

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM
December 7, 2018 3:30pm

Committee Members present: Councilor David A. Witham, Chairman
 Councilor Martin Pepin
 Councilor Martin P. Dumont, Sr.

Administration/Staff present: Bob Belmore, City Manager
 Scott Smith, Finance Director
 Mary Beth Walker, Contract Assessor
 Michael Bobinsky, Director of Public Works
 City Clerk, Trish Harris

Other: Councilor Richard Michaud
 James Johnson, Milo Lane Resident, Veteran

The meeting called to order by Chairman Witham at 3:30 PM.

APPROVE PAST MEETING MINUTES

Councilor Pepin, seconded by Councilor Dumont, made motion to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2018 meeting. Motion passed, 3-0.

VETERANS' TAX CREDIT

City Manager Belmore opened up the discussion and introduced Marybeth Walker from Corcoran Associates, the City's contracted Assessor. Ms. Walker distributed a memo listing various veteran's credits, and changes in the laws recently. Currently the City has 396 taxpayers receiving the regular veteran's tax credit for a total of \$205,500, and 31 residents receiving the veterans with service connected total disability tax credit at an amount of \$43,400.

Ms. Walker discussed the changes to the law. The optional amount that Council can set for the regular Veteran credit is \$51 to \$750, currently the City is at \$500 which was the maximum amount before the recent change in State law.

The tax credit for Veterans with Service Connected total disability is currently at \$1,400. The optional amount that the Council can set is between \$51 and \$4,000.

Councilor Witham asked if the Council were to approve a \$2,000 tax credit for Veterans with Service Connected total disability, what would be the total amount of the tax credit.

Director Smith stated that the increase would be \$18,600, for a total amount of \$62,000.

Councilor Dumont said that he was thinking a progressive, incremental increase would be a good option.

There was brief discussion about the history of the Veteran Credits and what the purpose was: to honor our veterans, a token of appreciation for serving, and to help the veterans who were having difficulty finding employment.

Mr. Johnson addressed the committee stating that he is a 100% disabled veteran and is receiving the tax credit. He said other communities have a \$2,000 tax credit on average. He would like to see Somersworth increase to at least that amount.

City Manager Belmore stated that any change would require City Council action before April 1st to make any changes effective on next year's property tax bill.

Councilor Dumont, seconded by Councilor Pepin, made a motion to table this discussion. The motion passed, 3-0.

For the next meeting the Committee would like to have information from the Assessor on what are other communities have voted on for tax credits with Strafford County.

FORM BASED CODES CONSULTANT PROPOSAL RECOMMENDATION

City Manager Belmore stated that the City received four proposals from consultants to prepare a form-based code component to the City's Zoning Ordinance.

City Manager Belmore, Director Smith and Director Saunders interviewed three of the firms and consensus was to recommend Resilience Planning and Design LLC of Plymouth NH. Their proposal was \$29,700, plus mileage.

There is about \$24,000 budgeted for this project. Additional Funds may be needed, however City staff believed some of the proposal could be eliminated or tweaked to reduce the cost.

Manager Belmore also mentioned that Resilience has successfully completed projects for Dover and Lancaster, NH. Manager Belmore mentioned that the area under consideration is the downtown areas of Market, Main and High streets. Belmore mentioned that the Economic Development Committee recently voted to support resolution to full Council to allow the City Manager to contract with Resilience Planning and Design, LLC.

Councilor Dumont, Seconded by Councilor Pepin made a motion to sponsor a Resolution to authorize the City Manager to Contract with Resilience Planning and Design, LLC of Plymouth NH, to develop a Form Based Code section for the City. The motion passed 3-0.

UPDATE ON EMERGENCY WATER INTERMUNICIPAL AGREEMENT

City Manager Belmore stated that he has met with the City Manager of Dover to discuss the Cities' approach to capital costs in regards to the Emergency Water Intermunicipal Agreement.

There was brief discussion as the Committee reviewed the agreement as amended by Dover.

Councilor Witham stated he is comfortable with the Draft agreement overall except for a few changes. Manager Belmore informed the committee that he intends to have City Attorney review the agreement before it is completed and moved forward to the City Council.

Councilor Dumont, seconded by Councilor Pepin, made a motion to sponsor a Resolution to to authorize the City Manager to sign the Emergency Water Intermunicipal Agreement with the City of Dover, pending final changes to the agreement and City Attorney review. The motion passed, 3-0.

SAU WITHDRAWAL COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

City Manager Belmore noted that on page 2, #2 of the Procedures for the City's Withdrawal from SAU, a member of the Finance Committee needs to be appointed to the SAU Withdrawal Planning Committee. Councilor Witham offered to take that position.

Councilor Dumont, seconded by Councilor Pepin, made a motion to nominate Councilor Witham as the Finance Committee Representative for the SAU Withdrawal Planning Committee. The motion passed, 3-0.

FAIR COURT DISCONTINUANCE

There was brief discussion regarding the discontinuance. City Manager Belmore will continue negotiations with the abutter and their attorney.

REPORTING

Director Smith stated that they are monitoring the Department of Public Works' budget as we enter into the winter season.

MISCELLANEOUS

There was a discussion about the need for a new middle school elevator. There are a number of questions about project oversight, timing and funding this project. The committee asked the city manager to follow up with the School Department and work through these questions.

ADJOURNMENT

***Councilor Dumont, seconded by Councilor Pepin made a motion to adjourn at 4:32PM
Motion passed, 3-0.***

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Harris, City Clerk