



Committee on Finance

November 19, 2013 – 7:00 PM - **Minutes**
Chambers of the City Council, Room 214

****View Agenda****

MEETING: COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
DATE: NOVEMBER 19, 2013
TIME: 7:06 P.M.
PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214, MUNICIPAL BUILDING

PRESENT: COUNCILLORS JANE GONSALVES, CHAIRPERSON; JOHN SAUNDERS, VICE-CHAIRMAN; HENRY BOUSQUET; DEBORA COELHO; BRUCE DUARTE, JR.; BRIAN GOMES (7:40); STEVEN MARTINS; JAMES OLIVEIRA

ABSENT: COUNCILLORS DAVID ALVES; DENIS LAWRENCE, JR.; JOSEPH LOPES

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Councillor Gonsalves called the Finance Committee Meeting to order and took attendance. The Clerk read memo's from Councillors Alves and Lopes stating that they would not be in attendance this evening due to a prior commitment and a work conflict. These communications were received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Duarte.

Councillor Saunders asked that item number four (4) be taken out order, there was no objection and Councillor Coelho asked that number three (3) be taken out of order, there was also no objection on that matter as well.

Item number four (4) was before them:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Communication, Derek Santos, Acting Executive Director, New Bedford Economic Development Council, to Council President Duarte and Members of the City Council, submitting TIF Application and Resolution approved by the Tax Increment Financing Board for a five (5) year TIF Agreement for **DICKSON DEVELOPMENT CORP-STEWARD-ST. ANNE'S AMBULATORY CARE CENTER**, Coggeshall Street, New Bedford, MA 02746 (Ref'd 11/14/13) was received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Coelho. (4, 4a)

Derek Santos, Acting Executive Director of New Bedford Economic Development Council was present and addressed the Committee on the TIF. He reviewed the terms and expectations involved in the TIF Agreement. He explained that the jobs could actually become closer to 50, and that, at 5 years, this TIF is at the minimum term allowed by law.

Councillor Bousquet asked why a TIF was needed. Mr. Santos stated that the acquisition costs of the parcel were very high, particularly due to the utilities. David White, one of the applicants and principles in the firm, reiterated Mr. Santos' statement. He explained that there was a cost of \$230,000 just to bring electrical service to the building, due to the fact that they essentially paid NSTAR's capital costs, as they are the first in the building.

Councillor Martins remarked that he is looking forward to this coming to fruition.

Councillor Oliveira asked what the percentage of jobs would go toward local people. Mr. White stated that he expects it would be roughly 85%.

On motion by Councillor Saunders and seconded by Councillor Martins the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the TIF Application and Resolution approved by the Tax Increment Financing Board for a five (5) year TIF Agreement for **DICKSON DEVELOPMENT CORP-STEWARD-ST. ANNE'S AMBULATORY CARE CENTER**, Coggeshall Street, New Bedford, MA 02746. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 7, Nays 0, with Councillor Gomes not present for vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Communication, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting AN ORDER for the TRANSFER of \$120,000.00 from OVERLAY RESERVE, to TOURISM & MARKETING, CHARGES & SERVICES (Ref'd 11/14/13) was received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Duarte. (3, 3a)

Ms. Dagny Ashley, Tourism and Marketing Director, was present to answer questions from the Committee.

On motion by Councillor Duarte and seconded by Councillor Coelho, the Committee VOTED: To recommend to the City Council ADOPTION of the ORDER, for the TRANSFER of \$120,000.00 from OVERLAY RESERVE to TOURISM & MARKETING, CHARGES & SERVICES. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Martins, requesting, that the Committee on Finance meet with a representative of the MIS Department, City Auditor, CFO and City Treasurer for the purpose of having the City of New Bedford's checkbook placed online for all taxpayers and Citizens to view; and further, that the City has a large budget, monies being transferred, items being bought and salaries being paid for that although the City Budget it posted on the web, it's not easy to follow and doesn't give them, the information needed to follow the monies being spent, nor the access to see what they pay for and what we do with City funds; and further, that this process would increase transparency of local government and we should have our books open to the public to show the people of New Bedford what is being done with their tax dollars; and further, this process should include the School Department's budget, especially during times like these when so many Citizens and taxpayers want answers to their questions and rightfully so (Ref'd 5/9/13) was received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Coelho. (1)

Councillor Martins asked Ari Sky, CFO, if it were plausible to somehow mimic something that the state has in place so that more citizens of the city could know how, with more detail, their tax dollars are spent.

Mr. Sky agreed that transparency in government is important and they are currently searching for ways to be more so. However, they are currently in the midst of converting over to the new financial software system, which will, in the future, make transparency more plausible. He did state that the quarterly reports that he gives to the City Council are on the city's web site, but will continue to find methods by which the finances of the city can be made more available and understandable to the public in general.

Councillor Oliveira recommended perhaps creating a "dashboard" type of format that citizens could easily follow and understand on the web site. Mr. Sky stated he would look into something like that.

On motion by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Duarte, the Committee VOTED: To table this matter for six (6) months. This motion passed on a voice vote.

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Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Communication, Mayor Mitchell, to City Council, submitting a LOAN ORDER, that \$5,867,000.00 be appropriated for the purpose of making critically-needed repairs to City-owned buildings, including, but not limited to, projects for the repair and renovation of public safety facilities, school buildings, recreational facilities and general office space, and all costs incidental and related thereto (Ref'd 11/14/13) was received and placed on file by Councillor Martins and seconded by Councillor Duarte. (2, 2a)

Ari Sky, CFO, stated that when he first became CFO of the city, he promised to put together a comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan for the city; and that this is at least the beginning of it. He explained that he received needs assessment from each city department. From that starting point, several meetings and discussions were held; and ultimately, the plan that is being presented this evening was eventually put together.

Ari Sky walked the Committee through the Capital Improvement Plan.

Councillor Duarte made a motion to recommend approval to the City Council which was seconded by Councillor Martins.

Councillor Coelho made a motion to table this matter at this time, but failed to get a second.

On motion by Councillor Duarte and seconded by Councillor Martins, the Committee VOTED: To recommend APPROVAL to the City Council on the LOAN ORDER, that \$5,867,000.00 be appropriated for the purpose of making critically-needed repairs to City-owned buildings, including, but not limited to, projects for the repair and renovation of public safety facilities, school buildings, recreational facilities and general office space, and all costs incidental and related thereto. This motion passed on a Roll Call Vote of Yeas 6, Nays 0, with Councillors Gomes and Saunders not present for vote.

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On motion by Councillor Duarte and seconded by Councillor Martins, the Committee VOTED: To take "No Further Action" on items five (5) through seventeen (17). This motion passed on a voice vote. They are as follows:

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Saunders, that the City Council, request that Mayor Lang, submit a specific proposal to the City Council detailing how the Administration intends to fund the payment of economic losses plus interest to the AFSCME employees pursuant to the November 17, 2011 Decision and Order of the Department of Labor Relations for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in the case of City of New Bedford vs. AFSCME Council 93, AFL-CIO, (case #'s MUP-09-5581 and MUP-09-5599) whereby Mayor Lang was found to have illegally implemented furlough on City Employees; and further request that the Mayor submit said proposal prior to the setting of the tax rate. (Ref'd 11/22/11, 12/12/11 – tabled, 5/9/12 – remain tabled) (5)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Lawrence, requesting that the Committee on Finance review the salaries/compensation as it relates to Union and Non-Union Employees, Department Heads and Elected Officials to see if they are commensurate with communities of the same size; and further requesting, that the Committee reports their findings back to the City Council as a whole. (Ref'd 1/12/12, letters to communities with similar economic struggles asking what salaries Dept Heads, Mayor, etc. make) (6)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Communications from the Town of Freetown and the Cities of Brockton, Fall River and Worcester with their responses for salaries/compensation as it relates to Union and Non-Union Employees, Department Heads and Elected Officials. (Ref'd 12/10/12) (6a)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Gonsalves, Alves, Coelho, Lopes, Saunders, Bousquet, Council President Martins, Lawrence, Gomes, Oliveira, and Duarte, requesting, that the Committee on Finance meet with MIS Director Robert Tetreault to explore the possibility of streaming City Council Meetings live on the internet, as part of the planned upgrades in out MIS capabilities with the purchase and installation of MUNIS. (Ref'd 2/23/12, 5/9/12 – tabled) (7)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Related Motion, Councillor Coelho, that the Committee on Finance ask MIS Director Robert Tetreault to look into the possibility of using the three existing cameras in City Council Chamber to stream live the City Council meetings and get back to us with the price, see if it is doable and to see if it can hook up to the present system; what we are looking for is a cost effective appropriate software interface that would solve the problem of working with Cable Access as well. (5/9/12) (7a)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Related Motion, Councillor Coelho, that the Committee on Finance ask MIS Director Robert Tetreault to look into the possibility of placing computers, laptops or tablets on each Councillor's desk in the City Council Chambers and including two at the Council President's desk. (5/9/12) (7b)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Lopes and Council President Martins, requesting, that the Massachusetts General Accounting Office provide City Council with a year-by-year breakdown of the gasoline tax collected in the City of New Bedford for the past 16 years. (Ref'd 10/25/12) (8)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Related Motion, Councillor Gonsalves, requesting that the document submitted by Superintendent Shea relative to book expenditures, be referred to the Finance Committee. (Ref'd 12/3/12) (9)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillors Gonsalves, Alves, Lopes and Martins, requesting, that the Economic Development Council meet with the City Council and provide us with the loan documents relative to the loans made to Andrew Rocket d/b/a Rocket Enterprises, for the purchase of properties in New Bedford and that we review those loans, their terms and conditions including whether there is a claw back provision in light of recent events relative to Mr. Rocket. (Ref'd 1/10/13, 10/23/13 – Remain in Committee) (10)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Related Motion, Councillor Lopes, requesting that Ron Labelle, DPI Commissioner, be invited to a future Finance Committee Meeting to provide detailed information on the Combined Sewer Overflow Abatement Program and how the \$2,100,000.00 will be utilized. (Ref'd from Finance meeting 1/29/13) (11)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Gomes, requesting, that the Administration provide the Committee on Finance at its' April meeting a breakdown of the monies received through FEMA's SAFER Grant and a breakdown of how the monies were spent throughout each year by the Fire Department; and further, that through the calculations of this Councillor, there presently is \$2.5 Million Dollars unaccounted for that was transferred out of the SAFER Grant, that the Committee on Finance would like to know how and when the money got transferred out of the SAFER Grant to the City. (Ref'd 3/14/13, 10/23/13 - tabled) (12)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Written Motion, Councillor Gonsalves, requesting, that the Committee on Finance meet in Executive Session with the City Solicitor to get a claims briefing of all open claims, in particular those claims of high dollar exposure. (Ref'd 4/11/13, 5/22/13 - tabled) (13)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Related Motion, Councillor Lopes, requesting, that the Director of the Quest Center attend a Committee on Finance meeting to discuss the collection of rents and revenues as it relates to the operation of the Quest Center. (Ref'd 6/27/13) (14)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Lawrence, in response to the Standard-Times Article, of July 15, 2013, stating that City Leaders are confident that New Bedford will be awarded a SAFER Grant, which would extend the employment of seventy of our firefighters and sustain the opening of the two fire houses once closed, even though the Federal Government has yet to release the applications for the next round as said applications were thought to be released in June, requesting that the City Council's Committee on Finance meet with the CFO Sky and Fire Chief Gomes to discuss the following: 1) When the SAFER Grant application will be released by the Federal Government for New Bedford to reapply; 2) What is the projected turnaround time for the Government to review and inform the City whether they have been approved or not; and 3) When will we know if the current SAFER Grant allows the City to retain its seventy firefighters until September, and when in September if the monies are not received, will the layoffs begin, and will there be a reduction in the number of layoffs as a result of retirement attrition; and further, what is the projected time frame for the closing of the two stations which were reopened as a direct result of New Bedford securing the original SAFER Grant; and further, requesting that a letter be sent to our Federal and State Delegations expressing the urgency in securing the funds necessary to maintain our current compliment of firefighters. (Copy of Standard-Times article dated July 15, 2013, enclosed.) (Ref'd 7/18/13, 10/23/13 - tabled) (15)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a COMMUNICATION, Councillor Gonsalves submitting email from Robert Clark, Sales Development Consultant, Extend Health, a Towers Watson Company, requesting to meet with the Committee on Finance to discuss retiree medical for the City of New Bedford. (Ref'd 9/12/13) (16)

Notice, City Clerk of reference of a Discussion, regarding a Communication/email from Exchange Solutions Sales Development Consultant, Rob Clark to Councillor Jane L. Gonsalves, Chairperson, Committee on Finance, pertaining to sustainable health benefit strategies for the upcoming Affordable Care Act (ACA) transformed health care landscape. (10/10/13, 10/23/13 - tabled) (17)

Councillor Martins made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Bousquet.

This meeting adjourned @ 8:15 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Committees