



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

BIANCA L. TIRADO, CITY CLERK

PERSONNEL & FINANCE

AUGUST 27, 2025 6:00 P.M.

Committee Members Present:

Sheila Niezgodski, Karen L. White, Rachel Tomas Morgan

Committee Members Absent:

Dr. Oliver Davis

Councilmembers Present:

Canneth Lee, Ophelia Gooden-Rodgers,

Others Present:

Bianca L. Tirado, Jasmine Jackson, Matthew Neal, Margaret Gotsch, Lari'onna Green, Bob Palmer

Presenters:

Kyle Willis, Denise Riedl, Sandra Kennedy

Agenda:

2026 Department of Community Investment (DCI) | TRANSP0

Members marked with an asterisk (*) are in virtual attendance.

Please note the attached link for the meeting recording:

<https://docs.southbendin.gov/WebLink/browse.aspx?dbid=0&mediaid=399253>

Please note the attached link for the meeting presentations:

<https://docs.southbendin.gov/WebLink/0/fol/395495/Row1.aspx?dbid=0&dbid=0&startid=395495&startid=395495&row=1&row=1>

Committee Chair Sheila Niezgodski called to order the Personnel & Finance Committee meeting at 6:00 P.M.

City Clerk Bianca L. Tirado announced: Good Evening, members of the public. If you would like to speak during the meeting on a specific agenda item, please submit your request in the chat - directions to do so are in the chat. We ask that you provide your [FULL NAME] and [ADDRESS], as those are required for all speakers at in-person Council meetings.

Committee Chair Niezgodski provided information regarding the 2026 Budget Overview process. City Residents can access the City Budget Survey to provide their input using the flowing link: <https://southbendin.gov/budget>. Additional questions pertaining to this meeting or the budget

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Jasmine Jackson
CHIEF DEPUTY CITY CLERK / CHIEF OF STAFF

Matthew Neal
DEPUTY CITY CLERK / DIRECTOR OF POLICY

Margaret Gotsch
DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROJECTS

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hearing can be emailed to the Personnel and Finance Committee Chair, Sheila Niezgodski, at sniezgodski@southbendin.gov and they will be directed to the appropriate department. The Final Budget Hearing is scheduled for October 13, 2025.

Committee Chair Niezgodski entertained a motion to adjust the agenda and hear the presentation by TRANSPO before the presentation by DCI.

Committee Vice Chair Karen L. White moved to adjust the agenda and hear the presentation by TRANSPO before the presentation by DCI, which was seconded by Committee Member Rachel Tomas Morgan and carried via a vote by voice with one (1) Committee Member absent.

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| Committee Chair Sheila Niezgodski - <i>Aye</i> | Committee Vice Chair Karen L. White – <i>Aye</i> |
| Committee Member Rachel Tomas Morgan - <i>Aye</i> | Committee Member Dr. Oliver Davis – <i>Absent</i> |

Chris Kubaszak, Interim-General Manager & CEO/Controller, with offices at 1401 South Lafayette Boulevard, South Bend, IN 46613, provided an overview of the proposed 2026 budget while presenting a PowerPoint that showcased accomplishments including, but not limited to, technology upgrades, reduced number of missed trips, and the completed audit in July, 2025. Chris Kubaszak presented the final budget for TRANSPO, which represents a two hundred thirty-nine thousand two hundred ten dollar (\$239,210) decrease in 2026, a two hundred ninety one thousand four hundred sixty dollars (\$291,460) decrease in 2027, and a one million eleven thousand three hundred eighty dollars (\$1,011,380) decrease in 2028. Chris Kubaszak stated that TRANSPO has many opportunities including outreach programs and partnerships to increase accessibility in addition to job openings and asked for questions or comments from Council or the public.

Committee Chair Niezgodski asked Chris Kubaszak to provide the presentation to the Clerk's Office.

Committee Vice Chair White asked if any fare increases are foreseen at this time and if the current routes are maintainable.

Chris Kubaszak stated that he does not foresee any fare increases at this time and if that needs to be done internal reviews would need to take place so internal expenses could be cut first before having to increase fares. Chris Kubaszak also stated that the current routes are maintainable but expressed concern for the upcoming weeks due to driver shortages.

Committee Member Tomas Morgan asked what are the biggest challenges regarding retention and are the wages competitive.

Chris Kubaszak stated that even with having competitive wages, half of the drivers hired do not make it through onboarding due to attendance issues.

Council President Canneth Lee asked how TRANSPO will plan for the projected deficit in 2028 and clarified what the starting salary is for drivers.



Chris Kubaszak stated that TRANSPO will need to look at the overall budget because the last thing that they want to do is decrease service and decrease wages. Chris Kubaszak also stated that after three (3) years of service the top rate for drivers is twenty-nine dollars (\$29) an hour.

Committee Chair Niezgodski held the public hearing, and nobody spoke.

Committee Chair Niezgodski adjured the next presenter to showcase their presentation.

Caleb Bauer, Executive Director of Community Investment, with offices on the fourteenth (14th) floor of the County-City Building South Bend, IN 46601, provided an overview of the Department of Community Investment's proposed 2026 budget while presenting a PowerPoint that highlighted the different teams in the Department comprised of the Neighborhoods Team, Growth and Opportunity, Engagement and Economic Empowerment, Sustainability, Planning, and Community Resources, Building Department, Neighborhood, Health, and Housing, Neighborhood Services and Enforcement, and South Bend Animal Resource Center (SBARC). Caleb Bauer went on to highlight the proposed organizational changes that consisted of job additions and job decreases. Caleb Bauer paused the presentation for questions from Committee Members and Councilmembers.

Council President Lee asked how will medical services be provided in regard to removing the part time Veterinarian position.

Caleb Bauer stated that within the one (1) year that the position has been posted, they have not had any eligible candidates and SBARC is rethinking contractual services.

Council President Lee asked if the Department will be using contractual services in regard to the elimination of the Workforce Development Coordinator.

Caleb Bauer stated that local agencies like Goodwill are already more engaged in that space than the Department is and the Department intends to continue to build those connections with those agencies.

Councilmember Ophelia Gooden-Rodgers asked if the employees directly affected by the cuts have been notified and expressed concern for the increase in salaries and elimination of jobs.

Caleb Bauer stated that the employees have been notified and will be receiving a severance package. Caleb Bauer also stated that the lack of retention is due to lack of pay, which explains why some salaries are increasing and some positions are being eliminated.

Committee Vice Chair White asked if there is a list of the programs being eliminated.

Caleb Bauer stated that will be presented next.

Committee Vice Chair White asked how the City plans to move forward with the lack of retention in SBARC.

Caleb Bauer stated that the City needs to start thinking that SBARC is a part of the mission to ensure public safety.



Committee Chair Niezgodski expressed concern for the lack of retention and for losing the Building Department position.

Committee Chair Niezgodski asked if the the part time veterinary position is eliminated would that also eliminate the salary ordinance.

Caleb Bauer stated that the part-time positions are governed in the salary ordinance by the part-time cap and no amendements are neccesary to recreate this job.

Committee Chair Niezgodski asked in regard to the loss (elimination) of the Building Department position, how many employees will be supervised and are those positions currently filled.

Caleb Bauer stated that the new position will be supervising three (3) people and those roles are currently filled.

Committee Chair Niezgodski asked if SBARC is planning on future expansion.

Caleb Bauer stated that there is no definitive timeline or identified budget but expansion was discussed when the building was constructed.

Caleb Bauer highlighted the different accomplishments throughout each team in the Department of Community Investment. These accomplishments included, but were not limited to, installing three (3) elecric vehicle charging stations throughout the City, being awarded forty-four (44) grants totaling five hundred sixty-five thousand two hundred forty-four dollars (\$565,244), launched the South Bend Financial Empowerment Center, lead remediation work completed at fourteen (14) homes, two hundred twenty-nine adoptions by SBARC, and four hundred five interactions with unsheltered individuals to provide connections to services and resources. Caleb Baur presented the final budget to be seven point four-nine percent (7.49%) while providing an overview of major upcoming and ongoing projects with emphasis on Four Winds Field, Drewrys redevelopment, and Coal Line Trail.

Committee Member Tomas Morgan asked if the one hundred fifty-seven million dollars (157,000,000) for city cost sharing projects are private investment dollars.

Caleb Bauer clarified that the City had been involved in some way whether it was a tax abatement, development agreement, or a vibrant places program match. Caleb Bauer also stated that he would follow up with year to date permit valuations.

Committee Member Tomas Morgan thanked Caleb for his presentation.

Council President Lee thanked Caleb Bauer for his presentation and asked what was the deciding factor to cut the eviction prevention program and what would the Department want to see in regard to a partner organization.

Caleb Bauer stated that there has been an underutilization of those funds and have tried to work with other partner agenices to deploy those funds. Caleb Bauer also stated that the goal of these funds is primarily legal assistance.



Council President Lee asked how the Department is funneling South Bend residents to the new housing developments and opportunities.

Caleb Bauer stated that for example, with the Housing Authority Project on the very low income, those units will be made available first to the individuals displaced by the demolition of the Rabbi Shulman and Monroe Circle.

Councilmember Gooden-Rodgers thanked Caleb Bauer for making the application process more streamlined and asked when the applications would be released.

Caleb Bauer stated that there is not an exact date but will be released by the end of the year.

Committee Chair Niezgodski asked if the new consolidated platform will include landlord registration.

Caleb Bauer answered yes, landlord registration is included.

Committee Chair Niezgodski asked for clarification on the large budget cut from the office of sustainability.

Caleb Bauer stated this is due to the elimination of all of the new programming created as part of the American Rescue Plan which includes the project manager position, the partnership with nonprofits and businesses, and the elimination of the Greener Homes program.

Committee Chair Niezgodski opened the public hearing.

Tom Anderson, 535 Riverside Drive, South Bend, IN 46601, expressed concern for SBARC employees and spoke in favor of the SBARC salary increase.

Steve Frances, 54174 Juday Lake Drive West, South Bend, IN 46635, spoke in opposition of the budget cut and the elimination of the program manager position in the office of sustainability.

Committee Chair Niezgodski closed the public hearing.

With no further business, Committee Chair Niezgodski adjourned the Personnel & Finance Committee meeting at 8:05 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sheila Niezgodski, Committee Chair

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