

NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
DATE: AUGUST 11, 2022
TIME: 7:00 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS WILLIAM BRAD MARKEY, CHAIRMAN; SCOTT LIMA, VICE CHAIRMAN; IAN ABREU; DEREK BAPTISTE (7:04); SHANE BURGO (7:11); NAOMI CARNEY; HUGH DUNN; MARIA GIESTA; BRIAN GOMES; LINDA MORAD; RYAN PEREIRA

ABSENT: NO ONE

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Councillor Markey called the Finance Committee Meeting to order and took attendance; everyone was present.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a REPORT, Committee on Finance, recommending to the City Council APPROVAL of the LOAN ORDER, appropriating \$11,170,000 for the purpose of making critically needed repairs to City-owned buildings, including but not limited to projects for the repair and renovation of public safety facilities, recreational facilities, general office space, and roads and infrastructure and all cost incidental and related thereto (Ref'd back to Finance Committee on 07/21/2022) was received and placed on file by Councillor Carney and seconded by Councillor Dunn. (1, 1a)

Mike Gagne, Interim CFO was present and gave an overview of the Loan Order, which then opened the floor to questions from the Committee.

Mr. Lunsford, Zoo Director, and Ms. Shara Raposa were present from the Zoo to answer questions from the Committee. Councillor Morad asked if the prior CIP funds that were approved by the Council were expended and she was told that all but \$500,000 had been spent, but the remaining amount would be spent as planned. The additional funds in the new order will allow for several improvements to include exhibits, renovation of the old barn on the property, new bathrooms to make them ADA compliant, exterior façade, new windows, a new educational space for children as well as the redesign and replacement of the HVAC systems in the Vet Clinic area and the Zoo rainforests, rivers, and reefs humidification system.

Councillor Lima asked what financial contribution the Zoological Foundation makes towards the Zoo and was told they are very instrumental in raising additional funds and currently have raised \$2,106,500 which included matching funds.

Jaime Ponte, DPI Commissioner, was present and gave an overview for the need to repair a facility shed.

Councillor Morad asked several questions as it related to the need to spend \$850,000 of taxpayer's money at a time when taxpayers are having a difficult enough time paying their current taxes, that the approval of this loan order will result in a tax increase for businesses and homeowners. Commissioner Ponte explained that if he did not feel that his department needed this to do proper repairs to large equipment indoors, especially during the winter months, he would not be asking for this funding.

Councillor Carney also questioned the timing and need for this shed financially as it will place an additional burden on taxpayers.

Jonathan Nunes, Assistant Director of MIS, was present and explained the request for additional funds would allow MIS to complete their communication tower installment. The past funds allocated were used to complete 4 of the 6 towers needed. These funds would allow for the final two.

Jennifer Vieira, Acting DFFM Director, was present and addressed questions as it relates to the South Public Annex request. She informed the Committee that there was a total of \$2,000 remaining in the original Public Safety Building left.

Police Chief Oliveira was present and was asked about the need for additional funding for public safety equipment, he stated the funding would be used towards the purchase of tasers. He also explained that the city's public safety communications system would be upgraded to include EMS and Fire. To do this there is an extra cost involved. He went on to explain that he believes the cost to be fair and reasonable and that the vendor was honoring the original purchase price even though the pricing has increased since the original agreement.

Mike Gagne, Interim CFO was asked by Councillor Morad, why the city is looking to renovate the Purchase Street building rather than the city selling it. He stated that the Administration has expressed an interest of using the building for another purpose. Christine Connelly of the Mayor's office was also recognized on this issue. She explained that the Administration was looking to move the Community Development Office from the upper level of the Art Museum to the Purchase Street building.

Several Councillors voiced their concerns about renovating the building as opposed to selling it and putting it back on the city tax rolls.

Jennifer Vieira, Acting DFFM Director, was asked about the Wilks Library expenditure. Ms. Vieira explained that the funds would replace the library windows, create an ADA compliant entrance, alarm improvements, emergency lighting as well as a boiler replacement. She was asked if the allotted \$570,000 would be enough to complete the projects presented and she replied that it would.

Brian Nobrega, Emergency Management Director was present and explained the plan is to put their current Kempton Street location up for sale and move this department to the former Station 6. He acknowledged that the Station 6 property was currently in the Property Committee, but that the Administration would be looking to put it back into use. This new space would allow for storage area of all COVID supplies as well as room for offices and vehicles. The money's requested would allow for some immediate repairs needed to allow them to move into the building.

Councillor Morad asked Project Manager, Nick Pereira if the house tower, which is leaking causing damage to the station could be removed, rather than just repaired, to prevent further damage to the facility in the future, and he responded he believed it could.

Jaime Ponte, DPI Commissioner was asked questions as it related to the \$3,000,000 request for roads and infrastructure. The Committee asked that they be provided with a list of proposed street repairs. He explained the funds would be used in conjunction with funds received from the state and would apply to utility related improvements as well as improvements to roads and sidewalks. This would be a part of the pavement management program initiated in 2017. He explained that there is a 20% increase in the allocation as it related to previous years.

Attorney Gerwatowski, Legal Counsel to the City Council was asked by Councillor Morad if the Committee can reduce specific projects that are a part of this loan order request and he explained to the Committee that they could not specifically cut items. They could however, cut the funding amount and let the Administration know why and from where they had made the reduction. However, the Administration could still do the project with the funds that were approved. He went on to explain that if she wanted to make a cut that may fail, she should start with the higher of the figures and continue to make amendments that she deems fit.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: To reduce the Loan Order by \$2,250,000 (\$900,000 Pleasant Street Renovations; \$850,000 DPI Shed; \$500,000 Roads & Infrastructure) for a total of \$8,920,000. This motion FAILED on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 3, Nays 8, with Councillors Carney, Gomes, Morad, in favor.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: To reduce the Loan Order by \$1,750,000 (\$900,000 Pleasant Street Renovations; \$850,000 DPI Shed) for a total of \$9,420,000. This motion FAILED on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 3, Nays 8, with Councillors Carney, Gomes, Morad, in favor.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: To reduce the Loan Order by \$1,400,000 (\$900,000 Pleasant Street Renovations; \$500,000 Roads & Infrastructure) for a total of \$9,770,000. This motion FAILED on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 3, Nays 8, with Councillors Carney, Gomes, Morad, in favor.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: To reduce the Loan Order by \$1,350,000 (\$850,000 DPI Shed; \$500,000 Roads & Infrastructure) for a total of \$9,820,000. This motion FAILED on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 3, Nays 8, with Councillors Carney, Gomes, Morad, in favor.

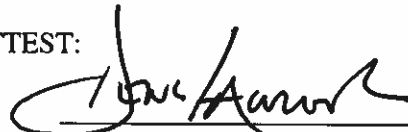
On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Lima, the Committee VOTED: To reduce the Loan Order by \$900,000 for the Pleasant Street Renovations, for a total of \$10,270,000. This motion PASSED on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 6, Nays 5, with Councillors Abreu, Burgo, Dunn, Markey, Pereira, opposed.

On motion by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Dunn, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the LOAN ORDER, AS AMENDED, appropriating \$10,270,000 for the purpose of making critically needed repairs to City-owned buildings, including but not limited to projects for the repair and renovation of public safety facilities, recreational facilities, general office space and roads ad infrastructure and all cost incidental and related thereto. This motion PASSED on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 9, Nays 2, with Councillors Carney and Morad opposed.

Councillor Morad made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Burgo.

This meeting adjourned @ 9:20 p.m.

ATTEST:



Denis Lawrence, Jr.,
Clerk of Committees