

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
August 30, 2023 – 5:00 p.m.

Committee Members present: Councilor David A. Witham, Chairman
Councilor Don Austin, Vice-Chairman
Councilor Robert Gibson
Councilor Matt Gerding

Administration/Staff present: City Manager, Bob Belmore
Finance Director, Scott Smith
Fire Chief, George Kramlinger
Director of Public Works & Utilities, Michael Bobinsky
City Engineer, Amber Hall
City Clerk, Kristen LaPanne

Chairman Witham called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

APPROVE PAST MEETING MINUTES OF JULY 27, 2023

Councilor Austin made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 27, 2023 meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Gibson and passed 3-0-1, Councilor Gerding abstained.

SCHOOL DEPARTMENT SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION REQUEST

City Manager Belmore reported that the School Board notified him that they are not prepared to submit a formal request for a supplemental appropriation as the School Board Finance Committee needs to meet to discuss their request. Councilor Austin commented that during last night's School Board meeting, the Board received a financial report that confirmed the school would be receiving an additional \$1.6 million in adequacy funding and roughly \$600,000 in funds are projected to be returned to the City's General Fund. He added that the School Board has discussed a number of items as to how the extra funding could be spent including the completion of the high school roof project. Manager Belmore mentioned that the Code Officer, Jeff Gallant, was going to attend the meeting because the school requested a waiver from the energy code requirements due to adding the correct amount of insulation which would then require some expensive structural improvements and that Mr. Gallant could waive the energy code if appropriate, which he had. Councilor Gibson questioned how the project was going to move forward without meeting code requirements. Councilor Witham stated that there are structural issues that will need to be addressed as well as snow melt issues and that there will be more to come on that topic.

ASSISTANCE TO FIREFIGHTERS GRANT (AFG) FOR RESCUE EQUIPMENT

City Manager Belmore reported that the Public Safety Committee met prior to this meeting and approved sponsoring a Resolution to accept the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) for the purchase of technical rescue equipment. Manager Belmore provided the Committee with a

memorandum from Fire Chief Kramlinger and he thanked the staff involved, especially Chief Kramlinger for securing two Grants two years in a row. He shared that the Grant is in the amount of \$47,619 with a required City match of \$2,381 for a total of \$50,000. Manager Belmore mentioned that the Grant must be accepted or denied by September 11th and therefore he would suggest that during the City Council meeting scheduled on September 5th, that the Council consider waiving their Rules and to allow for a second reading of the Resolution in order to meet the deadline.

Chief Kramlinger explained the Grant would allow the Fire Department to purchase technical rescue equipment primarily in the area of confined space and rope rescue. He noted that the current equipment has reached its life span and are either outdated or no longer work.

Councilor Gerding made a motion to sponsor a Resolution for the acceptance of the Assistance to Firefighters Grant for the purchase of technical rescue equipment in the amount of \$47,619 with a City match of \$2,381. The motion was seconded by Councilor Gibson and passed 4-0.

Manager Belmore requested that Chief Kramlinger summarize the Fire Station closeout and open house event. Chief Kramlinger stated that the contractor is working on finalizing the punch list items such as hydroseeding, parking space lines, lighting control and HVAC controls, he added that Port One and Harvey Construction have been great to work with during the entirety of the project. Chief Kramlinger noted that he will be attending a meeting tomorrow morning to review the whole site with the project team . He stated that the red globe lights are to be installed near the main entrance under the “dog house” and he is working on costs and a required electrical plan.

Councilor Witham questioned if there is money within the current budget to fund the red globes. Finance Director Smith confirmed that there is enough funding.

Chief Kramlinger reported that the Public Safety Committee agreed to schedule the Fire Station’s open house event on Wednesday, September 27th from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. which is before Fire Prevention Week in an effort to utilize the State Fire Marshal’s smoke house and arson K-9 resources for the open house. Councilor Witham thanked the Chief for his continued support of the Fire Station project. Chief Kramlinger expressed gratitude to the elected officials and staff that have supported the Fire Department in its efforts to increase the Department’s capabilities for the residents of Somersworth as well as during mutual aid requests.

Councilor Gibson asked if training costs are included in the Grant award for the purchase of rescue equipment. Chief Kramlinger stated that training costs are not provided and that he is certified in rescue training and will conduct on duty training.

INVESTMENT POLICY

Manager Belmore presented the investment policy, and informed the Committee this is an annual housekeeping issue, that the City Council is required to adopt an investment policy annually.

Finance Director Smith noted that there were no changes recommended to the Investment Policy

Councilor Gerding made a motion to support the re-adoption of the City of Somersworth’s Investment Policy. The motion was seconded by Councilor Austin.

Councilor Gerding inquired about the current rate of return. Director Smith stated that the current rate of return is a little over 5%, he added that the Treasurer's Report generally shows a return of investments around \$40,000 whereas this year the City received about \$900,000 on their investments.

Councilor Witham questioned if there were State "bumpers" that determine what the City can invest in. Director Smith responded yes, that investment options are detailed in State law, and focus on secure, liquid investments. Councilor Witham asked if the funds go into investments such as certificate of deposits. Director Smith responded that we may use a certificate of deposit, but would be of a short term, usually not more than 90 days, and other liquid investments we can access daily and gets deposited into the City's checking account and has same day availability .

The motion passed 4-0.

WILLAND POND TRAIL BRIDGE REPAIR/REPLACEMENT

Councilor Witham commented that he supports that the two bridges along the Willand Pond Trail be replaced with aluminum material. City Manager Belmore updated the Committee on the possibility to utilize Conservation funds, he confirmed that the Conservation Commission's consensus seemed to not support the funding for the bridge replacement. Manager Belmore stated that the City did not budget for the replacement of the bridges however that repair or replacement is necessary for safety reasons.

Councilor Witham has concern that if the current structures are not replaced with aluminum material, that the City will be replacing or repairing the bridges in another 10 years, he prefers something more permanent and long-lasting. He asked what City staff recommends, Public Works Director Bobinsky recommends the replacement of the bridges with aluminum as a long-term solution.

Director Bobinsky provided the Committee with a memorandum which included quotes from J&B Contracting and FMW Docking. Manager Belmore inquired about how long it would take Public Works staff to demolish the bridges and Director Bobinsky estimated 1-2 weeks. There was discussion of the two quotes whereas J&B Contracting's project quote came in at \$57,520 with the option to deduct \$14,400 if City staff were to demolish the bridge. The quote from FMW Docking came in at \$65,187. Director Smith noted that funding for the project could come from ARPA funds, the General Fund or the Cable Fund.

Councilor Witham stated that he does not support the Public Works staff doing the demolition of the current bridges as they are busy with other important City projects. Councilor Austin agrees that the City should pay a contractor to remove the current structures.

Councilor Gibson commented that he is also in favor of replacing the bridges with aluminum material. Councilor Austin wondered if anyone had knowledge of how often the bridges are utilized. Director Bobinsky stated that he has been receiving weekly calls from users as well as having witnessed regular use when he has been out there. He added that both Dover and Somersworth have access from both ends of the trails.

Manager Belmore mentioned that the bridges were originally built using grant funds and believes that the City has a requirement to maintain said bridges. Councilor Gerding stated that from his personal experience, he feels that the Willand Pond Trails are the most highly used trails in the City. He added that the schools utilize them as well and agrees that the bridges should be replaced with aluminum.

Councilor Witham questioned that if the bridges were originally done in coordination with the City of Dover, would they be willing to share the cost. Director Bobinsky confirmed that he would reach out to the City of Dover to inquire about shared costs.

Councilor Gibson made a motion to sponsor a Resolution for the demolition and replacement of the Willand Pond Trail bridges and to award the contract to J&B Contracting for an amount not to exceed \$60,000. The motion was seconded by Councilor Gerding.

Councilor Gibson wondered if the bridge, when being replaced with aluminum, could be lifted to a semi-arch which would elevate the bridge above the water. Director Bobinsky stated that it would be more expensive to do so and would require permits.

Manager Belmore recommended that the Resolution for the bridge replacement be brought to Council during the second meeting in September which would allow Director Bobinsky to confer with the City of Dover.

The motion passed 4-0.

ZERO TURN LAWN MOWER FOR HIGHWAY DIVISION

City Manager Belmore provided the Committee with a number of quotes from Public Works Director Bobinsky regarding the replacement of the City's currently worn-down mower that he recommends replacing. Councilor Witham commented that although some of the mowing is contracted out by the City, the Department of Public Works still does quite a bit of mowing throughout the City. He commented that he likes the idea of dealing with a local business such as Patriots Tractor or Tool Crib. Councilor Witham stated that he did some of his own research on the lawn mowers and felt that the Bad Boy Rebel 61" has great reviews.

Councilor Gerding wondered if the Committee should consider the Husqvarna 61" should be looked into as the current one has lasted about 20 years. It was noted that the current Husqvarna mower had two engine replacements over the past 20 years. Councilor Gibson expressed his opinion that he feels Husqvarna products are not as dependable as they once were, Councilor Witham agreed.

Manager Belmore mentioned that the replacement of the lawn mower was not budgeted for but could be purchased utilizing ARPA funds or another option could be to take it out of this year's operating budget. Councilor Gibson stated that he would like to move forward with the purchase and the Committee agreed.

Councilor Witham made a motion to support the purchase of a Bad Boy Rebel Zero Turn Lawn Mower from Patriots Tractor in the amount of \$12,899. The motion was seconded by Councilor Auston and passed 4-0.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT UPGRADE-ENGINEERING

City Manager Belmore asked that the Committee to consider either going out to bid or continuing to contract with Wright-Pierce Engineering for the Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrades. Councilor Witham stated that he feels continuing to work with Wright-Pierce Engineering the better option as they did work on phase one of the design which gives them the upper hand. He asked for the opinion

of City staff. Public Works Director Bobinsky agrees with contracting with Wright-Pierce Engineering as they did the facility study and master plan for phase one, he added that this project is to build off of phase one and would allow for continuity between the projects. City Engineer Hall expressed her agreement in staying with the same team as phase one.

Councilor Gibson questioned if there would be any advantages to contracting with another engineering firm. Manager Belmore commented that it would be a lot more work for another firm who would be unfamiliar with the project as well as an increase in project costs. Director Bobinsky agreed with Manager Belmore's comment.

Councilor Witham noted that the City budgeted \$450,000 for the design of phase two of the Wastewater Treatment Plant improvements and questioned next steps. Director Bobinsky stated that he and City staff would create a scope of work and request that Wright-Pierce Engineering respond. Councilor Gerding asked if the response would come back to the Finance Committee. It was confirmed that the response would be brought in front of both the Public Works & Environment Committee as well as the Finance Committee for review. Director Bobinsky clarified that the amount budgeted is for engineering and not the construction of the project.

The Committee agreed to support waiving of the bidding process and to contract the Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrades engineering services with Wright-Pierce Engineering.

REPORTING

Finance Director Smith reported that the Finance Department is working on year end and closing out of fiscal year 2023. He stated that the expenditures came in at about \$500,000 under spent, and we realized excess revenue from interest on investments, building permits, motor vehicle registrations and the Green Mountain Power Hydro lease.

MISCELLANEOUS

City Manager Belmore provided the Committee with memorandum pertaining to the Hamilton Street tank roof replacement. He reported that the City does not need to do immediate temporary repairs. Public Works Director Bobinsky stated that he had a helpful conversation with a representative from CorrTech where he learned that the support arm that was in question, was part of the original design and is not integral to the structure of the roof and currently serves no purpose to the existing roof. He added that the tank does undergo bi-annual inspections and confirmed that there are no defects that stood out. Councilor Austin questioned if the storage tank poses any danger to the people around the tank. City Engineer Hall confirmed that it does not pose a threat to those around the tank.

Manager Belmore reported that the State has denied the County's request for additional funding to operate the emergency cold weather warming center at 30 Willand Drive and that the County has requested additional funding to cover costs from the City of Dover, City of Rochester and the City of Somersworth. He stated that Dover and Rochester are being asked to each contribute \$75,000 to assist in the operation of the emergency warming shelter and that the Somersworth is being asked to contribute \$20,000, is his understanding. Manager Belmore noted that the City also contributes in-kind services via their emergency services as the hosting City, he also added that the City has budgeted \$10,000 within the Welfare budget for homelessness.

Councilor Gibson inquired about the usage breakdown of the emergency warming shelter between the three Cities. Councilor Witham recalled that Dover and Rochester residents were the heavier users of

the shelter and that Somersworth came in third. Councilor Gibson questioned the proportion of the usage compared to the request for funding from the County. Manager Belmore stated that last year's funding from both Dover and Rochester municipalities was \$50,000 and the request to increase is \$25,000 for a total of \$75,000 from Dover and Rochester.

Councilor Gerding inquired about the Welfare Department's obligation to continue providing financial support even if the budgeted money were to run out. Manager Belmore confirmed that the Welfare Department is obligated to assist those that qualify regardless of the budgeted amount running out, adding that it is State Law and the City must find the money.

Councilor Witham commented that he supports the increase but is pained by the fact that the State is downshifting more financial responsibility to the Cities knowing that homelessness is a County and Statewide issue. He stated that he would like to continue to utilize the same parameters as this past winter regarding the operation of the emergency warming shelter. Councilor Gibson agreed with Councilor Witham's comments.

Councilor Austin expressed his agreement and added that it puts into perspective the request to fund the replacement of the Willand Pond Trails bridges and feels that funding the emergency warming shelter is necessary for the welfare of homeless individuals during life-threatening cold weather.

Manager Belmore stated that the item will go to the full Council for a vote.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Austin made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Gibson and passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 6:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen LaPanne, City Clerk