

Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Information

Date: April 13, 2021

Time: 6:30 P.M.

Location: Council Chambers, 31 Wakefield Street and Remotely via Microsoft Teams

**Committee members present:** Mayor McCarley, Deputy Mayor Lauterborn, Councilor Walker, Councilor Gray, Councilor Bogan, and Councilor Hamann.

**City staff present:** City Manager Blaine Cox, Deputy City Manager Katie Ambrose, Deputy Finance Director Mark Sullivan. Chief Assessor Jonathan Rice. Deputy Fire Chief Tim Wilder. City Attorney Terence O'Rourke.

**Others present:** Ray Barnett, resident. Carol Granfield, MRI.

Agenda & Minutes

**1. Call to Order**

Mayor McCarley called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:30 PM and read the following preamble:

Good Evening, as Chairperson of the Finance Committee, I am declaring that an emergency exists and I am invoking the provisions of RSA 91-A:2, III (b). I also find that this meeting is imperative to the continued operation of City government and services, which are vital to public safety and confidence during this emergency. As such, this meeting will be conducted without a quorum of this body physically present in the same location.

At this time, I also welcome members of the public accessing this meeting remotely. The public can call-in to phone number: 857-444-0744 using conference code: 843095.

This meeting will be set to allow the public to "listen-in" only, and there will be no public comment taken via conference line during the meeting.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote.

Let's start the meeting by taking a Roll Call attendance. When each member states their name and ward, also please state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law.

Deputy City Clerk Cassie Givara took the roll call. The following Councilors were present in Council Chambers: Councilor Bogan, Council Gray, Councilor Hamann, Councilor Lauterborn, Councilor Walker, and Mayor McCarley.

**2. Acceptance of Minutes**

Councilor Gray **MOVED** to **ACCEPT** the minutes of the March 9<sup>th</sup> Finance Committee meeting. Councilor Bogan seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous roll call vote with Councilors Hamann, Bogan, Walker, Gray, Lauterborn and Mayor McCarley all voting in favor.

**3. Public Input**

Ray Barnett, resident, addressed the committee in regards to city staff salaries and merit pay increases. Mr. Barnett also requested that the elderly exemption be placed on the May Finance Committee update for an update.

**4. Unfinished Business-None**

No discussion.

**5. New Business**

**5.1.1 Assessing Vision 8 Software Conversion Update**

Chief Assessor Jonathan Rice gave a brief summary of the ongoing software conversion. He stated that they had started the process 10 months ago, converting from Patriot to Vision 8. The first stage of the conversion process went smoothly with the transition of data to one software to the other. Ms. Rice reported that in the final stages they have run into some issues with data not transferring over as well as they had hoped. He stated that they have tried over the course of the past several months to go live with the software both internally and to the public, but they have not wanted to share inaccurate values and cause confusion and further issues. Mr. Rice said that staff is working on cleaning up this data and in preparation for the first issue tax bills, new data is being collected; with this taken into consideration, he says they should have values and a product ready to be shared both internally and publically by the end of the month.

Councilor Walker asked for clarifications on the issues assessing had encountered with the software conversion. Mr. Rice said that the depreciation for out buildings in the new software doesn't work the same way as it did in Patriot. The department has had to manually adjust these values to make sure they are in line with the previous values. He reported that they have added a conversion factor in order to manually adjust these values to better reflect what had been in the prior software. Mr. Rice also mentioned several tables which have not transferred into Vision 8 or don't operate the same way in the new system. Conversion factors have been added to these

as well to standardize the numbers.

Councilor Walker asked if the sketches came over to the new software adequately. Mr. Rice said that the sketches came over clean; however he did reference a conversion factor which had to be added to account for unfinished area which had not been reflected in the prior software, but is contained within Vision 8.

### **5.1.2 Fire Department Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV) Purchase Request.**

Deputy Chief Tim Wilder addressed the committee regarding the reasoning behind this request. He gave a summary of the types of rescue situations which the Rochester Fire Department encounters. He said that this particular piece of equipment would give the department an opportunity to move people from hard to access locations. Deputy Chief Wilder reported an increase in outdoor activities resulting in injuries further into the woods, on trails, and away from roadways. He said a UTV would be beneficial in these situations. He showed the committee an example of the type of vehicle the department is proposing.

Deputy Chief Wilder addressed the Committee in regards to the perception that when equipment such as this UTV or the swift water rescue boats are purchased, they are used more for mutual aid in other communities than they are used in Rochester. He stated that this has not been the case; In fact, in the past several years when the department has responded to a technical rescue situation or injury incurred from snow-related activity, Rochester has called in the Milton Fire Department for use of their UTV. This has happened 9 times in the past 3 years. He spoke about Rochester becoming dependent on other municipalities for use of resources which Rochester doesn't have in-house. Deputy Chief Wilder also reported that calling on mutual aid from Milton increases response times due to the wait time in getting the UTV from one community to another.

Councilor Hamann asked if any equipment comes standard on the UTV. Deputy Chief Wilder stated that the equipment does not come standard and would be separate purchases over the next year or so, which would be handled under the "other equipment" line item in their budget. There was a discussion regarding the uses for the vehicle and where it would be stored. Deputy Chief Wilder said that the Fire Department has a technical rescue trailer in which this UTV would be stored, ready for immediate deployment as needed. Councilor Walker inquired about the potential that this UTV would be used primarily for mutual aid. Deputy Chief Wilder stated that multiple neighboring communities already have similar equipment and Rochester is currently the community reliant on these others.

Councilor Gray inquired if the Rochester Fire Department would consider meeting with neighboring fire departments to compile a list of equipment needed for each municipality and develop a mutual purchase agreement. He suggested that there needed to be a county-wide emergency plan which would benefit all the communities to avoid certain communities spending large amounts on items which will primarily be used for mutual aid.

Mayor McCarley clarified that the cost of this UTV would be coming from surplus funds from prior years' fire budget and asked the total cost for the vehicle. Deputy Finance Director Mark Sullivan stated that the cost is \$14,527. He clarified that the funding is coming from two previously approved capital improvements projects for technical rescue.

Councilor Gray **MOVED** to recommend to full council the approval of the unexpended CIP funds for the purchase of the UTV. Councilor Bogan seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a 4-2 roll call vote with Councilors Lauterborn, Gray, Hamann, and Bogan voting in favor and Councilor Walker and Mayor McCarley voting opposed.

### **5.1.3 Granite Ridge Development District-Phase II Developers Agreement**

Attorney O'Rourke reminded the Committee that Phase II of the Granite Ridge development was going to be the "entertainment" portion with a movie theater, family entertainment center, restaurants, etc. Due to COVID setbacks with these industries, a new financial schedule was proposed which would separate Phase II into two separate phases; 2A and 2B. Phase 2A will remain the planned infrastructure improvements. He said that Waterstone is still committed to Phase 2B, although they are not able to commit to a particular timeline. Attorney O'Rourke said this phasing will not increase the city's financial obligation and given the timeline, the City may be able to cash fund the infrastructure improvements as opposed to bonding. He stated that the huge majority of the agreement remains the same as when it was originally approved; the changes only involve splitting the second phase into two more financially manageable pieces.

Councilor Lauterborn **MOVED** to recommend to full Council that they approve changes to the Granite Ridge developer's agreement. Councilor Walker seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous roll call vote with Councilors Bogan, Gray, Hamann, Lauterborn, Walker, and Mayor McCarley all voting in favor.

### **5.1.4 Non-Union: Salary Study by Municipal Resources Inc. (MRI), Classification & Compensation Plan.**

Finance Director Ambrose introduced Carol Granfield, MRI. Ms. Granfield gave a summary of the salary market review which they conducted of 27 non-union positions. She stated that the last time these positions had been reviewed was in 2014. The updated report was initiated in September of 2020 and submitted to the City in January 2021. She stated that the market data report contains data from six comparable communities. Although Dover and Somersworth were included in the original data, they were not included in the final analysis due to Somersworth being smaller and having a different form of government, and Dover's data was not available due to their analysis also being underway at the time. The Communities which were used in the analysis were the same as were used in 2014 and are also the same communities

utilized in data for union negotiations.

Ms. Granfield explained how the pay plan was developed. She said that the City was looking to use a step system as opposed to an open range. She stated that the proposed step system provides more continuity and consistency with the pay plan currently used for union positions. She reported that based on the data in the executive summary, the cost projected was \$62,690, which includes placing eligible employees on a step where they would receive at least 1% increase for implementation. It also includes recommendations for reclassification of 15 positions. Ms. Granfield said that since the report was submitted in January, the City has continued to review and make adjustments, such as excluding the police positions.

Councilor Lauterborn said she did not agree with the communities that the report chose to compare to Rochester and the exclusion of Dover, Rochester's nearest and most comparable neighbor. She also referenced the 15 positions suggested for reclassification and how they have all been recommended for a higher grade with not even one being recommended for a lower level. Ms. Granfield stated that when the data from Dover was originally included, it did not affect the outcome of the final report or recommendations. Ms. Granfield said that in the past, they have recommended a lower pay grade for reclassified positions if the analysis supported that adjustment; however, the salary data did not support this recommendation for any of these positions.

Diane Hoyt, Director of HR, said that the initial study had included 9 police positions, but following discussions with the police commission, they decided to remain with the 0%-4% merit, so the police staff is not included in the data supplied. The final total after removing the police personnel and adding track advancement, is \$78,827 which is a 4.21% overall increase. She stated that the merit adjustment would reduce this percentage. Ms. Hoyt referenced several positions listed in the data which have been crossed out due to the positions not being funded for many years.

Councilor Walker asked if any of the reclassifications are union positions. Ms. Hoyt clarified that all the positions in the data are non-union.

Councilor Walker **MOVED** to recommend to full council to approve the MRI classifications and compensation plan. Councilor Hamann seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous roll call vote with Councilors Hamann, Bogan, Walker, Gray, Lauterborn, and Mayor McCarley all voting in favor.

## Reports from Finance & Administration

### **52** Monthly Financial Report Summaries March 31, 2021,

#### **5.2.1** (a) March 31, 2021 Revenues

#### 5.2.1 (b) March 31, 2021 Expenses

Mark Sullivan, Deputy Finance Director, reported that revenues continue to be strong in most areas. Overall expenses are trending to budget. Areas of concerns are police and fire overtime, but even with those increases, the City is still at the same percentage of General Fund as this time last year.

Mayor McCarley inquired about the Welfare Assistance line and why it continues to be underspent year after year. She asked if this was due in large part to the CARES funds and COVID assistance which has been coming from the State. Mr. Sullivan stated that it is his understanding that it is the CARES fund money, additional unemployment funding, as well as the delays in landlords executing eviction notices. City Manager Cox said that this is the case throughout the State of NH, not just the City of Rochester.

**6. Other**

No Discussion.

**7. Adjournment**

Councilor Walker **MOVED** to **ADJOURN** the Finance Committee meeting at 7:24 PM. Councilor Bogan seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous roll call vote with Councilors Gray, Walker, Lauterborn, Hamann, Bogan, and Mayor McCarley all voting in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara  
Deputy City Clerk