

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
February 1, 2022 – 5:15 PM

Committee Members present: Councilor David A. Witham, Chair
Councilor Don Austin, Vice-Chair
Councilor Matt Gerding
Councilor Martin P. Dumont, Sr.

Administration/Staff present: City Manager - Bob Belmore
Director of Public Works - Michael Bobinsky
City Engineer - Amber Hall
Code Compliance Officer - Paul Crouser

Chairman Witham called the meeting to order at 5:15 pm

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Motion made by Councilor Austin to approve January 12, 2022 meeting minutes, seconded by Councilor Dumont. Motion Passes, 3-0, with Councilor Gerding abstaining.

SOMERSWORTH YOUTH CONNECTION/SYC FUNDING

Manager Belmore stated that a number of meetings were held with the School District and their administrators, Scott Smith, the Deputy City Manager/Finance Director, and with the SYC taskforce, to continue pursuing grant funding, but it was acknowledged that grant parameters are becoming increasingly strict, thus, the group opted to not recommend seeking grant funding.

Manager Belmore stated currently, the City gives SYC about \$5K per annum. The recommendation from the Superintendent and SAU staff was to request \$50K, this amount was supported by the City Council-School Board Joint Commission. Manager Belmore stated if directed to put \$50K towards SYC as a line item, that it would be an annually reoccurring cost of \$50K in the Community Support section of the City budget until Council votes to deviate from that value. Manager Belmore further stated that it would likely take several years to determine if the budgeted \$50K is sufficient, or over/under budget.

Councilor Witham stated he supports the City integrating the cost into the City's budget, while seeking the approval of full City Council at a later date.

Councilor Gerding recused himself as he is works with the SYC, and noted he could address any questions Councilors had about the program.

Councilor Austin stated that over the years, the grant process indeed continues to get more competitive, and that the current grant restrictions would make it difficult for SYC to achieve their goals, and because of that, is in favor of the School continuing the program without any grant application being sought.

Councilor Witham asked if there is a participant fee structure in place.

Councilor Gerding stated, the elementary-level program has quite a few paying members, but the middle school is free-of-cost to encourage students in that age group to attend. Councilor Austin added that he has heard that there are many willing to pay for the program.

Councilor Witham noted the need to have funds available for those who cannot pay. Councilor Austin replied that the \$50K would likely provide those types of subsidies.

Motion made by Councilor Austin to approve increasing the present \$5K to \$50K to the City's budget for the SYC program, which is seconded by Councilor Dumont. Motion passes 3-0 with Councilor Gerding abstaining due to his recusal.

ROAD RESURFACING AND CRACK SEALING BIDS

Councilor Witham reviewed the details of the PWE Committee meeting which was just held, stating that out of the bids received for paving, Pavex, Inc. had the lowest bid while still receiving good recommendations from other contractors. He added that the bid was significantly under budget, and that the balance would likely be used for improvements to Mt. Vernon Street and possibly other adjacent streets on the hill.

Councilor Witham stated the winning contractor for crack sealing was Connecticut Sealcoating, LLC. Amber Hall stated that the City received five (5) bids, each based off of an estimated total linear length of all cracks in all City roads. There was a big range, but CT Sealcoating was the lowest not-to-exceed bid at \$32K. They had the lowest estimate of linear footage of cracks, but confirmed that they would not exceed their not-to-exceed price.

Councilor Dumont inquired when the project's estimated completion date would be, to which Amber Hall stated an anticipated completion date of July/August 2022.

Councilor Gerding inquired how much under budget the City is for the combined project, to which Councilor Witham replied an approximate figure of \$400K.

Councilor Austin asked about Pavex Inc's background. Director Bobinsky stated the City was forwarded good references from others in addition to several other municipalities, and that are a Methuen-based company with 33 years of experience.

Councilor Dumont inquired when the City will get its sidewalk assessment. Councilor Witham stated it is anticipated that a presentation regarding the City sidewalks will be given sometime in March of 2022 for full Council review. He further stated that the sidewalks were rated, and estimated to be replaced in kind (concerning construction and composition). The estimate did not, however, include

curbing. The estimate for replacing the sidewalks, in kind, and without curbing additions, is around the \$4M mark.

Councilor Witham stated the current focus is on school walking routes and sidewalks that can fit the width of the sidewalk plows.

Councilor Dumont advocated for using the balance of the paving/crack sealing budget for use on sidewalk repairs, or to save the money for such future repairs.

Motion by Councilor Witham to bring the issue of adding repairs of additional streets to the scope of work order to full City Council. All approve.

Councilor Gerding moves as such, with Councilor Dumont seconding. Motion Passes 4-0.

FORMER PD: STATE BROWNFIELDS GRANT & CREDERE CONTRACT AMENDMENT

Manager Belmore stated that the City decided to go out for rebid because only two were received and one bid was late, and one was significantly overbudget. He adds that if the new bids are still overbudget, the City will go to the State to secure additional grant funds to move the cleanup project forward.

Due to the rebidding process, the City's remediation consultant is requiring an additional \$2K in funds. Councilor Witham approves, stating that the process of securing a different consultant would not be time or cost efficient, and then asks Manager Belmore what contaminants are present at the site, to which Manager Belmore replied, mercury, lead, and asbestos.

Councilor Austin moves to approve the contract amendment, increasing payment to the City's remediation consultant by \$2K, which Councilor Gerding seconds.

Motion to amend the City's contract with the remediation consultant, Credere, is passed, 4-0.

LIBRARY – PLACEWORK STUDY: FINAL DESIGN & COST ESTIMATES

Manager Belmore asked the Committee if they want to move this forward.

Councilor Witham stated that moving forward makes sense, although he suggests moving the issue to full Council.

Councilor Gerding supported moving the matter before full Council. He states that the City needs to broach this issue with the community, as the public likely doesn't know what the project is.

Councilor Gerding moves to raise needed legislation to move this matter before full City Council. Councilor Austin seconds. Motion to move the matter to full City Council is approved, 4-0.

REPORTING

Manager Belmore stated that the City has three upcoming payouts, totaling approx. \$78K, due to two Police Department retirements, along with a resignation from an employee at City Hall. Manager Belmore stated that there is approximately \$90K in an accrued liability fund for long-term employees, and states that a recommendation later in the fiscal year might include utilizing some or all of these funds for all or a portion of the upcoming payouts.

Manager Belmore stated that the City will have to readdress trash bag fees in the near future, additionally Waste Management recently reached out to the City with the goal of re-opening their contract with the City because of increased operation costs; which Manager Belmore says is happening between Waste Management and all other municipalizes.

MISCELLANEOUS

Manager Belmore addressed the Salmon Falls Road HazMit Grant, and that the PWE Committee voted to not pursue it, noting staff workload concerns, as well as the uncertainty as to whether or not raising the road height would provide a permanent fix to the flooding along with several infrastructure projects already being designed that involve large funding needs.

Councilor Witham added that the cost of all of the City's ongoing projects are way too substantial to justify this expense.

Councilor Dumont stated he agreed, and highlighted his concerns of raising the road due to drainage from the road, stating that obstructing the water's natural flow could have negative repercussions. Consensus of the Committee was to agree with the Public Works Committee to respectfully decline the State grant funds.

Councilor Dumont commends the Department of Public Works' efforts in repairing the Blackwater Rd. culvert. He appreciates the work, and has noticed the water table draining substantially since the City implemented the repairs.

ADJOURNMENT

*Motion to adjourn made by Councilor Dumont, which is seconded by Councilor Austin.
Meeting adjourned at 6:03PM.*

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Crouser, Code Compliance Officer