

**CITY OF WOBURN
WOBURN CITY COUNCIL
ORDINANCES CHARTER & RULES COMMITTEE
COMMITTEE ROOM
WOBURN CITY HALL
MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2024 – 6:47 P.M.**

Voting members present: Chairman Joseph Demers, Councilor Robert Toro, Councilor Robert Ferullo, Councilor Lou DiMambro, and Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen

Non-voting members present: President Jeffery Dillon, Councilor William Pappalardo, Councilor Charles Viola, and Councilor Joanne Campbell

Also present: Mayor Michael Concannon

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Reading and approval of previous meeting minutes: Motion made by Councilor Ferullo and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to waive the reading of and approve the minutes of the meeting of February 13, 2024; approved, 5-0.

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Communication and Order amending WMC by adding Section 2-12C Assistant to the Mayor/Chief of Staff and Section 2-180 Base Salaries for the new position: Motion made by Councilor Ferullo and seconded by Councilor Toro to suspend the City Council's rules to allow Mayor Concannon to address the committee; approved, 5-0. Mayor Concannon said he is requesting to add another position to the mayor's office. He said he has given this issue much consideration and he has not taken it lightly. He said he had some of these thoughts when he was a member of the City Council. He said he has always felt there could be an extra set of hands to push the boulder up the hill. He said he discussed this with former Mayor Scott Galvin. He said former Mayor Galvin concurred that something like this was going to be necessary. He said he attended a conference at UMass for newly elected and returning mayors and proper staffing of the office was one of the highlighted topics. He said every mayor had a version of the position he is proposing to add. He said several mayors had teams. He said he became more concerned that something like this was going to be necessary. He said he is here to tell the committee that he thinks this is a need and it will help him do his job much better. He said the job description has been given to the council. He said this position will not be a layer between the mayor's office and the council, the School Committee and department heads. He said he thinks he has demonstrated a genuine desire to work with the City Council. He said the assistant/chief of staff will assist him in all aspects of city government. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she and Mayor have spoken about this. She said she expressed some of her concerns. She said when she looked at the descriptions in other cities and towns they didn't differentiate the way the description Mayor Concannon's text did. She said in other cities and towns the assistant/deputy acts as a buffer. She said she trusts Mayor Concannon and will take him at his word. She said she assumes

the assistant/deputy will not have the ability to set policy or influence legislation. She said she will support the creation of the position 100 percent with that in mind. Mayor Concannon said there is no intent for this position to be an acting mayor or a temporary mayor. He said he talked to the Human Resources Director who contacted other cities and towns. He said he does not want to make this position a Deputy Mayor. He said the HRD also undertook a salary survey that indicated similar positions pay \$95,000-\$120,000 and his request is on the bottom of that spectrum. He said the duties and responsibilities of the position are spelled out in the job description. Councilor Mercer-Bruen asked if Mayor Concannon has had any conversations with department heads about the position. Mayor Concannon said he has spoken to several department heads. He said he has assured them the person in this position will not be a buffer or a gatekeeper. Councilor Toro said he supports the mayor's request. He said as a business owner he has found having an assistant or a chief of staff is beneficial. He said everything the mayor has brought forward so far has been done with the intention of being beneficial to the city. Councilor DiMambro said he will also support this position. He said it will put the city on a forward trajectory toward progress. He said he supports the mayor because he has already demonstrated his involvement in so many areas of the city. Motion made by Councilor DiMambro and seconded by Councilor Toro to suspend the City Council's rules to allow any member of the council not on the committee to address the order; approved, 5-0. Councilor Viola said he thinks adding this position is a good idea. In response to a question from Councilor Viola, Mayor Concannon said the person in this position will serve at the mayor's will and carry out anything that comes up. Councilor Pappalardo asked what other cities and towns in the area have a position like this. Mayor Concannon reads a list of communities that have this position including Amesbury, Lynn, Fitchburg and Leominster. He said every city of Woburn's size and character has some sort of assistant or chief of staff. He said it has become the norm. He said the city is akin to a \$200 million corporation. Councilor Pappalardo asked why it is important to add this position now. Mayor Concannon said he does not want to get so far behind he has to dig out of a hole. He said he believes three months in is a perfect time to bring this position on board. Councilor Pappalardo asked about the budgetary considerations. Mayor Concannon said he will have this position funded on July 1. He said he hopes to fill the position quickly. Councilor Campbell said it is critical to have a chief of staff. She said she is surprised the prior administration did not have one. She said the city is growing. She said she does not want the mayor to become frazzled. She said she will support the hiring of a chief of staff. Councilor Demers said he formerly worked as an aide to a state legislator. He said he is amazed it has taken the mayor's office so long to build a staff. He said just keeping up with the email volume alone in a legislative district of 40,000 people is an arduous task. He said it is important to have enough staff to figuratively keep the trains running on time. He said added support will help the mayor do his job better and he has all the faith in this mayor to continue to provide a conduit to the council. Councilor Ferullo said he reported to the previous mayor in his role as police chief for seven years. He said he thinks this position will help with communication with the mayor's office. He said he thinks this position will give the council a direct conduit with the mayor's office. President Dillon said he fully supports this. He said he did some research and communities with a town manager or mayor not only have assistants but they also have assistants to assistants. He said there are incredible demands on the mayor's time. He said the mayor ought to be able to fulfill the requirements of the job and still have a life. Motion made by Councilor DiMambro and seconded by Councilor Toro that the order "ought to pass;" approved, 5-0.

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MOTION made by Councilor Ferullo and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to adjourn; in favor, 5-0. Chairman Demers adjourned the meeting at 7:08 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees