

SPECIAL GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, June 6, 2017 – 7:00 p.m.

Kyrouz Auditorium – City Hall

-MINUTES-

Present: Chair, Councilor Joseph Ciolino; Councilor Melissa Cox; Councilor Paul Lundberg; Councilor Valerie Gilman; Councilor Scott Memhard; Councilor Orlando; Councilor Sean Nolan; Councilor James O'Hara

Absent: Councilor LeBlanc

Also Present: Joanne Senos; Jim Destino; Kenny Costa; Chip Payson; John Dunn; Chris Sicuranza; Jonathan Pope; James Pope; Grace Macan; Dr. Richard Safier; Tony Gross

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. The Council President announced that this meeting is recorded by video and audio in accordance with state Open Meeting Law.

Flag Salute & Moment of Silence. Council President Ciolino dedicated the Moment of Silence to those members of the U.S. Military forces and their allies who were killed or wounded on D-Day, 73 years ago today. These brave soldiers landed in Normandy in five sectors: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword with thousands of lives lost saving the world's freedom.

Council President Ciolino noted the absence of Councilor LeBlanc.

Oral Communications: None.

Presentations/Commendations: None.

Consent Agenda:

- *APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS STANDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS*
1. FY18 Budget Review meetings: B&F 05/03/17, 05/11/17, 05/16/17, 05/22/17, 05/24/17, 05/25/17, 05/30/17, 05/31/17 (Approve/File)
 2. FY18 Budget Review Meeting: 06/01/17 (under separate cover) (Approve/File)

By a unanimous vote of the Council the Minutes from Previous Standing Committee Meetings were accepted as presented.

Scheduled Public Hearings:

1. PH2017-028: Public Hearing on FY18 Proposed Budget (FY18 Mayor's Recommended Budget (<http://gloucester-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4338>)):

FY18 Mayor's Recommended Budget:

Note: No Council action will be taken as a result of this public hearing. The City Council takes up the matter of voting on the Fiscal Year 2018 City Budget at its regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, June 13, 2017.

This public hearing is opened at 7:07 p.m.

Those speaking in favor:

James Destino, CAO, highlighted this is the third budget through the Theken Administration. He pointed out that the results of the annual independent audit of city finances, results received the previous month showed a positive fund balance of \$1.4 million, which he said was a much better position than in the past. He commended city department heads naming in particular: CFO, John Dunn; Financial Analyst, Grace Macan and James Pope, IT Director.

He conveyed the following information to the Council: that the FY18 budget became difficult due to city debt; that while \$1 million in debt fell off, the city lost \$1.5 million in revenue for debt service on the old MSBA project for the High School -- but another \$1 million in debt came on for the new West Parish Elementary School. Cuts had to be made in the FY18 budget as a result -- the positions of Assistant Fire Chief and Assistant Police Chief are not funded. The Administration is hopeful that it will be able to fund those two positions very soon with anticipated new revenue, but that the city will operate without the positions being filled for the time being. It was noted that one position, that of Assistant Fire Chief was becoming vacant due to a retirement and the Assistant Police Chief

position has been vacant since the person filling that role stepped up to take the position of Interim Police Chief.

Highlighting positive aspects of the city's FY18 budget, **Mr. Destino** pointed out that through prudent fiscal management, there have been no supplemental appropriations put forward to the Council for operating expenses because departments are living within their budgets. Water and sewer rates were pointed out as being held down in FY18 by utilizing Enterprise Fund free cash for rate relief which helping to keep the rates level.

Mr. Destino pointed out through the utilization of new benchmarking software, "ClearGov," saying that Gloucester in comparison to other cities and towns in the state for its size is No. 1 for debt which is one factor that had to be taken into consideration in the budget development. He also pointed out that benchmarking software has shown that city employees receive top notch benefits through contractual obligations and continue to drive the city and school budgets. There are department step and track pay increases for personnel which he said means less discretionary funds.

He highlighted the Administration's commitment to the city's economic development and to IT support throughout all city departments and all the growth areas that are being prioritized. Mr. Destino assured that the city will meet its contractual obligations to their personnel and at the same time funding the schools. He cited the excellent working relationship between the School Department and the Administration whom he said are working together and sharing information. He advised that all department heads were encouraged to put capital projects or items into their budgets, and said that although a lot of that capital was pulled out of the FY18 budget, he further advised that some items and projects will be funded through the Capital Project Stabilization Fund. He said that for most capital items or projects, those requests will be used to create a five-year plan of measured capital funding for the city. There are many departments that are level funded and level serviced for FY18, and many departments are working shorthanded, he said, noting two such departments, the Treasurer/Collector and Human Resources.

Mr. Destino expressed that the Administration will look to move forward with some initiatives -- planning projects, a downtown civic district, and the hiring of a new Community Development Director. With the budget being passed the Administration can begin to move the city forward on these initiatives, he said. The Council was thanked by **Mr. Destino** for its support and for the Councilors attending so many of the budget meetings.

Council President Ciolino acknowledged the presence of Dr. Richard Safier, Superintendent of Schools; Jonathan Pope, School Committee Chairman; and Tony Gross, School Committee member and the School Committee's Building and Finance Committee Chair.

Those speaking in opposition: None.

Communications: None.

Councilor Questions:

Councilor Memhard noted as B&F Chair received email communications from several fiscally-concerned constituents, from Ronn Garry, 209 Atlantic Road; Katherine Goodick, 10 Dogtown Road; and Cecelia Coraza, 6 Naomi Drive, to whom he said he made a "best effort" to respond to their statements and copied members of the B&F Committee members on his responses. He said that the FY18 budget was presented to the Council on May 2 by the Mayor and advised that there have been nine B&F Committee meetings to date reviewing all the city's department budgets. He highlighted Councilor Gilman's initiative for the convening of the Committee of the Whole simultaneously with the B&F Budget Review meetings which has created a great improvement for Council participation in the budget process. He said that there is still room for improvement to better communicate and make accessible for constituents the city's budget process but pointed out that the entire FY18 budget agendas along with the city's full budget line by line are found on the city's website, placed on line in the last month, and that minutes are also on the city's website of these meetings.

Councilor Orlando said having discussed "at length" with the Administration that he had requested an audit, and was assured that the audit is being done, through a Council Order which the Council voted 8-1 in favor of. He said he was sure the Administration and School Department will produce the audit and expressed his thanks for their efforts.

Council President Ciolino said that through the initiative of Councilor Gilman the Council, under the state's Open Meeting Law, has paved a way for all the Councilors who want to participate in the budget process to be able to do so during all the budget meetings. He said this year has been different in that it was a more inclusive Council process. He pointed out that when the Council votes next Tuesday, it will be a budget that is thoroughly vetted. He said that there is an understanding of what needs to happen in the future to sustain the city and the services taxpayers expect. He congratulated the Administration for a great job, citing that much of what is budgeted is contractual, and that the Council has shared its concerns with the Administration. He mentioned that the School Committee had done a "great job" with the School District's budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Everyone works together to get the job done and this budget reflects it, he said.

This public hearing is closed at 7:22 p.m.

Councilor Cox expressed her praise for Councilor Gilman's effort in urging the convening of the Committee of the Whole during the budget season. She recounted that during her tenure as B&F Chair and Vice Chair that it hadn't occurred to her to convene a Committee of the Whole which she said has only improved the Council's budget process. She also highlighted the newly renovated Council dais, and that the work was done by the city's own Public Works Department staff, Phil Curcuru and Mike Tarrantino.

Councilor Gilman thanked City Clerk, Joanne Senos and Clerk of Committees, Dana Jorgensson, for their efforts on behalf of the Council during the budget season highlighting the administrative work that goes into each of the budget meetings in light of three to four meetings per week and ensuring the information is put forward to the public on a timely basis. She said for next year's budget process she would want a more creative way as to how the Council advertises its meetings for the FY18 budget season via alternative methods to encourage more public participation.

Councilor Lundberg said while he agreed there is always room for improvement in communication, he pointed out that the reason some members of the public aren't in attendance is because their constituents trust the Councilors in their duties. Noting he had attended many of the budget meetings, he expressed his appreciation for the Administration and commended department heads for their participation in the thorough budget process. These are open meetings, and any time they can convey that invitation to the public they should, he said.

Councilor Orlando said that there were some spirited discussions with department heads on their budgets, all of whom handled it with grace and tact. He pointed out it isn't easy when a department head has to defend their budget line item by line item wasn't easy and expressed he had respect for their jobs as it isn't easy to do. To the Mayor's office and to the department heads he expressed his thanks for their professionalism. He said it was good work and good to see so many members of the Council in attendance at the budget meetings.

Councilor Nolan thanked the taxpayers for "choosing to live here" and for their help in funding the FY18 city budget.

A motion was made, seconded and voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dana C. Jorgensson
Clerk of Committees

DOCUMENTS/ITEMS SUBMITTED AT MEETING: None.