

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Tuesday, May 4, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.
REMOTE MEETING
-Minutes-

Present: Council President, Councilor Steve LeBlanc; Council Vice President, Councilor Val Gilman; Councilor Melissa Cox; Councilor Jen Holmgren; Councilor John McCarthy; Councilor Scott Memhard; Councilor Sean Nolan; Councilor Barry Pett

Absent: Councilor Jamie O’Hara

Also Present: Mayor Sefatia Romeo Theken; City Clerk, Joanne Senos; CAO, Nicole Kieser; Assistant to CAO, Chris Sicuranza; Auditor, Kenny Costa; CFO, John Dunn; Fire Chief, Eric Smith; Clerk of Committees, Sherry Karvelas

*This meeting was conducted remotely through Zoom
All votes were ROLL CALL votes*

Meeting called to order at 6:01 p.m.

Councilor LeBlanc announced consistent with the Governor’s orders suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law and banning certain gatherings such that an in person meeting of the City Council is not possible, 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. Additionally, all votes taken by the City Council during this and future remote meetings will be by roll call vote.

Councilor LeBlanc announced the names of the Councilors and city staff who were in attendance. There was a quorum of the City Council.

PRESENTATIONS/COMMENDATIONS:

1. Mayor’s Proposed FY22 Budget Presentation to Council

Opening remarks for the FY2022 Budget

Councilor LeBlanc stated he would like to thank the Mayor and her administration for their efforts in the preparation of the FY2022 municipal budget for the City of Gloucester in order to provide essential city services to all Gloucester residents. He then turned it over to Mayor Sefatia Romeo-Theken for her presentation of the FY2022 budget.

Mayor Theken gave the City Council the following information:

- General fund budget of \$120 million reflects a nearly level-funded effort despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Gloucester Public School funding is proposed for \$45.6 million;
- The Gloucester Public Health Department has worked diligently to provide timely COVID-19 updates including access to vaccines while still providing critical social services to the most vulnerable populations. The City and School Department received funds for COVID-related needs, but the funding did not cover all of the City’s COVID-related expenses. The lag in the federal reimbursement process may create some cash flow issues as the City waits for reimbursement. The long-term unknowns, the impacts on local revenue and local aid and Chapter 90 must be addressed to maintain our financial security;

- The City will continue to evolve by using online platforms and mobile-friendly options, but will continue to offer the traditional services that the community expects;
- Tourism to Gloucester during 2020 was at an all-time high despite the pandemic. The City's front-line workers, DPW, Harbormaster, Public Health, Community Development, Police Department and Fire Department all rose to the challenge and worked together to ensure public health and safety priorities;
- With strength in the local economy and significant infusion of federal funding by the American Rescue Plan Act, the proposed budget includes a year over year increase of 1.95%;
- The most significant new dynamic to this year's budget is the federal funding to the City's schools for the next year;
- The City's most recent credit evaluation resulted in maintaining an AA rating, which allows the City to make critical investments;
- The Community Development and Economic Development teams worked closely with the State of Massachusetts Administration to help give small businesses resources through the local Rapid Recovery Program and SBA. The Planning Division helped amend our Zoning Ordinance to allow outdoor dining, retail and other services which was a critical piece of the City's response to the pandemic;
- The City received its third Tax Financing Agreement (TIF) in March of 2021 from the Commonwealth, with the TIFs set to leverage 248 new jobs and \$26 million in private investment in the City.

Mayor Theken thanked all City employees and volunteer members on the City's boards and commissions, the School Committee and City Council. She also thanked local, state and federal delegations especially Governor Baker, Lieutenant Governor Polito, Senator Bruce Tarr and Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante. She stated she looked forward to working with the City Council during the budget process.

Councilor Cox shared the following important dates for the FY22 Budget:

- Wednesday, May 19, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. for core departments and revenues
- Wednesday, May 26, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. for Emergency Services, DPW and the remaining core departments
- Thursday, May 27, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. for the School Department
- Tuesday, June 8, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. for the Public Hearing on the entire budget (during a regularly scheduled City Council meeting)
- Tuesday, June 15, 2021 to pass the budget

Closing remarks for the FY2022 Budget

Councilor LeBlanc stated he would like to thank the Mayor for her remarks and the City Council looked forward to working with Mayor Theken and her administration on crafting a blueprint for the over \$100 million dollar corporation also known as the proposed Fiscal Year 2022 municipal budget for the City of Gloucester.

He stated that the City Council will vote this evening to accept receipt of the annual budget as proposed by the Mayor for its budget review that is in accordance under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44, Section 32 and pursuant to the Gloucester City Charter Part 1, Section 6-1. The City Council will have 45 days after the receipt of the budget to take action on the budget. The receipt of the budget will start a long and intense process for the Budget & Finance Committee, comprised of Chair Melissa Cox, Vice Chair Scott Memhard and City Councilor at Large John McCarthy of the review of the Fiscal Year 2022 budget. The budget meetings are open virtually to the public which will continue through the middle of June and he encouraged all Gloucester residents to tune in and listen.

MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor Memhard, the City Council voted by ROLL CALL 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (O'Hara) that in accordance with Massachusetts

General Law Chapter 44, Section 32 and pursuant to the Gloucester City Charter Part 1, Section 6-1 that the City Council accepts receipt of the Mayor's Fiscal Year 2022 Proposed Budget and becomes the budget of the City Council and to refer this budget to the Budget & Finance City Council Standing Committee for further review.

2. Public Session: City Council Vote to enter into Executive Session

Council President LeBlanc stated in order for the City Council to go into Executive Session, the Council must adhere to Massachusetts General Laws. He stated that as Council President he declared that May 4, 2021 special meeting of the City Council has been duly posted and had been called to order. The Council is now in open session, and there is a quorum present. Before the Council can vote to go into Executive Session, the purpose of the Executive Session must be stated: "I declare the purpose of the Executive Session as follows is to discuss litigation strategy in a legal matter; and to discuss this in an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the City. I further declare that it is the intent of the Council will not reconvene into open session after the Executive Session but will adjourn the Special City Council meeting from that point. Motions to go into Executive Session are by roll call vote and require a majority vote of the Council. Therefore, I entertain a motion: That the City Council and its staff go into Executive Session to discuss strategy with respect to an update on litigation pursuant to MGL Ch.30A, §21(a)(3)

MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor Gilman, the City Council voted BY ROLL CALL 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (O'Hara) to call the City Council and City Council staff, to enter into Executive Session (in accordance with MGL Chapter 30A, §21(a) (3) to discuss litigation strategy with respect to an update on litigation.

Council President LeBlanc then stated, "I hereby announce that the roll call vote is 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent [O'Hara]. The Council shall now convene into Executive Session and will **not reconvene** back into open session to close the Special City Council meeting."

3. EXECUTIVE SESSION under MGL Ch. 30A, Sec. 21(a) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation

MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Cox, seconded by Councilor Memhard, the City Council voted by ROLL CALL 8 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 absent (O'Hara) to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Submitted by Sherry Karvelas, Clerk of Committees

Items submitted at the meeting: None.

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