



## SPECIAL MEETING CITY COUNCIL

59 COURT STREET  
MUNICIPAL BUILDING, CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS  
JUNE 24, 2021 AT 6:00 PM

The meeting was called to order in the City Council Chamber, Municipal Building, 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA at 6:00 PM by President Bean.

The Clerk called the roll. Councilor Figy was absent.

1. Upon motion of Councilor Onyski, it was

VOTED: That a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Westfield authorizing approval of the Mayor to sign a Host Community Agreement (HCA) with Lucky 7 Cannabis, Inc., a Massachusetts corporation to be operated at 0 Timberswamp Road for a Marijuana Production Operation be REFERRED TO LEGISLATIVE AND ORDINANCE COMMITTEE and LAW DEPARTMENT.

2. Councilor Flaherty read the following Communication from the Mayor:

Submitting an amended FY22 budget based on a proposal presented by Councilor Flaherty. The proposal is to move 5 Firefighter/EMS employees back to the Fire budget in the General Fund and charge back the Ambulance Fund for the benefit costs associated with the employees that are included in the Ambulance budget (Medicare, OPEB, insurance and retirement). Public Safety Communications associated costs would free up monies in the general fund to be used for other budget priorities. The following General Fund budgets would be amended:

Emergency Management - \$1,000.00 to Purchase of Services for RAVE system contract.

Flood Control - \$150,000.00 to Purchase of Services for needed levee work.

Reduce the amount of Free Cash used by \$187,829.85

President Bean informed the Council that the contract for the Emergency Management RAVE system has been renegotiated therefore, the \$1,000.00 to purchase of services is not needed. Upon motion of Councilor Flaherty, it was

VOTED: That the reduction of Free Cash be amended to \$188,829.85.

Councilor Sullivan informed the Council that it is his understanding that the above communication needs immediate consideration to be either referred to Finance Committee or to take it tonight as the committee of the whole. Councilor Flaherty questioned what the exact numbers are for the above communication because they are not attached. Councilor Sullivan informed the Council that he has the exact numbers relative to the above communication. He read the numbers as follows: The total amount of chargebacks is \$990,770.24. The transfer of

labor costs to the Fire Department budget is \$466,923.99 and the net available to benefit the City budget is \$523,846.25. The breakout of that is as follows: current health insurance - \$308,000.00, pension - \$171,579.75, OPEB - 183,018.40, Medicare - \$33,172.09, Public Safety Communications \$295,000.00 and then from the available money move \$150,000.00 to the Flood Control, there will be a deduct to Public Safety Communications of \$295,000.00, an increase of \$466,923.99 to the Fire Department, a credit to the Health insurance of \$308,000.00, a credit to the Pension of \$171,579.75 and a credit to Medicare of \$33,172.09, therefore, reducing the Free Cash amount to \$189,827.85 and Councilor Sullivan made a motion to discuss the above numbers and the motion was seconded by Councilor Flaherty.

Councilor Harris asked the following questions, will the above movement of money hurt the firefighters, will it affect taxes and with the recent announcement from the President of the United States relative to money becoming available for levees will it be necessary at this time to move money into the Flood Control budget. Councilor Flaherty replied that it will not hurt the firefighters. It will move five firefighters back to the Fire Department side as where they have been in the past, but due to COVID they were moved to the ambulance side. It will not affect taxes, it will put money back into the City's general fund that can be used for other things and thereby potentially lowering taxes depending upon what is decided in November at the tax rate setting. There are millions of dollars of work to be done on the levees so even with federal money this money is still needed in the Flood Control budget.

Councilor Flaherty explained why he made this request to the Mayor to amend the budget. He explained that there is a \$6 million increase in spending, \$2.67 million in tax revenue increases and that math doesn't work for the long term. For the past few years Free Cash is being used to balance the budget and that negative pattern cannot continue to be used. Free Cash should be used for capital projects and reduce the Free Cash to zero. There are still millions of dollars owed to OPEB. The ambulance account is like an enterprise fund and the benefits should be paid from that fund. Dispatch keeps track of how many calls are for ambulance and it is about 25% and that the ambulance fund has the capability to fund it. Councilor Adams questioned if the changes were discussed with the Mayor and Fire Chief. Councilor Flaherty replied that the changes were discussed with the Mayor and Auditor and that he had discussions with the Chief and that the original plan was to move the five people back to the Fire side and he's on board and there were discussions to charge back the benefits and he knew that was coming even though he would like to have no money charged to that account so that they can do projects that they want out of that fund. There is \$2.6 million in the fund and the \$700,000.00 to be taken out of that account is not going to negatively affect it. Councilor Adams questioned if the Chief wanted it why did he not propose it in his budget. Councilor Flaherty replied that he did propose it but because of the budget scenarios working out the Mayor told him to leave them in the ambulance fund because there were so many other budget stresses. Councilor Mello spoke in support of money for the Flood Control Commission. She informed the Council that she is working with Representative Pease to secure money for the levees and since the City is in noncompliance relative to its levees, putting money into that budget is a good faith effort that the City is trying to come into

compliance. Councilor Allie informed the Council that he has spoken to senior officers of Police and Fire and they are well aware that some of these benefits may not be available to the younger officers of Police and Fire and that the City is doing a disservice to them and that the City needs to get a grip on it and possibility having more contributions from employees. Councilor Sullivan spoke in support of the OPEB but opposed to the rest of the proposed amendments. He expressed his concern that this was creative financing and it was a shell game. And that it takes away the ability for the Fire Department to purchase fire trucks or ambulances from the ambulance account. That taking money out of the ambulance fund is not a good idea long term. Councilor Bean questioned if there are ordinance that determine how this money is spent. Councilor Flaherty replied that ordinance allows for operating costs and chargebacks for benefits in revenue generating accounts is common practice. Councilor Flaherty, Councilor Sullivan and City Auditor discussed how the numbers would all balance. After discussion it was concluded that the OPEB is a separate account. Councilor Sullivan informed the Council that he would be comfortable to vote on the amendments as one block. Councilor Sullivan questioned if there is a need for immediate consideration and will yield to the Chair's decision. President Bean informed the Council that immediate consideration is not needed.

Upon motion of Councilor Sullivan, it was

VOTED: That the FY22 budget be amended based on a proposal presented by Councilor Flaherty to move 5 Firefighter/EMS employees back to the Fire budget in the General Fund and charge back the Ambulance Fund for the benefit costs associated with the employees that are included in the Ambulance budget (Medicare, OPEB, insurance and retirement) and that the Public Safety Communications associated costs would free up monies in the general fund to be used for other budget priorities. The following General Fund budgets would be amended:

Flood Control - \$150,000.00 to Purchase of Services for needed levee work.

Reduce the amount of Free Cash used by \$188,829.85

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

Ralph Figy	Absent
Dave Flaherty	Yes
Cindy Harris	No
Bridget Matthews-Kane	No
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Morganelli, Jr.	Yes
William Onyski	No
Richard Sullivan, Jr.	No
James Adams	No
Dan Allie	Yes
Brent Bean II	Yes
John Beltrandi III	No
Michael Burns	No

The President declared the motion LOST.

Councilor Flaherty reiterated that the City cannot continue to live with increases to the budget and it does not work long term to use Free Cash. He expressed his concern that there was not an effort to trim the budget and informed the Council that he will be offering motions for cuts. The first one will be a cut to the School Department which he explained will be a reduction to the increase, not an actual cut.

Upon motion of Councilor Flaherty, it was  
VOTED. That \$300,000.00 be cut from the School Department Budget.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

Ralph Figy	Absent
Dave Flaherty	Yes
Cindy Harris	No
Bridget Matthews-Kane	No
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Mougatielli, Jr	Yes
William Onyski	No
Richard Sullivan, Jr.	No
James Adams	Yes
Dan Allie	Yes
Brent Bean II	No
John Beltrandi III	No
Michael Burns	No

The President declared the motion LOST.

Councilor Flaherty informed the Council that he will offer a cut of \$1 million to the Engineering Department, Construction account and that the construction projects can be funded through Stabilization because the projects are capital in nature and with this cut it will reduce the use of Free Cash.

Upon motion of Councilor Flaherty, it was  
VOTED: That \$1,000,000.00 be CUT from the Engineering Department, Construction account #14110000-589200.

The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

Ralph Figy	Absent
Dave Flaherty	Yes
Cindy Harris	No
Bridget Matthews-Kane	No
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Morganelli, Jr.	Yes
William Onyski	No
Richard Sullivan, Jr.	No
James Adams	Yes
Dan Allie	Yes
Brent Bean II	Yes
John Beltrandi III	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes

The President declared the motion PASSED.

Councilor Flaherty informed the Council that he will offer a motion to cut \$100,000.00 from the Purchasing Department for the cost of street lights due to the fact that street lights are now LED and the cost is cheaper. Councilor Sullivan informed the Council that he spoke with the G & E General Manager and that the City was responsible for the new fixtures and that the savings will come next year. Councilor Flaherty withdrew his motion based on Councilor Sullivan's information.

Councilor Sullivan thanked his colleagues for the wonderful attendance that the budget hearing meetings. Councilor Flaherty agreed that there was good attendance but that there was no focus on goals of the Council for the budget. He expressed his appreciation to the Mayor for working with changes that were proposed. Councilor Beltrandi agreed there was good attendance and participation and that due to the Open Meeting Laws it had to be a committee of the whole so all Councilors could ask questions and he expressed his appreciation to the Mayor for his cooperation. Councilor Allie expressed his concerns that the labor costs need to be controlled. Councilor Morganelli informed the Council that labor contracts are out of the control of the Council, that it needs to be the corner office and that he supports teachers, Police and Fire but there needs to be a cap on salaries. Councilor Mello informed the Council that she will support the final budget because of the cut of \$1 million to Engineering and that she would hope that that money would go to support the levees and the Flood Control Commission.

3. Upon motion of Councilor Sullivan, for the Finance Committee, it was VOTED: That the FY2022 Budget be submitted to the Auditor for the Orders of Appropriation for the Special meeting of the Council on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021, with the amendment submitted by the Mayor to reduce the Mayor's department, Full Time Salary account #11210000-511000 by \$30,000.00 and to increase the Health Department, Purchase of Services account #15100000-

520000 by \$30,000.00 and also to include any previous amendments made during the budget hearings, as well as the cut from tonight's meeting of \$1,000,000.00 from the Engineering Department.

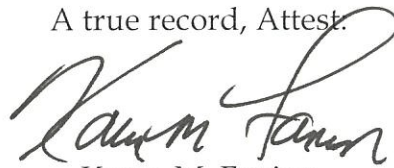
The vote on the foregoing was as follows:

Ralph Figy	Absent
Dave Flaherty	No
Cindy Harris	Yes
Bridget Matthews-Kane	Yes
Kristen Mello	Yes
Nicholas Morganelli, Jr.	No
William Onyski	Yes
Richard Sullivan, Jr.	Yes
James Adams	Yes
Dan Allie	No
Brent Bean II	Yes
John Beltrandi III	Yes
Michael Burns	Yes

The President declared the motion PASSED.

At 7:02 PM, and upon motion of Councilor Harris, it was VOTED: To ADJOURN.

A true record, Attest.

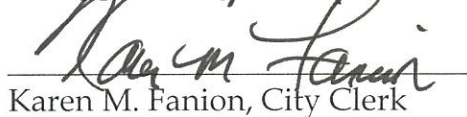


Karen M. Fanion

City Clerk/Clerk of the Council

Presented to the Mayor

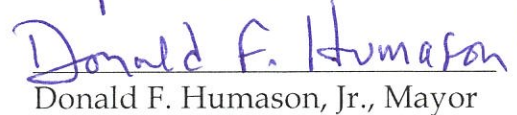
For approval Sept. 29 2021



Karen M. Fanion, City Clerk

Approved by the Mayor

September 29 2021



Donald F. Humason, Jr., Mayor