

May 16 2023 10:44 an



**City of Fitchburg
Massachusetts 01420**

CITY COUNCIL

Councilors at Large

Marcus L. DiNatale
Sally H. Cragin
Amy L. Green
Samantha M. Squailia
Anthony M. Zarrella

President

Anthony M. Zarrella

Vice President

Andrew J. Van Hazinga

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 – Derrick J. Cruz

Finance Committee

A meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order by Councilor DiNatale on Wednesday, April 26, 2023 at 6:07 PM in the Legislative Building, 700 Main Street, Fitchburg, MA.

Committee Members present: Councilors Paul Beauchemin, Marcus DiNatale, Samantha Squailia, Andrew Van Hazinga, and Anthony Zarrella.
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.

110-23 ORDER: that there be and hereby is transferred from within the sum of EIGHTY-FIVE THOUSAND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$85,000.00) same to be transferred from POLICE, PERSONAL SERVICES, PATROLMAN and credited to the following POLICE DEPARTMENT accounts:

EQUIPMENT & REPAIR, AUTO REPAIR	\$35,000.00
EQUIPMENT & REPAIR, TRAINING	\$20,000.00
MAINT. OF BUILDING, REPAIR & CARE	\$15,000.00
MAINT. OF BUILDING, ELECTRICITY	\$15,000.00

Discussion: Police Chief Ernest Martineau was present. He stated that this order is part of the end of year accounting review to make adjustments in areas that are likely to be overspent. The added funds for auto repair are to cover the increase in the cost of parts. Training covers the cost of training new officers and there have been five unanticipated retirements. In building repair and care, the department has had to replace security glass in the cell block and to run

new electrical lines to a freezer and generator. Electricity costs have simply increased. Money is available in the Patrolman account because of lower than budget staffing levels.

Councilors asked questions and were told that the department has 56 vehicles to maintain and that new hires sign an agreement that says they may be required to return funds if they leave the city's employ.

Action: On a motion made by Councilor Beauchemin second by Councilor Zarrella, the committee voted unanimously to approve Order #110-23.

111-23 ORDER: that there be and hereby is transferred from within the sum of SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$75,000.00) same to be transferred from FIRE, PERSONAL SERVICES, FIREFIGHTERS and credited to FIRE, PERSONAL SERVICES, OVERTIME.

Discussion: Fire Chief Dante Suarez was present and said this transfer is needed to cover overtime costs for the balance of the fiscal year. Five retirements in the last year have freed up space in the firefighter budget. There have been eight long term absences and some larger fires that have used the overtime. The chief has also been trying to provide a second person in dispatch.

Councilors asked about the possibility of a call fire department and the chief answered that Fitchburg is too big a community for that model to work.

Action: On a motion made by Councilor Zarrella second by Councilor Van Hazinga, the committee voted unanimously to approve Order #111-23.

112-23 ORDER: that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Cultural Council grant in the approximate amount of \$2,500.00 (TWO THOUSAND, FIVE HUNDRED AND 00/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of said grant, which is to support Concerts in the Common during the summer months.

Recreation Director James Bunnell was present and indicated that this grant will help cover the costs for concerts last year. Concert costs are also covered by contributions from the community.

Action: On a motion made by Councilor Beauchemin second by Councilor Squailia, the committee voted unanimously to approve Order #112-23.

113-23 ORDER: that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the National Fitness Campaign grant in the approximate amount of \$50,000.00 (FIFTY THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of said grant, which is to support the construction of the National Fitness Campaign Fitness Park and Outdoor Fitness Studio.

115-23 ORDER: that there be and hereby is transferred from within the sum of TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$200,000.00) same to be transferred from RESERVE FOR OTHER MUNICIPAL PURPOSES, CAPITAL EXPENSES and credited to PARKS CAPITAL EXPENSE, PARK & PLAYGROUND IMPROVEMENTS for purpose of making improvements to the playgrounds.

Discussion: Mr. Bunnell remained. He reported that in addition to this grant the city has received \$50,000 from Block Grant funds and the city is contributing \$100,000 to the project. It will be one of two fitness parks in central Massachusetts and one of three in New England. The blueprint for the fitness park is about the size of a tennis court.

At the suggestion of Councilors, the chairman agreed to take up together Order #113-23 and # 115-23.

Mr. Bunnell said that of the \$200,000 coming from Reserve for Capital, \$100,000 is for the fitness park project and the other \$100,000 is for Mama Fitz Park and Parkhill Park. The Mama Fitz share will be for playground structures. Parkhill Park is getting older and needs some updating, such as the perimeter fence and the walls containing the stream. Councilors then discussed project details.

Action: On a motion made by Councilor Van Hazinga second by Councilor Squailia, the committee voted unanimously to approve Orders #113-23 and #115-23.

114-23 ORDER: that there be and hereby is transferred from within the sum of THREE HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$335,000.00) same to be transferred from RESERVE FOR OTHER MUNICIPAL PURPOSES, CAPITAL EXPENSES and credited to PUBLIC WORKS CAPITAL EXPENSE, EQUIPMENT for the purpose of acquiring a loader and a 1-ton pickup truck.

Discussion: Streets Superintendent Gary Withington was present. The chairman read a letter from Public Works Commissioner Nick Erickson dated April 27, 2023.

Councilors asked about the pickup truck which will not have an extended cab but will have a snowplow. As for the loader, the department is trying to buy from the same brand and so are sticking with John Deere. Councilors also noted that while the city has been funneling millions into new equipment for Public Works, the department still has fifteen to twenty year old vehicles.

Action: On a motion made by Councilor Squailia second by Councilor Zarrella, the committee voted unanimously to approve Order #114-23.

116-23 ORDER: that there be and hereby is transferred the sum of TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$275,000.00) same to be charged against RESERVE FOR SNOW & ICE REMOVAL and credited to the following DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, SNOW & ICE accounts:

OVERTIME	\$ 26,973.00
EQUIPMENT RENTAL	\$ 84,249.00
SALT	\$163,778.00.

117-23 ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of FIFTY-FOUR THOUSAND, SEVEN HUNDRED NINETY-ONE AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$54,791.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to the following DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, SNOW & ICE accounts:

SALT

\$54,791.00.

Discussion: Mr. Withington remained. The chairman announced that he was taking up Order #116-23 and #117-23. He then read a letter from Mr. Erickson dated April 25, 2023.

Councilors noted that there were several pesky storms over the winter and one last big one. Mr. Withington said that the city was dealing with both the amount of salt and its price. Upon questioning, he said that the salt shed is about three quarters full. They will complete filling it in the fall.

Action: On a motion made by Councilor Zarrella second by Councilor Squailia, the committee voted unanimously to approve Orders #116-23 and #117-23.

118-23 ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of TEN THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$10,000.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to CITY AUDITOR, PERSONAL SERVICES, DEPUTY AUDITOR.

Discussion: Deputy City Auditor Jacquelyn Cronin was present. Given the near retirement of the City Auditor and her elevation to that post, the city has hired an excellent candidate to replace her as deputy and there will be a five week overlap while the new deputy learns the job. These funds will be used to cover the overlap.

Action: On a motion made by Councilor Squailia second by Councilor Zarrella, the committee voted unanimously to approve Order #118-23.

119-23 ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$175,000.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to LAW OTHER EXPENSES, DAMAGES PERSONS & PROPERTY to settle two claims.

Discussion: Assistant City Solicitor Donna Pawlak and Health Director Steve Curry were present. Atty. Pawlak indicated that these funds are to settle two lawsuits, one of which had been previously discussed during an executive session and the other the city may be looking to settle to avoid a twenty day trial.

Action: On a motion made by Councilor Squailia second by Councilor Van Hazinga, the committee voted unanimously to approve Order #119-23.

120-23 ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of THIRTY-FIVE THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$35,000.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to FACILITIES DEPARTMENT, EXPENSES.

Discussion: Facilities Director Russell Karlstad was present. These funds are to cover the costs of contracted custodial services during the absence of the City Hall custodian, to cover higher electric costs, and to cover the costs of repairing the building.

Councilors asked if the building would still be under warrantee. Mr. Karlstad answered that usually it covers only one year from occupancy.

Action: On a motion made by Councilor Van Hazinga second by Councilor Squailia, the committee voted unanimously to approve Order #120-23.

Councilor Squailia recused herself on Order #121-23, left the room, and did not return.

121-23

ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of ONE HUNDRED TWENTY THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$120,000.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to the following AIRPORT EXPENSE accounts:

AVIATION FUEL AND OIL	\$100,000.00
ELECTRICITY	\$ 20,000.00

Discussion: Airport Manager Peter Kettle was present. He reported that he had sat for a budget review with the City Auditor and Deputy Auditor and found that both fuel and electricity were running over budget. He said that this request should get the airport to year end and that fuel sales will return revenue to the airport. He expects the airport will soon be self-sustaining.

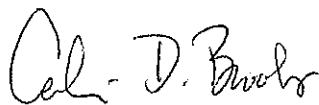
A discussion about fuel sales ensued. Mr. Kettle also noted that rents are running about \$360,000 per year and will increase as the land area for development has more hangars on it. Councilors expressed a concern about taxpayers subsidizing the airport. Mr. Kettle said the benefits are not just what you see at the airport, but also all the other business it brings to the area.

Action: On a motion made by Councilor Zarrella second by Councilor Van Hazinga, the committee voted unanimously to approve Order #121-23. (Councilor Squailia had recused herself.)

On a motion made by Councilor Zarrella second by Councilor Van Hazinga, the committee voted unanimously to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 7:42 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Calvin D. Brooks, Clerk