

CITY OF GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS
CITY COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF JUNE 1, 2021

The Finance Committee meeting was called to order remotely by Council President Elizabeth Kazinskas at 8:00 a.m. Finance Committee Members Councillors Ronald Cormier and James Walsh were also present via Zoom.

President Kazinskas announced that pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Finance Committee will be conducted via remote participation on Zoom. The audio recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings will be posted on the City's website as soon as possible after the meeting and the meeting is being broadcast live on Gardner's YouTube Channel.

Also participating remotely was Mayor Michael Nicholson, City Auditor John Richard, Council on Aging Director Mike Ellis, Human Resource Director Deb Pond, Tim Josti of GETV and City Clerk Titi Siriphan.

1-1 Review and Approval of the Meeting Minutes.

On a motion by Councillor Ronald Cormier and seconded by President Elizabeth Kazinskas, on call of the roll, it was voted to waive reading and to accept the Finance Committee Meeting Minutes of May 13, 2021, as printed.

2-1 An Order Transferring \$2,100.00 from Council on Aging - Department Head Salaries to Repairs and Maintenance.

Mayor Nicolson informed the committee that this appropriation is to cover the cost of some maintenance that was required to be done at the building. Since we had a long period in between Director Ledger and Director Ellis while conducting a search for the new Director, they had some money left over in the salaries line item.

Director Mike Ellis wanted to add that there were extraordinary repairs that are detailed in the letter submitted. He thanks the committee for their consideration of this request.

On a motion by Councillor Ronald Cormier and seconded by Councillor James Walsh, on call of the roll, it was voted to recommend to the City Council that the following Order ought to pass:

AN ORDER APPROPRIATING FROM COUNCIL ON AGING DEPARTMENT HEAD SALARIES TO REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE.

ORDERED:

That there be and is hereby appropriated the sum of Two Thousand One Hundred Dollars and No Cents (\$2,100.00) from Council on Aging – Department Head Salaries to Repairs and Maintenance.

2-2 **A Resolution to create a revolving account for the Gardner Health Department Prevention Activities.**

President Elizabeth Kazinskas wanted to highlight that this position for the City Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator was a great move by the city. Most cities around us have one of those and it is certainly needed.

Mayor Nicholson informed the committee that the prevention coordinator oversees different activities. The request is being submitted so that any donations received by the Prevention Coordinator can be used to help further the mission of this position to help curb the trend of the opioid epidemic in our community.

On a motion by Councillor James Walsh and seconded by Councillor Ronald Cormier, on call of the roll, it was voted to recommend to the City Council that the following Resolution ought to pass:

CITY OF GARDNER HEALTH DEPARTMENT PREVENTION ACTIVITIES
REVOLVING FUND M.G.L. CH.44. S.53E½

VOTED: To authorize and direct the City Treasurer to establish a revolving fund in accordance with M.G.L Chapter 44, section 53E ½ for trainings and expenses relating to prevention activities provided by the Gardner Health Department Prevention Coordinator.

Monies received from trainings provided by the Prevention Coordinator shall be credited to this fund. As per M.G.L., interest earned on this fund shall be treated as general fund revenue.

The Health Department is authorized to expend from this fund and is limited to a total amount not to exceed any available balance or twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000.00), whichever is less.

The Health Department shall report annually to the Mayor and City Council the total amount of receipts and expenditures for the prior fiscal year and for the current fiscal year through December 31st, along with any other information that the City Council may by vote require.

In the event this fund is not reauthorized for the following fiscal year or the city changes the purpose of the revolving fund, the balance in the fund shall revert to surplus revenue, unless City Council and the Mayor vote to transfer the funds to another revolving fund established in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 44, section 53E½.

2-3 An Order Appropriating \$27,600.00 from Sewer Surplus to Department of Public Works – New Equipment.

Mayor Nicholson informed the committee that the Public Works Director Dane Arnold submitted a letter requesting the appropriation from Sewer Surplus to New Equipment. There is a need for sand to be used for mixing and cover material at the Sludge Landfill. The City has an abundance that can supply the Sewer Department with sand. Since this is an enterprise account, the term retained earnings is used, however, this is similar to free cash in the General Fund, in which any revenue that comes in over budget or expenses that end up under budget fall back into this one fund.

On a motion by Councillor Ronald Cormier and seconded by Councillor James Walsh, on call of the roll, it was voted to recommend to the City Council that the following Order ought to pass:

AN ORDER APPROPRIATING FROM SEWER SURPLUS TO DEPT. PUBLIC WORKS NEW EQUIPMENT.

ORDERED: That there be and is hereby appropriated the sum of Twenty Seven Thousand Six Hundred Dollars and No Cents (\$27,600.00) from Sewer Surplus to Dept. Public Works - New Equipment.

2-4 An Order Appropriating \$125,000.00 from Free Cash to School New Locker Cap Expense.

Mayor Nicholson informed the committee that this appropriation is to do two floors of new lockers at the middle school.

- Right now the existing lockers at the middle school have a width of six inches and a depth of one foot.
- Pre-pandemic, our students were actually being told not to utilize their lockers because it was taking students too long in the hallway to change their books in between classes because the lockers are too close to each other that one student had to wait for the student next to them to be done using their locker in order to get into the locker that was next to them
- It has been three years now that the students are told that they are not allowed to utilize the lockers because they don't have the space to put anything in
- Every student in the district now has a Chromebook and the IT Director Bob O'Keefe said that there is no way to properly store the Chromebook in a safe manner with those lockers without potentially damaging it
- In the pictures submitted, the new lockers will be four lockers of the stacked two by two lockers and then goes into six inch wide lockers

Councillor James Walsh had a question about replacing the narrow lockers with the wider but shorter ones, are we reducing the number of lockers available?

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Mayor Nicholson responded that they are reducing the number of lockers but they've had about 200 lockers that weren't being used. They will still have a sufficient amount of lockers to suit the population.

On a motion by Councillor James Walsh and seconded by Councillor Ronald Cormier, on call of the roll, it was voted to recommend to the City Council that the following Order ought to pass:

AN ORDER APPROPRIATING FROM FREE CASH TO SCHOOL NEW LOCKER CAP EXPENSE .

ORDERED: That there be and is hereby appropriated the sum of One Hundred Twenty Five Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$125,000.00) from Free Cash to School New Locker Cap Expense.

2-5 An Order Appropriating \$40,000.00 from Free Cash to Pool Pump Installation Expense Account.

Mayor Nicholson informed the committee that this appropriation is for the installation for the filter that was purchased previously. The on-call contractor, Royal Steam is the one who provided the quote. By appropriating this money now, they can perform the work immediately after the pool closes for the season, rather than having to wait for Free Cash to be certified again in November before the work can be performed.

Councillor James Walsh said that he is happy to hear that there are going to be swim meets at the outdoor pool. They were big events that was an economic benefit to the city as a whole and people came from all around the country to compete.

On a motion by Councillor Ronald Cormier and seconded by Councillor James Walsh, on call of the roll, it was voted to recommend to the City Council that the following Order ought to pass:

AN ORDER APPROPRIATING A SUM OF MONEY FROM FREE CASH TO POOL PUMP INSTALLATION EXPENSE ACCOUNT.

ORDERED: That there be and is hereby appropriated the sum of Forty Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$40,000.00) from Free Cash to the Pool Pump Installation Expense Account:

2-6 An Order Appropriating \$167,368.00 from Available Funds - Cable Commission Fees Reserved to Cable Commission - New Equipment.

Mayor Nicholson informed the committee that the cable department is not funded by taxpayer dollars at all. It is funded solely from revenue provided to the City directly

from Comcast, and this funding is restricted to only costs associated with the Cable department. The Reserve for Appropriation account is the revolving account in which these funds are deposited and any difference in revenue and the annual budget are deposited in this fund. They are looking to upgrade our systems to HD systems at the cable studio, the council chambers, and the mobile equipment.

Director Tim Josti said that standard HD equipment is becoming harder to find replacement parts for anything that they operate right now:

- Recording on HD has a better quality definition
- He would like to be able to record meetings to YouTube
- The new upgrades will allow them to stream the meetings onto the city's webpage

On a motion by Councillor Ronald Cormier and seconded by Councillor James Walsh, on call of the roll, it was voted to recommend to the City Council that the following Order ought to pass:

AN ORDER APPROPRIATING A SUM OF MONEY FROM AVAILABLE FUNDS-
CABLE COMMISSION FEES RESERVED TO CABLE COMMISSION - NEW
EQUIPMENT

ORDERED: That there be and is hereby appropriated the sum of ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SEVEN THOUSAND, THREE HUNDRED SIXTY-EIGHT DOLLARS (\$167,368.00) from Available Funds-Cable Commission Fees Reserved to the Cable Commission – New Equipment.

2-7 An Order Appropriating \$2,000.00 from Free Cash to the Pool Department Salaries Account.

Mayor Nicholson informed the committee that this expenditure was caused by the fact that the pool was kept open an extra two weeks last year:

- School was delayed in to start on September 15th
- Since they added the two weeks, they had to pay the lifeguards a little more for the extended period of time
- They were able to keep the pool open longer because our lifeguards weren't going back to college and high school because of the COVID delay
- They did have a good amount of people use the pool during that two week period and it was heavily used
- He wanted to ensure that the public had access to this service since it was an outside location that was deemed safe for use by public

President Kazinskas said that she supports this based off Auditor Richard and Mayor Nicholson's comments. She thinks it makes sense and she appreciates their comments.

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On a motion by Councillor Ronald Cormier and seconded by Councillor James Walsh, on call of the roll, it was voted to recommend to the City Council that the following Order ought to pass:

AN ORDER APPROPRIATING A SUM OF MONEY FROM FREE CASH TO POOL DEPT. SALARIES ACCOUNT.

ORDERED: That there be and is hereby appropriated the sum of Two Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$2,000.00) from Free Cash to the Pool Dept. Salaries Account:

2-8 An Order Appropriating \$5,000.00 from Free Cash to Human Resource Exams Account.

Mayor Nicholson informed the committee that there were a large number of hiring's this past year:

- There are still several hires that are expected to go through
- We have four new firefighters and some other positions that are currently open that we're filling
- Due to the larger than normal number of new hires that we have this past year and the new hires we expect to start before the end of the fiscal year, the budget for the mandatory pre-hire physical and drug test is not sufficient to cover what is needed

On a motion by Councillor Ronald Cormier and seconded by Councillor James Walsh, on call of the roll, it was voted to recommend to the City Council that the following Order ought to pass:

AN ORDER APPROPRIATING FROM FREE CASH TO HR MEDICAL EXAMS ACCOUNT.

ORDERED: That there be and is hereby appropriated the sum of Five Thousand Dollars and No Cents (\$5,000.00) from Free Cash to the HR Medical Exams Account.

3-1 A Measure Confirming the Mayor's Appointment of Charles Leblanc to the position of Board of Assessors Member, for term expiring May 18, 2024.

Mayor Nicholson informed the committee that this was a reappointment. He has served on the board since he was appointed by former Mayor McKean.

On a motion by Councillor James Walsh and seconded by Councillor Ronald Cormier, on call of the roll, it was voted to recommend that the City Council confirm the Mayor's Appointment of Charles Leblanc to the position of Board of Assessors Member.

3-2 A Measure Confirming the Mayor's Appointment of Ann Twohig to the position of Golf Commission Member, for term expiring May 20, 2024.

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Mayor Nicholson informed the committee that this was a new appointment. Under statutes in the city ordinance, we are required to have a female member of the golf commission. The other existing female member will no longer be serving the golf commission.

On a motion by Councillor James Walsh and seconded by Councillor Ronald Cormier, on call of the roll, it was voted to recommend that the City Council confirm the Mayor's Appointment of Ann Twohig to the position of Golf Commission Member.

3-3 A Measure Confirming the Mayor's Appointment of Roger Tousignant to the position of Housing Authority Member, for term expiring May 25, 2026.

Mayor Nicholson informed the committee that this was a reappointment. He has served on the Housing Authority for several years. He said for the benefit of the public and who may be watching or the other Councillors who may not be aware, the housing authority is technically a state agency. Some of the members are appointed by the governor some of the members are appointed by the mayor subject to council confirmation and they oversee the different state housing locations.

On a motion by Councillor Ronald Cormier and seconded by Councillor James Walsh, on call of the roll, it was voted to recommend that the City Council confirm the Mayor's Appointment of Roger Tousignant to the position of Housing Authority Member.

3-4 A Measure Authorizing an Exemption for Demetrios Tyros under G.L. c. 268A, § 20(b), Financial Interest in a Municipal Contract, Personal Services, Non-elected Compensated Municipal Employee, School Department.

Mayor Nicholson informed the committee that this was our technology and engineering teacher at Gardner High School who over sees our new manufacturing trade. This disclosure of conflict of interest has to be signed by the President of the Council if passed by the City Council so that he can work as a summer maintenance worker to help with some of the repairs that need to be made to the school buildings.

On a motion by Councillor Ronald Cormier and seconded by Councillor James Walsh, on call of the roll, it was voted to recommend to the City Council the exemption of Demetrios Tyros for Financial Interest in a Municipal Contract, Personal Services, Non-elected Compensated Municipal Employee, School Department.

4-1 An Ordinance to Amend Code of the City of Gardner, Chapter 171, Thereof, Entitled "Personnel" by Amending Section 14: Holidays Designated, Section 44: Compensation in Lieu of Paid Holidays, and Section 60: Holidays with Pay.

Mayor Nicholson provided an update to the committee. He said that this this is the corrected version of the ordinance that was submitted at the last finance committee

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meeting that does remove the employees who are covered by the collective bargaining agreements that were previously listed under the section that says those employees not covered by the collective bargaining agreement. The clerical errors have been corrected in there from when this ordinance was originally passed prior to them having unions in those departments and this is the new state holiday that was created last year in the acts of 2020 for to create Juneteenth as a paid holiday.

Councillor James Walsh said “The first part of the proposed amendment and it says holidays designated all full-time and regular part-time city employees not covered by a collective bargaining agreement except the police and fire department personnel shall be granted holidays. Why are we exempting police and fire departments when they are subject to collective bargaining experiments that is for the non-union employees within those departments the chief the deputy chiefs the two chiefs and the deputy chief where they receive holiday pay instead of the days off”. He is concerned about that line and that it makes an exception for police and fire department personnel to the general proposition of regular part-time city employees not covered by collective bargaining agreement. It doesn't narrow it down to the people.

On a motion by Councillor Ronald Cormier and seconded by Councillor James Walsh, on call of the roll, it was voted to recommend to the City Council to place this item on the Council Calendar and referred back to the Finance Committee for further study and report.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Councillor Ronald Cormier and seconded by Councillor James Walsh, on call of the roll, it was voted to adjourn at 9:06 a.m.