

## CITY COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE

**Special - Budget & Finance**

Tuesday, May 31, 2011 – 6:15 p.m.

**Kyrouz Auditorium – City Hall**

- Minutes -

**Present:** Chair, Councilor Steven Curcuru, Vice Chair, Councilor Paul McGeary, Councilor Jacqueline Hardy

**Absent:** None.

**Also Present:** Councilor Verga; Councilor Ciolino; Councilor Whynott; Councilor Theken; Linda T. Lowe, Kenny Costa; Jim Duggan

**The meeting was called to order at 6:26 p.m. There was a quorum of the City Council. Items were taken out of order.**

**1. *Essex North Shore Agriculture & Technical (ENSA&T) School District By-Laws, Vote to authorize borrowing for New District High School Project, and School Financing Plan***

**Linda T. Lowe**, City Clerk explained last week her office was contacted by an administrative assistant for the ENSA&T School District who was at first requesting she give them a record or Certificate of Vote taken in January of this year approving the borrowing the school district would be going out to do. She checked and found the matter had been referred from some materials provided by the School Committee Vice Chair, Melissa Teixeira to B&F; and B&F hadn't taken any action or vote because it wasn't clear that there was a vote required. Since there was no vote, and having had several subsequent conversations with the assistant from the school district, she determined after consulting with their Bond Counsel that they need an official record of the fact that the City Council in January (being a narrow window of opportunity to take a vote) a vote had not been taken and that their Bond Counsel requires such a letter for their official records. It is now required to make an official directive toward her office to say they wish to send a notice to the regional school district that no vote was taken on the borrowing as they have to have a record from each member of the school district.

Councilor Hardy made clear there was no vote on that matter.

**MOTION: On motion by Councilor Hardy, seconded by Councilor McGeary, the Budget & Finance Committee voted 3 in favor, 0 opposed direct the City Clerk to send a letter to the Essex North Shore Agriculture & Technical School District and to the Bond Counsel to convey that no vote was taken by the City Council regarding the authorization to borrow for the New District High School Project and School Financing Plan and to certify same that no vote came from this legislative body.**

**2. *Appropriation of balance of Free Cash***

**Councilor Curcuru** expressed this is to discuss the use of funds for the purchase of computer tablets for the City Council in order to save on labor of the Clerk's Office and costs of the large volume of paper that is used weekly.

**Linda T. Lowe**, City Clerk, in response to Councilor Curcuru's interest in computer tablets for the Councilors, noted an article in the Boston Globe in the last month about the use of technology at Board of Selectmen and City Council meetings, speaking in particular of the town of North Reading who load their agenda packets for each selectmen; thereby relying on that at their meetings and have completely done away with paper packets. She spoke with the North Reading administrative assistant who works in the office of the Town Administrator who was "extremely enthusiastic" of the process. She relayed all the Board of Selectmen liked it; found it easy to use and saved an enormous amount of time and paper in that office. She strongly recommended this method.

**Councilor Curcuru** spoke with Mike Wells, IT Director who would be able to set up a wi-fi system for the Council for these tablets. He mentioned a few Councilors have been using their personal tablets over the last few months and had yet to have any problems with it.

**Councilor McGeary** suggested they should expand the wi-fi system so that it extends to the Council Conference Room on the first floor of City Hall; it is very helpful to use a tablet; it saves trees and time for the Clerk's office.

**Councilor Verga** found it much more convenient to use a tablet than paper and thought the signal for wi-fi would be important. He wanted to be sure they would be password protected.

**Councilor Curcuru** noted there would be a password. When IT purchases the tablets, they'll be set up for the passwords and will be protected.

Councilor Ciolino inquired as to where the funds would come from to pay for the tablets.

**Councilor Curcuru** reminded the Councilors it would be funded from the free cash set aside for the Council. He reiterated this would save money on paper and time it takes the Clerk's office to produce the paper packets along with the Committee reports. This is trying to cut down on costs, especially now that the Clerk's office is short handed.

**Councilor McGeary** asked what the per-page cost for copies was and how was that contract set up.

**Ms. Lowe** didn't have that information available at that time.

**Councilor Hardy** expressed her support of this purchase for the Council's use to save time and money.

**Councilor Theken** asked about training; would Councilors be able to take them home; and how would the tablets be maintained.

**Councilor Curcuru** responded IT would do the set up and training to show them how to download the information from the website; and it will all be under warranty and IT will be responsible for their maintenance as well. They may be taken home; however, they will be City property and passed on to any new Councilors.

**MOTION: On motion by Councilor Curcuru, seconded by Councilor Hardy, the Budget & Finance Committee voted 3 in favor, 0 opposed to appropriate up to \$10,000 (Ten Thousand Dollars) from the General Fund Unreserved Fund Balance also known as "Free Cash" for the purpose of the purchase of computer tablets to be placed in Unifund Account #101000.10.161.58715.0000.00.000.00.058 – City Clerk Computer Equipment.**

**Councilor Hardy** noted that will leave \$9,793.00. What did the Councilors wish to see it spent?

**Councilor Ciolino** suggested they could purchase chairs for the dais.

**Councilors Curcuru** and **Hardy** reminded the Councilor that a similar motion had been put on the floor at their last meeting and was defeated.

**Councilor Hardy** suggested this be appropriated to the capital projects stabilization fund (funded earlier in the spring by the Council with \$100,000 in free cash) so that they might be able to fund some small program or a study should there be a need rather than allowing the money to fall to the bottom line.

**Councilor Theken** asked for clarification on the capital projects stabilization fund.

**Councilor Curcuru** stated this fund was for capital improvements that need to be done in order to pay cash. It can be appropriated by the City Council with a 2/3 vote.

**Councilor Hardy** felt this goes to a worthy cause and shows they're going in the right direction to which **Councilor Curcuru** expressed his agreement.

**MOTION: On motion by Councilor McGeary, seconded by Councilor Hardy, the Budget & Finance Committee voted 3 in favor, 0 opposed to appropriate up to \$9,793.00 (Nine Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety Three Dollars) from the General Fund Unreserved Fund Balance also known as "Free Cash" for the purpose of funds to be placed in the Capital Projects Stabilization Fund, Fund #850000.**

3. *Unfinished Business: None*

**A motion was made, seconded and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:38 p.m.**

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Dana C. Jorgensson  
Clerk of Committees**

**DOCUMENTS/ITEMS SUBMITTED AT MEETING: None.**