

**CITY OF WOBURN
CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
COMMITTEE ROOM
WOBURN CITY HALL
MONDAY, MARCH 10, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.**

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

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

Also present: Mayor Michael Concannon, City Solicitor Mark Salvati, Human Resources Director Shawna Healey, and Fire Chief Donald Kenton

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Reading and approval of previous meeting minutes: 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 24, 2025; all in favor, 4-0-1.

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Order that \$740,283.75 be transferred from Unreserved Fund Balance Acct# 01-356000 to Fire Salaries (Contract Settlement) Acct# 0122051-511000: Mayor Concannon said these funds are needed to cover the settled contract for Woburn firefighters. He said the firefighters' contract is the fifth of the sixth to be settled with the city's unions. He said the only contract outstanding is with the Woburn Police Dept. Patrolmen's Union. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo to suspend the City Council's rules to allow any non-voting member of the City Council to address the order; approved, 4-0-1. Councilor Pappalardo said he is not clear on what the committee is being asked to vote for. He asked if the contract is for one, two or three years. Mayor Concannon said the committee is being asked to approve funding for the first year of the contract, plus any retroactive funding from last July. He said this is the amount the administration needs to cover the first year of the contract and catch up. Councilor Pappalardo asked what percentage increases the firefighters will receive. Mayor Concannon said the contractual raises due to the firefighters are in line with what the city's other unions have been settling for, with reasonable cost of living adjustments and incentives. He said union contracts are made up of different pieces. He said the contracts were agreed to be the city's negotiating team, members of which are present and available to answer any questions the councilors may have. Councilor Pappalardo asked if there are non-salary items that require funding. Mayor Concannon said the transfer mostly covers salary items but there are some stipends and other increases. He said there is nothing overly significant. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo that the transfer "ought to pass;" approved, 4-0-1.

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Order that a total of \$62,700 be transferred to Goddard School Crossing Acct# 3600058-58433, from Woodbridge Station Acct# 3600058-588040 for \$16,929 and from 165 Cambridge Road Acct# 360058-588425 for \$45,771: Mayor Concannon said the money from this transfer will cover the city's portion of the costs of the installation of a rapid flashing beacon on Cambridge Road. He said money was identified in other mitigation accounts. Chair Viola said the cost of the signals is double what was expected because MassDOT approved a hard-wired instead of a solar-powered version of the signal. Councilor Toro asked about the time line for installation of the signal. Mayor Concannon said the turnaround is not very long. Chair Viola said DPW Supt. Duran indicated the signal will be installed well before the start of the next school year. Councilor DiMambro asked if Eversource is involved. Mayor Concannon said he is not certain. Councilor Mercer-Bruen commended Chair Viola on a great job. She said it was a long process. She said the new day care center looks amazing. She said she hopes the neighbors are happy. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo that the transfer "ought to pass;" approved, 4-0-1.

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Order authorizing the Mayor to enter into a lease with Cummings Properties for premises at 4F Henshaw Street for temporary relocation of Fire Station #4: Mayor Concannon said the administration is asking the City Council to let him enter a lease for a temporary Station #4 in a building on Henshaw Street owned by Cummings Properties. He said an ambulance company used to occupy the building. He said it will house an engine and an ambulance. He said the city will take the opportunity to initiate a pilot program on short money to determine the efficacy of a third ambulance. He said rather than having crews work out of headquarters, maintaining a station in East Woburn would be more prudent. He said Cummings is willing to offer a lease for \$5,900 per month for 18 months. He said he felt those are reasonable terms. He said he has a copy of the lease for the committee's approval. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Ferullo to receive and make part of the permanent record the following documents submitted by Mayor Concannon: "Cummings Properties, LLC Standard Form Commercial Lease," and "Cummings Properties, LLC Standard Form Rider to Lease;" approved, 4-0-1. Mayor Concannon said he thinks this configuration will serve the city's needs and keep fire apparatus in the neighborhood. He said he thinks this is a pretty good deal. Councilor Demers said he likes the idea of the fire department keeping a presence in East Woburn. Chief Kenton said the fire department needs temporary quarters because there is not enough room on the current base. He said a study of high end response times was done and there is a need for a third ambulance. He said the idea of leasing temporary space came out of the blue. He said Cummings Properties is very interested in helping the city. He said the landlord is paying \$62,000 for the build-out and they dropped the rent considerably. He said 18 months at \$6,200 per is \$90,000. He said the cost of utilities will be a wash. He said maintaining a presence in East Woburn is the safest option. Councilor DiMambro said this is a great idea. He said the response time from Henshaw Street will be similar to what it is on Central Street. He asked where the money to pay the rent will come from. Mayor Concannon replied the rent will come from ambulance receipts. Chief Kenton said he thinks this is doable. He said a third ambulance will have two EMTs. He said adding an engine with 750 gallons of water and three more EMTs will augment the Henshaw Street facility. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo to suspend the City Council's rules to allow any non-voting member of the

City Council to address the order; approved, 4-0-1. Councilor Pappalardo said Henshaw Street is in Ward 2. He said he has a lot of concerns. He said he thought it would be good to ask the mayor and the fire chief questions directly. He asked if there are any concerns about the condition of the roads in the area in terms of public safety. He said Erie Street is messy. He said there is no sidewalk. He asked if there is anything the city can do to enhance safety. Chief Kenton said Cummings Properties will make improvements to the parking lot on Henshaw Street. He said the present Station #4 is across the street from the Goodyear School. He said the firefighters who work there understand the proximity to a school and public safety. He said when a fire truck leaves, its lights are on but the siren doesn't come on until the truck gets to a main road. Mayor Concannon said the guys and gals who work in the fire department are very cautious. He said it would not help to have an accident with a fire truck on the way to an incident. He said he feels comfortable saying the members of the fire department will be mindful of the sensitivity to the neighborhood. Chief Kenton said there will be training to acclimate personnel to the Henshaw Street facility. Councilor Pappalardo said Erie Street is tough. Chief Kenton said he can develop a plan to take the best route. Councilor Pappalardo said Albany Street is really tight in that area. Mayor Concannon said they will take a look at it. Mayor Concannon said there is a process of rating the roads and coming up with the best use of roadway repairs with limited funds. Councilor Pappalardo said it is hard to believe those roads wouldn't qualify. Mayor Concannon said they will take a closer look. Chief Kenton said the lease term could be closer to 12-14 months. Councilor Pappalardo asked what equipment will be stored at the Henshaw Street facility. Chief Kenton said a fire engine and possibly an ambulance will be stored there during the day. Mayor Concannon said a pilot program for the third ambulance is on the table. He said when this opportunity came up they thought it might be complementary. Councilor Pappalardo asked what the time frame will be to get the temporary fire station up and running. Chief Kenton said Cummings Properties needs 45 days to build out the facility. He said the timing is getting tight. He said the city really needs to make this happen in the month of April. Mayor Concannon said they are trying to proceed in April. Councilor Pappalardo asked if the trucks will be coming from the front or back of the building. Mayor Concannon said access will be from the back of the building. Councilor Pappalardo said that's better. Mayor Concannon said 4F Henshaw Street is the unit number. Councilor Pappalardo asked for consideration to be given to the street and the people who live there. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Demers to suspend the City Council's rules to allow members of the audience to address the order; approved, 4-0-1. Maureen Lanpher, 3 Erie Street, said she has the utmost respect for the fire department, but a fire station does not belong on the end of Erie Street. She said Erie Street is a small road with no sidewalk. She said there is not enough room for a fire truck on one side and another truck on the other side to pass safely. She said the area is already congested and tight. She said a fire station doesn't belong there. Josephine Tramonte, 24 Erie Street, said she has lived at the corner of Erie and Albany streets since 1977. She said since then there has been an influx of more and more traffic. She said the street is narrow. She asked if the city has looked at any alternative sites, perhaps in the area of Olympia Avenue or Wildwood Avenue. Mayor Concannon said the city has not looked at that area. He said the plan was to move Station #4 to headquarters for 18 months while the new station was being built. He said then this plan for Henshaw Street fell into their laps after the ambulance company left. He said he does not want to spend too much time trying to find another option. He said if the city does not seize the Henshaw Street option, it would revert to the headquarters option. Ms. Tramonte asked if there needs to be an ambulance and an engine at the Henshaw Street location. Chief

Kenton said they could run the ambulance out of headquarters. Mayor Concannon said the idea was to keep an ambulance in that area to keep response times as short as possible. President Dillon asked how often during a 24-hour cycle would there be calls that require a trip by the engine. Chief Kenton said there could be as many as 10 calls a day. President Dillon asked how often the ambulance would leave. Chief Kenton said the ambulance will probably leave more often. President Dillon asked when the fire truck's siren would be turned on. He asked if there is a policy. Chief Kenton replied they would probably wait until the truck got to Washington Street before the siren is activated. He said that would happen in the middle of the day. He said he does not anticipate using the siren at night. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she really hopes there can be a compromise. She said she has had a lot of experience watching trucks come and go on Central Street. She said very rarely did she hear sirens. She said very rarely did she get complaints about fire trucks and ambulances. She said Henshaw Street is a little tight but it is closer to where the fire department needs to be. She asked if it is necessary to have the ambulance there. Chief Kenton said they can relocate the ambulance from the Henshaw Street facility if necessary. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she would like to see accounting for the ambulance receipts from City Auditor Charles Doherty. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Demers to request from the City Auditor's office information about the ambulance receipts account and how much money is available and has been transferred; approved, 4-0-1. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said it sounds like Cummings Properties is giving the city a great deal. She asked if there would be any quid pro quo. She said she is very mindful of that. Mayor Concannon said there is no quid pro quo. He said the city is paying rent for the Henshaw Street facility. Chief Kenton said the upgrade to the building is something the landlord enjoy when the city leaves the facility. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said people have inquired. Councilor Toro said he is in support. He said the location isn't ideal. He said the Henshaw Street site was formerly used by an ambulance company. He said fire apparatus will remain in East Woburn. He said here is a public safety issue that could be a matter of life and death. He said this is only a temporary arrangement. He said he is sure the fire chief and his staff will take all the necessary precautions. Mayor Concannon said the plan is for a fire engine to be there 24/7. He said if the city proceeds with the ambulance pilot program it would be Monday-Friday when businesses in that area are active. He said there would not be ambulances leaving Henshaw Street at 2, 3 or 4 a.m. Councilor Demers said the City Council has been involved in a lot of difficult decisions. He said the purpose of the Henshaw Street facility is public safety. He said he thinks if the engine and the ambulance were moved to WFD headquarters they would not be able to meet an adequate response time for East Woburn. He said his primary concern is the general welfare of the public in East Woburn. He said he lives across the street from Woburn Fire headquarters and can attest they do not use the siren when they don't need to. He said he would like to suggest a creative neighborhood safety plan that involves the ward councilor, the fire chief and the mayor looking at this issue every six months to determine if the concerns of the neighborhood are being addressed. Mayor Concannon said they had in place an adequate plan. He said this is a better plan for a reasonable amount of money. Councilor DiMambro said he has seen box trucks and trailer trucks in the Henshaw Street area. He said it is a commercial area. He said his number one concern is public safety. He said he lives near the old Station #2 and has seen Woburn Fire trucks travel his street. He said 99 percent of the time after dark they only use the sirens. He said there is no noise. He said it is all about response times. He said he listens to the public safety scanner. He said he thinks the fire department will take all precautions to make sure the Henshaw Street neighborhood is safe. He said every second counts in an emergency. He said WFD headquarters

is a long way from Station #4. He said it is important that there be fire apparatus at the shortest distance possible. Councilor Ferullo said he thinks the city should enter into the lease for the Henshaw Street facility, which he said is near the highway. He said it is important to have an ambulance near the highway. He said he thinks an ambulance has a place over there. Councilor Mercer-Bruen said she thinks extra consideration ought to be given to this neighborhood. She said the city should find a way to make a commitment to the neighbors to fix the street. Councilor Pappalardo said it is a double-edged sword. He said if the city improves the street and puts in a sidewalk, that would be appreciated. Mayor Concannon said he will pledge to look into it. He said he will meet with the City Engineer and the DPW Superintendent to go over which streets will be improved and he promised to look into it. Chair Viola said he agrees with Council Ferullo that it makes more sense to have an ambulance and fire apparatus close to the highway. He said if the city decides to pave that road, he urged caution because the additional traffic might increase wear and tear. Councilor Demers asked when the mayor is projecting to sign the lease. Mayor Concannon said ideally the lease will be signed in mid to late April. Councilor Demers asked if there is time to work out some accommodations. Mayor Concannon said there is still a little bit of work to be done. He said if the committee sends the matter ought to pass and the City Council approves it on March 18, he can give the landlord a head's up. He said they are already operating with a condensed time line. He said he has given a pledge to the committee that he will work with the neighborhood. He said he will be asking for a little bit of leeway. Councilor Demers said it might be more prudent to send the matter back for action. Councilor Pappalardo said he thinks that's a great idea. Councilor Demers said he can work on some language to add. Motion made by Councilor Mercer-Bruen and seconded by Councilor Demers to send the matter "back for action," approved, 4-0-1.

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MOTION made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Ferullo to adjourn; all in favor, 4-0-1. Chair Viola adjourned the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees