



## **CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS**

**MEETING: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**  
**DATE: APRIL 24, 2023**  
**TIME: 7:00 P.M.**  
**PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214**

**PRESENT: COUNCILLORS WILLIAM BRAD MARKEY, CHAIRMAN; IAN ABREU; SHANE BURGO; NAOMI CARNEY; MARIA GUESTA; BRIAN GOMES (7:13); LINDA MORAD; SHAWN OLIVER**

**ABSENT: COUNCILLORS DEREK BAPTISTE; SCOTT LIMA; RYAN PEREIRA**

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Councillor Markey called the Finance Committee meeting to order and took attendance. The Clerk read Communications into the record from Councillors Baptiste, Lima and Pereira explaining their absences. The Communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Abreu. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting ORDERS for the TRANSFER out of the FREE CASH ACCOUNT, to the STABILIZATION FUND in the amount of \$3,217,704.00; to the STABILIZATION FUND in the amount of \$6,151,689; to the OPED TRUST FUND in the amount of \$1,287,082.00; to FACILITIES AND FLEET, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$495,000.00; to FACILITIES AND FLEET, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$85,500.00; to EMPLOYEES BENEFITS, CHARGES & SERVICES in the amount of \$166,077.00; to ZOO, CHARGES & SERVICES in the amount of \$70,000.00; to ZOO, SUPPLIES & MATERIALS in the amount of \$22,766.00; to POLICE, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$400,000.00; to POLICE, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$375,000.00; to GENERAL GOVERNMENT UNCLASSIFIED, CHARGES & SERVICES in the amount of \$100,000.00; to PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$300,000.00 and to PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$200,000.00 (Ref'd 04/13/2023); AN ORDER, (STABILIZATION FUND in the amount of \$3,217,704.00) (Ref'd 04/13/2023); AN ORDER, (STABILIZATION FUND in the amount of \$6,151,689.00) (Ref'd 04/13/2023); AN ORDER, (OPED TRUST FUND in the amount of \$1,287,082.00) (Ref'd 04/13/2023); AN ORDER, (FACILITIES AND FLEET, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$495,000.00) (Ref'd 04/13/2023); AN ORDER, (FACILITIES AND FLEET, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$85,500.00) (Ref'd 04/13/2023); AN ORDER, (EMPLOYEES BENEFITS, CHARGES & SERVICES in the amount of \$166,077.00) (Ref'd 04/13/2023); AN ORDER, (ZOO, CHARGES & SERVICES in the amount of \$70,000.00; ZOO, SUPPLIES & MATERIALS in the amount of \$22,766.00) (Ref'd 04/13/2023); AN ORDER, (POLICE, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$400,000.00) (Ref'd 04/13/2023); AN ORDER, (POLICE, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$375,000.00) (Ref'd 04/13/2023); AN ORDER, (GENERAL GOVERNMENT UNCLASSIFIED, CHARGES & SERVICES in the amount of \$100,000.00) (Ref'd 04/13/2023); AN ORDER, (PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$300,000.00) (Ref'd 04/13/2023); AN ORDER, (PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$200,000.00) (Ref'd 04/13/2023) were received and placed on file by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Oliver. This motion passed on a voice vote. (1, 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 1f, 1g, 1h, 1i, 1j, 1k, 1l)

The Chair recognized Emily Arpke, Deputy CFO/Auditor. Ms. Arpke gave an overview of the Transfer Orders submitted by the Administration. She shared that the State has issued their Free Cash Certification, which is done annually and was completed last month. New Bedford received \$12.87 million in free cash for the year. This is a higher amount than in previous years because last year the City had an amount certified but none of the funds were appropriated, so the remaining figure was essentially added to the amount that would be used this year.

Free cash is certified based on the budget by either having a surplus in revenues than were initially expected or having expenditures that were expected to be spent but were not. 80% of Massachusetts municipalities had an increase in revenue amounts, and when you removed Boston and Springfield from the equation, most municipalities received an increase in free cash that was 34% higher than usual.

In FY2014, a policy was adopted to place 25% of free cash into stabilization funds and 10% into the OPED Trust. Last year the City utilized \$6.1 million to settle the Police Department contract with the intent of returning it back to the stabilization fund. This brings the stabilization amount to \$15.1 million.

In addition to the stabilization Orders, there are Orders for Capital Improvement Projects (work to be completed at various Fire Stations), Unit C Reclassification (to avoid budget deficits), Buttonwood Zoo (budget deficits resulting from veterinary and surgical costs), Police Department (purchase of six frontline vehicles and installation of new tablets and laptops in cruisers), costs associated with a comprehensive review of the City's emergency plan, and the purchase of a new street sweeper.

Councillor Morad asked Ms. Arpke if the City had any discussion about making a double contribution to the OPED Trust account considering no funds were deposited last fiscal year. She was told it was discussed but decided against because the City did budget for it in FY23 as a part of the operating budget. She asked if there would be a surplus at the end of FY23. She was told there would be a surplus and that they were working to determine what that amount would be. She asked why these funds needed to be addressed tonight and not later. Ms. Arpke explained that they had to be appropriated before the end of the fiscal year or the City would lose the funds.

Councillor Markey asked if the surplus was attributed to the increase in State and Federal reimbursements as well as meal and room taxes collected. He was told yes, and that there was at least \$1 million in local receipts.

Jennifer Viera, DFFM Director, was recognized and gave an overview of the funding to be allocated to the Fire Department. She explained that the funds would be used to repair and replace the bathrooms at the downtown Fire Station and to upgrade the electrical system at Fire Station #5. Councillor Morad asked if these items went out to bid and was told that DFFM does have estimates on file.

Shara Rapoza, Assistant Director of Buttonwood Zoo, was recognized. Councillor Morad asked if the Zoo had a full time Veterinarian yet and was told that they do now. However, the Zoo had gone a full year without a Vet on staff. They had to retain services from outside veterinary practices, resulting in increased expenses.

Police Chief Paul Olivera was recognized. Councillor Morad asked when the last time the cruiser tablets were replaced; she was told it had been five years. The Chief went on to say that the new computers were state-of-the-art and that the time had come to replace the old ones. He was asked if the old ones would be used elsewhere; he was unsure, but stated that if they were, they would be sent to the City as surplus.

Councillor Markey asked if all the frontline vehicles would have new tablets. He was told yes, frontline cars and detective vehicles as well and added that the new units are portable. Once they are secured, a training session will be scheduled.

Jamie Ponte, DPI Commissioner, was recognized. Councillor Morad asked about the new street sweeper. He explained it would be a smaller more efficient model that would not require a CDL license to operate. It is state-of-the-art and will also spray water. The Commissioner was asked if the City lights are checked on a regular basis. He answered that they were, at the very least 1 to 2 nights a week. If they need repairs, they are added to a list and repairs are done as needed. He reminded the Committee that he only has one electrician on staff and that it is difficult to hire electricians due to the starting salary.

Councillor Gomes stressed the importance in keeping up the street light maintenance be it bulbs, poles, or bases. Commissioner Ponte explained that the City does contract with a private entity to take care of the traffic lights, freeing up his electrician to address other issues. He assured the Committee that he is always in the process of recruiting electricians.

On motion by Councillor Morad and seconded by Councillor Gomes, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDERS for the TRANSFER out of the FREE CASH ACCOUNT, to the STABILIZATION FUND in the amount of \$3,217,704.00; to the STABILIZATION FUND in the amount of \$6,151,689; to the OPED TRUST FUND in the amount of \$1,287,082.00; to FACILITIES AND FLEET, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$495,000.00; to FACILITIES AND FLEET, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$85,500.00; to EMPLOYEES BENEFITS, CHARGES & SERVICES in the amount of \$166,077.00; to ZOO, CHARGES & SERVICES in the amount of \$70,000.00; to ZOO, SUPPLIES & MATERIALS in the amount of \$22,766.00; to POLICE, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$400,000.00; to POLICE, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$375,000.00; to GENERAL GOVERNMENT UNCLASSIFIED, CHARGES & SERVICES in the amount of \$100,000.00; to PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$300,000.00 and to PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, CAPITAL OUTLAY in the amount of \$200,000.00. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Councillor Giesta made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Abreu. This motion passed on a voice vote.

This meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

ATTEST:

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Denis Lawrence Jr.  
Clerk of Committees