

Jan 27 2022 12:29 pm



**City of Fitchburg  
Massachusetts 01420**

**CITY COUNCIL**

**Councilors at Large**

**Marcus L. DiNatale  
Amy L. Green  
Thomas C. Hughes  
Samantha M. Squailia  
Anthony M. Zarrella**

**President**

**Anthony M. Zarrella**

**Vice President**

**Elizabeth R. Walsh**

**Ward Councilors**

**Ward 1 – Bernard J. Schultz, III  
Ward 2 – Paul R. Beauchemin  
Ward 3 – Andrew J. Couture  
Ward 4 – Andrew J. Van Hazinga  
Ward 5 – Marisa R. Fleming  
Ward 6 – Elizabeth R. Walsh**

**Finance Committee**

A meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order by Chairman DiNatale on Tuesday, January 25, 2022 at 6:13 PM in the Legislative Building, 700 Main Street, Fitchburg, MA.

Committee Members present: Councilors Derrick Cruz, Marcus DiNatale, and Anthony Zarrella. Councilor Andrew Van Hazinga participated remotely. Councilor Paul Beauchemin arrived late. Committee Members absent: None.

The chairman read an announcement regarding the recording of public meetings, noting that FATV was recording and broadcasting the meeting. No other person stated that they were recording the meeting.

The chairman opened the meeting for public comment. No one spoke.

218-21        **ORDER:**        that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of NINE THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$9,000.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to FACILITIES REPAIR & CARE, TAX POSSESSION MAINTENANCE.

Discussion: City Treasurer Anne Cervantes was present. The chairman read a letter from Ms. Cervantes dated December 3, 2021.

Action: Motion to approve made by Councilor Zarrella and second by Councilor Cruz.

Motion adopted. (4-0).

219-21        **ORDINANCE:** amending Chapter 44, Section 10 of the Code of the City of Fitchburg by adding Epidemiologist and Contact Tracers as outlined in the enclosed ordinance.

003-22 ORDER: that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the Department of Public Health grant in the approximate amount of \$480,000.00 (FORTY HUNDRED EIGHTY THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of said grant, which is to support the staffing for COVID-19 Contact Tracing and related services in the thirteen communities of the Montachusett Public Health Network (MPHN).

Discussion: The chairman announced that items #219-21 and #003-22 would be discussed together, but would proceed on separate motions. Public Health Director Steve Curry, Epidemiologist Victoria Selser, and Contact Tracing Supervisor Catherine Hoover were present. The chairman read the proposed ordinance.

Mr. Curry stated that the state Department of Public Health notified communities in October that the state would no longer provide contact tracing services. Those services would have to be absorbed by the communities, who had about three weeks to make the arrangements. The city looked to the Contact Tracer Collaborative arrangement and pursued people already doing the work. Currently, those hired have already made about 1,000 calls and are completely remote. Mr. Curry acknowledged the hard work that the Information Technology Department has put in to set up these contact tracers with equipment and software. Currently there are so many cases, they are having trouble contacting them all.

Mr. Curry asked that the proposed ordinance be amended by adding a Contact Tracing Resource Coordinator at \$32.00 per hour.

Action: Motion to amend the proposed ordinance by adding a Contact Tracing Resource Coordinator at \$32.00 per hour made by Councilor Zarrella and second by Councilor Van Hazinga.

Motion to amend adopted, (4-0).

Councilors noted that the change from the state occurred in October when the Delta variant was prevalent. The omicron variant is now widespread, but starting to recede. There are now some areas that are saying contact tracing should only be for the worst cases, while other areas are dropping contact tracing completely. Is there currently a need for contact tracing? Councilors read from various locations dropping contact tracing (see attached document). Can the grant be redirected to something other than contact tracing?

Councilor Beauchemin joined the meeting.

Mr. Curry said that the state is still requiring contact tracing, and the city is not seeing quite as much of a drop in cases. In Fitchburg it has been difficult to reach residents, so he wants to keep the contact tracing in place to reach out to residents. A five day quarantine is still an effective method of limiting the spread. The grant has spending requirements and so the city has to follow DPH guidelines. Currently, because there are so many cases, the city has been contact tracing only at-risk people. There are too many cases to trace everyone.

Councilors expressed support for two reasons. First, it makes sense, as there is not a national consensus to the contrary. We can evaluate as we go. Second, the funds are coming

from DPH, and they set the conditions. Councilors also thanked Mr. Curry and the contact tracers for their efforts.

Ms. Selser spoke about the need to establish prioritization for reaching out to populations at risk. She has developed a relationship with two area hospitals that are treating with monoclonal antibodies. The tracers have been able to connect infected people with treatment. They have also spent time to get skeptical residents to gain trust in the tracers and help the residents move on with care, such as with vaccinations. The tracers do much more than simple tracing. They are a connection to resources and information about vaccines and boosters, primary care, and insurance, food and care for the isolation period.

Ms. Hoover said that the tracers are at the point where the team is set up and working, and can contact the public to take the weight of the pandemic off the shoulders of the Health Director and Public Health Nurses. Ms. Selser spoke about texting forms to residents that can be used to request assistance.

Councilors are encouraged to hear that there is a lot more going on than just contact tracing. When exposed, a person has a lot of questions, and it is good to have a place to get answers. The money in the grant is not just for Fitchburg, but is entrusted to the city to assist other communities as well. They asked how the hiring is structured to keep these positions from being a long-term burden on the city. Mr. Curry stated that the tracers have been hired as temporary workers and will be gone when the job is done.

Councilors spoke about the people who obey the quarantine rules, while others who may be exposed are out and about. Mr. Curry said the problem is one of education, not a matter of enforcement. They are trying to get out enough information to get exposed people to isolate or quarantine. Ms. Selser noted that a lot of people have no choice, because they have to go out and work to survive. The tracers try to provide support for residents to stay home. About 10% to 15% of residents who talked with contact tracers need some support.

Councilors are pleased they are looking at long term issues, not just the current one.  
Action: Motion to recommend that item #219-21 be adopted as amended and sent to a First Reading made by Councilor Beauchemin and second by Councilor Zarrella.

Motion adopted. (4-1). Councilor DiNatale opposed.

Action: Motion to approve item #003-22 made by Councilor Zarrella and second by Councilor Beauchemin.

Motion adopted. (4-1). Councilor DiNatale opposed.

004-22        **ORDER:**        that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Planning Assistance Grant Program grant in the approximate amount of \$32,500.00 (THIRTY-TWO THOUSAND, FIVE HUNDRED AND 00/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of said grant, which is to update the city's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Discussion: Community Development Director Tom Skwierawski was present. He stated that the Open Space and Recreation Plan is a requirement and allows the city to be eligible for various grants, such as the recent ones for Parkhill Park. This grant will cover part of the cost, with the rest coming from the General Fund. The goal is to have the plan finished by August, 2022.

Action: Motion to approve made by Councilor Zarrella and second by Councilor Beauchemin. Motion adopted. (5-0).

005-22 ORDER: that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the MassDevelopment, Brownfields Redevelopment Fund grant in the approximate amount of \$65,000.00 (SIXTY-FIVE THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of said grant, which is to assess and plan for remediation at 173 Bemis Road.

Discussion: Mr. Skwierawski remained. He stated that 173 Bemis Road is on the corner of Bemis Road and Intervale Road. It is an abandoned gas station that has been discussed by the NICE Committee and is in tax title and Land Court. There is a brownfields issue, but if the city takes the property for taxes, then the city will have no liability and is not required to clean up the property as long as it is actively trying to sell the property. Mr. Skwierawski believes the city should exercise due diligence and conduct Phase I and Phase II studies.

There is a possibility of additional work to be required, deed restrictions, or further remediation. The property may also be impacted by a traffic study being conducted as part of the Amazon Warehouse project.

Councilors are pleased the city is doing something about the site. They asked if there will be more costs. Mr. Skwierawski indicated that the city should incur no major costs. Evidence of possible contamination goes back about ten years. The city can do a general cleanup of the property without having to engage in 21E remediation. The city can conduct a Phase I study prior to owning the property; Phase II will require city ownership because it involves test borings on the site. The city is currently waiting for Land Court to issue a Final Decree. Mr. Skwierawski noted that by doing this work, the city can provide a future buyer with an idea about what needs to be done.

Action: Motion to approve made by Councilor Zarrella and second by Councilor Cruz. Motion adopted. (5-0).

006-22 ORDER: that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the MassDevelopment, Real Estate Technical Assistance Program grant in the approximate amount of \$45,000.00 (FORTY-FIVE THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of said grant, which is to help prepare the city for the sale of 44 Wanoosnoc Road.

Discussion: Mr. Skwierawski remained. He said that this property was recently declared surplus. It is a 7.3 acre site with some wetlands that sits on the Water Street corridor. This grant will provide additional information in support of selling the property. The spending of the funds will be done by Mass Development; the city will have to repay a portion of the grant depending on the sale timing and amount.

Councilors asked about timing. Mr. Skwierawski said that he would like to have the work done by May. Councilors said it is in a very desirable location and are hoping the city benefits from the sale. They asked about the proceeds. City Auditor Calvin Brooks said the funds would belong to the city, since the School Committee has released the building from their control. Per MGL Chapter 44, section 63, all proceeds go to a Receipts Reserved account for spending on projects for which the city is allowed to incur debt of five or more years.

Councilors expressed the view that they think it is a mistake to sell the property and that they will not support the order.

Action: Motion to approve made by Councilor Zarrella and second by Councilor Beauchemin. Motion adopted. (4-1). Councilor Beauchemin opposed.

- Discussion about the meeting days and time for Finance Committee

One Councilor noted that when the Legislative Building was opened, a lot of groups wanted to use it for meetings. Finance Committee has historically met on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. Planning Board meets on the fourth Tuesday and draws a lot of residents. They could be better accommodated with a different meeting place or time. This Councilor is willing to adjust, but the Legislative Building is the City Council Chambers, so that body should have first rights to the space. He believes that the Finance Committee should meet in the Legislative Building, but is willing to consider a different night.

Mr. Skwierawski noted that the Planning Board recently changed from the second Tuesday to the fourth Tuesday. That board probably draws the largest crowd for meetings.

Another Councilor said he is a former Planning Board member and that this problem of meeting time and place has existed for quite some time. Originally the Planning Board met the same night as City Council, but changed to the second Tuesday when City Hall was closed. That change conflicted with the Zoning Board meeting night. The switching of nights has and may cause a loss of members. The Planning Board is wondering if Finance Committee could meet on Wednesdays, and this Councilor is willing to make the switch if it helps the Planning Board.

The conversation moved to discussing different nights of the week. School Committee meets on the first and third Mondays and Thursdays are too late to have a written report for the following City Council meeting. Wednesdays was discussed, because it would give time for a written report and allow Councilors to represent constituents at Planning Board and Zoning Board meetings. Mr. Skwierawski and Mr. Brooks noted that Wednesdays could be a problem, because Water/Wastewater Commission and Conservation Commission meet on the second Wednesday and Airport Commission on the fourth Wednesday. Councilors then began to focus on Mondays for Finance Committee meetings. Councilors want time to research the issue a little further and discussed holding the matter in committee for action at the next meeting. Action: Motion to hold the matter in committee and make a final determination at the next Finance Committee meeting made by Councilor Zarrella and second by Councilor Beauchemin. Motion adopted. (5-0).

Motion to adjourn made by Councilor Zarrella second by Councilor Beauchemin. Motion adopted. (5-0)

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 PM.

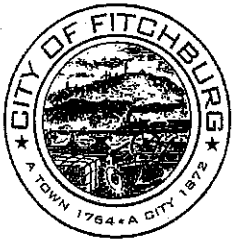
Respectfully submitted,



Calvin D. Brooks, Clerk

**City of Fitchburg  
Available Funds Summary  
Fiscal Year 2022**

<b>Available Funds Certified as of July 1, 2021</b>			<b>8,682,198</b>
<b>Less Approved Appropriations:</b>			
12/07/21	201-21	Stabilization Fund	-350,000
12/07/21	202-21	OPEB Trust Fund	-450,000
12/07/21	203-21	Reserve for Other Municipal Purposes, Capital Expenses	-125,000
12/07/21	204-21	School Expenses	-600,000
12/07/21	207-21	Police Maintenance of Buildings, Repair & Care	-8,380
12/21/21	208-21	Health Expense, Weights & Measures	-16,750
12/21/21	209-21	Library Trust Fund, Wallace Fund	-31,320
<b>Subtotal - Approved Appropriations</b>			<b>-1,581,450</b>
<b>Balance Available</b>			<b>7,100,748</b>
<b>Less Proposed Appropriations:</b>			
12/21/21	218-21	Facilities, Tax Possession Maintenance	-9,000
<b>Subtotal - Proposed Appropriations</b>			<b>-9,000</b>
<b>Balance Available if Proposed Appropriations are Approved</b>			<b>7,091,748</b>
<b>Possible Appropriations:</b>			
Snow & Ice			
Stabilization Fund 5% - \$6,974,000 7% - \$9,764,000 Current - \$7,517,897			
OPEB Fund Current - \$1,997,632			
Labor Contracts			
Veterans - Cash Benefits			
Community Development - Rail Trail			
Main Street Garage - Phase 1			
Salary Study			
Crocker Field			
DPW - Equipment List			
DPW - Paving			
Library Renovation			
Schools - Longsjø School - Window Replacement			
Police Station Renovation			
Senior Center Renovation			
Demolition			
Demolition - Laurel Street School			
Police - Vehicles			
Fire - Vehicles			
Marketing City			
Cemetery Software			
Cemetery - Vehicles			
Cemetery - Masoleum			
Cemetery - Engineering & Design for Expansion			
Cemetery - Construction for Expansion			
Parks - Downtown Summer Groundskeeper			
DPW - Oak Hill Road Bridge			
DPW - Street Paving			



Anne M. Cervantes  
Treasurer

# City of Fitchburg

OFFICE OF THE TREASURER

718 Main Street, Suite 103  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

978-829-1830  
FAX 978-829-1971

December 3, 2021

Mayor Stephen L. DiNatale  
City of Fitchburg  
718 Main Street  
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Dear Mayor DiNatale:

I respectfully request an appropriation of \$9,000 to the Tax Possession Maintenance Account to cover the expense of preparing three properties for the recent city property auction.

The auction required brush cutting and trash removal from the grounds of the properties, and removal of the contents of the buildings. Additionally, one property needed boarding removed and replaced on the day of the auction to allow for a showing of the property to prospective bidders.

The appropriation of \$9,000 will replenish the account for any needed tax possession maintenance for the rest of the fiscal year.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Anne M. Cervantes  
Treasurer

9MM  
1/25/22

Submitted for the record by Councilor D. Natale

Contact Tracing Quotes

for order 219-21 and Ordinance 003-22

[https://lanasteronline.com/news/health/pennsylvania-health-department-contact-tracing-1-in-10-covid-19-infections/article\\_567c5e7e-7ac4-11ec-98ff-dfe535746673.html](https://lanasteronline.com/news/health/pennsylvania-health-department-contact-tracing-1-in-10-covid-19-infections/article_567c5e7e-7ac4-11ec-98ff-dfe535746673.html)

"Unfortunately, during extreme community spread, contact tracing becomes impossible due to widespread transmission of the disease," Ryan Coyle, WellSpan Health spokesperson, said in an email. "We encourage anyone experiencing symptoms with a known exposure, to get tested as soon as possible."

"At this stage of the pandemic contact tracing has a different role," Dr. Amesh Adalja, an infectious diseases physician and senior scholar at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, said in an email to LNP | LancasterOnline.

The virus is going to become endemic and public health measures have to reflect that reality."

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/01/11/health/us-coronavirus-tuesday/index.html>

"Omicron, with its extraordinary, unprecedented degree of efficiency of transmissibility, will ultimately find just about everybody," Dr. Anthony Fauci told J. Stephen Morrison, senior vice president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies

<https://www.oregonlive.com/news/2022/01/in-quest-to-keep-schools-open-oregon-cuts-back-quarantines-contact-tracing-is-it-working.html>

<https://www.lohud.com/story/news/coronavirus/2022/01/11/ny-ending-covid-contact-tracing-amid-hope-omicron-wave-cresting/9171328002/>

Gov. Kathy Hochul on Tuesday announced New York would end COVID-19 contact tracing efforts amid early signs the highly contagious omicron variant wave is cresting.

The move to end COVID-19 contact tracing in New York, in part, conceded the massive scope of omicron variant cases — which are proving less severe than prior strains such as the delta variant — rendered contact-tracing investigations ineffective.

Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett said the omicron variant also has a very short incubation period and many more people are being tested.

"So the result is a very large number of people who tested positive and a very short window to disrupt the chain of transmission," she said, adding public health workers currently involved in contact tracing would be redirected to focus on COVID-19 testing and vaccination efforts.

<https://www.indystar.com/story/news/education/2022/01/21/indiana-covid-schools-contact-tracing-state-health-department/6612803001/>

The department issued new guidance this week that allows schools to end contract tracing programs and individual notification of close contacts for those schools that have mask mandates in place. Those schools may, instead, send classroom-wide notifications of positive cases, said a spokesperson for the department.



<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-01-26/omicron-spread-what-is-the-future-of-contact-tracing/100770948>

Countries around the world are scaling back contact tracing efforts in the face of rising Omicron infections

<https://www.freep.com/story/news/health/2022/01/21/covid-19-contact-tracing-all-but-stops-michigan-why-matters/6594180001/>

Coronavirus contact tracing has all but stopped for the vast majority of Michigan residents amid the worst yet pandemic surge.

"We really wish we could contact everybody, but there always has been a plan that there's going to come a point where we're really going to need folks to take on personal responsibility as this shifts from a pandemic to something that's endemic, something that we're going to have to live with," said Nick Derusha, health officer of the Luce, Mackinac, Alger and Schoolcraft District Health Department and president of the Michigan Association for Local Public Health.

"In times of high community spread, ... in indoor places where there will be people for any extended period of time without masks on — restaurants, bars, really in any crowded public settings — folks need to just assume they've been exposed," Derusha said.

<https://news.yahoo.com/end-k-12-contact-tracing-194930113.html>

It's long been an underlying logic of pandemic safety for schools: In order to contain COVID transmission, identify which students and staff have been exposed to the virus and make sure they quarantine or test negative before coming back to class.

That wisdom appears to be changing, however, in the wake of the Omicron surge, which experts say may have now peaked in many U.S. communities, but continues to strain K-12 operations.

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Three New England states — Massachusetts, Vermont and Connecticut — have recently announced new guidance recommending a pivot away from individualized contact tracing in schools and toward strategies like symptom monitoring and home test kits for those worried that they may be sick.

"We are recommending that school health personnel increase their focus on identifying symptomatic individuals, rather than monitoring in-school close contacts," Massachusetts Education Commissioner Jeffrey Riley, Massachusetts wrote in a Jan. 18 memo.

"Individuals identified as close contacts in school are very unlikely to contract or spread COVID-19," he continued. "Therefore, extensive contact tracing and associated Test and Stay procedures are not adding significant value as a mitigation strategy despite the demand they place on the time of school health staff and school staff at large."

New York announced in mid-January that it was ending its statewide contact tracing program, which was for the general population rather than K-12 specific. And individual school systems including Bekeley,

California; Brevard County, Florida; York, Maine and Delaware Valley, Pennsylvania have also opted to ease away from the practice, often ramping up other mitigation strategies instead.

“Omicron is spreading more quickly than contacts can be traced. Contact tracing for this variant is ineffective,” wrote Lou Goscinski, superintendent of Maine’s York School District, in a Jan. 13 message to the community explaining that the practice would be discontinued.

Indeed, the timeline from exposure to transmission is faster with Omicron than with Delta or other strains of the virus, scientists say. For districts that are practicing universal masking, that means “contact tracing doesn’t do much as a preventative measure,” said Danny Benjamin, co-chair of the ABC Science Collaborative at Duke University, which examines COVID-19 spread in schools.

“By the time you figure out who was in the room, were they really close, were they vaccinated, the list goes on and on, it’s now a couple of days after exposure and that child is now infectious,” Benjamin told The 74. “So [contact tracing] is not as helpful to contain the disease as we were seeing with the ancestral variant or the Delta variant.”