

## **MINUTES**

City of Concord Finance Committee Meeting  
May 27, 2021 @ 5:30 PM  
City Council Chambers

**Present:** Mayor James Bouley, City Councilors Brent Todd, Jennifer Kretovic, Erle Pierce, Rob Werner, Byron Champlin, Fred Keach, Nathan Fennessy (late), Gail Matson, Amanda Grady Sexton, Keith Nyhan, Linda Kenison, Candace White Bouchard, and Zandra Rice Hawkins.

The Mayor opened the meeting at 5:30 PM and indicated the committee was meeting electronically due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12, pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04.

Deputy City Manager Brian LeBrun took the roll and asked committee members when stating their presence to please also state whether there was anyone else in the room with them, which is required under the Right to Know Law. In accordance with the Right to Know Law, Councilors Grady Sexton, Kretovic, and Werner indicated they were at home with family; all other committee members indicated they were alone.

The Mayor explained that tonight's FY 2022 proposed budget review would cover the Community Development, Library, Parks & Recreation, Human Services, and CIP/TIF budgets.

A motion was made and seconded to seal the minutes from the non-public portion of the May 20, 2021 meeting. The motion passed with a unanimous roll call vote.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes from the May 20, 2021 and May 24, 2021 Finance Committee meetings. The minutes were approved unanimously with a roll call vote.

With no other business to take care of, Manager Aspell began his review of the budget.

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:** Revenues, budget to budget, are down \$55,000 or 4.1%. Construction permits are up \$196,000; street damage fees are down \$25,000; review fees are up \$42,000; transfer in from trust is up \$25,000; transfer in from water is down \$142,000; and transfer in from wastewater is down \$142,000.

Manager Aspell indicated that he is making a change in the transfer-in from water and wastewater. This portion of the transfer is for an allocation of wages and benefits for Engineering employees working on utility projects. Beginning in July, we will simply allocate these expenses every week through payroll instead of through this transfer-in process; a more efficient approach.

Expenses, budget to budget, are down \$213,000 or 5.8%. This decrease is due to decreased wages as a result of the elimination of the Economic Development Director position, and a decrease in Outside Services and transfers out – in conjunction with the reduction in street damage fee revenue.

**LIBRARY:** Revenues, budget to budget, are down by \$15,000 or 6.7% due to reductions in fines for overdue books, non-resident library fees, and other revenues.

Expenses, budget to budget, are up \$118,000 or 6.6% mainly due to increases in wages and benefits. Supplies are down \$31,000 due to a significant number of gifts and donations being made to the Library over the past year.

Councilor Todd asked for an update on the status of the Penacook Branch Library. Library Director Todd Fabian indicated that when he's made aware of potential properties in Penacook, he goes and looks at them. So far, nothing has been feasible. He noted that the Penacook Branch remains closed, as the HVAC system and limited space won't allow for social distancing.

**PARKS & RECREATION:** Budget to budget, revenues are down \$48,000 or 3.6%. This is mainly due to reductions in camps (\$5,000), program fees (\$39,000), other service charges (\$4,000), and rental income (\$10,000).

Expenses, budget to budget, are up \$43,000 or 1.3%. This is due to an increase in wages and benefits. Outside services and supplies are both down, in conjunction with the reduction in associated revenues noted above.

Manager Aspell indicated that he only budgeted for the opening of five pools: Heights, Rollins, Rolfe, Merrill, and Kimball. In addition, funding for five part-time temporary positions has been eliminated, resulting in a decrease of .36 FTE's. These positions have not been filled in the past few years and it produces a savings of \$18,000.

Mayor Bouley mentioned that, in the past, the Parks & Recreation Department was involved in putting on events that brought people downtown and asked if the Department sees itself getting back to doing that. Manager Aspell indicated that Parks & Recreation is holding its summer concert series this year, which includes concerts downtown on Thursday nights, and in the parks on Tuesday nights, throughout the summer. He also noted that the Department is planning to hold the July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration this year, and that he foresees the Department being involved in organizing other events in the future as things return to normalcy following the pandemic.

**HUMAN SERVICES:** Revenues, budget to budget, are flat.

Expenses, budget to budget, are up \$51,000 or 7.1%, mainly due to wage and benefit increases.

Manager Aspell indicated that he has been working very closely with the Human Services Director on all the issues regarding people seeking services and the difficulties of finding shelter or hotel space.

Manager Aspell noted that the projected expenses for the Miscellaneous line is short of the FY 2021 budget by \$117,000. While money has been flowing in from many different sources to help the City's most vulnerable, we do not expect that to last forever. We will accept the reprieve while it lasts but we fully expect these expenses to increase as we move forward.

Councilor Todd asked why the projected number of people to be served is lower than the past two years. Human Services Director Karen Emis Williams indicated that many of the social service agencies that provide services in the community have been receiving federal funds due to the pandemic, therefore it reduces the amount of people needing to go to the City for assistance.

Councilor Grady Sexton asked Director Emis Williams if the Department has been seeing many people needing services who are not from Concord. Director Emis Williams indicated that, by law, there is no residency clause – we have to provide services if an individual is eligible.

There was considerable discussion about the homelessness problem in the City. Mayor Bouley asked Ms. Emis Williams if she knew what the homeless population is in the city. Ms. Emis Williams indicated that, according to outreach workers, there are about 100-125 homeless people in the city. In follow-up, the Mayor said that the Police Department has indicated there are 200-250, and asked why the big difference. Ms. Emis Williams did not know why there was such a gap. Ms. Emis Williams explained that it is a challenge to count the homeless because they move around a lot, they come in and out of the city, and many of them don't want to engage and/or they have trust issues.

Councilor Keach asked how many homeless families there are. Ms. Emis Williams responded that, in FY 2021, they assisted 26 homeless families with children.

Mayor Bouley asked where the federal funding that is reportedly coming into the state to address housing issues is going. Ms. Emis Williams indicated that, despite the amount of money coming in to homeless service providers, like the Community Action Program, Riverbend, and the Homeless Resource Center, finding permanent housing for people is a big challenge. There is a very long waiting list for Section 8 housing, and it is increasingly difficult to find landlords willing to accept vouchers. In addition, often the voucher doesn't cover the cost of the rent. Ms. Emis Williams noted that the problem is likely to get worse, considering that federal funding will likely come to an end, as well as the moratorium on evictions, and there is a 1% vacancy rate on apartments in the City. Mayor Bouley noted that people look to the City Council to solve the problem, and asked that Ms. Emis Williams keep them informed about the issue more frequently.

### **TAX INCREMENT FINANCE (TIF) DISTRICTS:**

Matt Walsh, Director of Redevelopment, Downtown Services, and Special Projects, provided an overview of the Tax Increment Finance Districts.

### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN:**

Matt Walsh, Director of Redevelopment, Downtown Services, and Special Projects, provided an overview of the projects in the Capital Improvement Program. Projects that spurred discussion are as follows:

- **General Services Vehicles (CIP # 121):** There was a brief discussion about sidewalk plows, and the proposed funding in the budget to purchase two new sidewalk plows. Councilor Fennessy asked if it is usual to buy two at the same time. Manager Aspell indicated that because we bought them at the same time, they wear out at the same time. Councilor Pierce asked if they were used solely for snow removal. General Services Director Chip Chesley responded that some of the Department's sidewalk plows are used in the fall for leaf collection; but the two to be purchased are smaller and more nimble, used for more urban areas, and are mostly used for snow. Councilor Pierce asked Director Chesley what the total value is of the City's fleet. Mr. Chesley indicated that he did not have that information readily available, but would get back to the committee with the answer.

- **Intersections (CIP # 283):** The Mayor asked Director Chesley to have staff take a look at the crosswalk at North State and Pleasant Streets, as he has received a complaint from a constituent who is visually impaired about the audible walk signals and the angle of the crosswalk at that intersection, which results in the constituent often being stuck in the middle of the intersection.
- **Parks and Open Space (CIP #51, 55, 56, 528, 557, and 567):** As it relates to the proposed project to make repairs to the historic trolley stop at White Park, Mayor Bouley asked if it would take as long to complete the project as it took to replace the stone wall at Rollins Park. Manager Aspell indicated that the wall at Rollins Park was done in multiple phases, over three years, so we could afford to do it. Councilor Fennessy asked if this work would also include repair of the wrought iron fence around White Park. Mr. Walsh indicated that the fence is not included, but that it is in the outyears of the capital budget.

Mayor Bouley asked why Rolfe Park was chosen for a new pickleball court. Parks and Recreation Director David Gill indicated that Rolfe Park made the most sense, because there is already an existing base (former tennis court) and existing lighting. He also noted that the demand for pickleball is there.

Councilor Champlin asked who William Thompson was, for which the Thompson Play Lot is named after. Councilor Champlin suggested it would be nice to include this kind of historical information on the City web pages pertaining to each park. Director Gill indicated that the Department is currently conducting research on this park, as well as others, and will work with the Public Information Officer to include the information on the City web site.

There was a brief discussion about Memorial Field and the need for new lights for the football field. Committee members asked who the main user of the field is. Director Gill indicated that the main user of the football field and the lights is the Concord School District. He indicated that Bishop Brady uses the field and the lights, but they pay for the lights at the time of the event. Councilor Fennessy asked who some of the other users of the fields are. Director Gill indicated that Concord Crush Lacrosse, the Concord Capitol Football League, the Concord Cannons, and the Sunset League and other adult softball teams utilize the fields. Director Gill noted that the Concord School District always gets first dibs. Manager Aspell indicated that the Concord School District has offered to pay for half of the cost for the new lights.

Mayor Bouley asked Director Gill to research and get back to the Committee what it would cost for a new skate park and to implement disc golf in the community. For the skate park, Director Gill pointed committee members to CIP #60, which calls for \$400,000 to renovate the skate park in its current location at Everett Arena. Director Gill indicated that he would research the disc golf question and get back to the committee with a response.

- **Sewer Treatment (CIP # 104 and 466):** Councilor Pierce asked if the SCADA system is part of the City's IT infrastructure and is protected against hackers. General Services Director Chesley indicated that SCADA is an independent system, not part of the City IT

system. He noted that the City controls who has access to the SCADA system, which is a security system that alerts us immediately if there is a security breach.

- **Street Rehabilitation (CIP #78):** Councilor Kretovic noted that she had been contacted by several residents of Carter Hill Road, complaining that the road has been damaged substantially during the construction of a new subdivision in the neighborhood. Councilor Kretovic asked how the City recoups funds to fix the road after the construction is done. Deputy City Manager Carlos Baia said he will have Engineering staff review the matter and the protections we have in place for that project.

Councilor Matson indicated that she has received complaints from residents whose streets have not been paved in 30-40 years, and asked if the ranking of a street for paving, which is done every two years, can change from assessment to assessment. Director Chesley indicated that, yes, a street that is ranked at one level can move up or down in the rankings based on the findings during each biannual evaluation.

- **Water Treatment (CIP #124 and 347):** Councilor Fennessy asked if the SCADA system protects the City's water tanks. Director Chesley indicated that it does.

With no further discussion, Mayor Bouley noted that the next Finance Committee would be held on Thursday, June 3rd, at 5:30 PM, at which time Special Revenue Funds and Enterprise Funds will be discussed, followed by a public hearing.

With no other discussion, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed with a roll call vote and the meeting was adjourned at 7:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Sue Stevens, Executive Assistant