

FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES
1-18-21 AT 5:30 PM
ZOOM

The meeting was called to order by Chair Matthews-Kane at 5:30 PM. In attendance were Finance Committee members Councilor Bridget Matthews-Kane, Councilor Richard K. Sullivan, Jr. and Councilor Brent Bean. Also, in attendance were Mayor Michael McCabe, City Treasurer Matthew Barnes, President of the Council William Onyski, Councilor Michael Burns, Councilor Ralph Figy, City Clerk Karen Fanion, Personnel Director Robert Bishop, Reporter of the Westfield News Amy Porter, Scribe of the Finance Committee Marisa Colon and IT Personnel Peter Cowles.

Councilor Sullivan made a motion, seconded by Councilor Bean, to APPROVE the Finance Committee minutes from November 1 and November 17, 2021. The motion passed 3-0 with Councilor Bean, Councilor Sullivan and Councilor Matthews-Kane voting YES.

Chair Matthews-Kane asked if anyone from the public would like to speak during public participation. There was no one from the public who spoke.

Councilor Bean made a motion, seconded by Councilor Sullivan, to APPROVE of an appropriation of \$2,200,000.00 from Free Cash to Stabilization Reserve for Debt Decline account (8303-345000).

Treasurer Matthew Barnes stated that during the November 17, 2021 Long Range Finance Subcommittee meeting, he presented three different scenarios related to the projected bonding for the Franklin Avenue School and the Police Station projects to show where the City would be financially in the next few years. To get through the additional debt service that would be added with both projected projects, the city would be using the existing balance of the Debt Decline Stabilization account. In the second scenario, that was presented to City Council, the Franklin Avenue School project would be bonded in phases, i.e., 1st 55%, 2nd 35% and 3rd 10 % in order to lock in a lower interest rates in case they begin to increase over the next few years. The projection is that by FY2030 there would only be about \$75,000 left in the Stabilization Reserve for Debt Decline account and we would be entering the year with \$2,325,000 causing the account to be depleted. Which means the city might not have enough money to bond for other projects or unforeseen financial issues, the other option would be to increase the percentage the debt service makes off of the overall city budget. At the Long Range Finance Subcommittee meeting it was recommended that \$2,000,000 be appropriated, but at the December 2, 2021 City Council meeting, Councilor Flaherty recommended that \$2,200,000 be appropriated. Councilor Sullivan asked Treasurer Barnes if this was the recommendation for best business practices from the financial team and from the Mayor. Matthew replied, yes, and further explained that the city has consistently stayed at around

\$7,000,000 per year in debt services and by adding the school and police station projects, the debt services would be over \$8,000,000 a year. The Debt Decline account would then be used to level the budget out and by doing that it would bring it back down to zero. Councilor Sullivan asked with the amount of money that the city has in Stabilization and the amount of money that the city will have, if this passes, in Debt Decline, are well within the ranges that the rating agencies when looking at the city's bond rating will find acceptable. Treasurer Barnes, stated that the rating agencies prefer the city to have 5% of the budget in Stabilization. The city would have to disclose to the rating agencies that a portion is Debt Decline that city will be using in the next few years as the projects begin. Councilor Sullivan asked if by disclosing this information, will cause an adverse effect to the city's bond rating, which has been good for the last couple of decades. Treasurer Barnes, replied no because the city will still be over the 5%. Councilor Bean asked if this will be a reoccurring appropriation that happens every year. Also, he mentioned that there is still no discussion of how much the High School project will cost. Treasurer Barnes, replied no, and further explained that \$500,000 may be added to the budget this year, but this will be the last of the larger million dollar contributions because once the school bonding comes on, the city will be using the Debt Decline/Stabilization money to help fund that Debt Service portion of the budget each year. Councilor Bean asked if there will be any discussion on the new high school project this year. Treasurer Barnes stated that when the Westfield High School feasibility study was done, the projection for the Westfield High School project would be passed 2030. Councilor Bean asked if there will be a lot of Debt Decline or Debt Service coming off of the budget. Treasurer Barnes answered that in FY2030, it is projected that the city's Debt Service will be approximately \$7,500,000 and that is without a new High School. The motion passed 3-0 with Councilor Bean, Councilor Sullivan and Councilor Matthews-Kane voting YES.

Councilor Bean made a motion, seconded by Councilor Sullivan, to APPROVE a Resolution for the acceptance of a Grant in the amount of \$1,500.00 from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for a Sustainable Materials Recovery Program Small-Scale Initiatives to the Twiss Street Transfer Station for recycling costs.

Councilor Matthews-Kane explained to the members that Public Health Director Joe Rouse was unable to attend the meeting. She further explained that this grant is a standard grant, according the supporting documents and there is no match from the city that is required. There were no questions or comments from the members at this time. The motion passed 3-0 with Councilor Bean, Councilor Sullivan and Councilor Matthews-Kane voting YES.

Councilor Bean made a motion, seconded by Councilor Sullivan, to APPROVE the transfer of \$8,196.29 within the City Clerk's Department from Election Personnel account (11610000-512410) to Purchase of Services account (11610000-520000).

City Clerk Karen Fanion explained that historically ballot costs range from \$4,000 to \$5,000, but this year the cost was \$12,000. This year the City Clerk's office had to print enough ballots for early voting, in person and mail in, and Early Voting for Municipal Elections had not

been approved by the legislature prior to doing the budget, therefore, there was no knowledge of having to purchase two types of ballots. Additionally, there was a charge of \$2,600 for folding absentee and early voting ballots and the shipping and handling was \$1,000. She further explained that because there was no Preliminary Election this year, there is money in the Election Personnel account and the remainder will come from the Purchase of Service account which will cover the cost of the bill. Councilor Sullivan stated he supports the transfer of funds, but recommended to pay the poll workers at least minimum wage for future elections. He further stated that working out what they are paid to how many hours they work, the city is paying the poll workers below minimum wage and it something to consider in future budgets. City Clerk Fanion, completely agreed with Councilor Sullivan and stated that she will add it to the FY23 budget. The motion passed 3-0 with Councilor Bean, Councilor Sullivan and Councilor Matthews-Kane voting YES.

Councilor Sullivan made a motion, seconded by Councilor Bean to APPROVE an appropriation of \$45,000.00 from Free Cash account (1000-359000) to Sealer Weights & Measures Department, Equipment/Vehicle account (12440000-585001).

Personnel Director Robert Bishop explained that now retired Sealer of Weights & Measures Bob Popko used his personal vehicle for many years to perform his duties and was given a stipend in lieu of a city vehicle that was not progressing as years went by. In looking into this further, not only was this a major liability with him using his personal vehicle to pull a trailer to conduct these services all over the city, but the financial compensation for that was not appropriate for the employee. With the assistance of City Purchaser, Tammy Tefft and Mayor Donald Humason, it was decided to purchase a vehicle dedicated to this position to decrease the liability for the city and to make sure the employees are taken care of moving forward so they do not have to use their own person vehicles to conduct city business. Councilor Bean asked what the hours for this position per day are. Personnel Director Bishop stated that the hours are from 7 am to 3 pm, Monday through Friday. Councilor Bean asked if the hours are all day long or just by service call. Bishop stated that is all day long and Dennis Clark, current employee, is contracted to perform services in Southwick as well as Westfield. Councilor Sullivan asked if the compensation from Southwick goes into the General Fund. Personnel Director Bishop stated that he will look into and get back to the Councilor. Councilor Sullivan asked if the city bills Southwick or does Southwick automatically send Westfield a payment. Personnel Director Bishop stated that the Sealer's office does bill the town of Southwick. Councilor Beans asked if Dennis Clark was the original Sealer for Southwick and asked if he is currently a resident of Southwick. Robert replied yes to both questions. Councilor Matthews-Kane asked what is the trailer's function and purpose. Personnel Director Bishop explained that the trailer holds all of the tools and equipment the City Sealer needs in order to certify gas and oil pumps, etc. The motion passed 3-0 with Councilor Bean, Councilor Sullivan and Councilor Matthews-Kane voting YES.

Councilor Bean made a motion, seconded by Councilor Sullivan, to APPROVE the appropriation of \$2,000.00 from Free Cash (1000-359000) to Emergency Management Department as follows: \$1,700.00 Purchase of Services account (12910000-520000) and \$300.00 Supplies account #12910000-540000.

Chair Bridget Matthews-Kane asked Emergency Management Director Steve Malochleb to attend the meeting, but he was not present. Councilor Bean made a motion, seconded by Councilor Sullivan to take no action and LEAVE item in committee. The motion passed 3-0 with Councilor Bean, Councilor Sullivan and Councilor Matthews-Kane voting YES.

Councilor Sullivan made a motion, seconded by Councilor Bean to APPROVE an appropriation of \$2,897.00 from Free Cash (1000-359000) to Conservation Department, Full-Time Salary account (17100000-511000).

Councilor Sullivan made a motion, seconded by Councilor Bean to APPROVE an appropriation of \$1,810.00 from Free Cash (1000-359000) to Council on Aging, Full-Time salary account (15410000-511000).

Personnel Director Bishop stated that both agenda item numbers 10 and 11 will have the same explanations. In working with WPMEA, one of the Unions that represent the majority of Directors and Supervisor positions in the city of Westfield, in City Hall and throughout the city, the goal has been to recognize what positions have been misclassified and undercompensated. The city agrees with WPMEA that there are three positions within WPMEA that their job scope and management responsibilities have been misclassified and undercompensated. These positions are the Conservation Coordinator, the DPW Budget Analyst and the Council on Aging Program Director; they are currently all the same wage scale and should be moved all together to a higher wage scale within WPMEA. The DPW position wage increase already had funding assigned to it in the FY22 budget, but the other two positions did not. Personnel Director Bishop asked the committee to consider the appropriation of funds for the Conservation Coordinator and the Council on Aging Program Director in order to reward these positions and properly compensate them for the work they do. Councilor Sullivan asked if these appropriations are both Free Cash transfers. Robert replied, that is correct. Brent Bean asked if these increases will be a reoccurring cost for next year's budget. He also asked if these appropriations will catch them up to June 30, 2022. Personnel Director Bishop replied yes to both questions and further explained that the Department Heads will have to work the increases into FY23 budget. Councilor Sullivan asked if Conservation Committee has any money left over in their Revolving account. Robert replied that he will look into and get back to the committee with an answer. Councilor Bean expressed his concerns regarding using Free Cash to pay for reoccurring costs. He asked if one of these positions is open. Personnel Director Bishop replied yes, and the city is currently conducting a search to fill the Conservation Coordinator position. Councilor Sullivan asked if this was the second time the city has searched to fill this position and was it due to a salary issue. Robert replied, yes to both questions and further explained that it is such a specialized position and there are a lot of openings across the state. Everyone is competing for this small group of qualified candidates and everyone is trying to entice them. Councilor Bean stated that he heard a lot of talk around the enforcement piece that goes along with the position's duties, not so much the salary. Personnel Director Bishop stated that is a hard position because of the enforcement. He further explained that there is an ample of amount of desk work and

must have experience with environmental regulations and engineering, but the candidate must also be willing to leave the office and go into the field to make sure that proper laws and regulations are being followed. Councilor Bean asked if the enforcement duties have been an issue in the past. Councilor Sullivan replied, no, but the city has been pretty lucky with the people who've filled this position and the quality people on the Conservation Committee as members that have provided assistance to the enforcement portion of Conservation. Personnel Director stated that Conservation Committee member David Doe has been wonderful to work with and has been extremely helpful in looking for qualified candidates. Chair Matthews-Kane stated that the first roll call vote will be for the appropriation of Free Cash for the Conservation Coordinator position. The motion passed 3-0 with Councilor Bean, Councilor Sullivan and Councilor Matthews-Kane voting YES. Chair Matthews-Kane stated that the second roll call vote will be for the appropriation of Free Cash for the Council on Aging position. The motion passed 3-0 with Councilor Bean, Councilor Sullivan and Councilor Matthews-Kane voting YES.

Chair Matthews-Kane moved on to the next agenda item and asked if there were any other items not reasonably anticipated for the meeting that the committee would like to discuss. There were no other items to discuss.

Councilor Sullivan made a motion to adjourn, which Councilor Bean seconded. The motion passed 3-0 with Councilor Bean, Councilor Sullivan and Councilor Matthews-Kane voting YES.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 5:58 PM

Respectfully submitted

Marisa Colon, Scribe of the Finance Committee