

**CITY OF WOBURN
CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON LIAISON
WOBURN CITY HALL
COMMITTEE ROOM
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2024, at 6:14 p.m.**

Voting Members present: President Jeffrey Dillon, Councilor Robert Ferullo, Councilor Lou DiMambro, Councilor Charles Viola, Councilor Joseph Demers, Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen, Councilor William Pappalardo, and Councilor Joanne Campbell. Absent: Councilor Robert Toro

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Citizens Participation request from Kenneth Parlee to discuss taxation and revenue ideas for 2025: Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she will have to leave at 6:50 p.m. because she has another commitment. Mr. Parlee said he has many thoughts that go through his mind that he would like to share with the committee. He said he is concerned about the maintaining the quality of life in Woburn with all the housing that is being built in Woburn. He said he has been investigating a tiered tax structure. He said there is no precedent in Massachusetts but there is in other locations. He said there is a flat tax 2.5 percent increase. He said he does not expect Woburn to go through what Gloucester is currently going through with its teachers. He said he is looking more to places like Cambridge, which can grant exceptions for primary residents. He said it he thinks it will keep up home ownership. He said there might be a policy that exempts senior citizens. He said the city could consider instituting an infrastructure surcharge. He said that might be a nice way of neutralizing development, or at least making developers pay their fair share when the city has to replace pipes. He said there is \$42 million in the city's rainy day fund. He said he does not think that is a lot of cash. He said PFAS was a black swan and he thinks there may be more coming. He said the city won't know what those issues are. He said in 2019 the city had \$46 million in reserves and now it has \$42 million, and the city is down quite a lot of purchase power. He said he feels it's underfunded. He said he has studied bond markets and right now it's bad. He said he is a big advocate for Bitcoin. He said it is volatile, but the SEC has given language that makes it a commodity. He said it's not going anywhere. He said companies are putting it on a balance sheet. He said the city should be finding ways to hedge against the dollar. He said this is being embraced in Florida. He said the incoming President-elect plans on having strategies for Bitcoin revenue. He said it is better to be ahead of the curve than behind. He said he has had some detailed conversations about the assessment process with Councilor DiMambro. He said the metrics that are being considered are very concerning if you're a property owner, especially if you don't have a legal road or sidewalk. He said Mawn Drive is an example. He said the assessment is only a \$30,000-\$40,000 difference in the land. He said he does not know how that is equitable. He said then you look at clusters and what a good deal they are. He thanked the committee for listening tonight. He asked if there was any feedback. Councilor Demers said this is a lot to digest. He said he looks forward to future conversations with Mr. Parlee. He said there is nothing crazy about any of Mr. Parlee's ideas. He said the council needs to look at every tool in the toolbox. He said there may be some regulatory issues about what is allowed in the commonwealth. He said Mr. Parlee's head is where it needs to be in

terms of keeping Woburn affordable. Mr. Parlee said he is concerned about the density of the overlay. He said if there is a way the city can determine that it will create some leverage for the city. He asked if it is certain the city will sell the old Wyman School. Councilor Demers said he is not there yet. He said he plans on holding neighborhood meetings to determine what will happen to the Wyman. He said he is not resigned to any outcome. Councilor Viola said Mr. Parlee's suggestions are a lot to digest. He thanked Mr. Parlee to for his willingness to step up and offer suggestions. Councilor Ferullo said he has known Mr. Parlee for some time. He said he understands the value of Bitcoin has gone up by 43 percent in the last 60 days. He thanked Mr. Parlee for his thoughts. Councilor DiMambro said he and Mr. Parlee do a lot of talking. He said Mr. Parlee has a lot of ideas and he appreciates his foresight. He said Mr. Parlee's ideas are aimed at the city's future. He said the city can't rely on old ways. He said city officials have to find new ideas to support the city's infrastructure. He said the city can't keep relying on taxpayers. He said he appreciates Mr. Parlee's efforts and his attempts to find new ways of generating revenue. He said hopefully some will come to fruition. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she did not understand the dynamics of Bitcoin, but she has three daughters in the 20s who are very excited about it. She said the city relies on its commercial base and it will have to come up with creative ways of finding revenue before the residents start to feel a financial impact. She thanked Mr. Parlee for coming. She suggested contacting City Auditor Charles Doherty. She said some of the city's employees would be interested in talking to him. President Dillon said the city is already doing many of the things Mr. Parlee is talking about. He said the city is investing in hard assets. He said thinks the acquisition of the building next door is not only going to have functional uses for the city, and it will also be a heck of a deal based on the real estate value. He said he thinks the city is already doing some of the things Mr. Parlee suggested with assessments. He said he is concerned it doesn't come out as a spot assessment. He said he appreciates Mr. Parlee's input and he wishes more residents would talk to the council about issues. Councilor Pappalardo said he appreciates Mr. Parlee thinking outside the box. He said this is a great forum to discuss topics like this. He said good for Mr. Parlee for doing this. Mr. Parlee said he is available if any member of council wants further information.

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Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Viola to adjourn; approved, 8-0-1. President Dillon adjourned the meeting at 6:32 p.m.

Attest: _____
Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees