

The Committee on Budget and Finance Meeting Minutes

January 30, 2020, 6:30pm

Present

At Large Councillor Charles Tontar, Chair
At Large Councillor Afroz Khan
Ward 1 Councillor Sharif Zeid

Ethan Manning, Finance Director
Christopher LeClair, Fire Chief
Lisë Reid, Parks Department

Members of the Public in Attendance

Jane Snow, 9 Coffin Street, Newburyport
Kevin Parseghian, 13 Columbus Ave.
John Stomboly, 31 Rear Tyng St.
George Fraley, 29 Ferry Rd.
Jeffrey Cutter, 26 N. Atkinson St.
Megan St. John, 14 Basin St.
Mary Zinck, 6 Laurel Rd.
Jim McCarthy, 17 Russia St.

Agenda

1. **TRAN067_01_27_2020** - Legal Settlement \$11K to Fence Repairs \$11K
 - a. Because of hazardous condition and danger to residents fence was replaced before funds were transferred.
 - b. **Vote 3-0** to recommend approval.
2. **TRAN068_01_27_2020** - Free Cash \$50K to Fire Station #2 Design/Feasibility Study
 - a. Councillors Zeid and Khan requested a copy of the \$75K feasibility study undertaken to study the need and feasibility of re-building Station #2 at its current location.
 - b. Councillor Zeid expressed his opposition to relocation of the Fire HQ to Storey Ave. He requested that the transfer request be held in committee until:
 - i. Members could see the previous study
 - ii. More information could be obtained
 - c. Councillor Khan noted that she had seen the process used in Northborough to study a new fire station and was impressed by its transparency
 - d. Councillor Khan wanted more information.
 - e. Councillor Zeid asked if other sites had been examined.

- f. Fire Chief LeClair noted that the expense of building on the current site was determined to be too high by the Mayor and Councillors (Tontar and Giunta) on the Building Committee and the Building Committee determined that alternative sites should be examined.
 - g. Members of the Firefighters union who were present indicated that they felt there had been insufficient public input.
 - h. **3-0 vote** to hold in committee
- 3. **COMM222_01_27_2020** - FY2020 Mid-Year Budget review
 - a. Expenditures are consistent with budget projections.
 - b. Some transfers are anticipated as indicated in the report
 - c. Not expected to have much free cash for allocation to capital expenditures as a result of lower free cash from FY2019 and anticipated transfers
 - d. Fire overtime expected to be higher because of injuries
 - e. Revenue strong (11.4% above FY19 mid-year report) led by Motor Vehicle Excise Tax increase
 - f. **3-0 vote** to recommend R&F
- 4. **COMM226_01_27_2020** Ltr from Jim McCarthy RE: Request for Financial Inquiry
 - a. Mr. McCarthy indicated he had experience as a financial planner and was concerned that the license signed by the Mayor to exchange use of 9 Titcomb Street for tax abatement placed the city in a risky position and requested an investigation.
 - b. Mr. McCarthy indicated that he was not concerned that the Committee follow the specifics of his written request but that an investigation be undertaken and a report be placed before the entire Council
 - c. Councillor Zeid had specific questions - they are appended and will be discussed by the entire Committee at a future date
 - d. Councillor Khan agreed with Councillor Zeid's request
 - e. Committee **voted 3-0** to hold in Committee

Councillor Zeid questions:

- 1) Please provide a list of all property's/owner names that had a past due tax bill in the past 3 years. Please indicated the date of the past due tax bill(s) and the date that proceedings were started for a lien.
- 2) Please provide copies of any license agreements executed City wide over the past 3 years
- 3) Please provide details as to the arrangements that allow the City to store Fireboats and Shanties on private property

4) Please provide a list of any other properties where manual adjustments have been made to a tax bill.