this analysis review of all the fees for the building department to make sure that all the fees are being charged properly, they're going to the right department. because as of right now, planning and zoning fees are not. Again, if you look at the revenue line also we actually added a line item for planning and zoning fees.

Again, with the anticipation of putting the systems in place so that we can start recording that properly and account for it properly.

**Mayor Nickerson:** I see. Thank you. Anybody else planning zoning? All right, let's move to Village Clerk you guys. This is pretty straightforward. You see only a \$4,000 increase from the requested. There's also, as the Clerk said earlier, in the September meeting we're going to have her contract. I'm going to prepare you all. There's a lot with her past paychecks in her contract and a lot of stuff that's been incorrect. Been going through a lot lately and breaking down a lot of stuff. Since

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she's been hired, our payroll shows that she didn't accrue the sick days that she was supposed to accrue.

First of all, she had been hired in 2015, but we were only showing from the middle of 2016 forward. She was underpaid since [chuckles] she had been hired. There's a lot of problems with our previous, Ms. Perez who's there now, who works back there in Human Resources and does the payroll, which is part of the things that Mr. Taubenfeld was talking about that he's changed, which I believe that is one of the things.

We don't have these mistakes in the future, why he deserves what he deserves? There's been years and you guys will see all the proof and everything. There's been years where the clerk has been not only underpaid, has accrued zero sick days where in her contract, she's owed sick days per year, annual amount of sick days per year. There's a lot wrong with her contract. The first step is trying to just bring it before you all to show you all what's been going on this upcoming September.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** Needless to say, I've been here eight years and I've only gotten a raise once. Once, and it was \$3. That's on me. That's not on anybody else. I asked for it at some point. Also, there's a misconception with part-time. I can do sometimes more than 30 hours a week. I have the same demands as a full-time. I'm the only one who's part-time. It happened to be that way because I do have three kids and I wanted a flexible schedule, but I still do full-time.

I have the same demands as any other city. I also have to do in compliance, follow with the law do some education, and go far beyond. I don't only do the clerk's job. If I can, I help out any other department that comes to ask me. I'm always willing. When I started looking at my salary, I didn't even know this. This was brought to my attention because I never questioned the checks ever. That falls on me. I should be looking at them. Sometimes I'm afraid to look at them, but anyway, that's on me too. I think that I'm way overdue for a raise, not only for a raise to, actually, look at my job, like I said before. No other municipality wants to put me down because of what I make across since we're comparing. It shouldn't even be compared to Biscayne Park because Biscayne Park answers to a manager. When you answer to the body, which is five different people, it's a higher salary. She just quit and she was making 73, and she quit because she was making 73. She was only there a year. She wanted an increase.

What happens there is there, I'm here. I am addressing, you guys. Like I said before, there was a lot of things that I did see in my contract that I did speak to the attorney about and there's a lot of things in my contract that are not right. They're not correct. There's a lot of things that have been done. When you do see it in September, I am open to sit with each one of you and discuss it and discuss what was brought to my attention.

Much to my surprise, I didn't realize that from before the previous administration, I saw in my check one time APTO and also sick. When the problems started arising, I

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had no sick days. When the payout, I had no sick days. Everybody here has sick days. It doesn't matter whether, if you look at the Florida law, it says 30 and over, you're considered full-time. At this point, I'm like, "Wait, there's a lot." It's on me because I was so eager to do the job and to try to do as much as I can that I never stopped to think about me.

Moving forward, I'm, actually, going to sit down and analyze all this. I'll speak to the attorney with regards to my contract so I can present it to you guys, hopefully, by September. This has been a long time coming, it's just it's too much. I always think, "Oh, you know what? They don't have it in the budget. I'll wait till next year. They don't have it in the budget next year." Then I start looking at all these increases and I'm like, "Wait a second. What am I waiting for?" Coming September, I will be presenting that. Thank you.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Even this, even now, she kept saying, "Mayor, it's okay." I was like, "Well, let's take a deeper look." When we started to sit down and look paycheck by paycheck, by paycheck, we were like, "What the heck is going on here?" We really started to look deep into and we were like, "The last individual who's not here with us anymore," we were like, "What was he doing?" It's just a lot. It's been a lot of cleaning up.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Mayor, I don't disagree with it. It's been a long time coming. Village Clerk and I have talked and I've been the one trying to calm her down before she cuts my throat or something like that. This is long overdue. For what we get from the clerk, it's phenomenal. It's just absolutely phenomenal. The night that she broke up, the silliness that was going on, she didn't have to say a word, but she did. She jumped in and said, "That is not part of what's going on. You're beyond where you're supposed to be."

She went to school and learned her position admirably. I have to say that she learned it admirably. When I realized how much she was being paid, I was undone. I was on the floor because it didn't make a whole lot of sense to me. We already know that Ms. Jacobi has been an outstanding Village Clerk from day one. Even when we didn't have her, she still was clocking in with, "Oh, that file is over there, that file is." We didn't even have her. This is long overdue. I don't have a problem with it.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes. Again, like I said in the beginning, I want to thank all of y'all because our administration, unfortunately, is like the cleanup administration. When we got elected, if we would've come in and all the stuff that was going on wasn't going on, and we could have hit the ground from ground zero instead of ground negative 100, we would be so far beyond right now, but we still accomplish a lot of things you all. You know what I mean? That's what we are. We are, and whoever, I won't be here forever.

I don't know if you're going to be the next Mayor or I don't know who's going to be the next Mayor, but whoever's the next Mayor, I'm making sure that I'm allowing you all to hit the ground running. This administration that we're in you all since we've

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been elected, we're the clean of administration. We started negative and we have to clean everything up. That was messed up. I talk about that all the time, Clerk Jacobi. I always say this, "By the time we leave, we're going to leave with everything in place and fixed." I always say that.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** Not going back, but he just reminded me when I started because he was talking about when he started that office, that's the office they gave me. It was just boxes with roaches. I almost passed out. [chuckles] I had to bring a lot of stuff up to speed and I've done a lot of stuff, but you know what? That's my job. I enjoy doing my job and that's part of my job. I'm just looking out now, moving forward, "Okay. I've come to here now, let's just move forward and where we're at." I've brought a lot of different things, like these meetings being recorded the way that they are so everybody can see them. I brought that up because I was like, "I think that as transparent as you can be is the best. That's the best practice." Best practice is to be as transparent as you can be. When they come question you, you can just show them the video and say, "This is exactly what it is. This is where we're at." Well, thank you all, anyway. Thank you light from work and all of you.

**Councilperson Urbom:** I have two comments after all of this, if I may. One is, in light of the anticipated discussion regarding making the contract correct, are these numbers still accurate on this sheet, anticipating any of that? I guess my other question is, it sounds like this is another side project that has been landed in the CFO's lap. Is that right?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** I know there was a project in the works. I personally have not seen the final compilation yet. I know that David has been working with the Village Clerk and trying to compile it. I'm letting him finna do it and once it's completed, I will review it for its accuracy.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Got you. Is it my understanding that every year we have a \$10,000 placeholder for the municipal elections? Is that right?

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** Yes.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** Yes.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** That's necessary. We are having elections next year though.

**Councilperson Urbom:** In 2024 fiscal year?

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** Yes, in 2024. Yes, we're having elections next year.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** November, 2024.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** We also always have it every year just because that one election, which you were a part of, that was the first election here when that-

**Councilperson Urbom:** Right. Special election.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** -never happened before. You guys have never had a special election. I was like, "Oh. Okay. What do I do now?"

**Councilperson Urbom:** Now that too.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** I have to educate you. We didn't have the money allocated for it, so we decided that moving forward it was the best practice to, actually, have that

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in place, just in case it happens. Not that it's going to happen again but we prepare for what the future holds. That's something standard. One thing I did not see here and I think I spoke to the CFO about was the Muni Code had been removed, which is the codification.

I'm, actually, negotiating with them. We're the only municipality they left the price for this year because I was speaking to them that I wasn't very happy about some of the stuff. We had conversations and I was able to keep the price. This is the only municipality that's going to keep the price for this year. Looking for next year, it's going to go up. Everything's gone up. The cost of living, it's gone up. Everything.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Even Muni Code. Wow.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes. Any other questions for the Village Clerk?

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** No.

**Mayor Nickerson:** No?

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** No.

**Mayor Nickerson:** All right.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** I guess I don't know if that was going to be your question, Councilperson Urbom, about the \$10,000 if it's allocated and it's not used, it's especially--?

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** It goes back. This year it goes back. It goes back. Actually, last year it went back too. It's two years in a row that it went back.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** If I may I guess try to, conceptually, look at any unused monies, in theory, going to the reserve, and any item-- because remember, this is a budget. The budget is a forecast. Lack of better words, swag. Trying to best guess where we think where the municipality is going. Whenever you're looking at a line item and you see where it's less, conceptually, we're increasing our reserve balance. On the flip side, when you see a line item where we probably spent more than what we forecasted, it's a negative towards the reserve. Just something to think about when you see the pluses and minuses.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** I haven't really spoken, sorry. I haven't really spoken to the Elections Department. It may have gone up too. I have no idea since we haven't had one. I know there's a lot of laws that are coming into place and there's a cost attached to them. That might be something that might be higher, but I'm, obviously, going to work within my own budget. That's what it is.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you. Anybody else for Village Clerk? No? Public affairs. When you look at this, everybody says, "Oh my God, 38,000. What is that all about?" Well, [laughs] don't be scared. That was the informational exposition that was all offset by the sponsorships. That was all offset by the sponsorships. Luckily, we put in place the \$20,000, \$15,000, \$10,000, \$5,000, \$3,000, \$2,000 sponsorships.

The sponsorship, especially that came from the Barrington Brothers who were building the Kavista, they sponsored at the highest level and then cap sponsored at

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the second highest level. That started to offset that and then we had our lobbyists also sponsor at the fourth highest level. We covered everything with sponsorships. The problem is, is what I was talking about earlier, Councilperson Urbom, about, we have to be careful about if we don't use it, we take it away because we won't have line items for it.

The reason why that looks how it looks is because I don't have a line item for the informational exposition. I don't have a line item in revenue for sponsorships. We were like, "Where do we even put this stuff?" We just had to throw it because we don't have line items for it. The informational exposition, since the last time it was done was sponsorships, it's not budgeted by us. We're still talking about how we're going to figure out how to put a line.

Because if we would put a line item for informational exposition, it would be zero budgeted so that every year would show whatever we went over, but then we'll always be offset with the sponsorships on the other side. I'm trying to figure out how we're going to go about doing that line item just so it doesn't look like this every time. Even if that didn't say promotional activities, even if it said informational acquisition, it would still be the same type of thing.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Mayor?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** We got the man here right now. What's that usually called? I know what he's talking about, but I can't remember that line item that it was called. I worked in enough cities that we got donations from corporate people from things that they did, and we put it inside of the budget so that, just like it is right now, so that when it did come up, they can see that these were all donations. They were all charity kind of things. There is something, but it's, certainly, not public affairs. It's something that's--

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** The revenue wouldn't show up in public affairs. The revenue would show up in the general fund revenue.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** That's what I'm talking about.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** I'm sorry. It's part of the general fund revenue.

**Mayor Nickerson:** The problem is that, just like what I explained earlier. That's the issue. I'll figure it out and I'll figure out how to do it. It's interesting because when we first put it in, I was talking about the sponsorships that came in and another reason why CFO Taubenfeld deserves to get paid what he's requesting, [laughs] is because he was educating me. I was like, "Well, why don't we just put the sponsorships in and just have it offset this?"

He was like, "If you don't have a line item for something, you can't just offset the sponsorships for what came in through the exposition." He was like, "Because you don't have line-item form." He said, "You can't just offset it like that, so it has to go in there like that." Because I was like, "Why don't we just offset it? He was like,

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"Doesn't work like that in order for the budget to show what really happened." That's what that is you all.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** We're okay. We're not going in jail for this, right?

**Mayor Nickerson:** No. That's exactly what that is. [laughs] The office supplies and copies, the 3,000. The reason why that's there and we didn't have a year-to-date is because we're going to start following how much paper's being used because, at this time we don't follow how much paper was being used. We were saying like, "Well, how many reams of paper are we using when I do the flyer things and stuff like that?"

We were like, "Man, we're not sure." Even though paper's not too much, we were like, "Just put it at 3,000 and next year. 3,000 is a test placer. It might be 2,000, you guys might be 1,500. It's not going to be over 3,000. We went to the extent, we said, "Let's take 3000, and then next year we'll see how many reams of paper we, actually, go through." Next year we'll have an accurate budget about that. That's where that 3,000 comes in.

**Councilperson Urbom:** All right.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** All right.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Anything else? Police?

**Councilperson Urbom:** We good.

**Mayor Nickerson:** We good?

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Oh, my favorite department.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Police Department, you guys. Public safety. [laughs]

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Same with department, step down.

**Mayor Nickerson:** You guys, I'll give you a chance to take some time to look over and see if there's anything that stands out to you.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** What stood out to me was the retirement contribution.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** That number is dictated by the state. That's the FRS. Every July 1, the state comes out with a new rate. This year's rate went up almost 3%.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Huge for us. [laughs]

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** It's huge for everybody. Understand also though, that not all that goes to the employee. A small percentage of what gets funded into the fund, actually, makes it to the employee. A majority of what we're paying is really to fund the pension plan, not necessarily the individual employee.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** It also skyrocket this line item over here for the executive salary, is that we added that other position for the Mayor?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** I'll let you answer.

**Village Manager Alou:** I'll answer. The major. We separated. The major.

[off-mic conversation]

[crosstalk]

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**Village Manager Alou:** We separated out the major from the regular salaries because he's not a part of the collective bargaining. We put executive. That's Chief and the Supervisor that's not a part of the Union. That's what that is.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** I'm sorry, looking at the numbers, I realize also in the year-to-date, I did not reclass the major salaries to executives. I'll fix that for next week.

**Mayor Nickerson:** All right.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Are the numbers going to change?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** The requested budget is not going to change. The year-to-date, July 31st numbers individual line-item for executive salaries will change, but the total number on the bottom of a million 142 will not change.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Very good.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Now, for the vehicle maintenance, it went up from 15 to 30, but we have a new fleet of police cars. Is that maintenance for--?

**Mayor Nickerson:** I think, Madam Manager, correct me if I'm wrong, but I think we underbudgeted. This is the first year where we're having the cars for a year, so we didn't know what the maintenance was going to be. We just said we're getting new cars. We said we'll put the maintenance last year at \$15,000. Right now, if you look at the year-to-date, it's at \$28,000, so we're saying it's probably going to be about \$30,000 next year. Basically, look at this. The \$15,000 we put was like \$3,000 we just put for the copies.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** What does that entail?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** It entails the maintenance program that we have with Enterprise, which is our Fleet Manager. It also includes and this goes back to a scenario similar to what the Mayor was saying as far as what I was explaining to him about the expenses and the revenue. Included in this line item here are repairs to some vehicles that were damaged.

We did get recoup funds from the insurance company, but the revenue has to stay with the revenue, the expense stays with the expense. You're looking at a high number for repairs and maintenance of vehicles because of the repairs done to the cars, but what you're not seeing is the revenue that came from the insurance company, which is sitting in the general fund revenue, page number--

**Mayor Nickerson:** Things like that look like a loss, but it's not because in the general fund, we're getting it back like the sponsorship thing. Like he said, he told me that during this budget this time. I was like, "Why don't you just offset this stuff so we see the actual amount and we're allowed to see it easier, but you can't do it like that."

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Well, that was easy.

**Councilperson Urbom:** I just had the same question regarding the repair and maintenance, line items, repair and maintenance vehicles. I was just curious if there would be any opportunity for building those specific coffers, rainy day fund, et cetera? That's my only comment.

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**Mr. Taubenfeld:** Sure.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Are we on a schedule for maintenance? Are the vehicles automatically on a schedule for maintenance?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** Yes. One of the reasons why we're paying a monthly fee to Enterprise is to be part of this maintenance program.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Repair and maintenance. Very good. That was the right answer.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you very much. Councilperson?

**Councilperson Martin:** [inaudible 02:02:32]

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes, absolutely.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** Microphone.

**Councilperson Martin:** My apologies. I have a question on that last line item for machinery and equipment. The year-to-date amount is about like \$47,000. What was that that we spent that on?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** That was to build the shed for the Police Department.

**Councilperson Martin:** Thank you so much.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** You're welcome.

**Councilperson Martin:** That makes sense.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Didn't those funds come from ARPA?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** We did have ARPA funds. ARPA funds were allocated and utilized for other purchases for the Police Department, but not specifically for the shed.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Mayor?

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** I think it was presented as it was then. No?

**Mayor Nickerson:** In resolution.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Madam Manager, since you gave me the heads up, I commend the force for not utilizing too much sick leave. That says volumes to me. They stay healthy. I'm seeing only \$4,266 for sick pay. That speaks volumes to me. They want to be here. They are here. Please, give them our regards.

**Village Manager Alou:** I appreciate that. I can attest to just the department having a very good work culture. I think that also lends to people wanting to be at work and doing their job. I want to speak about the shed, though. I just want to say that, yes, we did present a list of things that we were going to fund with the ARPA funds, but once we started expanding this, some things were out of our abilities to pay from ARPA. As we started paying it off, the funds ran lower and lower, so the shed we had to pay for.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Okay.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Anybody else for police?

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** No.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Moving on to Code Enforcement. I'm going to give you guys a few minutes to look over it. Then if you have any questions, just jump on in.

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**Councilperson Urbom:** There's two comments. One is same comment for repair and maintenance budget and code enforcement. Then education and training, just for everyone's benefit, I'm making assumptions here of why it looks the way it does. Am I right that with code enforcement we've done a fair amount of training in this year, and then we won't require the same amount of training in the next year, so we dropped it to \$5,000?

**Village Manager Alou:** Exactly.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Perfect.

**Village Manager Alou:** That is Phase Three training done, so that won't be needed.

**Councilperson Urbom:** I'm 100% in favor of any and all training, so that's awesome. Thank you.

**Village Manager Alou:** That is money well spent. [chuckles]

**Councilperson Urbom:** Yes.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Any other questions or comments for code department before we move on? Moving on, you guys. Public works. I'll give you guys a few minutes to look over it.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Oh, Mayor?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** We probably have it. I just don't remember. Have we seen the code enforcement officer?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes.

**Councilperson Martin:** What does he look like?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Officer Simmons. African American, Black gentleman. Really, really cool.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Oh, yes.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes, you've seen him. Fitz.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Fitz. That's all you had to say, Fitz. Come on, man. Didn't you know I got a memory thing?

**Mayor Nickerson:** I said Officer Simmons. I'm trying to be professional here.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** You know I got a memory thing going on.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Officer Simmons. Fitz.

**Ms. Jacobi:** It's hard for you all the time.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Yes, it's hard for me all the time.

[laughter]

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** See, I told you it was real. I told you there's a memory loss when you get to where I am. I know exactly who he is, yes.

**Mayor Nickerson:** We love you, Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward. Public Works, you guys. I'll give you guys a few minutes to look over it. Then if you have any questions, just jump on in with the questions.

**Councilperson Urbom:** As far as the increase in contractual services, specifically lawn maintenance, who dictates that increase?

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**Mr. Taubenfeld:** I can answer it.

**Village Manager Alou:** Okay. [laughs]

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** I'm sorry. The number for '23 was understated. In review of the upcoming contract for '24, the actual number that you see there is what the actual expense is going to be.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Then is the year-to-date misstated then? Should that be something like \$27,000 instead of \$2,700?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** I'll look into that, sir. It's, definitely, misstated, but I'll get back to you on that.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Oh, they wouldn't like that at all. [laughs]

**Mayor Nickerson:** Any other questions or comments about public works before we move on?

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** No. For the contractor salaries, is that--

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** That's capped.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Capped, right?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** Yes.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Okay.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Any other questions or comments before we move on?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** It should be just for the-- [crosstalk]

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** I'm sorry.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** I'm sorry. I just want to give full disclosure on the cap. The cap contract is broken up into two parts.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Right, yes. No, I understand.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** I just wanted to make sure you saw that.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** What I was going to suggest is probably just the way you did it on the Police Department and do the code enforcement engineer and worker.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** Sure.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** You know there's two salaries on that.

**Councilperson Urbom:** All right. I do have one question about recycling. That is our fee to Gulf Coast?

**Village Manager Alou:** That's to the county.

**Mayor Nickerson:** The county?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** Miami-Dade County.

**Councilperson Urbom:** We pay Miami Dade County \$50,000 to do recycling. Is that right?

**Village Manager Alou:** Yes. We are the ones who had the contract with Coastal.

**Councilperson Urbom:** I'm just going to make a public comment here real quick about recycling. It's just a comment, understanding that I'm probably going to be an immediate outlier on this issue. I have been an informed conservationist my entire life, and I no longer see any value whatsoever in recycling. It is a lost cause. It is a failed endeavor. The answer is to change the way we package absolutely everything. I am

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inclined to be very adamant that we no longer have recycling services or pay for recycling services.

Again, understanding that I'll be an outlier in that and I'm not announcing that we should do this for this next budget, but I would like to make a public comment to that effect that we are fools for paying for recycling at this point in time. If you understand anything at all about what is, actually, recycled and where our recycling goes, which is, of course, the dump or to third world countries that are just continually grateful for all the blessings the first world nations shed on them.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Mr. Mayor?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes, Council Lightfoot-Ward.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** If I might piggyback on him. It's gotten so bad that the recycling truck doesn't know the difference between the days of the week. This past week, they dumped both my garbage and my recycling bin in the same truck. Not just mine, the whole area where I live at. They, literally, did that. I'm glad he brought that up because that was very disturbing to me. I'm wondering what in the world are we paying for if they going to put the garbage in the garbage?

This time I saw it happening on my street. Before we go walking through that door without really knowing what's going on, I think the county needs to be informed because this is a county-structured program. This is not right. Since I eyeballed it. I saw it happen. I don't know how many streets they went on like that but I know when that truck stopped, it picked up both garbage cans at the same time. Doesn't make sense. Some people got to stay home sometimes, but since I'm retired, I saw that myself.

**Councilperson Urbom:** [unintelligible 02:10:43] lives. The Inspector of Garbage Racketeering lives on.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you very much, everybody. Any questions or comments about public works before we move on? Moving on to the next page. We have here building permits. We also have building departments and expenses. I'll give you guys some time to look over it. Do you have any questions, comments?

**Councilperson Urbom:** Just a quick question and that is, we're at 307 year-to-date, but we're only projecting 233 for next year.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** There's really no way to dictate and tell. The way the budget for the billing department is built and the way it's currently structured. Whatever revenue we put in, in theory, is going back out with the exception of some of these additional expenses. Yes, in theory, I guess we can make the number. I'm just trying to make it look somewhat realistic. I hate to over-promise and over-deliver. [crosstalk]

**Councilperson Urbom:** Sure. Very good.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** I thought you will.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Any other questions or comments before we move on? Next thing, transportation. Yes, go ahead, Councilperson Lightfoot Ward.

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**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Mayor, I would like to speak to the Village Manager. Village Manager, do we ever get to see the building person? The building person was very nice to me, but somebody spoke in regard to him/her before and they made me feel like I was a nut. I probably am, but I'm not. They were not trying to explain to me. They were not. All I wanted was my garage, my driveway repaved and extended.

They were not nice to me. I kept going. Someone called me and said, "Dr. Ward, you can do a variance just as nice. You can do a variance." Remember, the law came. The law came five years ago and you all voted for it. It was not to extend or whatever your driveway to the street. I can do anything I want up there by the house, but I cannot do what I want on the curve of the street. I can't. That person was very nice.

The other person was just as rude. I don't know who it was. They didn't give me that name, but they stalled-- Matter of fact, Madam Clerk, I want to take the papers home the night. They stalled. I asked for it in February. It was July before I got an answer. I'm glad this came up because I wouldn't have thought about it after that. I just can't hold that in my head anymore. It wasn't good customer service at all.

**Village Manager Alou:** What you're describing isn't, but I know that we have talked about this, you and I, and I've talked about it with our building official. I don't believe it's the building official who you're talking about, but I'm not sure. We are doing some trainings with staff for customer service and for the 119 public records requests and just attitudes on the job, that kind of thing. We will be doing those kinds of trainings over the next week. I'm hopeful that you won't have that experience again.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** That's sufficient enough.

**Village Manager Alou:** If you do, then we'll deal with that appropriately.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Everybody else in the office is very nice.

Everybody knows. Have you ever walked in there and they didn't know who you were?

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Yes.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** You have? I walked in there and they were like, "Hey, Dr. Ward. How're you doing?" That type of thing. Whoever it was, I can't see it being the staff. It may be in a contract. I don't know what it was. I don't know who it was. I know it was nice, but I didn't walk around with my title on my shoulder. I just acted like a regular resident. Thank you.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you very much, Councilperson Lightfoot. Anybody else for this page before we move on to transportation? Moving on to the transportation fund, you guys. Take some time to go. Jump in when you feel.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Looks like it's holding its own course. Is that about right? Looks like it's holding its own course.

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**Councilperson Urbom:** Could we just be reminded what the rules are for spending these funds in the different categories? As far as the gas tax, what are the restrictions on that revenue?

**Village Manager Alou:** [inaudible 02:15:25]. There are restrictions to what they can be used for. There is one pot that may be utilized for transportation costs. That would be road repair. Now, again, we don't get a lot. We are the smallest municipalities. We're getting the smallest contribution, but there are certain things we can do. Transportation is one and that entails road repairs, sidewalks, those kinds of things. That is what we utilize when we do the pothole repairs or anything that we're working on that's related to the roads.

Also the tree. Our tree canopy trimming also can fall under the right of way. It's maintenance of the right of way, those things. We can do those. Those are allowed expenses. Then there's another portion of the money that can only be utilized for transit and that's bus or the electric shuttle or something that's mobile. We don't have a lot of options here since we're so small but that's how we paid for the electric shuttle which we are revisiting and may not be continuing. We'll have other opportunities to spend these funds and we're trying to fund our speed reduction program with these funds.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Mr. Mayor?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes, Councilperson.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** May I ditto what the Manager has said? You know I used to serve on that board, Citizens Independent Transportation Trust. That was the way we funded that vehicle, right?

**Village Manager Alou:** Right.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** It's phenomenal. It's phenomenal, but you broke it down very well about why we even want to be a part of Miami-Dade transportation services because a lot goes into it. My serving 15 years, I think that plaque is 15 years was phenomenal. This part of it, I made sure they didn't minimize our village because we wanted the smallest ones anyway. Thank you so much. I appreciate you. When I saw the bus, I knew it was time. [laughs] That's how I'm back here because you can't do both of them at the same time. They didn't want me to go.

**Village Manager Alou:** You'll see other projects in this new fiscal year, understanding that we did this mobility study in the traffic study. Now we've got to buy signs and that costs money. We have to do the whole assessment of the existing signs and that costs money.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** When we get ready to do that and we go before the board, let me know. I'd like to speak to the board on that. It's a new crew but they'll never forget me.

**Village Manager Alou:** We're going on October 10th at 2:00 PM. I'll give you all of the information. We just got the invitation today-

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Excellent.

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**Village Manager Alou:** -to present our mobility study for CIT team.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Thank you.

**Village Manager Alou:** You're welcome. TPO, I'm sorry. TPO. We were presenting it for.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Thank you, Mayor.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you very much, Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward. Anything else before we move on to the next page? Let's move on. I'll give you guys a second. If there's any questions, comments, jump right in.

**Councilperson Urbom:** We're on stormwater, is that right?

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** It's stormwater, right?

**Councilperson Urbom:** The only question I have is to know if, once we begin the subject to sewer in earnest and sewer comes online for whoever that is, 1st, 2nd Avenue, for example. Will we see any of those stormwater revenues from sewer payments in the future? You know what I'm saying? Will 100% of that payment go to the utility?

**Village Manager Alou:** It'll go to Miami-Dade County, all of that.

**Councilperson Urbom:** Okay. I'm just curious.

**Village Manager Alou:** Yes. Our stormwater projects would be separate.

**Mayor Nickerson:** All right. There was also the CITT. Did we do that one?

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Yes, we did that.

**Councilperson Urbom:** We did it both together.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** [inaudible 02:19:38]

[background conversation]

[crosstalk]

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** The freebie. I don't see--

**Mayor Nickerson:** Stop. Who's talking then, sir?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** It's sitting in other contingencies, that \$100, \$2,000 line item. Freebies run about \$9,500 a month.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** We're discontinuing the service, right? Freebies?

**Mayor Nickerson:** Yes.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** It's gone. It's going to be gone for next year?

**Village Manager Alou:** Yes.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** I think the route and the size of the vehicle was--

**Village Manager Alou:** The size of the village. It just didn't have the ridership and we'd spent enough on it. I think we can move on. We have something else, which is a little more of a priority for us, and I think that's the speed limit reduction that we can use those principles.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Okay. Perfect.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** What's that from?

**Village Manager Alou:** CITT.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Use it for what?

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**Village Manager Alou:** Speed limit reduction.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Yes, that's what you'd say. I told you, I'm doing a memory thing right now.

[laughter]

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** I'm not even embarrassed.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Anything else for stormwater, you guys? We're going to go to parks and recreation funds.

[pause 02:20:48]

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** On the parks and revenue, we just spoke about the numbers here that it should be. Is that--?

**Village Manager Alou:** [inaudible 02:21:09]

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** It reflects 366. It should be a little more than that, right?

**Village Manager Alou:** Yes.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** That's the last payment that is owed. They paid us two payments and that's the third payment of the, I believe, that's owed to us.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Development. Yes, but there was something left over from whatever the Council decided to move to another--

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** Okay. That's separate and apart. I'm looking at it separately. There's funds that the village has received already, and the village has a separate bank account for those funds. There's currently, I believe it's \$475,000 still remaining in that account. That's separate and apart from what you see here. What you see here is what we're projecting for next year.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** For next year.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** We're anticipating their final payment to come in fiscal 24. It's my understanding, I believe that those funds are currently restricted. Correct?

**Village Manager Alou:** Yes, they're restricted.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** That will be a total of 700 in a chance?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** That'd be roughly about a little over 800,000 in the account once we receive that payment.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** Okay. Perfect. Thanks.

**Mayor Nickerson:** There's more things coming through that myself and the Village Manager are going to be negotiating with, you guys. More stuff coming through. Next year will look even better than this year, we have a lot of things that we're working on, so lot of stuff. [chuckles] All right, you guys. I would just say, leaving here, I'll get you guys those evaluations when we get a chance.

Remember, the CFO has no evaluation. You're talking about the Clerk, you're talking about the Manager, you're talking about the Attorney, which I got those also. The attorney had an interim contract, but never had a permanent contract. We'll have to see how we address that in the meeting upcoming. We have the two agenda items. On the next meeting, we will have the agenda item attorney services, RFQ for discussion, and possible-

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**Village Manager Alou:** Action.

**Mayor Nickerson:** -action. I was going to say possible motion. Possible action. We also have another agenda item which was the CFO.

**Councilperson Martin:** Yes. Said that wasn't going to be an agenda item that something mattered.

**Mayor Nickerson:** That wasn't going to be because the per charter is underneath the Manager. Speak to the Manager. I feel like the CFO should deserve all his money, but speak to the manager, you guys. Speak to the CFO, he can explain to you all the work that he's done. Like I said, he's done a lot of work and really turned us around. That's pretty much where we leave that, all right? Thank you.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Mr. Mayor, stop. Somebody should-- [crosstalk]

**Mayor Nickerson:** Oh, that's right. A good one, right.

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** I'm sorry, I have one thing to add not related to the budget, it, actually, relates to the audit. I don't have the information in front of me, but forgive me. I believe that the auditors are still waiting for some questionnaires.

**Vice Mayor Pirela:** You guys, have any fraud questionnaires?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** Any party questionnaires and fraud questionnaires from some of the council. It's imperative that you guys get that in, that will hold up the final audit. If you can, please, get those to them as soon as possible.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Is it coming in the mail?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** They emailed you directly. It's a third party. I cannot be part of it, neither can the manager. In essence, what they're asking you is, if you see any fraud, they want you to see it and they want to know that, and any related party questionnaire. Meaning they can ask you questions if you know there are any related parties that interacted with the town. Those are specific questions that you need to answer, that need to go directly to the auditors. If you did receive them and you ignored them--

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Is it get it in the email or they get it to you?

**Mr. Taubenfeld:** They sent it to you via email. I will send them an email again tomorrow, following up for the note that I spoke to everybody as a whole. If you do see a follow-up email tomorrow or the next day, please don't ignore it. Please, let's get them signed and sent over to the auditors. Thank you.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Thank you very much, CFO Taubenfeld. Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward, if you guys just go to your email, if you just type into this fraud questionnaire and related party questionnaire. If you type those two in, fraud questionnaire, related party questionnaire, they'll probably pop right up and just print it out and I'll fill it out. I think you have to print it out, because I think I tried to do it through the PDF on it, but you have to print it out, fill it out, then scan it, and then email it back to them.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Everybody get--

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**Mayor Nickerson:** Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward, I know, that's what I was going to come to you, because I know with your email and stuff like that, you used to get like a lot of problems like that. What I'll do is, I think I have it still here in my email, because it doesn't have my name typed on it.

[background conversation]

**Mayor Nickerson:** No, is it?

[background conversation]

**Mayor Nickerson:** I'll see if I could find a way to get you, Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward. I'll do something to find a way to get you a copy and I'll bring it over to you.

**Village Clerk Jacobi:** They're going to send it to me, once they send it to me, I'll call you so you can come over and I'll walk you through it.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Okay. All right.

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Okay.

**Village Manager Alou:** Whoever is missing, I mean.

**Mayor Nickerson:** All right, you guys.

**Speaker 1:** I'll find out next week.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Next, Good and Welfare, anybody want to talk about anything at all? Anything that's on your mind, first and last name, three minutes. The floor is yours. Hearing, seeing none. We got to give you Citizen of the Year man. You're the only one dedicated, you come to every meeting.

**Speaker 1:** [unintelligible 02:26:47]

[laughter]

**Mayor Nickerson:** We appreciate it. Thank you very much. Do I have a motion to adjourn? Oh, yes. Do I have a motion to adjourn?

**Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward:** Yes.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Motion made by Councilperson Lightfoot-Ward. Do I have a second?

**Councilperson Urbom:** Second.

**Mayor Nickerson:** Seconded by Councilperson Urbom. Does anybody have any last questions or comments? Hearing none, all in favor for a motion to adjourn say aye.

**Council Members:** Aye.

**Mayor Nickerson:** All opposed say nay. Hearing none. The budget workshop for Tuesday, September 5th, 2023 is adjourned at 9:29 PM. Good job.

**[02:27:18] [END OF AUDIO]**

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