

FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES
3-24-2022 AT 5:00 PM
WESTFIELD CITY HALL, Room 315

The meeting was called to order by Chair Bridget Matthews-Kane at 5:00 PM. In attendance were Finance Committee members Councilor Bridget Matthews-Kane, Councilor Richard K. Sullivan, Jr and Councilor Brent Bean. Also, in attendance were Community Development Director Peter Miller, Council on Aging Director Tina Gorman, Interim Superintendent of the Department of Public Works Francis Cain, Budget Analyst of the Department of Public Works Joanna Williams, Waste Water Sewer and Treatment Facilities Director Jeff Gamelli and scribe of the Finance Committee Marisa Colon

Councilor Sullivan made a motion, seconded by Councilor Bean to accept the Finance Committee minutes of February 10, 2022. The motion passed 3-0 with Councilor Bean, Councilor Matthews-Kane, and Councilor Sullivan voting YES.

Chair Matthews-Kane asked if anyone from the public would like to speak during public participation. There was no one who spoke.

At this time, Councilor Richard Sullivan left the room.

Chair Matthews-Kane made a motion, seconded by Councilor Bean to ACCEPT a grant in the amount of \$19,000.00 from the Western Mass Economic Development Council under a Regional Economic Development Organization (REDO) grant program enabled by a program offered by the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD).

Community Development Director Peter Miller explained that it is a \$20,000 grant, \$1000 of which goes towards an administration fee to the agency who is overseeing the grant. He stated that in September of 2021 they completed the Rapid Recovery Plan for downtown Westfield. As part of that program, they identified that signage and façade improvements would be a welcome addition to downtown. He further explained that the Rapid Recovery Program was a roadmap to show what needs to be done to bring downtown neighborhoods back. This grant was through the EDC, and Community Development proposes to assist nine different businesses with graphic design and installation of new signage. He explained that what they are looking to do is match the experience one would have in the business with the outward appearance. He stated that Westfield is presented with a unique opportunity which has not been done before in the past with other grants because it allows more flexibility on how to spend the funding, unlike some of the CBG grants that focuses on low to moderate income businesses. He has been in touch with Westfield State University's graphic design department and Professor George Ramirez who is in charge of that department for assistance in achieving a clean, modern look for some small businesses downtown. Peter stated that the owner of Circuit Coffee, Ted Dobek, former alumni of WSU, is an example of the marketing style that they are envisioning. He further explained that Mayor McCabe and he will go around with applications looking for potential businesses to take advantage of the grant. He explained that

he has \$5,000 in his budget that he pledged to match for graphic design and marketing services. Peter clarified that the EDC are the administrators of the grant, but the state decided which community would receive the grant. Chair Matthews-Kane asked who will be doing the outreach. Peter replied that he and the Mayor will be doing door-to-door outreach and they will be combining that with the new parking signage for business windows. Chair Matthews-Kane asked if there is money left over, does that have to be returned. Peter replied yes, but he believes they will be able to spend the entirety of the grant. He explained that the estimate cost of the sign is \$2,000 and \$1,000 for the graphic services. He stated that they may have overestimated how many businesses they can assist. Chair Matthews-Kane asked if Peter will be providing oversight on the graphic designs. Peter replied that he will be assigning City Planner Jay Vinsky, the business owner and the graphics designer to develop the new business signs. As a side note, Peter stated that he would like to review and replace the sign ordinance in the Core District to allow for blade signs because currently, they are allowed by special permit only. He stated that the style of the blade signs gives the downtown area some depth and would like to have those blade signs be allowed by right. Councilor Bean asked if the \$5,000 is needed in order to accept the grant. Community Development Director replied, no, but he hopes that more money will be available to continue the program in order to benefit more businesses. The motion passed 2-0 with Chair Matthews Kane and Councilor Bean voting YES. Councilor Sullivan abstained from the vote due to a professional conflict.

At this time, Councilor Sullivan re-entered the room to rejoin the meeting.

Councilor Bean made a motion, seconded by Councilor Sullivan to ACCEPT a grant in the amount of \$95,904.00 from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs to the Westfield Council on Aging to fund positions in the Council on Aging.

Council on Aging Director Tina Gorman explained that the grant is solely used to fund six positions at the Westfield Senior Center, two full time and 4 part time positions. Some of the positions had been partially funded by the city, but over the years Tina had shifted those expenses. She explained that during COVID, the state allowed communities to carryover funds instead of returning left over money, which allowed her to save approximately \$30,000 in personnel due to the Senior Center being closed. Tina further explained that there are some salary changes in staff transportation for mileage and volunteer companion program for mileage which is coming out of the carryover money. Councilor Sullivan asked if there is a limit to how many years the money can be carried over. Tina replied, no and further explained that they no longer have to apply for the grant in order to receive it, unlike in previous years. She stated that they simply have to maintain a budget of the staff salaries in case they are audited by the state. Chair Matthews-Kane asked if this is a long standing grant. Tina replied yes and explained that the state formulation allocation goes to all of the Councils on Aging across the state and is based on the community's elder population from the 2010 Census. It is based on a per elder amount, which is \$12 per elder, and she lobbies to increase that amount every year especially since there are approximately 2,000 more seniors this year than 10 years ago. Councilor Bean asked at what age is someone considered an elder. Tina replied 60 years of age, in the state

of Massachusetts. The motion passed 3-0 with Chair Matthews-Kane, Councilor Bean and Councilor Sullivan voting YES.

Councilor Sullivan made a motion, seconded by Councilor Bean to APPROVE an appropriation of \$175,000.00 from the DPW Sewer and Wastewater Division Undesignated account (67004400-35900) to Purchase of Service account (67004400520000) to handle unanticipated increase to the Sludge Management Contract.

Waste Water & Treatment Facilities Manager Jeff Gamelli explained that Mickey Nowak, President of Massachusetts Water Environment Association wrote a letter to Mass DEP last summer stating that their concern for a potential environmental and economic disaster. Jeff read portions of the letter to the Finance Committee to highlight the environmental and economic concerns that all communities will face years to come (document attached). After reading the letter, he further explained that Westfield's bio solids are disposed of by an incinerator in Naugatuck, CT. The incinerator at that facility is undergoing a major overhaul for another 20 years of service. He explained that Veolia is the company that currently holds the contract the Sludge Management Contract for Westfield that hauls the sludge to the incinerator in Naugatuck, CT, however, due to the temporary closure at this facility, the sludge must be hauled to New Jersey, then loaded on a railroad car and then delivered to Alabama or Ohio to be landfilled. He stated that this is the reason the cost has increased 200% for the time period of 4 to 6 weeks while the incinerator is shutdown. Jeff stated that he is working with the Vice President of Veolia, Dan Gorka to try to get a portion of the city's sludge out to the landfill in Fitchburgh, MA but there is a 55 day review period through DEP. He further stated that in preparation for this, they started processing the sludge inventory down as much as possible for the past couple of weeks in order to get as much sludge out of the treatment plant and reduce the activated sludge concentration. He explained that by doing this process it will reduce the haul removal by 25%. He stated that unfortunately, there are not many options and the cost would be \$86,000 for 4 weeks or \$172,000 for 8 weeks of shutdown time and that would be processing 3 days per week, processing 75 tons of bio solids/cake out of the waste water treatment plants. Councilor Sullivan stated in looking at the 2 phases, Storage silo work phase and General shutdown phase, the total is more than what is being requested for appropriation. He asked Jeff if the reduction in cost is due to the process that the wastewater treatment facility is doing now. Jeff replied, yes and further explained that in the past 6 months they have increased their process and were hauling over 100 tons per week. He stated now that the sludge concentration has been reduced, they are currently hauling one time less per week. If absolutely necessary, the treatment plant could store a week to a week and ½ at most. He stated that if the shutdown took longer than expected they could change things at the plant for process control to allow more storage of bio solids at the plant for as long as possible without violating permit. Interim Department of Public Works Superintendent asked Jeff if there would be an odor issues due the change in processes. Jeff replied that there could be a potential for it. He stated that these expenses are extravagant such as the trucking which goes from \$33 to \$58 per wet ton, \$92 per wet ton for the railroad component and then \$36 per wet ton for disposal. Councilor Bean asked if the city will go longer in a contract with

Veolia. Jeff replied that the city enters into a 1 year contract with a 2 year renewal option, totaling 3 years in order to lock in a lower rate. He stated that the issue is the Incinerator is down for major overhaul repairs and everywhere else is at capacity. Jeff stated that in Rhode Island, the Narragansett Bay Commission are studying to find regionalized solution to this problem by using anaerobic digestion, incineration or something to start our own disposal option because all of Massachusetts' sludge is hauled out of state. Councilor Sullivan asked if there was any response to the letter from Mickey Nowak of MAWEA. Jeff replied, he is not aware of a response yet, but he will let the Councilor know as soon as he receives an update. Councilor asked Budget Analyst Joanna Williams if she spoke with City Purchaser Tammy Teft or the Law Department regarding the change of costs. Joanna stated she had discussed with Tammy the adjustments in the purchase order to Veolia which is a provision in the existing contract that allows for unforeseen circumstances. She further explained that there is some money left in the undesignated fund for this fiscal year and after the \$175,000 expense there will be \$150,000 left. Councilor Sullivan asked how much is typically left over at the end of the fiscal year. Joanna replied, typically it is rough, but this year, everyone has been paying their bills and there is some money left. The motion passed 3-0 with Chair Matthews-Kane, Councilor Bean and Councilor Sullivan voting YES.

Councilor Bean motions to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Sullivan. The motion passed 3-0 with Chair Matthews-Kane, Councilor Bean and Councilor Sullivan voting YES.

Meeting adjourned at 5:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Marisa Colon
Scribe of the Finance Subcommittee