

Warrant for a Special Meeting of the City Council

Roll Call

The Special meeting of the City Council of the City of Fitchburg was held over the Zoom meeting platform and live streamed at FATV Studios, Fitchburg, on September 22, 2020. The meeting was called to order by President Michael Kushmerek at 7:30 P.M. The Clerk stated the names of the Councillors who had logged in and eleven (11) Councillors were present. The meeting opened with a salute to the Flag led by Councillor Zarrella.

President Kushmerek read the Warrant for the Special Meeting.

Motion made by Councillor Zarrella regarding the Council Rules pertaining to remote participation; 2/3 roll call votes required passed by unanimous vote. 11 members present. Board consists of 11 members.

For the Record

Noted for the record:

FATV was recording the audio and video of the meeting.

Agenda

**WARRANT FOR A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
A Special Meeting of the City Council will be held on  
Tuesday, September 22, 2020  
Immediately following Council as a Whole Committee  
which follows Finance Committee Meeting scheduled at 6:00 PM**

**Via Zoom Meeting Platform**

**Register in advance for the Public Comment/Hearing portion of the Agenda by going to:  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_y1WAmWVPS16NQSTwljsO1Q](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_y1WAmWVPS16NQSTwljsO1Q)**

**The agenda will consist of the following:  
Report from Council as a Whole Committee and final vote on the FY2021 Budget matters.**

- 181-20. ORDERED THAT: There be and hereby is appropriated the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget:  

General Fund:	\$134,397,026
Water Enterprise:	\$ 6,778,877
Wastewater Enterprise:	\$ 12,925,648
Airport Fund:	\$ 817,300
- 182-20. ORDERED THAT: There be and hereby is appropriated the sum of SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$700,000), same to be credited to the Fiscal Year 2021 TAX LEVY and charged against OVERLAY SURPLUS.
- 183-20. ORDERED THAT: There be and hereby is appropriated the sum of TWO MILLION, ONE HUNDRED NINE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$2,109,000), same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to the Fiscal Year 2021 TAX LEVY in order to reduce the tax rate.
- 184-20. ORDERED THAT: there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of TWO HUNDRED EIGHT THOUSAND EIGHTY-THREE DOLLARS (\$209,860.00), same to be charged against PARKING METER/GARAGE RECEIPTS and credited to Fiscal Year 2021 accounts as follows:  

Treasurer Personal Services	\$ 96,860.00
Treasurer Expenses	\$113,000.00
- 185-20. ORDERED THAT: There be and hereby is appropriated the sum of TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$25,000), same to be charged against PEG ACCESS AND CABLE RELATED FUND receipts and credited to Fiscal Year 2021 accounts as follows:  

Information Technology, PEG expenses:	\$ 25,000
---------------------------------------	-----------

Agenda

- 186-20. ORDERED THAT: There be and hereby is appropriated the sum of FIFTEEN THOUSAND (\$15,000), same to be charged against CEMETERY SALE OF LOTS AND GRAVES and credited to Fiscal Year 2021 accounts as follows:  
 Cemetery Personal Services: \$ 15,000
- 187-20. ORDERED THAT: there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of SIX MILLION, SEVEN HUNDRED SEVENTY-EIGHT THOUSAND, EIGHT HUNDRED SEVENTY-SEVEN DOLLARS (\$6,778,877.00), charging \$6,666,500.00 against WATER ENTERPRISE FUND RECEIPTS and \$112,377.00 against WATER ENTERPRISE FUND RETAINED EARNINGS and crediting Fiscal Year 2021 Water Enterprise Fund accounts as follows:
- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Personal Services | \$1,735,312.00 |
| Expenses          | \$1,492,500.00 |
| Indirect Costs    | \$ 920,000.00  |
| Debt Service      | \$2,261,065.00 |
| Capital Expenses  | \$ 370,000.00  |

-----

Councilor DiNatale offered the following prepared comments regarding the budget:  
 "The FY2021 budget proposal from Mayor DiNatale is the 14<sup>th</sup> budget plan I have reviewed and will vote on. Twelve of the last 13 budgets I voted against. My rationale for voting against those 12 budgets was two-fold. Avenues to reallocate funding in areas that showed glaring excess were not adopted by the City Council, resulting in my opinion, in a lost opportunity and failed privatized certain city services to address our long standing unfunded liabilities in pension and health insurance, which continue to be a drain on the City's annual operating budget. More often than not, my past proposals were met with immediate opposition since they were politically unpopular.

After repeated attempts to implement changes to the operating budget, I realized there was no stomach to make substantive and tangible changes to the structure of this document. And that so part of my analysis no longer applies beginning with the 2020 budget plan, which I ended up voting in favor of. The FY21 proposal, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, is foundationally stronger than at any other time since the City was close to DOR receivership in 2008. Where the City once held a paltry \$10,000 in stabilization, and had reliance on anticipated certified free cash to balance the budget, Fitchburg now has over 7 million in stabilization and strategic use of already certified free cash for one-time expenses in emergencies on Covid-19. As I stated on September 10<sup>th</sup>, if not for the City's strong financial practices with respect to budgeting and planning, and having the discipline to not spend free cash on hand while the pandemic crisis is ongoing, the austerity measures the Mayor has put forth would have been far worse. Cities and towns throughout the United States are in the same position we are in with respect to revenue uncertainties. The obvious hope is that with time, revenues will return to normal, and using free cash to mitigate any losses will be lessened and ultimately cease.

While it is truly unfortunate that the City had to impose four layoffs in addition to a hiring freeze, they were unavoidable and necessary actions to take, especially when the unions refuse to entertain any proposals to mitigate staffing reductions. Far too often comments are made that the City is not doing enough to address glaring challenges it faces with respect to building and road infrastructure. On the September 10<sup>th</sup> meeting, while I admit that it is hyperbolic to say that we're not doing enough, it serves no tangible purpose by a way of arriving at solutions to these ever present challenges. Challenges that remain obviously because of costs and lack of financial resources to address them adequately. People want and demand things be done on a large scale and give little to no thought on how to pay for them. Some Councilors criticize the allocation of resources in the City but offer no practical avenues in how to address them, because everyone knows deep down that to pay for something that isn't in the budget you must take elsewhere from the budget.

Two weeks ago I called on residents to thoroughly study this budget document and learn where your tax dollars go. When I asked the City Council where they intend to reduce spending to things they repeatedly criticize the City for not doing, I do not get a response. Why? Here's the breakdown of the budget with respect to revenues. Fitchburg Public Schools and Monty Tech, 48.5%, employee benefits 24.2%, Police 6.2%, Fire 6%, DPW 3.5%, debt service 2.4%, rubbish removal and collection 1.8%, building .9%, and health .7%. The above nine line items represent 94.2% of the total General Fund budget. And these are line items that essentially cannot or will not be touched. Our School allotment is entirely dictated by the Laws of the Commonwealth, employee benefits are contractual, police, fire, and DPW are always deemed to be the most

Prepared Comments

Prepared Comments

essential line items in the budget, and then you have critical inspectional services in health and building to ensure safety and full compliance. So when you exclude all of this, you are left with 5.8% of the budget, or \$7.8 million dollars. , houses City Clerk, City Council, Licensing and Elections. Anything unnecessary and wasteful there? Executive. The Mayor's Office, Human Resources, and the Legal Department. Anything wasteful there? Finance and Administration. Assessing, Auditing, Purchasing, IT, Parking and Treasury. Anything wasteful there? Community Development. A department, I remind you, that is largely funded via State and federal grants that brings millions into our City every year. What's getting cut there? Miscellaneous expenses. That is largely our City's liability insurance. Can't survive the year without liability insurance. And lastly, human services. Who wants to put forth cuts to the Library which if it were cut would lose State funding. Veterans, Senior Center, or Recreation? So, when you look at this entire package, you will find that you will be hard pressed to find any irrelevancies in this budget that would not initiate a fire storm of opposition from either City Councilors or members of the public. What any of us thinks is not a priority for the City will surely be covered by those who do find it a priority. This is not to state, by any means, that we should just quietly accept the Mayor's proposal. I certainly am evidence of the fact, given my voting record, that I do not believe that in the least. However, what I am trying to intimate to the Council and the public is we, legislatively under the Law, all we can do is reduce. We cannot add. We cannot reallocate. And given what the Mayor has already put forth for austerity measures, what more can or should be done? My answer to this question is nothing more. And since I cannot offer any tangible and realistic alternatives to this plan, I will support it and hope that the next budget will include recovered revenues, and by extension, a recovery of positions lost. Thank you."

Oral Report from the Council as a Whole Committee

**Oral Report from the Council as a Whole Committee:**

The Council as a Whole Committee recommended the following Order be amended to reduce the General Fund to: \$134,394,026, by roll call vote of 9 in favor and 2 opposed (Beauchemin, Squailia):

181-20. ORDERED THAT: There be and hereby is appropriated the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2021 Operating Budget:

General Fund:	\$134,397,026
Water Enterprise:	\$ 6,778,877
Wastewater Enterprise:	\$ 12,925,648
Airport Fund:	\$ 817,300

Report accepted. Order adopted as amended by roll call vote of 10 in favor and 1 opposed (Squailia). 11 members present. Board consists of 11 members. Order signed by the Mayor September 23, 2020.

The Council as a Whole Committee recommended the following Orders be adopted by roll call vote of 10 in favor and 1 opposed (Squailia):

182-20. ORDERED THAT: There be and hereby is appropriated the sum of SEVEN HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$700,000), same to be credited to the Fiscal Year 2021 TAX LEVY and charged against OVERLAY SURPLUS.

183-20. ORDERED THAT: There be and hereby is appropriated the sum of TWO MILLION, ONE HUNDRED NINE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$2,109,000), same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to the Fiscal Year 2021 TAX LEVY in order to reduce the tax rate.

184-20. ORDERED THAT: there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of TWO HUNDRED EIGHT THOUSAND EIGHTY-THREE DOLLARS (\$209,860.00), same to be charged against PARKING METER/GARAGE RECEIPTS and credited to Fiscal Year 2021 accounts as follows:

Treasurer Personal Services	\$ 96,860.00
Treasurer Expenses	\$113,000.00

- 185-20. ORDERED THAT: There be and hereby is appropriated the sum of TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS (\$25,000), same to be charged against PEG ACCESS AND CABLE RELATED FUND receipts and credited to Fiscal Year 2021 accounts as follows:  
Information Technology, PEG expenses: \$ 25,000
- 186-20. ORDERED THAT: There be and hereby is appropriated the sum of FIFTEEN THOUSAND (\$15,000), same to be charged against CEMETERY SALE OF LOTS AND GRAVES and credited to Fiscal Year 2021 accounts as follows:  
Cemetery Personal Services: \$ 15,000
- 187-20. ORDERED THAT: there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of SIX MILLION, SEVEN HUNDRED SEVENTY-EIGHT THOUSAND, EIGHT HUNDRED SEVENTY-SEVEN DOLLARS (\$6,778,877.00), charging \$6,666,500.00 against WATER ENTERPRISE FUND RECEIPTS and \$112,377.00 against WATER ENTERPRISE FUND RETAINED EARNINGS and crediting Fiscal Year 2021 Water Enterprise Fund accounts as follows:  
Personal Services \$1,735,312.00  
Expenses \$1,492,500.00  
Indirect Costs \$ 920,000.00  
Debt Service \$2,261,065.00  
Capital Expenses \$ 370,000
- 188-20. ORDERED THAT: there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of TWELVE MILLION, NINE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND, SIX HUNDRED FORTY-EIGHT DOLLARS (\$12,925,648.00), charging \$11,762,463.00 against WASTEWATER ENTERPRISE FUND RECEIPTS and \$1,163,185.00 against WASTEWATER ENTERPRISE RETAINED EARNINGS and crediting Fiscal Year 2021 Wastewater Enterprise Fund accounts as follows:  
Personal Services \$2,331,128.00  
Expenses \$2,823,500.00  
Indirect Costs \$1,150,000.00  
Debt Service \$5,679,020.00  
Capital Expenses \$ 942,000.00
- 189-20. ORDERED THAT: there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of EIGHT HUNDRED SEVENTEEN THOUSAND, THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS (\$817,300.00), same to be charged against AIRPORT RECEIPTS RESERVED and credited to Fiscal Year 2021 Airport Fund accounts as follows:  
Personal Services \$277,550.00  
Expenses \$539,750.00

Report accepted. Orders adopted by roll call vote of 9 in favor and 2 opposed (Beauchemin, Squailia). 11 members present. Board consists of 11 members.  
Orders signed by the Mayor September 23, 2020.

Mayor DiNatale took a moment to thank the Council for their affirmative vote and then wanted to publicly state how fortunate he was to have the Team with him that had helped to put the budget together, namely Anne Cervantes, Treasurer, Calvin Brooks, Auditor, and AJ Tourigny, Chief of Staff.  
Mayor DiNatale then noted that this would AJ's last budget meeting as he would be moving to another position outside of City government. Mayor DiNatale stated that AJ had far exceeded any expectations he had when he hired him. He mentioned that AJ had been instrumental in most of what they had accomplished in the 5 years of his tenure, and that he would be sorely missed. Mayor DiNatale also said that AJ would be going on to "bigger and better things", no matter what was in store for him in the future, he would do well at them all. He stated that the City of Fitchburg was very grateful to him as no one worked harder to get things done. He said that AJ was welcome back anytime.  
President Kushmerek echoed the Mayor's words and stated that the City and the Council were grateful for the work that he had done, not only in guiding the City, but the Council, as well.

Mayoral Remarks

Mayoral Remarks

He thanked him for many of the long evenings that he had spent while in Council meetings, and wished him luck in his future endeavors.

Mr. Tourigny stated that he has been very blessed for the past 5 years to work with the team of City staff, and City Council, and to work for the great City of Fitchburg, as well as being a part of the strongest administration that the City had seen in decades. He wished to thank the public, the Council, his family, and Joan David and Mayor DiNatale for the opportunity that he received to work for the City.

The Council and Finance Team applauded his efforts and wished him all the best in his future endeavors.

The meeting adjourned at 7:48 P.M.

  
Mary de Alderete, Clerk

--	--

