

**MINUTES
GENERAL COUNSEL COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING OF JANUARY 15, 2026**

Present: Council Member Blackwell, Council Member Salafia, Council Member Pulino, Council Member Sweeney and Council Member Fulton

Staff: Deputy General Counsel Kori Wisneski, HR Director Justin Richardson

Public: Christine Marques

1. Call to Order:

Meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. Public Comment:

No public comment.

3. Approval of Minutes

Council Member Sweeney made a motion to approve the October 28, 2025 special meeting minutes and Council Member Salafia seconded the motion. The motion passed, with no vote from Council Member Pulino.

Council Member Sweeney made a motion to approve the December 11, 2025 regular meeting minutes and Council Member Salafia seconded the motion. The motion passed with no vote from Council Member Pulino.

4. New Business

A. Ordinance – Enterprise Zones

Director Marques presented a revised ordinance for Enterprise Zones, noting the program has existed since the 1980s but lacked clear guidance on application deadlines and deliverables. The updates align the ordinance with other city tax deferral programs, using a 1997 map to define boundaries rather than outdated written descriptions. The Commission discussed the formation of a state-mandated 13-member "Community Enterprise Zone Board," deciding it would include only one non-partisan Common Council representative rather than multiple members from different parties .

Council Member Sweeney made a motion to approve the Enterprise Zone ordinance and Council Member Salafia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Discussion of Records Clerk and Scheduling Office Clerk Job Descriptions

The Commission engaged in a detailed discussion regarding the Records Clerk and the newly proposed Scheduling Office Clerk positions within the Police Department. The primary focus of the deliberation was to address whether these two roles should be collapsed or if they remained distinct enough to warrant separate classifications. Director Richardson clarified that while both positions are technically within the Police Department, they operate in entirely different divisions and are located on different floors of the building. The Records Clerk is an established, externally facing role within the Records Bureau on the first floor, primarily responsible for public counter interactions, processing police reports, court warrants, and managing sensitive national criminal database data. In contrast, the Scheduling Office Clerk is an internally facing position located upstairs in the Administration and Professional Standards division, specifically tasked with the complex logistics of scheduling for the 24-hour private duty reserve.

The Commission addressed concerns that there might be an overlap between the roles, particularly since one Records Clerk position had been frozen in a previous budget cycle. However, Director Richardson argued against reclassifying the frozen Records Clerk position into the Scheduling Office Clerk role because the duties and organizational structures were too distinct to be effectively combined. It was noted that the fiscal impact of maintaining the separate Scheduling Office Clerk position was minimal, representing a salary difference of approximately one pay grade, or an annual increase of \$1,200 to \$2,500. Currently, the scheduling duties are being absorbed by a pool of existing staff members who handle the workload in shifts, but the department emphasized that a dedicated staff member is necessary to manage the high volume of scheduling demands. Ultimately, the Commission accepted that the Records Bureau's heavy workload of FOI requests and subpoenas necessitated its own dedicated staff, while the Administration division required a focused role to ensure the constant coverage needs of a 24-hour department.

5. Old Business

B. Recruitment Efforts

The Commission engaged in a detailed discussion regarding recruitment efforts, highlighting the proactive initiatives led by the new Recruitment and Outreach staff member, Maria. Director Richardson shared that Maria has been actively meeting with local schools and colleges to target recruitment within the Middletown and Middlesex populations, with a specific focus on the Vinal Tech CDL program to address upcoming truck driver vacancies. To improve internal engagement and humanize the HR process, the department launched a quarterly staff newsletter that includes "shout-outs" for promotions and updates from city leadership. To ensure inclusivity, physical copies of the newsletter are hand-delivered to staff in departments located outside the main municipal building, such as Public Works and Water and Sewer.

The conversation then shifted toward the technological and strategic needs of the department, specifically the transition from "reactive" hiring to "proactive headhunting." Director Richardson noted that the city's current software lacks the ability to effectively track how applicants are

discovering job postings, making it difficult to measure the success of various outreach channels. Consequently, the department plans to request a CRM-style (Customer Relationship Management) software update in the upcoming budget cycle to synchronize recruitment data and generate informative reports. In addition to these strategic efforts, it was noted that the Recruitment and Outreach position has been vital in supporting the current heavy workload of scheduling and conducting interviews to fill the high volume of city vacancies.

C. Baker Tilly Update

The Commission discussed the status of the Baker Tilly study in preparation for an upcoming workshop scheduled for February 9 at 6:00 p.m. HR Director Richardson confirmed that 15 printed copies of the executive summary were delivered to the Council Clerk's office to ensure all members had physical access to the high-level findings. The discussion highlighted the complexity of the review process, as Commissioners are tasked with navigating approximately 180 job descriptions across three distinct digital folders: the original job descriptions, the versions proposed by Baker Tilly, and the final redlined versions reflecting city management's input. Commissioners expressed concern over the difficulty of comparing these three versions on their issued tablets, noting that they lack the multi-screen or split-screen capability necessary for such a tedious cross-reference. To assist, a "tutorial" or orientation was suggested to help members effectively use the digital "box link" provided for the data.

The Commission also explored the procedural steps following the February workshop. Once the workshop is complete, the Common Council will be required to vote on one of three implementation options presented in the report and officially approve the study. Following this legislative approval, the city will enter into mandatory impact bargaining with its unions to address the proposed changes. Additionally, Director Richardson noted that five or six newer positions created after the initial city submission to Baker Tilly—including the Scheduling Office Clerk—would be delineated with an asterisk to clarify which roles were or were not part of the firm's formal analysis.

D. Vacancy Report

The Commission discussed specific strategies to address difficult-to-fill roles, such as the Utility Worker 1 position, where the city has improved recruitment by removing the CDL requirement. This change effectively creates a "stepping stone" that allows candidates to be hired as underfills to gain the necessary experience and licensing required advancing to a Utility Worker 2 position. Other notable updates in the vacancy report included the Budget Analyst role, for which testing was conducted the day of the meeting despite a brief interruption by an unexpected fire drill, and the Parking Operations Manager position, which is moving to the requisition phase following the conclusion of negotiations with Union 466. Additionally, interviews for the Chief Engineer are being coordinated pending the return of the former chief engineer from vacation to serve on the panel, while two new Mechanic Assistant roles were announced for the Parks and Garage divisions to support senior mechanics with smaller tasks so they can focus on heavy truck repairs.

6. Adjournment

Council Member Sweeney made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Council Member Salafia seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 7:38 p.m.