

NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
DATE: OCTOBER 19, 2020
TIME: 7:01 P.M.
PLACE: HELD REMOTELY IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS' MARCH 12, 2020 ORDER SUSPENDING CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF THE OPEN MEETING LAW G. L. C. 30A, SECTION 20 AND THE CITY COUNCIL'S VOTE TO WAIVE RULE 21A

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS LINDA MORAD, CHAIRPERSON; IAN ABREU, VICE CHAIRMAN; DEREK BAPTISTE; NAOMI CARNEY; DEBORA COELHO; HUGH DUNN; MARIA GIESTA; BRIAN GOMES (7:05); SCOTT LIMA; JOSEPH LOPES; WILLIAM BRAD MARKEY

ABSENT: NO ONE

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Councillor Morad called the Finance Committee Meeting to order and took attendance, everyone was present.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting AN ORDER for the TRANSFER of \$1,250,000.00 from the WATER STABILIZATION FUND to WATER CAPITAL OUTLAY (Ref'd 09/24/2020) was received and placed on file by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Abreu. (1, 1a)

Jamie Ponte, DPI Commissioner, gave an overview of the money request. He told the Committee that the Street work on Cottage Street to Parker Street, Nelson Street to County Street to Crapo Street was scheduled work to replace lead pipes, turned in to a larger project, it was discovered that watermaines needed to be replaced. The amount of work affected the integrity of the surface of the road and it was decided it was best to redo the streets, curbing and sidewalks, thus the request for the \$1,250,000.

Councillor Abreu asked if this a way to address infrastructure issue, and he was told it is a good way to supplement the bond that was already approved to do the original work. He explained the more they did in the areas, the more they discovered additional work was needed and that it was better to take from their stabilization fund then to take a loan out on it.

Councillor Lima asked if the Commissioner was comfortable in taking the money from the stabilization fund. He was told he was, and that there is currently 6.7 million dollars in the fund and that this would bring them down to 5.5 million dollars. It is a good practice to have 20% of your budget saved in the stabilization fund and this is more than the 20%.

Councillor Baptiste asked if this would solve the flooding problems in specific areas when it rains, and he was told it would because they will either adjust the curbing or add to it. It should address any past flooding issues.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Abreu, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER, for the TRANSFER of \$1,250,000.00 from the WAER STABILIZATION FUND to the WATER CAPITAL OUTLAY. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 11, Nays 0.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Lopes, requesting that a Representative from ABC Disposal attend the next Committee on Finance meeting to discuss issues with garbage and recycling pickup (To be Referred to the Committee on Finance, Director of Facilities and Fleet Management and the City Solicitor.) (Ref'd 06/11/2020) (06/22/2020 – tabled 30 days) (Due to the fact that the City is currently litigating certain issues with ABC Disposal, the possibility exists that information related to this particular matter may need to be provided in Executive Session if it is determined that public disclosure of the information could jeopardize the City's litigating position.) was removed from the table by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Dunn. (2)

Councillor Lopes thanked Michael Camara, CFO of ABC Disposal for addressing his concerns after the last Committee meeting.

Michael Camara, CFO, ABC Disposal gave an overview of the changes implemented since the last meeting. He has hired more drivers, repaired side load issues on trucks, and ABC now has a complete fleet servicing the city. They have a new automated system that will keep track of pickups as they are done. The computer system will read the bar codes on the containers and register the pickup. If the barrels are not out, it will not register, but the drivers are instructed to take an iPad photo of the house with the containers not out, in case there is any question.

Councillor Giesta asked about blow debris, when dumping trash does escape and blows away. How is this being addressed. She was told they have made repairs to containers so this should not be an issue moving forward. He also stated that the drivers have been instructed to pick up any blow away debris.

Councillor Morad asked DFFM Commissioner Mark Champagne if he was satisfied with the improvements taken by ABC and he said he was and that there have been less calls since the last meeting. He also stated the new computer program will have portal access for the City to view the pickups should there be any questions or concerns. He is overly satisfied with the way things are moving forward.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Abreu the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council to take "No Further Action" on the WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Lopes, requesting that a Representative from ABC Disposal attend the next Committee on Finance meeting to discuss issues with garbage and recycling pickup. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Councillor Morad, submitting an email and spreadsheet from CFO Sky regarding the City's current COVID-19 Expenses as of June 5th (To be Referred to the Committee on Finance) (Ref'd 06/25/2020) was received and placed on file by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Markey. (3)

Ari Sky, CFO, was present and gave an overview of the COVID-19 spending since the Committees last discussion in June. There have been \$2,647,000 in expenses, approximately \$150,000 more than projected. They have been reimbursed \$1,000,000 thus far, \$400,000 from FEMA so far, and through the CARES Act. He believes they will be reimbursed in full of both entities. In fact, the city may not reach their \$8,000,000 in funding they were granted. He did express concern after 12/20 when the funding is supposed to end, he believes after the election, whatever administration there is they will have done something to continue funding. Especially since it is projected that COVID is not going away.

Councillor Morad asked if nursing homes were included in the 2.6-million-dollar figure and she was told that it was. She asked if funding could be used to add an additional point of access for handicapped individuals at City Hall other than just the single one. She was told that this was not a possibility based on the way the spending rules are written.

Councillor Lopes asked if overtime is covered under this agreement, and he was told it was, most of the overtime is regaled to Fire and EMS and the reconstruction of City Hall to become COVID ready to open up City Hall, for example the work done to the Ashley Room, the School Departments custodial overtime for cleaning etc. would be reimbursable as well.

Councillor Markey asked what the \$1,000,000 reimbursement consisted of, and he was told \$676,000 from the CARES Act and \$392,000 from FEMA.

Councillor Lopes asked if funding could be used for the improvement of MIS services, for example servers. He was told some items are reimbursable, for example laptop computers for employees to work from home and the like.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Giesta, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter at this time. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Giesta, the Committee VOTED: To waive the reading of items 4, 4a, 5 and 6, take "No Further Action" and report out to the City Council. This motion passed on a voice vote. They are as follows:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Abreu, Giesta, Dunn, Lopes, Lima and Markey, requesting that the Committee on Finance, a Representative of the Mayor's Office, Chief Financial Officer Sky and a Representative of the Economic Development Council discuss the feasibility of implementing a "rent rebate" program, which has helped revitalize economic development in other gateway

cities throughout the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; the program would entitle qualifying business owners moving into vacant storefront/buildings a partial rent rebate in both their first and second years of operation to help them get started, the City would accept applications for consideration of locations all throughout New Bedford, there would be a priority focus on development in the north, south and west-end Mixed-Use Business districts. (To be Referred to the Committee on Finance.) (Ref'd 04/26/18) (05/16/18-Chair to create a subcommittee to discuss feasibility of a rent rebate program; tabled) (06/20/18-tabled 60 days) (4)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Councillor Abreu, submitting a copy of the City of Taunton's Rent Rebate Program Applicant Guidelines. (To be Referred to the Committee on Finance.) (Ref'd 04/26/18) (05/16/18-Chair to create a subcommittee to discuss feasibility of a rent rebate program; tabled) (06/20/18-tabled 60 days) (4a)

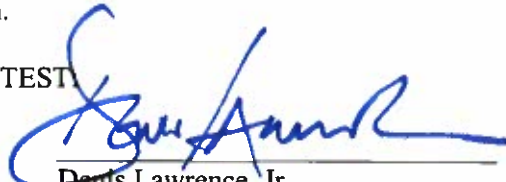
Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Derek Santos, Executive Director, New Bedford Economic Development Council, to the City Council, submitting the New Bedford Tax Increment Financing Board's Annual Program Report for 2019. (Copy all Councillors – January 31, 2020.) (Ref'd 02/13/2020) (5)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Council President Lopes submitting a copy of an email from Assistant City Solicitor Jaikes, regarding the background information on the two closed nursing homes in New Bedford to deal with Covid-19 patients. (Ref'd 05/14/2020) (6)

Councillor Giesta made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Markey.

This meeting adjourned @ 7:49 p.m.

ATTEST



Denis Lawrence, Jr.,
Clerk of Committees