

Budget & Finance Standing Committee
Thursday, September 3, 2020 – 5:30 p.m.
REMOTE MEETING
-Minutes-

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

Also Present: Acting CAO, Vanessa Krawczyk; City Clerk, Joanne M. Senos, Economic Development Director, Sal DiStefano; Community Development Director, Jill Cahill; CFO, John Dunn; Auditor, Kenny Costa; Fire Chief, Eric Smith; DPW Director, Mike Hale; Library Director, Jenny Benedict

Absent: None.

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

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

Chairperson Cox announced, “This meeting is recorded by video and audio in accordance with state open meeting law. Consistent with the Governor's orders, suspending certain provisions of the open meeting law and banning gatherings of more than 25 people, 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. Persons who wish to do so are invited to view the meeting and you have the information that was on the posting. If you are calling in on a phone, you can press *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 these options to be recognized to speak.”

1. Supplemental Appropriation-Budgetary Request (#2021-SA-33) from the DPW

Summary of Discussion: DPW Director Mike Hale explained that this is a Highway Force Account transfer of \$25,000 that will go to Right-of-Way Vegetation Management. The DPW has been focusing a lot on vegetation management and dead trees over the last 18 months, and he stated that some good progress has been made in their call outs during big windstorms or thunderstorms as far as tree limbs down are concerned. He believed it is a better decision to do it now for a reasonable price rather than doing it for emergency costs later.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor Memhard, the Budget & Finance Committee voted by ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to recommend that the City Council approve Supplemental Appropriation 2021-SA-33 in the amount of \$25,000 (Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars) from DPW Highway Force – Transfers to General Fund Account #32085-596001, to DPW-Public Services Purchase of Services Account #0147052-520000 for the purpose of funding a right of way tree removal and pruning on Holly Street and other locations.

2. Memorandum from the CFO re. loan authorization request for the Gloucester Water Pollution Flood Mitigation Project in the amount of \$4,200,000

Summary of Discussion: CFO John Dunn explained that this is a loan order for \$4.2 million dollars. The city is hopeful that in the end, this will not be the expense, however, total project cost estimates have varied, so he feels that it is better to submit a loan order in excess and rescind the balance than to have to come back and increase it. He stated that he is happy to answer any questions about the loan order itself.

DPW Director Mike Hale described the project. The wastewater treatment plant on Essex Avenue is in a low-lying area, it is a filled estuary. As early as last year, with January storms, that whole campus (not the building) was underwater, making it so employees could not leave, they were trapped there during the high tide cycles. That is the future home of the city's primary and secondary wastewater treatment facility, and to fortify that requires some sort of flood mitigation barrier around the entire perimeter to keep that viable for the upcoming quarter to three quarters of a century, so some preliminary designs have been reviewed that could protect it from sea level rise flooding.

When **Chairperson Cox** asked about the project cost, **Mr. Hale** stated that he is surprised that the estimate was not higher considering the amount of structural work involved to create a barrier that will protect the campus from overflowing tidelands, it is a complicated project that requires a fair amount of design and cost to install. The Public Works Construction Project and federal Davis-Bacon Act prevailing wage provisions must also be adhered to as a condition of receiving financial assistance.

Chairperson Cox asked if the plant building itself was going to change during the secondary treatment implementation. **Mr. Hale** explained that when the facility was built, it was anticipated that a secondary facility would be located on the side of the campus closest to the Gloucester Cinema, so a dedicated area already exists. This project would ensure that the entire campus, primary and secondary, would be protected.

Chairperson Cox clarified with **Councilor Memhard** that this is not permission to apply for funding, it is a loan order. **CFO Dunn** explained that standard loan order verbiage states that the Mayor, Treasurer (**CFO Dunn**), or anybody else of authority in the city can accept the grant that is going to benefit the project, so this is the firm establishment of that. There will be grant documentation that **Community Development Director Jill Cahill** will negotiate with the federal government through the Economic Development Administration so the project can proceed.

Councilor McCarthy asked what the landscape will look like once the elevation is considerably elevated to prevent flooding, and whether there was a preferable material to use for the riprap (loose stone used to form a foundation for a breakwater or other structure). **Mr. Hale** responded that it will be dependent on many design factors, and the work is still in the preliminary stages, so the structural components are decided first, and the surrounding landscape is the final focus. He believes a mix of various materials could be considered: composite and/or steel sheet piles, concrete, or painted surface. A superficial burning could be used on the outside to make it appear even lower, or a variety of ground covers could be used to curtain the structure.

Ms. Cahill explained that the municipal vulnerability plan involves a lot of community engagement to identify infrastructure within the city that is most at risk, and this project rose to the top of the list. Last year a Coastal Zone Management grant was received to create the preliminary design, which is what the \$4.2 million dollar budget created by city engineers is based on. Gloucester received warn notices when two fish processing plants closed, which made the city eligible for EDA funding for the first time in a long time. One year is given once these warn notices are received to find the right match for funding, and this project meets the resiliency requirement. The request for 100% reimbursement was submitted in July, however EDA engineers review the budget, and are only willing to cover 85-86% of the project cost since they do not provide contingency funding over 10% (although most projects exceed that at the preliminary design level). A final report has been provided by CZM that anyone interested is welcome to view.

Ms. Cahill elaborated that the city is very optimistic and expects an announcement from the EDA Secretary of Commerce in the next week that they'll be awarding Gloucester \$3 million dollars. The city match would amount to approximately \$522,400. She thanked **Economic Development Director Sal DiStefano** and Planning Director Gregg Cademartori for their efforts regarding this project, along with

support from community businesses such as GMGI, Gorton's, and several other fish processors.

Chairperson Cox thanked the team for their hard work, and requested that the Budget and Finance Committee be notified of any grants that the city applies for regarding this project, and whether those grant applications are approved or denied.

The Public Hearing for this matter will be held during the 6:00 p.m. City Council Meeting on Tuesday, September 22, 2020.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor Memhard, the Budget & Finance Standing Committee voted by ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to recommend the City Council approve the following loan authorization as follows:

Ordered: That the City of Gloucester appropriates Four Million Two Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$4,200,000) to pay costs associated with the Gloucester Water Pollution Facility Flood Mitigation Project, including costs incidental or related thereto. To meet this appropriation the Treasurer, with the approval of the Mayor is authorized to borrow said amount under and pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 44, Section 7 or Section 8, or pursuant to any other enabling authority. The Mayor and any other appropriate official of the city are authorized to apply for, accept and expend any grants or gifts that may be available to the City to pay costs of the projects. Any premium received by the City upon the sale of any bonds or notes approved by this vote, less any such premium applied to the payment of the costs of issuance of such bonds or notes, may be applied to the payment of costs approved by this vote in accordance with Chapter 44, Section 20 of the General Laws, thereby reducing the amount authorized to be borrowed to pay such costs by a like amount.

Further Ordered: That the Treasurer is authorized to file an application with the Municipal Finance Oversight Board to qualify under Chapter 44A of the General Laws any or all of the bonds authorized by this order and to provide such information and execute such documents as the Municipal Finance Oversight Board may require for these purposes.

3. Memorandum, Grant Application, & Checklist from the Economic Development Director re. request acceptance of an Essex National Heritage Commission Grant in the amount of \$2,500

Summary of Discussion: **Mr. DiStefano** explained that Gloucester has been fortunate enough to receive this grant over the past few years to support the great work that Stage Fort Park **Welcome Center Executive Director Carol Mondello** and her volunteer staff goes above and beyond to do, especially during the challenges associated with COVID-19. He attested to their hard work and dedication, and stated that he and **Ms. Mondello** are requesting permission to accept this grant. Half the money has already been mailed to the Welcome Center, and they anticipate receiving the other half very soon.

Ms. Mondello stated that this is her third season running the center, and although met with some unexpected challenges this year, it was able to open in mid-July after work was completed on the deck and porch. She invited anyone who has not yet done so to stop by to see it and the stonework. She explained that the Essex National Heritage Commission prefers that the grant be used on some type of printing project. Last year it was used for the Explore Gloucester Beaches brochure, the previous year the lighthouse-shaped brochure was created. This year, she was told that she could use the money at her own discretion. She explained that \$2,500 goes a long way for the Welcome Center, and she would like to update the maps on the wall, especially the 4' x 8' one that is used daily. The Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce has offered to lend the Welcome Center their map to copy, and she is looking forward to creating a partnership with the chamber. She shared that she currently has 9 volunteers (down from 32 last year), resulting in the center being open Thursday through Monday 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. They receive a lot

of visitors, and she has been answering the phone since May, so the center fields a lot of beach and parking questions. She shared that she is also the Treasurer for Discover Gloucester. **Chairperson Cox** congratulated **Ms. Mondello** on scoring access to that map since she is excited about the consistency of having the same map used for tourism throughout the city.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor Memhard, the Budget & Finance Committee voted BY ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed to recommend that the City Council accept under MGL c. 44, §53A, a federal grant from the National Park Service passed through the Essex National Heritage Commission, a 2020 Essex Heritage Visitor Grant for \$2,500 for the purpose of supporting activities for the city's Welcome Center at Stage Fort Park. The grant period is from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. There is no local match for this grant.

4. Memorandum, Grant Application, & Checklist from the Library Director re. request acceptance of the federal Library Services & Technology Act Grant in the amount of \$7,500

Summary of Discussion: Acting CAO Vanessa Krawczyk introduced Sawyer Free Library Director **Jenny Benedict** to the committee members, who all welcomed her. **Ms. Benedict** explained that this grant is administered through the MA Board of Library Commissioners, and that it is timely because the community's employment landscape is currently changing, and this grant positions the library as a hub for connecting residents with resources, technology, and assistance so that they can increase their skills and competence in job seeking and work readiness. It provides for services, supplies, and some resources in terms of books for training sessions, program promotion, and collection development. The library intends to work in partnership with the Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce, Gloucester Housing Authority, Action Inc., Wellspring House, the North Shore Career Center, and the schools. She explained that the grant proposal originated to seek community alignment between job opportunities and job seekers, their perceptions of the opportunities, and what their skills needed to be.

Councilor McCarthy asked how the library's curbside service was doing. **Ms. Benedict** responded that the 1:00-5:00 p.m. staff hours are averaging 100 people a day, and they have lots of requests that the building reopen, which they hope to have news on soon. **Chairperson Cox** thanked **Ms. Benedict** for her application and hard work.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor Memhard, the Budget & Finance Committee voted BY ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed to recommend that the City Council accept under MGL c. 44, §53A, a federal grant for \$7,500 from the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) for the Pathways to Success special project through the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners for the purpose of connecting residents with resources, technology and assistance to increase skills and confidence in job seeking and work readiness. The grant period from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021. There is no local match for the grant.

5. Memorandum, Grant Application, & Checklist from the Fire Chief re. request acceptance of FEMA FY18 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) in the amount of \$466, 460

Summary of Discussion: Auditor **Kenny Costa** advised Fire Chief **Eric Smith** that this grant did not need to be resubmitted because it had already been accepted and approved by the City Council during the October 22, 2019 meeting. The original grant period was from September 3, 2019 through September 2, 2020, and FEMA has granted a 12-month extension through September 2, 2021. No further action is needed.

6. Memorandum, Grant Application, & Checklist from the Fire Chief re. request acceptance of FEMA FY19 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) in the amount of \$490, 670.91

Summary of Discussion: Fire Chief Eric Smith commended his grant writers for doing such a good job in receiving award after award each year. He explained that they will receive over \$2 million dollars if this FEMA grant is accepted. The 2018 grant was used for equipment training, and the 2019 grant will provide the next tier of officer-level training credentials, as well as rapid intervention team training (an abbreviated refresher version of the course since the basic course is taught at the fire academy) that the federal government supports being periodically re-taught, along with a nationwide program called Saving Ourselves that teaches firefighters how to get themselves out of dangerous situations whenever possible. A fire instructor level one course will also be taught. He explained that there is a huge training shortage throughout the state that the MA Fire Academy is unable to keep up with. This is most cost-effective way to provide the necessary training (at ten cents on the dollar in out-of-pocket expense) since most training is held on the South Shore or in Springfield, and requires travel expenses including overnight accommodations. He elaborated that it will cost the city a little over \$42,000 to provide over a half a million dollars worth of training that will be delivered to their doorstep in a consistent manner that satisfies all of the requirements all at once, allowing them to meet or exceed national standards.

Chairperson Cox asked **Chief Smith** which budget line item the \$49,000 matching grant will be taken out of. He replied that with their current staffing levels, they are budgeted in the Salary Wage section for a complete complement up to 72 personnel, which they do not have on the roster, and given the delays and how the process works, and getting people hired and through the academy, they have money that has been budgeted that can cover it. **Councilor McCarthy** commended **Chief Smith**, and stated that there is nothing more important than training.

Chief Smith shared that they have also applied for a new fire engine and a new pump, but have currently not been approved for either.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor Memhard, the Budget & Finance Committee voted by ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to recommend that the City Council accept under MGL c. 44, §53A Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Department of Homeland Security FY19 Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) in the amount of \$490,670.91. The purpose of this grant is to fund training and personnel costs with a 10% local match equal to \$49,670.09 funded by the City of Gloucester. The grant period is from August 14, 2020 through August 13, 2021.

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

Summary of Discussion: City Auditor Kenny Costa advised there was no report for the Committee for this meeting.

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 6:09 p.m.

**Respectfully submitted,
Brianna Komi
Administrative Support
City Clerk's Office**