

Budget & Finance Standing Committee
Thursday, August 19, 2021 – 5:30 p.m.
REMOTE MEETING
-Minutes-

Present: Chair, Councilor Melissa Cox; Vice Chair, Councilor Scott Memhard; Councilor John McCarthy

Other Councilors Present: Councilor Val Gilman

Also Present: Auditor, Kenny Costa; CFO, John Dunn; Regional Prevention Director, Amy Epstein; Clerk of Committees, Sherry Karvelas

This meeting was conducted remotely through ZOOM. All votes were by ROLL CALL.

Meeting called to order at 5:30 p.m.

Chairperson Cox announced, “Consistent with chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting will be conducted by remote participation. The public may not physically attend this meeting but every effort will be made to allow the public to view and listen to the meeting in real-time and participate when necessary. If you are calling in on a phone, you can press Star 9 to request to speak. If you are watching on a computer or a device, there is a raised hand button that you can tap or press to request to speak. Please use either of these options to be recognized to speak.”

1. Memorandum from Interim Health Director requesting acceptance of a Prevention in Early Childhood Grant in the amount of \$156,250

Summary of Discussion: Regional Prevention Director, Amy Epstein stated this grant was focused on upstream prevention of eventual opioid misuse working mainly with the age group of 0-10 years and their families. She stated the Health Department had partnered with Pathways for Children to submit this application which had given the Health Department the opportunity to work with a new workgroup aimed specifically at working with early childhood, looking at gaps, and how the community and Health Department could support efforts with offering protective factors to youth and their families.

Councilor Cox asked how vulnerable children would be identified. **Ms. Epstein** stated they would employ the use of environmental strategies and added the grant worked as a strategic prevention framework which, she explained, was a specific structure where an assessment would be done, and then the provider would look at gaps and data and identify what programs were available to address those specific gaps and needs.

Councilor McCarthy asked if there was an outreach component to the grant when a vulnerable child was identified. **Ms. Epstein** stated there were many places to refer to but, with the Health Department’s partnerships with Pathways and the YMCA, there was a group of trained staff already in place in this field doing this type of work. The **CAO, Kenny Costa** added there was a staff training piece of the grant of \$25,000. **Ms. Epstein** stated if a particular curriculum was chosen for a program then the staff would need to be trained in that particular curriculum with those funds.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor Memhard, the Budget and Finance Committee voted by ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to accept under MGL c. 44, §53A, a federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) and passed through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), Bureau of Substance Addiction Services, a Prevention in Early Childhood

Services Grant in the amount of \$156,250 over approximately a 15-month timeframe for the purpose of supporting the development of an Early Childhood Workgroup through the existing Regional Youth Prevention Network (RYPN) to include prenatal, postpartum and early childhood providers. The Fiscal Year 2022 grant period for expenditure of these funds is \$125,000 from July 14, 2021 through June 30, 2022; and the Fiscal Year 2023 grant period for expenditure of these funds is \$31,250 from July 1, 2022 through September 29, 2022. There is no local match required for this grant.

2. Memorandum from Interim Health Director requesting acceptance of a Youth Mental Health Grant in the amount of \$150,000

Summary of Discussion: Ms. Epstein explained this grant was focused on having youth lead the efforts in improving mental health access and services for young people. She stated the Regional Youth Coalition (RYC) was made up of students from seven regional towns who met monthly who had chosen mental health as their key coalition. She gave an example of a strategy that the RYC had recently chosen to promote good mental health which was an event in June 2021 held in Beverly called Youth Mental Health Awareness Day. She stated the event had activities for teens as well as outreach tables. She stated this grant would help expand the RYC program by providing more staffing and creating a new program called “The Teen Mental Health First Aid.” She explained the concept as changing the culture by training a large cohort of youth at a single time and she added an agreement had been made with each of the seven towns within the RYC to train all of the 10th graders in The Teen Mental Health First Aid. She stated this would help the youth share a common language and would offer resources including tools for those trained to help their peers.

Councilor Memhard asked if staff that was already in place in the schools would be trained. **Ms. Epstein** confirmed that was a big piece of the program. She stated a clinical school workgroup was in the process of being formed and stated that adjustment counselors from all seven towns would meet regularly to share strategies and would be an active part of training the 10th grade students in each of the seven towns. **Councilor McCarthy** added that he was excited for these grants and the work being done, and stated this had been an area that had previously lacked resources. **Councilor Cox** added that “youth-driven, adult supported” was an amazing concept and she, too, was excited about the work being done with this grant.

Councilor Gilman joined the meeting at 5:43 p.m.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor Memhard, the Budget and Finance Committee voted by ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to accept under MGL c. 44, §53A, a private grant in the amount of \$150,000 from The Peter & Elizabeth C. Tower Foundation for the purpose of supporting the City’s Cape Ann/North Shore Youth Lead Mental Health Wellness Initiative 2021-2022, that includes creating a youth-driven, adult-supported movement working towards building communities more conducive to good youth mental health both regionally and community based. The grant period is from July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022. There is no local match required for this grant.

3. Memorandum from Chief Financial Officer requesting acceptance of a Community Grant from the Cape Ann Community Foundation, Inc. in the amount of \$1,500

Summary of Discussion: The CFO, **John Dunn** stated this was a grant received by the City-Owned Cemeteries Advisory Committee for headstone restoration work. He added that this grant would bring the fund to just over \$2,000 in available funds for this type of work.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor Memhard, the Budget and Finance Committee voted by ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to accept under MGL c. 44, §53A, a private grant in the amount of \$1,500 from the Cape Ann Community Foundation, Inc. for the purpose of headstone restoration on behalf of the City-Owned Cemeteries Advisory Committee.

4. Memorandum from City Auditor regarding accounts having expenditures which exceed their authorization & Auditor's Report and other related business

Summary of Discussion: There were no matters under this heading for the committee's consideration.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was a discussion regarding ARPA funds. **Councilor McCarthy** stated he wondered how Sec. 2-9(a) of the Charter would affect these funds. He stated it read that all expenditures would go through the City Council to Budget & Finance. **Councilor Cox** asked the **CFO** if the acceptance of the federal money needed to go through City Council. The **CFO** stated the money was sent automatically (and stated some funds had been received this week) so he did not believe the acceptance needed to go through City Council. He added that the **Auditor** had set up revenue accounts only for the received funds. **The CFO** further stated that no funds had been spent as of yet, but the City had until the end of 2024 to spend the funds. **Councilor Cox** asked the **CFO** if there was a guide for the use of ARPA funds as far as something that the Budget & Finance Committee could brush up on, including use capability of the funds for people versus projects. The **CFO** stated moving forward it would become clearer over time over what was allowed versus what was not allowed, and further stated the ARPA funds were aimed heavily at infrastructure and communications, where CARES Act funding was more targeted to COVID-19 issues within the local community. He added there was a mountain of paperwork to go through and he felt the directives from the federal and state governments for the use of the funds were not completely clear at this point. **Councilor Cox** added that in her research about ARPA fund use she has found different answers to the same questions. **Councilor Cox** further stated she hoped to see economic recovery ideas from the Administration for the City's businesses with the CARES Act funds.

The **CFO** added that the total amount of funds expected was \$23 million dollars, which included \$17 million coming to the City as an entitlement community with another \$6 million coming to the City as an allocation on a per capita based on the Essex County per capita. He reiterated that the decision on where the funds should be spent had not yet been made and that none of the funds had been used. He stated help was needed to oversee the funds, both internally and externally, to track expenditures to make sure it was done properly. He added there would be someone at a clerical level within the City to oversee expenditures. The **Auditor** stated the City was looking at possibly bringing in a consultant to help guide the City in looking for public input for fund use and also was looking for an ARPA Director/Compliance Officer to ensure proper tracking and spending. **Councilor Memhard** stated he looked forward to receiving continuous updates on the management of these funds to keep the process as transparent as possible.

Councilor Cox stated the Budget & Finance Committee had received an update from **General Counsel, Chip Payson** on the requested information regarding the lawsuit surrounding the new combined school. She stated if any member of the B&F Committee had any questions regarding that information to reach out directly to **General Counsel**. **Councilor Memhard** added that he appreciated the information that had been received, particularly the comparison of in-house legal costs versus outside legal costs.

Councilor Cox asked the members of the Budget & Finance Committee if they were satisfied with the information received regarding the councilor-to-councilor complaint. **Councilor McCarthy** stated he thought it was an ongoing process.

The **CFO** stated the B&F Committee had previously asked for a review of debt service. He suggested that the matter be put on the next B&F meeting agenda. **Councilor Cox** agreed.

MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Memhard, seconded by Councilor McCarthy, the Budget and Finance Committee voted by ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to adjourn the meeting at 6:11 p.m.

Submitted by: Sherry Karvelas, Clerk of Committees

Documents submitted at the meeting: None.

Meeting Recording: <http://gloucester-ma.gov/1097/Past-Remote-Public-Meetings>