

**NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS**

**MEETING:** COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
**DATE:** MAY 17, 2021  
**TIME:** 7:00 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  
(REMOTELY); JOSEPH LOPES, VICE CHAIRMAN  
(REMOTELY); IAN ABREU (REMOTELY); NAOMI CARNEY  
(REMOTELY); DEBORA COELHO (REMOTELY); HUGH  
DUNN (REMOTELY); MARIA GIESTA (REMOTELY); BRIAN  
GOMES (REMOTELY); SCOTT LIMA (REMOTELY); WILLIAM  
BRAD MARKEY (REMOTELY)

**ABSENT:** COUNCILLOR DEREK BAPTISTE

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Councillor Morad called the Finance Committee Meeting to order and took attendance. The Clerk announced he received a call from Councillor Baptiste stating he had a family commitment and would not be attending tonight's Finance Committee meeting.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Derek Santos, Executive Director, New Bedford Economic Development Council, to Council President Lopes and Members of the City Council, submitting TIF Agreement and Resolution for a ten (10) year Agreement for **ServedWell New Bedford, LLC, 1480 East Rodney French Boulevard, New Bedford, MA 02744** (Copies provided and distributed to all Councillors on April 5, 2021.) (Ref'd 04/08/2021) were received and placed on file by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Abreu. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 10, Nays 0, with Councillors Abreu, yes; Carney, yes; Coelho, yes; Dunn, yes; Giesta, yes; Gomes, yes; Lima, yes; Lopes, yes; Markey, yes and Morad, yes. (1, 1a)

Councillor Morad excused herself from the discussion as her employment is where the applicant has received their loan to finance the project on East Rodney French Boulevard; Vice Chairman, Councillor Lopes took the Chair.

Ramon Silva, Senior Director of New Bedford Economic Development Council gave an overview of the TIF. The project at 1480 and 1495 East Rodney French Boulevard will result in a \$4,400,000 investment in the City. This will be the location for the Cisco Kitchen and Bar. The plan is to rehab the building, the parking area, create a sand area, with event access, portable kiosks, replacing dock and mooring on the premises. It will result in the creation of 45 full-time job and 100 part-time seasonal jobs.

Steve Silverstein the applicant, explained that this project has been in the works for the past 2 ½ years; but was slowed down because of COVID. The goal is to open the restaurant side by June 14, 2021 and the entertainment side by June 21, 2021. He also explained that the original budget of \$4,400,000 has now increased to a \$5,400,000 investment. There will be a multitude of infrastructures that will need to be done on the property to include hi-tech drainage systems.

Councillor Markey asked if the TIF is applicable net of the proposed improvements and not the property itself. He was told yes, the TIF was applicable to the increased value.

Councillor Abreu asked the applicant to give a description of the other businesses he currently operates in the city. He was told, they included The Black Whale, The Whale's Tale, and others.

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Giesta, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the TIF Agreement and Resolution for a ten (10) year Agreement for ServedWell New Bedford, LLC, 1480 East Rodney French Boulevard, New Bedford, MA 02744. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 9, Nays 0, with Councillors Abreu, yes; Carney, yes; Coelho, yes; Dunn, yes; Giesta, yes; Gomes, yes; Lima, yes; Lopes, yes; Markey, yes and Councillor Morad not present for the vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a RELATED MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting that the Committee on Finance be provided with a Y-T-D expenditure of all salaries and overtime associated with the Fire Department. (Ref'd 02/25/2021) (Chair Suggests Referral to the Quasi-Committee of the Whole for the 2022 Budget Review) (2)

On motion by Councillor Gomes and seconded by Councillor Giesta, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council to receive and place on file and refer to the Quasi Committee of the Whole for the 2022 Budget Review. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 10, Nays 0, Councillors Abreu, yes; Carney, yes; Coelho, yes; Dunn, yes; Giesta, yes; Gomes, yes; Lima, yes; Lopes, yes; Markey, yes and Morad, yes.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Council President Lopes, Councillors Lima, Markey and Morad, requesting that the Mitchell Administration and the Department of Public Infrastructure establish a payment plan for all past due / outstanding water and sewer bills incurred during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the payment plan shall be structured so that all past due amounts are paid in full by the end of April 2022; and further that details of the payment plan along with the verbiage being sent to the rate payers be shared with the members of the New Bedford City Council within the next 30 days (To be Referred to the Mitchell Administration and the Committee on Finance.) (Ref'd 04/08/2021) was received and placed on file by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Giesta. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 10, Nays 0, with Councillors Abreu, yes; Carney, yes; Coelho, yes; Dunn, yes; Giesta, yes; Gomes, yes; Lima, yes; Lopes, yes; Markey, yes and Morad, yes. (3)

Commissioner Ponte explained that he had not yet finished the plan to recover delinquent payment as it related to water from residents and business. He asked for an additional thirty (30) days.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Gomes, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter until after the Budget Hearings. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 9, Nays 1, with Councillors Abreu, yes; Carney, yes; Coelho, yes; Dunn, yes; Giesta, yes; Gomes, yes; Lima, yes; Lopes, yes; Markey, yes and Morad, no.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, requesting an opportunity for relevant City staff and Consultants to brief the City Council regarding proposed upcoming Wastewater and Stormwater Capital Improvement Projects identified through the City's recently completed integrated plan as well to discuss anticipated financial implications and proposed sewer rates increases associated with the Plan (Ref'd 03/12/2020) (07/13/2020 - tabled) (03/31/2021 – tabled) was removed from the table and received and placed on file by Councillor Lima and seconded by Councillor Dunn. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 9, Nays 1, with Councillors Abreu, yes; Carney, yes; Coelho, yes; Dunn, yes; Giesta, yes; Gomes, yes; Lima, yes; Lopes, yes; Markey, yes and Morad, no. (4)

Jaime Ponte, DPI Commissioner, reviewed the Power point previously presented and highlighted the differences from his last presentation. The discussion revolved around the increase in funding in the various options, including \$3,200,000.

The proposed \$3,200,000 includes COVID relief money and \$1,200,000 from Wastewater reserves. If this option is approved it would result in fee increases starting in 2022 at 11% and would be adjusted yearly to 2025 at 15%, 10.5%, 8.5% and 7.5%.

Councillor Lopes suggested using \$3,200,000 in COVID relief funding and leave the existing sewer funds alone. He explained there would be no difference between using the \$3,000,000 from the \$2,000,000 proposal submitted for consideration, as well.

Councillor Lima asked if the first tranche received could be used towards this project and he was told the first amount to be received is \$3,200,000, but they are not clear how it can be used. There were guidelines issued May 19<sup>th</sup>, but they are being re-written and should be received by the end of May. He could not say at this point if they could be applied.

Throughout the discussion, Councillors Morad and Carney expressed their concerns about moving to increase the fees, when the City has not explored or determined the full amount of other funding sources that may be applied to lessen the burden of the taxpayers. They expressed their frustration that the average taxpayer could see upwards to a \$700 increase over the next five (5) years.

Commissioner Ponte understood their frustration but explained that a decision needs to be made because it must be in place prior to accepting the budget for FY22. He told them that currently his department is operating at a deficit.

Councillor Markey asked the terms of the loan from the States revolving loan fund and he was told it was a 20 to 30-year loan at approximately 3%.

Councillor Morad asked why the City was not looking to use \$4,000,000 in relief money to help the taxpayer and lessen their contribution to these projects. Commissioner Ponte explained that should they not be able to apply COVID relief money that he had enough in stabilization funds that he could apply to the projects allowing the City to meet the federal governments infrastructure improvement directives.

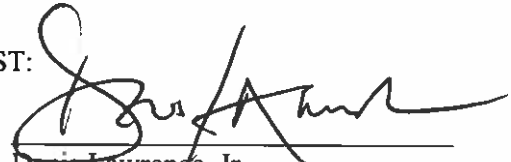
Robert Ekstrom, City Auditor, told the Committee that there will be money coming in that can be applied to these types of wastewater projects, but he is not sure when it will come in.

On motion by Councillor Lopes and seconded by Councillor Giesta, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council that the City use \$3,200,000 of the American Rescue Plan funds to set the water sewer rates for 2021 through 2026. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yea 6, Nays 3, with Councillors Abreu, yes; Dunn, yes; Giesta, yes; Lima, yes; Lopes, yes; Markey, yes and Councillors Carney, no; Gomes, no; Morad, no and Councillor Coelho not present for the vote.

Councillor Lopes made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Giesta. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 8, Nays 0, with Councillors Abreu, yes; Carney, yes; Dunn, yes; Giesta, yes; Lima, yes; Lopes, yes; Markey, yes, Morad, yes and Councillors Coelho and Gomes not present for the vote.

This meeting adjourned @ 8:25 p.m.

ATTEST:



Denis Lawrence, Jr.,  
Clerk of Committees