



City of Fitchburg Massachusetts 01420

CITY COUNCIL

Councilors at Large

Marcus L. DiNatale
Amy L. Green
Michael P. Kushmerek
Samantha M. Squailia
Anthony M. Zarrella

President

Michael P. Kushmerek

Vice President

Elizabeth R. Walsh

Ward Councilors

Ward 1 – Bernard J. Schultz, III
Ward 2 – Paul R. Beauchemin
Ward 3 – Andrew J. Couture
Ward 4 – Andrew J. Van Hazinga
Ward 5 – Marisa R. Fleming
Ward 6 – Elizabeth R. Walsh

Finance Committee

A meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order by Chairman DiNatale on Tuesday, March 10, 2020 at 6:00 PM in the Memorial Middle School Library, 615 Rollstone Street, Fitchburg, MA.

Committee Members present: Councilors Paul Beauchemin, Marcus DiNatale, Michael Kushmerek, and Anthony Zarrella.

Committee Members absent: Councilor Elizabeth Walsh.

The chairman read an announcement regarding the recording of public meetings, noting that FATV was recording and broadcasting the meeting. No other person stated they were recording the meeting.

The chairman opened the meeting for public comment. No one spoke.

059-20 ORDER: that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, Department of Fire Services grant in the approximate amount of \$6,448.94 (SIX THOUSAND, FOUR HUNDRED FORTY-EIGHT AND 94/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of said grant, which is to purchase Washer-Extractor equipment.

Discussion: Fire Chief Kevin Roy was present. He stated that in 2016 the department bought two washers for the substations. In 2017 through a fundraiser, the department was able to outfit all three stations with new dryer units. The washer at the North Street Station is twenty-one years old and parts are becoming difficult to get, so this washer will be replaced with a new one acquired with the grant funds.

Action: Motion to approve made by Councilor Kushmerek second by Councilor Zarrella.
Approved: 4-0.

060-20 ORDER: that there be and is hereby appropriated the sum of SIX HUNDRED THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$600,000.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to DPW, CAPITAL EXPENDITURES, ARBOR WAY REPAIR for the purpose of repairing the retaining walls that support Arbor Way.

Discussion: Public Works Commissioner Nicolas Bosonetto was present. The chairman read a letter from Commissioner Bosonetto dated February 27, 2020. A plan showing where the work is to be done was handed out to councilors.

Councilors asked if the catch basin will be fixed first. Commissioner Bosonetto stated that the catch basin may have been located in the wrong place, but it is not the only cause of the problems. The work to be done will also address the catch basin.

Councilors expressed frustration with the Fitchburg Redevelopment Authority which built the road, but is not assisting with the repair costs. They recognized the need to make the repairs now in order to protect two business operations, but also pushed for the FRA to reimburse some of the costs. They also said the situation is unfortunate in that the city has to spend \$600,000 on work that directly affects only two businesses, rather than on projects that benefit all the residents.

Action: Motion to approve made by Councilor Kushmerek second by Councilor Zarrella.
Approved: 4-0.

061-20 ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of ELEVEN THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$11,000.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to the following COUNCIL ON AGING, EXPENSES accounts:

HEATING FUEL	\$4,000.00
BUILDING & GROUNDS	\$7,000.00

Discussion: Councilors asked about the request for funds for Heating Fuel. City Auditor Calvin Brooks explained that the budget for FY20 was for \$10,000, but that actual expenses for heating fuel in FY19 were just over \$14,000. This line item will be reviewed in the upcoming FY21 budget process. The funds requested for Building & Grounds arose because of unexpected repairs to the building during the year.

Action: Motion to approve made by Councilor Kushmerek second by Councilor Zarrella.
Approved: 4-0.

COMMUNICATION: Year 46 Community Block Grant Application

Discussion: The chairman read a letter from Mayor Stephen L. DiNatale dated February 27, 2020 and summarized the recommendations for funding which total \$1,112,414.

Councilor Beauchemin stated he was not happy with comments made about the Fitchburg School System in the application for the Spartacus Program, saying that the suspension rate numbers were overstated. He was unhappy with the Streetscapes proposal

because of its focus on downtown, while there are many other areas of the city that need work. He also expressed concern with the Abolitionist Park being proposed, because city resources for parks maintenance are already stretched thin. It was noted that the park will be owned by Fitchburg State University and they will be responsible for its maintenance.

Councilor Zarrella addressed the issue of the Streetscapes proposal, by saying that while a lot of areas need work, a scattershot approach will not work. It is better to focus on one area, transform it, and then move on. In reference to the request from Our Father's House, he pointed out that a rise in the homeless population in Fitchburg does not mean that the program is not effective. The problem may be growing as well. In the overall, the funding being requested in Year 46 is consistent with prior years.

Councilor Kushmerek reiterated that most of the programs in this year's application are reauthorizations of prior year spending. The process for Block Grant funding is long and elaborate with public hearings already held. He thought that organizations shouldn't have to sit through a critique of their work by the Finance Committee.

Councilor DiNatale agreed and added that past City Councils have rarely not approved the mayor's recommendations. He noted that the proposals have been vetted through a long process and most are a continuation from prior years.

Councilor Beauchemin stated that while he approves of most of the projects, he would be voting against the proposed motion because of the following three specific projects of which he does not approve: Fitchburg Abolitionist Park Phases I & II (\$5,000), Street Homeless Intervention Program, Our Father's House (\$28,000), and Fitchburg Downtown Coordinator (\$35,000).

Action: Motion to approve made by Councilor Kushmerek second by Councilor Zarrella.

Approved: 3-1 (Councilor Beauchemin in opposition, see above).

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Zarrella, second by Councilor Kushmerek. Approved 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:38 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Calvin D. Brooks, Clerk