



City of Fitchburg Massachusetts 01420

CITY COUNCIL

Councilors at Large

**David Clark
Marcus L. DiNatale
Samantha M. Squailia
Anthony M. Zarrella
E. Thomas Donnelly**

President

Michael P. Kushmerek

Vice President

Amy L. Green

Ward Councilors

**Ward 1 – Amy L. Green
Ward 2 – Paul R. Beauchemin
Ward 3 – Joel R. Kaddy
Ward 4 – Michael P. Kushmerek
Ward 5 – Marisa R. Fleming
Ward 6 – Elizabeth R. Walsh**

Finance Committee

A meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order by Chairman DiNatale on Tuesday, May 8, 2018 at 6:02 PM in the Memorial Middle School Library, 615 Rollstone Street, Fitchburg, MA.

Committee Members present: Councilors Paul Beauchemin, Marcus DiNatale, Michael Kushmerek, Elizabeth Walsh, and Anthony Zarrella.

Other Councilors present: Councilors David Clark, Thomas Donnelly, Marisa Fleming, Joel Kaddy, and Samantha Squailia.

Others present: City Auditor Calvin Brooks, Human Resources Director Susan Davis, Police Chief Ernest Martineau, City Solicitor Vincent Pusateri, Public Works Commissioner Lenny Laakso, Veterans Agent Michele Marino, Airport Manager Scott Ellis, Community Development Director Thomas Skwierawski, Director of Public Health Stephen Curry, Assistant City Solicitor Christine Tree, Assistant School Superintendent Robert Jokela, Airport Commission Chairman John Naylor, Eric Sheffels of FACT, and members of the AFSCME bargaining unit.

115-18 ORDER: that the Airport Commission be authorized to lease for a period of more than twenty years a certain premise at the Fitchburg Municipal Airport to FACT under the terms and conditions as set forth on the attached RESTATED Lease, originally authorized by petition #055-03.

Discussion: Scott Ellis, John Naylor, and Eric Sheffels reported that is has taken time to straighten out the lease with the Fitchburg Airport Condominium Trust (FACT). Mr. Naylor stated that his role as chairman of the commission has been to bring everyone together. Upon questioning by councilors, the group indicated that tenants will be getting a copy of the lease about two weeks prior to a meeting of the condominium owners called to discuss the lease.

Action: Be adopted (5-0)

117-18 ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$75,000.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to VETERANS BENEFITS, CASH BENEFITS account.

Discussion: Michele Marino reported that this request is to supplement the FY2018 budget for cash benefits. At the start of the year, the payment rate was less than it is now. While the state reimburses 75% of these costs, there has been a significant increase in the number of veterans being served. Currently there are 97 veteran cases; when she started there were only 24 cases. There have been as many as 104, but the load is usually between 95 and 100.

Councilors asked about the trend in payments from prior years. Benefits in FY2018 are about \$50,000 higher than last year, in part because of more cases and in part because of higher medical and dental expenses. The benefit is a means based state program designed to supplement the veteran's personal budget.

Action: Be adopted (5-0)

118-18 ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-FIVE THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$175,000.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to BOARD OF HEALTH SANITARY LANDFILL EXPENSES, CONTRACTED SERVICES for the cost of disposal of recycling material now being invoiced to the city.

Discussion: Stephen Curry related that from the time the current disposal contract was signed in 1992 until January, 2017, the city had not been charged for disposal of recycling as was allowed by the contract. Waste Management is now charging the city, in part to make up for lost revenue from reduced trash volume caused when the barrel system was instituted and from an increase in recycling costs.

Councilors asked if the city should hold back on payment given the less than acceptable curbside service this past year. Mr. Curry explained that there are two contracts—one for curbside collection and the other for disposal and management of the landfill. The landfill contract was last negotiated in 2010 and runs until the landfill is closed.

Councilors asked to have their displeasure with curbside service be expressed to Waste Management. Mr. Curry said that that displeasure has already been expressed to Waste Management in earlier meetings. Councilors asked if there is anything in the contract allowing the city to charge penalties to Waste Management for poor service and were told it is already in the contract and will be expanded in a future contract. However, the burden for management of that oversight falls on the Board of Health. Some fault also lies with homeowners.

Mr. Curry reported that the current curbside contract expires June 30th, so the city is out to bid on a new contract. However, it will be very difficult to outbid Waste Management. The city has received a grant from DEP to start a campaign to keep plastic bags out of the recycling stream.

Some councilors questioned whether the matter should be held until there is an opportunity to meet with Waste Management or to perhaps even withhold payment due to current service issues. Other councilors responded that the city is contractually obligated to pay these costs and is currently in negotiations for a new contract. Councilors who wish to examine

the matter more closely can do so in the week between the Finance Committee meeting and the next City Council meeting.

Action: Be adopted (4-1) Councilor DiNatale in opposition.

119-18 ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of FOUR THOUSAND, THREE HUNDRED TWENTY AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$4,320.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, DEP COMPLIANCE for the purpose of DEP compliance at city owned property at 465 Westminster Street, formerly the site of the Central Steam Plant.

Discussion: Thomas Skwierawski said the fee being assessed to the city is the result of the Steam Plant site going in to DEP’s tiered system. As we work to get site compliance, the city needs to pay the DEP fees. The Brownfield fund was used to assist in the demolition and cleanup of the site, but there is still liquid leaching from the site. Booms are collecting the leaching liquid, so the river is not being further polluted. He is looking for \$500,000 in additional grant funds to remove soil and pave over the site.

Councilors asked about pursuing an insurance claim against the prior owner and were told that there could be a lot of litigation involved and that the prior owner may be bankrupt. Property taken by the city for taxes is exempt from these fees; however this property came to the city as a gift.

Action: Be adopted (5-0)

120-18 ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of TWENTY-SIX THOUSAND, SEVEN DOLLARS (\$26,007.00), same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to accounts as follows:

ASSESSOR – Personal Services	\$2,236.00
TREASURER – Personal Services	5,200.00
CITY CLERK – Personal Services	1,976.00
BUILDING – Personal Services	1,768.00
POLICE – Personal Services	3,328.00
FIRE – Personal Services	2,496.00
DPW – Personal Services	1,040.00
HEALTH – Personal Services	3,588.00
COUNCIL ON AGING – Personal Services	1,616.00
VETERANS – Personal Services	936.00
MAYOR – Personal Services	1,040.00
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS – Other Benefits	783.00

121-18 ORDER: that there be and hereby is transferred from within the Water Enterprise Fund, Personal Services Accounts the sum of EIGHT HUNDRED EIGHTY-FOUR DOLLARS (\$884.00), same to be credited to the Water Enterprise Fund, Personal Services Accounts.

Discussion: Orders 120-18 and 121-18 were taken together. Councilor DiNatale recused himself from this matter stating that a family member is being impacted. Councilor Kushmerek assumed the chair.

Susan Davis announced that the city has completed a successful negotiation with the AFSCME clerical union. This group serves as the backbone to many, if not all city departments, because of their involvement with daily operations and constituent interactions. The new contract eliminated longevity for new hires, took new hires out of civil service, added an educational incentive for those employees working on degrees, along with an educational waiver requiring a payback to the city if they should leave before two years. The vacation matrix was adjusted to match other contracts, a telephone usage policy was added, two senior positions were added to the matrix, two steps were dropped from the bottom of the matrix, and two steps were added to the top.

Councilors noted that the contract rewards one of the hardest working groups in the city, who often go unnoticed and offered their congratulations in reaching a settlement.

Action: Be adopted (4-0)

122-18 ORDER: that there be and hereby is appropriated the sum of NINETY-FIVE THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS (\$95,000.00) same to be charged against AVAILABLE FUNDS and credited to SCHOOL DEPARTMENT, CAPITAL IMPROVMENTS for the purpose of completing the audio-video upgrade to the Fitchburg High School Auditorium (\$20,000.00) and of replacing the vacuum pump at the Longsjö School (\$75,000.00).

Discussion: Councilor DiNatale resumed the chair.

Robert Jokela explained that this order represents the balance of \$20,000 for the FHS auditorium project (\$75,000 had been appropriated last year) and the cost of a new vacuum condenser pump for the Longsjö School. This pump is a critical part of the heating system and needs to be replaced before the next heating season.

Councilors expressed a willingness to fund projects that are critical, but do not want to fund extraneous projects, especially on a building the School Department may not be committed on for the long haul. The Longsjö School roof replacement is an example of a critical project the city is willing to do.

Action: Be adopted (5-0)

123-18 ORDER: that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the Unitil/Fitchburg Gas & Electric Light Co. gift in the approximate amount of \$250,000.00 (TWO HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of said gift, which is for reconstruction of various streets.

Discussion: Lenny Laakso said that last year Unitil replaced a lot of gas lines which required a lot of trenching. Rather than require a permanent trench patch, the city allows Unitil to make a payment toward repaving certain streets. The funds are earmarked for the streets they have trenched.

Action: Be adopted (5-0)

124-18 ORDER: that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the Cumberland Farms, Inc. gift in the approximate amount of \$16,000.00 (SIXTEEN THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of said gift, which is for pedestrian signals or any other sidewalk or roadway improvements necessary due to the traffic impact of the proposed Cumberland Farms facility at 479 Electric Avenue.

Discussion: Vincent Pusateri took this opportunity to thank Councilor Beauchemin for getting Cumberland Farms in to the mayor's office to identify certain signs and other improvements that were needed. This gift will insure that the work gets done.

Action: Be adopted (5-0)

125-18 ORDER: that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Transportation, Complete Streets grant in the approximate amount of \$219,100.00 (TWO HUNDRED NINETEEN THOUSAND, ONE HUNDRED AND 00/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of said grant, which is for street and sidewalk improvements in the Upper Common area.

Discussion: Thomas Skwierawski reported that this grant is for roadway improvements in the Upper Common. Some of the brick in the sidewalk is falling apart and ramps are difficult to use. Pedestrian signals are already in use as a result of an earlier grant.

Councilors asked if a later discussion about Main Street would have an impact on this grant. Mr. Skwierawski stated that the funds are to be used to make an area more walkable and more pedestrian friendly, so they have no bearing on any other arrangement of Main Street.

Action: Be adopted (5-0)

The meeting adjourned at 7:11 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Calvin D. Brooks, Clerk