

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
As a Committee of the Whole
THURSDAY, JUNE 1, 2023, at 6 p.m.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
WOBURN CITY HALL

Members present: Chair Darlene Mercer-Bruen, Councilor Robert Ferullo, Councilor Richard Gately, Councilor Jeffrey Dillon, Councilor Joseph Demers, Councilor Lou DiMambro, Councilor Charles Viola, and President Michael Concannon.

Absent: Councilor Joanne Campbell

Also present: Mayor Scott Galvin

* * * * *

President Concannon said he filed a disclosure with the City Clerk's office today indicating he has family members who are employed by the city of Woburn. He said he has also sought an opinion from the state Ethics Commission which indicates he can participate in a discussion about the municipal budget but he must abstain from voting on any departmental budgets which have a direct financial impact on members of his family. Councilor at-large Ferullo said he would like to make the same disclosure as it relates the Planning Dept., of which a family member is an employee. Chair Mercer-Bruen said the budget is posted on the city's website.

Transfer of \$750,000 from Overlay Reserve Account to OPEB Trust Fund Account: Mayor Galvin said the city started funding the Other Post Employment Benefits account about a half-dozen years ago. He said this money for this transfer will come from the overlay reserve account, which is set up to fund tax abatements. He said once the money is released, it becomes available for expenditures. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Viola that the transfer "ought to pass;" approved, 8-0.

Transfer of \$204,000 from Mayor's Utilities Account to Police Lighting Account (\$20,000); Library Lighting Account (\$24,000); DPW Electric-Traffic Account (\$8,000); DPW Gas Account (\$12,000); Library Heat Account (\$10,000); DPW Sewer-Electric Account; and DPW Water-Electric Account: Mayor Galvin said the money is needed to pay electric bills, as the cost of electricity has increased. He said the supply went from 12 cents to 18 cents and there are additional costs for Eversource. He said the administration is asking the City Council to put extra money into that account. He said the largest outlay is for the DPW and the water treatment plant. He said he is hoping the rates go down in November. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Dillon that the transfer "ought to pass;" approved, 8-0.

Transfer of \$1,440,547.66 from Mayor's Salary Adjustment Account to: School Salaries Adjustment Account: Mayor Galvin said the money in this transfer will cover contractual salary increases. He said the administration asked for \$700,000 in FY '23 to make the schools whole for the budget. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Dillon that the transfer "ought to pass;" approved, 8-0.

Transfer of \$172,000 from Auditor Salary (\$40,000); Assessor Salaries (\$100,000); and Planning Board Salary (\$32,000) to: Treasurer Salary (\$25,000); Police Crossing Guards (\$51,000); Police Sick Leave Buy Back (\$56,000); Inspections Temporary Help (\$32,000);

Health Salary (\$2,000); and Recreation Wellness Coordinator (\$6,000): Mayor Galvin said this transfer has been submitted to cover a number of salary accounts in various municipal departments. He said the money is coming from positions that were vacant. He said the Deputy Collector's position has been vacant for some time. He said there is a position in the Assessors Dept. that was unfilled for quite a while. He said there is a position in the Planning Dept. that will be filled shortly. He said the money will be used to pay sick leave buy back for former Deputy Treasurer/Collector Alex Dizio, who left unexpectedly for a job in another community. He said the rate for police crossing guards has been increased. He said there is an outlay for sick leave buy back to cover unexpected retirements in the police department. He said there is an outlay to fund salary for temporary help for an electrical inspector who is out on medical leave. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Dillon that the transfer "ought to pass;" approved, 8-0.

Appropriation of \$80,000 from Cemetery Interest Fund to Various Cemetery Accounts:

Mayor Galvin said the Cemetery Commission submits a similar transfer every year to cover costs. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Dillon that the transfer "ought to pass;" approved, 8-0.

Transfer of \$95,000 from Fire/BLS Ambulance to Fire/Ambulance Overtime: Mayor Galvin said there was a similar appropriation approved recently and another appropriation is needed to cover an increase in overtime due to a spike in injuries in the fire department. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Dillon that the transfer "ought to pass;" approved, 8-0.

Discussion of the FY '24 Budget with the following departments:

Mayor –Mayor Galvin said he will be present for the public hearing on the budget and the City Council can ask him questions about his departmental budget or any other departmental budget at that time. Chair Mercer-Bruen said the budget hearing will be held on June 12.

Treasurer/Collector: Representing the Treasurer/Collector Dept. was Treasurer/Collector Timothy Donovan. Treasurer/Collector Donovan said the Treasurer/Collector's office has undergone some unexpected changes. He said Deputy Treasurer/Collector Alex Dizio took a job in another community. He said this was a big loss to the Treasurer/Collector Dept. He said Mr. Dizio will do well where he is now. He said Mr. Dizio's departure has resulted in disruption to personnel. He said Jennifer McKittrick was hired to replace Mr. Dizio. He said Ms. McKittrick worked closely with Mr. Dizio so she has some familiarity with the machinations of the position. He said Ms. McKittrick is getting up to speed quickly. He said Patti Doyle has moved from a Head Clerk's position to a Secretary's position. He said he expects a new Head Clerk to start on Monday. He said the office will be back to full staff by the time the new fiscal year starts. He said collections remain steady. He said there is about \$2.5 million in tax title. He said the office collects \$250,000-\$300,000 in tax title collections every year. He said there are a lot of tax title items with balances due in land court. He said interest rates have been rising for the past 5-6 months and his office has been taking full advantage of that. He said the maintenance budget is level funded except for payroll fees. He said Century Bank was acquired by Eastern Bank and there is a little bit of a different structure. He said fees have gone up. He said there is an increase in the cost of producing W-2 forms and payroll checks. He said he thinks the budget will cover expenses. He said he thinks he will have a better sense of the expenses once the current fiscal year is over. He said lock box fees have increased \$1,500 due to the same banking issues. He said they are right on the number that was budgeted for this year, but next year there may be an

increase. He said there is an increase in the postage mailing fees line item. He said since 2017, postage has increased 2-3 cents every year. He said first class postage is now 63 cents, and another increase is expected shortly. He said his budget will have to account for that. He said right now postage costs are approaching \$80,000. He said everything else is level funded.

Councilor Dillon said he appreciates all Treasurer/Collector Donovan and his staff do for the city. He said the staff is always professional. He said the Treasurer/Collector Dept. is one of the most visible offices in the city. He said the office is still running well despite being short-staffed. Treasurer/Collector Donovan said everyone in the office has taken on extra responsibilities in the last four months. He said everyone on staff has been working hard. He said they do have high traffic in the office. Councilor Dillon said the efforts of the staff are appreciated. Councilor Gately thanked Treasurer/Collector Donovan and his staff for all their work. He said this is probably the last time he will review a budget with Treasurer/Collector. He said Treasurer/Collector Donovan's office does a lot of work. He asked if there is an opening in the department. Treasurer/Collector Donovan said there is a new person starting Monday. He said they will be fully staffed next week. He said Councilor Gately has been his elected representative to the council all these years. He said they have had a good working relationship. Chair Mercer-Bruen thanked Treasurer/Collector Donovan and his staff for everything they do. She said she is glad to hear the office is reverting to a full staff and they won't be doing double duty much longer.

Council on Aging – Representing the Council on Aging was Council on Aging Director Marie Lingblom. Director Lingblom said Councilor Gately has always been a big supporter of the Woburn Senior Center. She said the Woburn Senior Center is also short-staffed. She the program coordinator is going for her Master's degree. She said they are on the hunt for a replacement. She said the staff is small but mighty. She said she is loving the work. She said her budget is basically level-funded, except for a long overdue raise for van drivers. She said the van drivers undergo training to accommodate wheelchairs, defensive driving, and passenger loading. He said the four van drivers are local guys who are really dedicated. He said they made 3,500 trips last fiscal year. He said that number does not include trips to the food pantry, delivering taxi vouchers or trips to pick up books at the library. She said she is really happy the drivers are getting a raise to bring their rate up to \$20 per hour from \$15 per hour. She said the city will subsidize half the outlay. She said she cannot tell the committee how critical the transportation vouchers are. She said Checker Cab has been great. She said the regular rates for a taxi to Boston are around \$80. She said Checker Cab offers a much lower rate. She said transportation is one of the most critical services the Senior Center offers. She said the Senior Center has approximately 3,000 members, nearly 2,000 of whom are active. She said they had nearly 23,000 sign-ins during the last fiscal year. She said a lot of people have come back after Covid. She said they have started pickleball lessons and more than 170 players. She said one of the goals is to attract more men to the Senior Center. She said it seemed like the center was attracting mostly women. She said the pool table was resurfaced. She said a ping pong table was added. She said one of the biggest draws has been a men's strength and balance program that can accommodate up to 20 people. She said the numbers in general have gone up. She said the annual barbecue will be held on June 8. She said there are a lot of seniors who are still struggling in the wake of Covid. She said there has been a sharp uptick in the number of people who are asking for housing assistance. She said SCI has been great with helping seniors with their landscaping. She said they are trying to help people stay in their homes. She said the Senior Center is supposed to be a safe, welcoming place. She thanked the Council on Aging board members and staff for their hard work. Councilor DiMambro thanked Director Lingblom for everything she does. He said he lives

right down the street from the Senior Center. He said his is proud to have that facility in his ward. He said he has noticed an uptick in traffic. He said the pickleball court has been a draw. He said the garden looks great. He said custodian Paul Medeiros and the Parks Dept. do a great job. Councilor Viola said Director Lingblom and her staff do an amazing job. He said he never gets any negative feedback about the Senior Center. He said he has heard the pool table has been an unbelievable addition. Councilor Gately asked how long he and Director Lingblom have been friends. Director Lingblom said they have been friends a long time. Councilor Gately said he remembers when Director Lingblom worked for the Woburn Advocate a long time ago. He said Director Lingblom has always been a great person. He said Director Lingblom is doing a fantastic job. He said he has heard from seniors she is doing a fantastic job. Director Lingblom thanked Councilor Gately for taking care of Ward 2, of which she is a resident, for so long. Councilor Dillon thanked Director Lingblom for all she does. He said the city owes a debt to its seniors and veterans. He said when he goes to the Senior Center, he sees the vibe that the staff has created there. He said he sees the happiness the staff brings to the seniors. He said he has seen simple acts of kindness. He told Director Lingblom to keep up the good work. Councilor Demers thanked Director Lingblom and her staff. He said he can tell it is a great department because he is the council's liaison to the Senior Center and he does not get many calls that are negative. He said he appreciates the welcoming environment at the Senior Center. He said the city needs to have a conversation about more senior housing. He said even the units that are made available under Ch. 40B are not affordable for seniors. He said he would welcome a meeting between all the stake holders to encourage more senior housing. He asked Director Lingblom if there is an electronic version of the monthly newsletter. Director Lingblom answered affirmatively. Councilor Demers asked Director Lingblom if she could send to the council a list of recipients of the newsletter. President Concannon said the Senior Center provides a positive environment for seniors, including his mother, who participates in the dance program. He said Burlington has entered into partnerships with Uber and Lyft and asked if Woburn is considering doing the same. Director Lingblom said she is looking into it. She said she sees people waiting a half-hour for the MBTA's The Ride service. She said she thinks there is enough demand for ride sharing services. Councilor Ferullo thanked Director Lingblom for all of her work. Chair Mercer-Bruen thanked Director Lingblom for everything. She said she had no doubt Director Lingblom was the person for the job when she was hired. She said Director Lingblom is doing amazing work. She said people enjoy going to the Senior Center. **Planning** – Representing the Planning Dept. was Planning Director Tina Cassidy. Director Cassidy said there are no problems or issues with the office at the moment. She said she is happy to have hired an Economic Development Manager. She said the Grant Writer position is vacant. She said this is a dual position with the Sustainability Coordinator. She said she hopes they will have a new person on board soon. She said the Planning Board and the Woburn Redevelopment Authority are busy. She said her departmental budget is essentially level funded. Councilor Dillon thanked Director Cassidy for her availability. He said Director Cassidy always provides the council with insight and knowledge. He said he is honored to be able to work with the Planning Dept. Councilor DiMambro thanked Director Cassidy and her staff for their insight, foresight, and guidance. He said he is looking forward to working with Economic Development Manager Casey Hagerty. Councilor Gately said he heard about Director Cassidy before she came to Woburn. He said he was aware of the good work Director Cassidy did in Beverly. He said he heard she was doing good things in Beverly, and she is doing good things in Woburn. He said Woburn is lucky to have Director Cassidy. Councilor Viola thanked Director Cassidy for

everything she does. He said Director Cassidy is usually the first person he contacts to find out about development in the city. He asked Director Cassidy to elaborate about the Sustainability Coordinator. Director Cassidy said the Sustainability Coordinator's role will be to find ways to spend money more wisely. She said a lot of what the Sustainability Coordinator does will be driven by economic factors. She said she thinks there is a lot that can be done to enhance programs with grant money. Councilor Viola asked if the city is missing out on a lot of funding through grant money. Director Cassidy said there is a lot of grant money out there waiting to be tapped. Councilor Demers asked if a consultant is being used in the job search. Director Cassidy answered affirmatively. Councilor Demers asked if the job has been posted on the MMA's website. Director Cassidy said the job has been posted on a couple of websites. She said the same process was used for the search for the Economic Development Manager. She said Ms. Hagerty was happy where she was until the city enticed her to come its way. Councilor Demers inquired about the status of the pocket park on Main Street near Magazine Hill. Director Cassidy said Rep. Richard Haggerty secured \$120,000-\$150,000 for the project, which is designed to try to help the downtown area come back from Covid. She said the rationale is to try to create a gathering place. She said there will be new concrete and new lighting. She said DPW Deputy Supt. Len Burnham took the lead. She said the project should be done within the next 30-45 days. She said there will be a ribbon cutting. She said the grand re-opening will be a summer event. Chair Mercer-Bruen thanked Director Cassidy for her work. She said she spends an inordinate amount of time consulting with Director Cassidy. She said there have been many projects that didn't come the city's way because of their work together. **City Clerk** – Representing the City Clerk's office was City Clerk Lindsay Higgins. Clerk Higgins said her department's accounts are pretty spot-on. She said there is an increase in line item for postage. She said since FY '17 postage has increased 14 cents. She said the cost of postage has increased by about \$3,000. She said the paper and printing budgets have also gone up slightly. She said there is an item in the capital budget for high-speed voting tabulators and new machines. She said a new dog registration program has been implemented with the help of the Information Technology Dept. She said residents can now pay for their dog registration on-line. She said the next step will be to make vital records available for purchase on-line. She said the preliminary election if necessary will be held on Sept. 5, followed by a municipal election on Nov. 7. She said there will be a presidential primary in March 2024. She thanked her staff for working a lot of extra hours. Councilor DiMambro thanked Clerk Higgins and her staff for all they do. Councilor Gately thanked Clerk Higgins and her staff. He said he has experienced a lot of ups and downs in the past year and the City Clerk's office has backed him all the way. He said Clerk Higgins has a great staff. Councilor Viola thanked Clerk Higgins and her staff. He said anytime he has a question, they are able to answer. Councilor Dillon said Clerk Higgins' guidance and knowledge is incredible. He said that is noted and appreciated by all members of the council. Councilor Demers said he appreciates Clerk Higgins' attention to detail, and to her staff for everything they do. Councilor Ferullo said Clerk Higgins had huge shoes to fill, and she filled them perfectly. Chair Mercer-Bruen said she had the pleasure of working with Clerk Higgins on the City Council and she has continued that good working relationship now that she is the City Clerk. She said Clerk Higgins and her staff are amazing. **Human Resources** – Representing the Human Resources Dept. was Human Resources Director Shawna Healey. Director Healey said she was hired in October. She said Administrative Assistant Karen Crawford has been of great help. She said there is a little bit of a change to the city's drug and alcohol policy, which has resulted in an increase to that line item in her departmental budget. She said hiring has been

really challenging not only in the city but also statewide. She said there are six vacancies in the DPW. She said they are hoping to develop a Commercial Driver's License training program. She said it can cost about \$5,000 to get a CDL. She said the line item for pre-employment physicals has also increased. Councilor Demers said the idea to create an in-house CDL program is outside the box thinking and he commends Director Healey for that. Councilor DiMambro asked if there are any programs for hoisting licenses. Director Healey said the city offers training through MIIA. Councilor DiMambro asked if there is any thought to collaborating with the Peterson School. Director Healey said she would be happy to explore that. Councilor Ferullo asked about the status of recruitment in the public safety realm. Director Healey said hiring has been difficult on the police side. She said the Civil Service process makes it much more challenging. She said it is a tough job climate. Councilor Ferullo said the most recent Civil Service list contained 47 people. He said in his generation the list was 300-400 people. Chair Mercer-Bruen asked if the city has considered requiring anyone who undergoes CDL training to make a commitment to the city. Director Healey said that is something the city is definitely considering.

Conservation – Representing the Conservation Dept. was Conservation Administrator Theresa Murphy. Administrator Murphy said the Conservation Dept.'s budget is level funded. She said the annual Conservation Day was held recently. She said she was unable to attend for the first time ever. She said it was, however, a beautiful day. She said the tree program was revived after it was suspended during Covid. She said the entire stock sold out. She said she looks forward to it continuing. Councilor Viola asked how the search to fill a vacancy on the commission is going. Administrator Murphy said appointments to the commission are made by the mayor. Councilor Viola asked about the trail development line item. Administrator Murphy said there is not a lot of money in any of the departmental line items. She said that money in the trail development line item is for maintenance rather than for the creation of new trails. Councilor Viola said there are a lot of trails in Ward 7. He said a lot of trails are overgrown and asked if they could be maintained through the trail management program. Administrator Murphy said the Shaker Glen trail is under the auspices of the Conservation Commission, but the other trails in West Woburn are not. She said the commission does not have the jurisdiction over the other trails. Councilor Viola said the activity at the community gardens is great to see. Administrator Murphy said two of the Conservation Commission members are involved in the community gardens, and there is one former commission member who also helps out. Councilor Dillon thanked Administrator Murphy for her hard work. He said the City Council often asks her for advice. He said she is the expert on conservation matters. He said the Conservation Commission does a great job. He said the input the council gets from the Conservation Commission gives the council confidence in its decisions. He said he has constituents who use the community gardens. He said it is a wonderful place to hang out. He said there are a number of bird watchers there. He said it is encouraging to see people use the community gardens respectfully. Councilor DiMambro said Ward 6 is a busy ward. He said he appreciates the Conservation Dept. keeping a close eye in the projects there. He said it has not been easy. Chair Mercer-Bruen thanked Administrator Murphy and her team for their hard work. Administrator Murphy thanked the council for its service. Councilor Dillon said would also like to express appreciation to Rodney Flynn and the Woburn Residents Environmental Network and the Friends of Horn Pond for all the work they do, and their inclusivity. Administrator Murphy said there are volunteer organizations in the city that are dedicated.

Health – Representing the Health Dept. was Board of Health Agent John Fralick. Agent Fralick said his budget is level funded except for an increase to the Waste Management contract. He said this will probably be his last budget hearing. Councilor Gately asked about the

status of the contaminated soil remediation in the Sturgis Street area. Agent Fralick said he wants to finish that project. He said the pump system is already gone. He said the attenuation levels are down. He said due to the proximity of the area to the pond, drinking water standards are required. He said there is still the presence of diesel fuel, but it has never reached the pond and significant remediation progress has been made. He said the area will have to be monitored for several more years. He said he is trying to do away with the active gas collection system at the landfill. He said most of the methane is gone. He said he has approached DEP so he can put in a passive system that does not require as much funding. Councilor Gately said Agent Fralick does a good job. He said it is a miracle that the contamination from the Sturgis Street area never impacted the pond. Agent Fralick said the contamination happens to be sitting in the wrong spot. He said there was a mill on the parkway. He said there were a lot of businesses there. He said next year's budget will probably see an increase in the rodent and mosquito control line items. He said he won't be doing those treatments anymore. He said the program targets mosquitoes that transmit West Nile Virus. Councilor Gately said a lot of people don't know what the Board of Health does. Councilor Dillon said he wants to thank Agent Fralick and his staff. He said Meghan Doherty and Patricia Bergeron-George are very, very helpful. He said Councilor Gately passed the torch for the quarterly recycling drive to some of the younger council members. He said Ms. George is always there to assist. In response to a question from Councilor DiMambro, Agent Fralick said he needs to monitor the methane processing system at the landfill a few times a year. He said it no longer generates a lot of methane. He said he has 15 years of data. Councilor DiMambro said there are a lot of variables that Agent Fralick has to handle. Councilor Demers thanked Agent Fralick and his staff. He said the Health Dept. did a lot of heavy lifting during the Covid period. Agent Fralick said Mayor Galvin made the city's response to Covid a priority. Councilor Demers said if this is Agent Fralick's last budget hearing, it has always been a pleasure working with him. Agent Fralick said he thinks the only employee at City Hall who has a longer tenure is Gail Swymer. He said when he started working for the city, he was the youngest person in the building. He said retirement has been a very difficult decision. He said he does not want to leave. Councilor Viola said Ms. George is a valuable asset to the Health Dept. He said he has heard from residents about Waste Management and asked if there is any way to increase yard waste pickups from November to April. Agent Fralick said the city is required to do 12 yard waste pickups. He said each additional pickup is \$100,000. He said the waste disposal dynamic has changed. He said recycling costs \$122 per ton, and trash costs \$75 per ton. Chair Mercer-Bruen said it sounds like Agent Fralick hasn't made up his mind about retirement, so there is time to talk him in to staying. She said she appreciates all the work Agent Fralick did to alleviate the odors at the former Atlantic Gelatin site. She said Agent Fralick was on it right away. She said who knew it was the scrubbers. She said the city still has issues with rats, but it is not as bad as it once was. She said the Health Dept. does a tremendous amount of work, mostly behind the scenes. **Purchasing** – Representing the Purchasing Dept. was Purchasing Agent Orazio DeLuca. Agent DeLuca said his departmental budget is pretty straightforward. Councilor Demers said he has been reading about ways communities are banding together to purchase electricity. Agent DeLuca said his department is involved in all different types of consortia. He said Woburn is part of a few consortia, for items like fuel, heating oil and diesel. He said joining with other communities gives the consortium more buying power and lower prices. He said the city is beginning to see better deals. Councilor DiMambro said he wants to give credit to Agent DeLuca for his efforts to try to find discounts. He said a lot of paperwork is involved. He said everyone in the city appreciates it. **Information Technology** – Representing the Information

Technology Dept. was Information Technology Director David Mastronardi. Director Mastronardi said most of the changes to his departmental budget involved software applications. He said there is also an increase in the training account to more employee training systems. He said there is a Munis consulting line item that is new. He said there is an outlay for \$5,000 for cyber security. Councilor Ferullo said he is supportive of the enhancements to cyber security. He said he appreciates all Director Mastronardi does. **City Solicitor** – Representing the City Solicitor’s officer was City Solicitor Ellen Callahan Doucette. City Solicitor Callahan Doucette said her departmental budget is pretty much level funded. She said there is a reduction in the legal assistance line item from \$75,000 to \$50,000. She said there was some eminent domain litigation settled, and labor counsel is part of the outlay. She said the department is starting negotiations with Verizon on a cable account. Councilor Dillon said he appreciates that whenever a member of the council makes an inquiry about a legal issue that the City Solicitor’s office provides a timely response. **Engineering** – Clerk said City Engineer John Corey notified him of a late conflict. Clerk said Engineer Corey would like to reschedule to a meeting next week.

MOTION made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Viola to adjourn; approved, 8-0. Chair Mercer-Bruen adjourned the meeting at 7:36 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees