



FITCHBURG CITY CLERK
2021 MAR 12 PM 12:45

City of Fitchburg Massachusetts 01420

CITY COUNCIL

Councilors at Large

Marcus L. DiNatale
Amy L. Green
Thomas C. Hughes
Samantha M. Squailia
Anthony M. Zarrella

President

Anthony M. Zarrella

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 held over the Zoom platform and live streamed at FATV Studios on Tuesday, March 9, 2021. The meeting was called to order by Chairman DiNatale at 6:11 PM.

Committee Members present: Councilors Paul Beauchemin, Marcus DiNatale, Thomas Hughes, Elizabeth Walsh, and Anthony Zarrella.

Committee Members absent: None.

The chairman opened the meeting for public comment. No one had registered to speak.

034-21 ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of THREE HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$350,000.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to STABILIZATION FUND.

Discussion: The chairman read a letter from the mayor dated February 24, 2021. The chairman noted that this appropriation helps keep the balance in the Stabilization Fund at just over 5% of the city budget, which is a threshold that the Department of Revenue recommended in its financial analysis of the city in 2008.

Councilors asked why not use these funds to pay for additional personnel in the Public Works Department. City Auditor Calvin Brooks explained that these funds are from Free Cash and so are one-time funds, whereas hiring additional personnel will require ongoing funding. Also, the bond markets look at what the city has put into the Stabilization Fund and look favorably on the city continuing to annually put money aside.

One Councilor expressed concern about the condition of city roads and prioritizing their improvement. Another Councilor reiterated what the City Auditor had said in that the city should not fund positions with one-time money. There is no guarantee that funds will be available in the next budget.

Councilors noted that the city budget is close to \$140 million and that there are needs across the spectrum of city government, not just public works. There are already pothole crews filling potholes. The Stabilization Fund had a balance of \$10,000 in 2008, the city's bond rating was junk, and the Department of Revenue had threatened receivership, so the city had to make major cuts in its budget. There were cuts in the current year budget, but they weren't as bad because of available funds and the fact that much of the revenue loss, such as in hotel excise tax, is temporary. A vote in favor of this order does not mean there aren't other problems in the city that need to be addressed. This order should be approved to maintain fiscal responsibility.

Action: Motion to approve made by Councilor Walsh and second by Councilor Zarrella.

Approved: Roll call vote—(4-1) Beauchemin (No), DiNatale (Yes), Hughes (Yes), Walsh (Yes), and Zarrella (Yes).

035-21 ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of THIRTY THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$30,000.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to FACILITIES, TAX POSSESSION MAINTENANCE account, for the purpose of preparing nine properties for the city property auction.

Discussion: Treasurer Anne Cervantes was present. The chairman read a letter from Ms. Cervantes dated November 13, 2020. She stated that the properties were tax possessions that had been abandoned and required a lot of work to ready them for auction and to make them safe. The tax possession auction realized about \$750,000.

Action: Motion to approve made by Councilor Walsh and second by Councilor Hughes.

Approved: Roll call vote— Beauchemin (Yes), DiNatale (Yes), Hughes (Yes), Walsh (Yes), and Zarrella (Yes).

037-21 ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of TEN THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$10,000.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to HUMAN RESOURCES, PERSONAL SERVICES, OVERTIME.

Discussion: Human Resources Director Susan Davis was present. She stated that over the last three years there has been a significant increase in workload within the department, which assumed responsibility for workers compensation in August, 2018. There are approximately 1,270 employees in the city and school departments. In addition to workers compensation, her department handles personnel matters, day to day work, and contracts—work that can't be done in a 35 hour work week. At the time it was created the HR Generalist position was thought to be sufficient to get the job done, but now she feels that more than one position is needed. Another recent challenge has been the Covid pandemic, which has added to the workload. She anticipates that this load will be the norm.

Councilors asked if the overtime will be in the budget for FY2022, and Ms. Davis answered yes. Councilors noted that in the private sector companies with fewer employees have larger Human Resources departments. While it is another area that needs additional bodies, now is not the time to add. Councilors thanked the director and her staff for the work they do. Ms. Davis did note that the employee count can increase during the summer with temporary labor. The workers compensation cases can get complicated and have taken more time than expected.

Councilors asked where workers compensation was handled previously. Ms. Davis said it used to be handled in the Treasurer's Office, but that it makes more sense to handle it in Human Resources, since they touch every department.

Councilors asked if the School Department can share in the cost. City Auditor Brooks replied that those costs are included in the school indirect charges.

Councilors thanked the staff for their hard work and asked if the amount requested is enough. Ms. Davis replied that the ideal would be to add a third person. She tries to manage the overtime as best as she can. More money in her budget would be nice, but there are other departmental budgets that need more staff. They need to be productive while working and be frugal with spending, because we are all in this together.

Action: Motion to approve made by Councilor Beauchemin and second by Councilor Walsh.
Approved: Roll call vote— Beauchemin (Yes), DiNatale (Yes), Hughes (Yes), Walsh (Yes), and Zarrella (Yes).

038-21 ORDER: that there be and hereby is transferred the sum of THREE HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$350,000.00) same to be charged against RESERVE FOR SNOW & ICE REMOVAL and credited to the following DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, SNOW & ICE accounts:

| | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| PERSONAL SERVICES, OVERTIME | \$ 10,000.00 |
| EQUIPMENT RENTAL | \$210,000.00 |
| PLOWS & BLADES | \$ 20,000.00 |
| SALT | \$110,000.00. |

Discussion: Commissioner of Public Works Nicolas Bosonetto was present. The chairman read a letter from Mr. Bosonetto dated February 23, 2021. Mr. Bosonetto reported that the department is doing pretty well with snow removal expenses and are running about 106% of average spending to date. The salt shed is full and there are reserves of a sand/salt mix, so the start for next year should be all right. This appropriation should get the city through March.

Councilors asked how the snow removal equipment is holding up. Mr. Bosonetto said that there have been the usual breakdowns, but that the three loaders are giving them trouble and have all been in the shop this winter. He will need new ones.

Action: Motion to approve made by Councilor Beauchemin and second by Councilor Walsh.
Approved: Roll call vote— Beauchemin (Yes), DiNatale (Yes), Hughes (Yes), Walsh (Yes), and Zarrella (Yes).

039-21 ORDER: that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, SAFE grant in the approximate amount of \$6,380.00 (SIX THOUSAND, THREE HUNDRED EIGHTY AND 00/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of said grant, which is to continue to teach fire safety to children in elementary schools.

040-21 ORDER: that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, SAFE grant in the approximate amount of \$2,880.00 (TWO THOUSAND, EIGHT HUNDRED EIGHTY AND 00/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of

said grant, which is to educate seniors in the community regarding fire and life safety topics.

Discussion: The chairman announced that he was taking up items #039-21 and #040-21 together. Fire Chief Anthony Marrama was present. The chairman read a letter from Chief Marrama dated February 12, 2021. Chief Marrama thanked Lt. Phil Jordan, Firefighter Nick Landry, and Firefighter Matt Fraticelli for their work in getting these two grants. Lately the department has focused on the Senior SAFE grant because of so many seniors living in high rises. These grants help with spreading fire safety information to both seniors and students.

Action: Motion to approve item #039-21 and item #040-21 made by Councilor Beauchemin and second by Councilor Zarrella.

Approved: Roll call vote— Beauchemin (Yes), DiNatale (Yes), Hughes (Yes), Walsh (Yes), and Zarrella (Yes).

COMMUNICATION: Year 47 Community Block Grant Application

Discussion: Mayor Stephen DiNatale, Community Development Director Tom Skwierawski, Director of Housing and Development Liz Murphy, and Community Development Coordinator Cynthia Dalton were present. The chairman read a letter from Mayor DiNatale dated February 24, 2021. He then stated that there had been 21 requests for Year 47 funding totaling \$1,268,784 and that 20 projects had been funded in Year 47 for a total of \$1,050,406.

In the communication from the mayor, the total recommended was written as \$1,112,414, and the chairman asked for a motion to amend the figure to the correct total of \$1,050,406.

Action: Motion to approve amending the total to \$1,050,406 made by Councilor Walsh and second by Councilor Zarrella.

Approved: By unanimous consent (5-0).

The chairman then announced that he would take the proposals by section

Public Facilities and Improvements

A North of Main Downtown Cleanup \$25,000

Discussion: Mayor DiNatale, Mr. Skwierawski and Joe Ferguson, Director, Reimagine North of Main were present. Councilors asked why the city is cleaning privately owned property. Mr. Skwierawski said the TDI partnership is trying to create a downtown management group that can sustain this work for neighborhood appearance and events. Downtown is the heart of the city, which is why it should be addressed. It would be going beyond base level maintenance.

Mayor DiNatale spoke of the challenge every summer in trying to beautify downtown and regrets not being able to recommend the full \$50,000 that had been requested. There is a lot of development underway downtown, and the city needs to put its best foot forward.

Councilors expressed the concern that the city had spent \$3.5 million to improve River Street, doing a beautiful job, but that the property owners won't maintain the plantings. Mayor DiNatale said that that is the point of this funding, to be sure of the watering and the weeding. Councilors asked about extending this funding to include River Street and were told it could be done.

Councilors want to make sure downtown is a high priority and were concerned that the city may not be spending enough. Mr. Skwierawski said it is important for property owners to cover the cost of the program, but this may not be the year. Mayor DiNatale added that he did

not want the Public Works Department to spend time on maintaining plantings in the traffic islands.

B Sam Pawlak Community Playground \$65,000

C Streetscape Improvements \$75,000

Discussion: Councilors expressed the view that they were all right with Main Street being two way, but would like to leave Boulder Drive one way to open the possibility of closing off a section for other activities.

Mr. Skwierawski stated that he is excited about making both Main Street and Boulder Drive two way, because it will give the city a chance to experiment with traffic patterns.

Councilors felt the city needs to be in a position to close off parts of Boulder Drive at some future date, but first have to follow through on the proposed changes on both roads. Those changes will then open up a lot more options.

D Parkhill Improvements \$37,000

E Day Street/Snow Street Sidewalks \$40,000

F Fitchburg PD ADA Parking \$100,000

G Public Art Project \$50,000

Action and approval: The chairman called for unanimous consent on projects A, B, D, E, F, and G. There was no objection.

Action: Motion to approve Project C made by Councilor Zarrella and second by Councilor Walsh. Approved: Roll call vote—(4-1) Beauchemin (No), DiNatale (Yes), Hughes (Yes), Walsh (Yes), and Zarrella (Yes).

Public Services

H Street Homeless Intervention Program Withdrawn

I Fitchburg Farmers' Market \$7,543

J Spartacus Program \$10,000

Discussion: Angaw Kahassai from the YMCA was present. Councilors would like to hear some success stories for some of the students in the program. Mr. Kahassai stated that a lot of students had graduated from the program. Some have come to work at the YMCA and others to college. He will send some stories to the Councilors.

K Drug Enforcement Patrol Program \$65,000

Discussion: Police Chief Ernest Martineau was present. Councilors expressed concern about a newspaper article in which a legislator was proposing to decriminalize drug enforcement. Chief Martineau strongly disagrees with that approach. He said the effort of his drug squad is not just arresting the drug dealers, but to also help those suffering from addiction. It is a multi-pronged

approach. Part of the program includes funding an officer downtown and some goes to support the department's four member drug enforcement unit.

Councilors expressed support for a program that goes after the mid to high level dealers who blight the city's neighborhoods and streets. Councilors thanked the chief and his team for their work in developing a community partnership with the police. The chief said that the department has tried to work with the drug court to deal with the low level drug user. One way to eliminate addiction is to cut off the snake's head and get rid of the dealers.

Councilors who in their work have been involved with this problem said it is common knowledge that this chief and department are ahead of the curve in knowing how to deal with the problem. The chief noted that ten years ago the compassion side of drug enforcement did not exist as it does today.

L Family Homeless Shelter \$10,000

M Homelessness Prevention Program \$11,000

Discussion: Faye Rachlin, Community Legal Aid was present. Councilors wanted to be sure that Community Legal Aid are working with the landlords while representing the tenants. Ms. Rachlin said they have been working to be sure that landlords get paid some back rent through the state's Covid grants. They are trying to be sure that landlords are made whole while tenants are not becoming homeless. In their Section 8 work they are trying to make sure that tenants don't lose their Section 8 eligibility.

N Transportation to Project Learn STEAM \$16,000

Discussion: Donata Martin, Boys and Girls Club, was present. Councilors asked how many Fitchburg students go to the program. Ms. Martin replied that some students come a full day for remote learning and others for the afternoon. In the past there have been about 300 students; because of the pandemic there are currently about 60. Of those about 5 are from Fitchburg. No transportation is currently offered. Future participation will depend on social distancing guidelines.

Councilors noted that transportation is offered to the program, but not home. They would like to see a little more funding to get the students home. Ms. Martin replied that there are two vans available to offer a "take home" service for some student. Councilors thanked her for her good work.

Action and approval: The chairman called for unanimous consent on projects H, I, J, K, L, M, and N. There was no objection.

Economic Development

O Small Business Tech. Assist. Prog. \$25,000

P Small Business Financial Assistance \$148,305

Q Fitchburg Downtown Coordinator \$35,000

Discussion: Mr. Ferguson and Mr. Skwierawski were present. Councilors asked what this person was going to do about the empty buildings downtown. Mr. Ferguson said that the Downtown Coordinator will be an integrated liaison with businesses on Main Street. The vacancy issue is

higher up and being looked at by Reimagine North of Main, the city, and MassDevelopment. Mr. Skwierawski stated that the Downtown Coordinator is more than just a coordinator for downtown events. The position is there to help downtown businesses thrive and connect those businesses with other resources.

Councilors expressed their belief in an optimistic outlook for downtown. The city has had a lot of problems since the 1980's and 1990's. However, a lot of new activities are happening downtown, the level of interest is high, and residents want to see work happening. The pandemic has slowed things down, but there are a number of projects moving ahead, such as the Iver Johnson buildings on River Street, the former Harper Furniture and old fire station in Moran Square, City Hall and the Theater Building near the Upper Common, the relocation of Dario's Ristorante to Main Street, and the redevelopment of the BF Brown School.

Councilors asked if this position is new. Mr. Ferguson replied that this funding is for the third year. The first year amount was \$30,000 and last year it increased to \$35,000. Mr. Skwierawski stated that the first year involved a lot of learning for the Downtown Coordinator. This year the Downtown Coordinator was supposed to take the lead in coordinating events, but the pandemic interfered. So a lot of time has been spent coordinating Covid assistance instead.

R A Better Life Experience (ABLE) \$10,000

Discussion: Andrew Skoog, Fitchburg Housing Authority, was present. These funds are to be used to fund individual development accounts for either purchasing a home or being able to live somewhere with a lower subsidy.

Action and approval: The chairman called for unanimous consent on projects O, P, and R. There was no objection.

Action: Motion to approve Project Q made by Councilor Walsh and second by Councilor Zarrella.

Approved: Roll call vote—(3-2) Beauchemin (No), DiNatale (Yes), Hughes (No), Walsh (Yes), and Zarrella (Yes).

Rehabilitation and Preservation

S Code Enforcement \$103,241

Discussion: Councilors thanked the city for continuing to support code enforcement. It is important to spend money to get neighborhoods cleaned up.

T Critical Home Repair \$20,000

Discussion: Carolyn Read, Habitat for Humanity, was present. Councilors asked how many homes have been addressed. Ms. Read said that four in the first year, 6 in the second, and one in the present year, which was a roof and therefore a big project. They are working hard to get the word out. There were not a lot of applications over the winter, but interest is starting to increase.

Action and approval: The chairman called for unanimous consent on projects S and T. There was no objection.

Motion to adjourn made by Councilor Walsh second by Councilor Beauchemin. Approved by unanimous consent.

The meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Calvin D. Brooks". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C" and "B".

Calvin D. Brooks, Clerk

City of Fitchburg
Available Funds Summary
Fiscal Year 2021

| | | | |
|--|--|---|------------------|
| Available Funds Certified as of July 1, 2020 | | | 3,368,823 |
| Less Approved Appropriations: | | | |
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| | | | |
| Less Proposed Appropriations: | | | |
| 3/2/2021 | 034-21 | Stabilization Fund | -350,000 |
| 3/2/2021 | 035-21 | Facilities - Tax Possession Maintenance | -30,000 |
| 3/2/2021 | 036-21 | Legal - Litigation and Special Counsel | -80,000 |
| 3/2/2021 | 037-21 | Human Resources - Overtime | -10,000 |
| Subtotal - Proposed Appropriations | | | -470,000 |
| Balance Available if Proposed Appropriations are Approved | | | 2,898,823 |
| Possible Appropriations: | | | |
| | Snow & Ice | | |
| | Stabilization Fund | 5% - \$6,720,000 7% - \$9,400,000 Current - \$7,058,570 | |
| | OPEB Fund | Current - \$1,505,097 | |
| | Host Fee / Mitigation | | |
| | City Hall Move | | |
| | Community Development - Rail Trail | | |
| | Main Street Garage - Phase 1 | | |
| | Legal - Code Enforcement | | |
| | Demolition | | |
| | Demolition - Laurel Street School | | |
| | Police - Accessibility | | |
| | Steam Plant Cleanup | | |
| | Marketing City | | |
| | Cemetery Software | | |
| | Cemetery Vehicles | | |
| | Parks - Downtown Summer Groundskeeper | | |
| | Crocker Field | | |
| | DPW - Oak Hill Road Bridge | | |
| | DPW - Vehicles | | |
| | DPW - Street Paving | | |
| | Senior Center Roof | | |
| | Veterans - Cash Benefits | | |
| | Schools - South Street School - West Building Façade and Roof and Boiler | | |



The City of Fitchburg
Massachusetts
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

STEPHEN L. DINATALE
MAYOR

718 MAIN STREET
FITCHBURG, MA 01420
TEL. (978) 829-1801

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JOAN DAVID
ADMINISTRATIVE AIDE
JDAVID@FITCHBURGMA.GOV

February 24, 2021

Calvin D. Brooks
City Auditor
166 Boulder Drive
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Dear Mr. Brooks:

Kindly draw a council order for the City of Fitchburg to appropriate the sum of \$350,000.00 from Available Funds and credited to Stabilization Fund. This appropriation will increase the balance in the Stabilization Fund to just over \$7.4 million, which is slightly more than 5% of the FY2021 General Fund budget.

Thank you.

Regards,

Stephen L. DiNatale, Mayor



Anne M. Cervantes
Treasurer

City of Fitchburg

OFFICE OF THE TREASURER

166 Boulder Drive
Fitchburg, MA 01420

978-829-1830
FAX 978-829-1971

November 13, 2020

Mayor Stephen L. DiNatale
City of Fitchburg
166 Boulder Drive
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Dear Mayor DiNatale:

I respectfully request an appropriation of \$30,000 to the Tax Possession Maintenance Account to cover the expense of preparing nine properties for the recent city property auction, and to fund the account for any expenses which may arise for the rest of the fiscal year.

The recent property auction required brush cutting and trash removal from the grounds of the properties, removal of the contents of the buildings, removal of an oil tank from one property, minor repairs to make an outside staircase safe, and the services of a locksmith.

The appropriation of \$30,000 will leave approximately \$7,000 in the account for any needed tax possession maintenance for the rest of the fiscal year.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anne M. Cervantes
Treasurer

City of
Fitchburg



Department of
Public Works

COMMISSIONER

301 Broad Street
978-829-1910
978-345-9687 FAX

STREETS & PARKS

301 Broad Street
978-829-1900
978-345-9687 FAX

WASTEWATER

166 Boulder Drive, Suite 108
978-345-9622
978-345-9623 FAX

SEWER COLLECTION

301 Broad Street
978-829-1900
978-345-9687 FAX

WATER

1200 Rindge Road
978-345-9616
978-345-9555 FAX

ENGINEERING

301 Broad Street
978-829-1917
978-345-9687 FAX

CEMETERIES

115 Mount Elam Road
978-345-9578
978-345-9686 FAX

MEMORANDUM

Date: February 23, 2021
To: Mayor Stephen L. DiNatale
Subject: Snow & Ice Accounts

The Department of Public Works (DPW) respectfully request that \$350,000 be transferred from available funds to the DPW snow and ice budget. This year's snow season begun in late October with a storm that dumped 6-inches of snow. December had three storms totaling 19-inches and January was milder than usual with only 10-inches of snow and a couple of icing events. So far, February has been the most active period with over 34-inches of snow and several icing storms. As of February 19, 2021 we have already received 69-inches of snow (96% of our average annual snow fall), and have expended \$712,408 (or 67% of our yearly average) from the reserved snow & ice funding of \$1,000,000. (see Figures 1 and 2 below)

The additional \$350,000 in requested funding should be allocated to the following snow and ice accounts:

- DPW Overtime (Account 01410781-511104) \$10,000
- DPW Expenses
 - Equipment Rental (01410784-545475) \$210,000
 - Plows and Blades (01410784- 545476) \$20,000
 - Salt (01410784-545477) \$110,000

This request for \$350,000 will increase the total snow and ice budget for FY21 from the original budget of \$550,000 to \$900,000. In an average winter, our final snow and ice budget is about \$1,000,000, so it would not be surprising if another appropriation request is required at the end of winter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Nicolás H. Bosonetto in black ink.

Nicolás H. Bosonetto, PE
Commissioner of Public Works/City Engineer

cc: Calvin Brooks, City Auditor
Mary de Alderete, City Clerk
City Council



Anthony C. Marrama
Chief of Fire Department

City of Fitchburg, Massachusetts
FIRE DEPARTMENT

33 North Street

Fitchburg, MA 01420

February 12, 2021

To: Mayor Stephen L. DiNatale
From: Anthony C. Marrama
Re: Student Awareness of Fire Education (S.A.F.E.) and Senior SAFE Grants

Dear Mayor DiNatale:

I am requesting the City accept grants from Governor Charles D. Baker and the Massachusetts Department of Fire Service in the amounts of \$6,380 (S.A.F.E.) and \$2,880 (Senior SAFE).

These grants will allow us to educate the students and seniors in our community regarding fire and life safety topics.

If you have any questions regarding this grant, please contact me.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony C. Marrama".

Anthony C. Marrama
Chief of Department

cc: Calvin Brooks, City Auditor
Jacquelyn Cronin, Deputy City Auditor

ACM/ma