

**CITY OF WOBURN
CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.
COMMITTEE ROOM
WOBURN CITY HALL**

Voting Members present: Chair Charles Viola, Councilor Joseph Demers, Councilor Robert Ferullo, Councilor Joanne Campbell, and Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen

Non-voting members present: President Jeffrey Dillon, Councilor Robert Toro, Councilor William Pappalardo and Councilor Lou DiMambro

Also present: Mayor Michael Concannon, City Engineer John Corey and City Auditor Charles Doherty

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MOTION made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo to dispense with the reading of and approve the minutes of the meeting of February 13, 2024; all in favor, 5-0.

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Order transferring \$450,000 from Unreserved Fund Balance Acct#01-356000 to Downtown Safety Project Acct#0141058-589422 for the Downtown Woburn Traffic Safety

Improvement Project: Motion made by Councilor Campbell and seconded by Councilor Ferullo to suspend the City Council's rules to allow Mayor Concannon to address the order; approved, 5-0. Mayor Concannon said this order was discussed at a previous City Council meeting. He said City Engineer Corey and City Auditor Doherty are here to answer any questions about the order. City Engineer Corey said the consultant on this project was invited to the meeting but he is stuck in traffic. Mayor Concannon said the city has been looking at ways to enhance safety as well as improving access to Woburn Common. He said hopefully there will also be a net increase in parking. He said the Boston area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) held a meeting last Thursday about this project being placed on the Traffic Improvement Program (TIP). He said the city's Planning Director John Cashell weighed in and most of the feedback was positive. He said he is optimistic. He said one of the major things the city is going to have demonstrate is there the city is committed to this project. He said one of the ways the city can do this is by approving the order to allow the city to fund the 25 percent design of the project. City Engineer Corey said this is a huge downtown safety project. He said Woburn Center is one of the most problematic traffic areas in the state. He said in order to move forward the city will have to start vetting questions. He said there was a bike path meeting at which there was considerable support. He said that's what the MPO is looking for. Richard Benevento, Senior Vice President, Tighe & Bond Inc., 300 Trade Center, Suite 5560, Woburn, MA, arrived in the Committee Room. Mr. Benevento said he has written a graphic with a proposed time line for the project. Motion made by Councilor Campbell and seconded by Councilor Ferullo to accept and place on file the following documents from Mr. Benevento: "Proposed Project Schedule City of Woburn Improvements at Woburn Common MassDOT Project #6106662;"

“Woburn Contract No. 2021-50 – Amendment No. 1 Roadway and Intersection Improvements at Woburn Common Route 38 (Main Street), Winn Street, Pleasant Street and Montvale Avenue MassDOT Project #610662;” and “Amendment No. 1 to Agreement for Professional Engineering Services Between The City of Woburn and Tighe & Bond Inc. (formerly World Tech Engineering LLC) For The Woburn Center Safety Improvements MassDOT Project #610662;” approved, 3-0. Mr. Benevento said the time line graphic delineates proposed milestones and if more for informational purposes. He said the original agreement between the city and Tighe & Bond included phase 1A and phase 1B. He said the red meat of the preliminary design stage occurs in phase 1B. He said there will be more robust community meetings. He said he is working on a project in Brookline that involves similar issues. He said the city will have to connect with stakeholders to determine aspects of the project besides parking like loading zones for businesses. He said residents will want to hear whether there is going to be any inconvenience during construction. He said the city has to go through this process so the public knows what to expect when it’s done. He said during phase 1A MassDOT will have to approve additional things the city has to do. He said the city has to establish a duration schedule. He said the city is not going to be taking any land but it will have to schedule easements. He referred to the schedule and said the city has been at the funding component for quite some time. He said the issue is whether the MPO is going to fund it. He said the project has been programmed for the TIP. He said the city has been attending MPO meetings since 2018. He said this has been pushed right along. He said an Intersection Congestion Evaluation (ICE) analysis requires additional data collection. He said the city is required to look at numerous options, with variables like traffic signals and roundabouts. He said the city already knows it is not going to knock down buildings to put in a roundabout. City Engineer Corey said it is still a requirement. Mr. Benevento said the process is laborious. He said it is a requirement. He said MassDOT is coming to the realization this type of evaluation isn’t necessary for every project. Mr. Benevento said the city will need to decide when to hold public workshops. He said the workshops will help the public feel engaged. He said the city can tailor the project to what the community wants. He said the city needs to set a schedule beginning in early May. He said conceptual plans will be introduced in August or September. He said he likes to have a lot of public information workshops before the design public hearing. He said he is looking at holding another public workshop before the plans are submitted to MassDOT. He said that the schedule will have to be laid out. He said MassDOT is anxious to get submissions. He said MassDOT has 90 days to review the preliminary design. He said that is not a long time. He said public hearings could be scheduled in March 2025 and the plan specs would be submitted in 2026. He said after that happens the project would be available for advertisement. He said the project submission gets reviewed by different departments at MassDOT and then it is sent to District 4 in Arlington. He said the process has gotten a lot better. He said this project is pretty unique with the Common right in the middle of it. He said in a nutshell that’s where we are. He said the amendment to the agreement with Tighe & Bond needs to get executed. He said the city needs to get this to the finish line. He said generally for projects like this the design fee is 11-12 percent of the cost of the project. He said if this project costs \$20 million, the design fee is about \$2 million. He said there is a lot that comes with the fee. Councilor Mercer-Bruen thanked Mr. Benevento for coming to the meeting. She said this project has been discussed for years. She said she is glad to hear it is back on track now. She said she is excited to move forward. She said she will be communicating with City Engineer Corey and Mayor Concannon to keep the council updated. She said her only concern is if the project gets slowed down. She said the city needs to keep this

moving. She said this project needs to continue to be a priority. Mr. Benevento said one of the goals is to get the public engaged and excited about the project. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she is glad to see this project moving forward again. She said she hopes the consultant will let the council know when the public hearings will be scheduled. City Engineer Corey said all the information will be posted on the city's web page. He said the web page will be updated periodically so it doesn't get stale. Mr. Benevento said one of the things the consultant does is create an email address for the project. He said people can email the consultant with questions about how the project is going to affect them. Motion made by Councilor Campbell and seconded by Councilor Demers to suspend the council's rules to allow any member of the council not on the committee to address the order; approved, 5-0. Councilor DiMambro said there are 1,000 variables with this project. He asked if the engineer submits three designs to the council and lets the council pick one. Mr. Benevento said the engineering phase starts with what MassDOT is going to require. He said once the input from the public is collected, the engineering balances what the city wants. Then the engineers determine when tweaks are made. He said at some point the city has to decide. He said they know what MassDOT will be looking for and they know when the city will be looking for. Councilor DiMambro asked what the financial component will be. Mr. Benevento said the cost right now is estimated at \$17.38 million. He said that number will go up when construction starts. He said that is understood. He said that is called scope creep. He said if it ends up being \$24 million, then that's what it will be. He said in his 40 years he has never seen a design project that has been put on a shelf. Councilor DiMambro asked if there will be any underground construction. Mr. Benevento said every utility company on the street is notified of the project. He said they are made aware there is a 5-year moratorium on excavation. He said if poles need to be moved, MassDOT provides a 50 percent reimbursement. City Engineer Corey said MassDOT does a great job with utility coordination. He said one of the caveats is the city has to pay for water and sewer improvements unless certain thresholds are met. He said the good news is the major water lines have been cleaned and relined and are good for another 50 years. Councilor Demers said when he worked for Rep. James Dwyer there was a bike path installed in Woburn, Stoneham and Winchester and Rep. Dwyer and then state Sen. Kenneth Donnelly had to argue against putting bike lanes on Montvale Avenue. He suggested advising the city's legislative delegation of the Woburn Common project. Mayor Concannon said state representatives Richard Haggerty and Michelle Ciccolo and state Sen. Cindy Friedman all weighed in to the MPO their support for the project. Commissioner Pappalardo said this is certainly not Mr. Benevento's first rodeo with MassDOT and asked what can delay projects of this nature. Mr. Benevento said there is always back and forth with MassDOT but he does not see any fatal hurdles with this project. He said the biggest hurdle would be if city leaders decide they don't want to do the project anymore. He said he remembers there was a lot of discussion about the veterans memorial. He said it may have to be moved a little bit but in the end it will be enhanced and made a focal point of the Common. He said a lot of this involves presenting the project to the public in a way they will understand it. He said the other option is to do nothing. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said doing nothing is not an option. She said the committee is about to endorse an order to appropriate half a million dollars and the city needs to find a way to make this project happen. She said otherwise she does not see a need to move forward with the appropriation. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Campbell that the order "ought to pass;" approved, 5-0.

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MOTION made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo to adjourn; all in favor, 5-0. Chair Viola adjourned the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees