

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
As a Committee of the Whole
THURSDAY, JUNE 3, 2021, at 6:00 p.m.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
WOBURN CITY HALL

Voting Members present: Chairman Darlene Mercer-Bruen, Alderman Michael Concannon, Alderman Robert Ferullo, President Edward Tedesco, Alderman Michael Lannan, Alderman Jeffrey Dillon, and Alderman Joseph Demers. Absent: Alderman Joanne Campbell and Alderman Richard Gately

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Discussion of the FY 2022 Budget: City Clerk - Chairman Mercer-Bruen said the City Clerk's departmental budget is on page 10 of the mayor's municipal budget. City Clerk Lindsay Higgins said most of the accounts are level funded. She said the clerk's office currently charges \$200 for advertising public hearings but some of the bills from the newspaper are coming in higher than that. She said the License Commission recently raised its advertising fees from \$100 to \$110 to cover rising costs. She said some of the advertising bills are coming in at between \$300 and \$200. She said the staff in the clerk's office and her predecessor performed a lot of work, including the execution of two elections, during the pandemic. She said former City Clerk William Campbell requested a copier/scanner and new voting machines in the capital budget. She said her office is going to hold off on the new voting machines because they need to be certified at least 120 days before an election. She said ideally new machines would be integrated during a municipal election rather than a mid-term or a presidential election. She said the preliminary election is on September 14 and the municipal election is on November 2. She said she, Asst. City Clerk Joyce Gray and Matthew Barrett from the City Engineer's office participated in a meeting this morning about re-precincting the city's voting districts. She said there will be changes to the city's ward and precinct boundaries. She said the preliminary census data indicates there are 40,264 residents in Woburn. She said there are more than 7 million residents in the state. She said the final data should be available in September. She said the City Charter requires there to be seven wards in the city. She said the city will not need more wards or precincts. She said to population of each precinct has to be within a variable of 5 percent and there cannot be more than 4,000 people in any one precinct. She said the city cannot dilute voting districts in which minority groups are prevalent. She said any changes to the voting districts have to be approved by the City Council and the mayor. She said the clerk's office will be working with the City Engineer's office to draw ward and precinct maps. Chairman Mercer-Bruen asked if the city incurs costs due to the publication of the annual poll books. City Clerk Higgins said there is a \$30 charge for poll books, and they may have to look at that because the cost may be slightly higher. President Tedesco asked if the new ward and precinct districts will go into effect for the November municipal election. City Clerk Higgins replied the new voting districts go into effect in 2022 but the new district lines will have an impact on anyone running in the municipal election because most of the terms are for two years. Chairman Mercer-Bruen asked if the advertising costs are for public hearing notices in the newspaper. City Clerk Higgins said that is correct. **Conservation** – Conservation Administrator Theresa Murphy said her budget is level funded. She said it has been a crazy year. She said she hopes things will return to normal.

Chairman Mercer-Bruen thanked Administrator Murphy for her efforts during what has been a very busy year. Administrator Murphy said all orders of conditions have been issued for the projects at the Vale. Chairman Mercer-Bruen said that was a Herculean task. **Law** - Chairman Mercer-Bruen said the Law Dept.'s budget is on page 8 of the municipal budget. City Solicitor Ellen Callahan Doucette said her department's budget is level funded. She said there was a typographical error in the original version of the budget for the line item for office supplies and asked if that had been fixed in the version that was disseminated to the council. She said she does not foresee any additional costs. She said she is seeking legal assistance for three appeals related to the Montvale Avenue widening project. She said all collective bargaining contracts expire at the end of the month. She said the city usually hires outside counsel to negotiate with the police and fire unions. She said the mayor is not sure where the revenues are. She said the mayor anticipates not as much money will be coming in. She said she assumes her administrative assistant Dianne Mearls will be returning to her office after the mayor hires a new aide. She said Ms. Mearls' salary is included in the Law Dept. budget. Chairman Mercer-Bruen thanked City Solicitor Callahan Doucette for her assistance to the council. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette reported to Alderman Demers that there is a hole being fixed on Ellen Road. Alderman Demers said he appreciates that. He said there is a property line issue on Ellen Road. He said he never had to work so hard to get a hole filled. He said if there is progress, it is a pleasant surprise and thanked City Solicitor Callahan Doucette for her efforts. **Human Resources** - Chairman Mercer-Bruen said the Human Resources Dept. budget is on page 11. Human Resources Director Elaine Pruyne said her departmental budget is level funded. She said she requested a pay raise for administrative assistant Karen Crawford to the same level as the Asst. City Clerk, but she said the mayor did not agree. She said it has been a busy year for the Human Resources Dept. and she wanted to acknowledge Ms. Crawford's efforts. Chairman Mercer-Bruen thanked Director Pruyne for her efforts. **Information Technology** – Chairman Mercer-Bruen said the Information Technology budget is on page 9. Information Technology Director David Mastronardi said it has been a crazy year. He said his department squeezed five years of projects into one year. He said his department obtained several hundred thousand dollars through the CARES Act. He said his department has added a lot of new systems. He said he is looking to establish on-line permitting and business licensing. He said he has asked for and received funding to hire a new IT support position that will be working primarily in the public safety realm. He said with the new fire station coming on-line, there will be all kinds of new technology. He said his department has been working hard with the police department. He said any funding increases in his budget are to cover the ever-expanding footprint of technology. He said there were cuts to some line items in the IT budget. Chairman Mercer-Bruen asked who is in charge of converting paper records to virtual records. Director Mastronardi said they are using the cloud to store on-line records. He said the cloud is a better option because it saves money. He said the conversion to on-line recording will go on for years. He said former City Clerk William Campbell had a closet filled with old books and they backfilled those records. He said he is working with City Clerk Lindsay Higgins to determine how to make the records searchable. Chairman Mercer-Bruen said the conversion to on-line records is a big effort. She said she appreciates Director Mastronardi leading the charge. **Veterans Services** – Chairman Mercer-Bruen said the Veterans Services Dept. budget is on pages 51 and 52. Director of Veterans Services Larry Guisepppe said this is the 13th consecutive year the budgets for Veterans Services and the United Veterans Council have been level funded. He said the money in the United Veterans Council budget pays for events on Veterans Day and Memorial Day. He said he asked for and received \$2,500 in the Veterans

Services budget for new flags at Ferullo Field. He said there is a line item that will cover veterans cash aid for the first six months of the year. He said the account will be replenished in December. He said cash aid involves direct payments to veterans, their survivors, or families. He said they have had as many as 98 people receiving cash aid. He said the number right now is down to about 75 people. He said he wants for nothing and he needs nothing. Chairman Mercer-Bruen said Director Guiseppe makes everything run smoothly and the council appreciates that. Alderman Dillon thanked Director Guiseppe for helping the city's veterans. He said he believes the community owes a great debt to its veterans. Director Guiseppe said he thoroughly enjoys his job. He said he looks forward to coming to work every day.

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MOTION made by Alderman Concannon and seconded by Alderman Ferullo to adjourn; approved, 7-0. Chairman Mercer-Bruen adjourned the meeting at 6:20 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees