

Finance Committee

Meeting Minutes

Meeting Information

Date: September 14, 2021

Time: 6:30 P.M.

Location: Council Chambers, 31 Wakefield Street

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

City staff present: Finance Director Katie Ambrose, Deputy Finance Director Mark Sullivan. Paul Toussaint, Rochester Police Chief. Chris Bowlen, Director of Recreation and Arena. Kim Conley, Director of Human Resources. Peter Nourse, Director of City Services.

Agenda & Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Lauterborn called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 6:30 PM. Deputy City Clerk Cassie Givara took a silent roll call. All Councilors were present except for Councilor Jean, who was excused.

2. Acceptance of Minutes- July 13, 2021

Councilor Walker **MOVED** to **ACCEPT** the minutes of the July 13, 2021 Finance Committee meeting. Councilor Lachapelle seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous voice vote.

3. Public Input

No discussion.

4. Unfinished Business-

4.1.1 Fire Department Living Quarters- Withdrawn, resubmitting in FY23 CIP.

Mayor Lauterborn stated that the Fire Department Living Quarters item is on the agenda for informational purposes only and has been withdrawn. This project will be resubmitted in the FY23 CIP.

New Business-

- Public Works-Construction Inspector-PAB Recommendation

Finance Director Katie Ambrose stated that the Public Works Construction Inspector position had gone to the Personnel Advisory Board for discussion. The PAB recommended approval of the new position at a pay grade 9. Councilor Walker **MOVED** to recommend to full Council the Personnel Advisory Board's recommendation for the Public Works Construction Inspector position. Councilor Hamann seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous voice vote.

- **American Rescue Plan Act-Draft Project Proposals**

Finance Director Katie Ambrose gave an overview of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). She stated that the City of Rochester was allocated \$6,147,502.00 of State and Local fiscal recovery funds, of which half has been received with the other half being received in spring of 2022. Funds cover eligible costs which are listed on the Business/Finance page on the City of Rochester website. The funds are available from March 2, 2021 to December 31, 2024. These funds must be obligated by December 31, 2024 and expended by December 31, 2026. Finance Director Ambrose reported that the City Manager had reviewed project proposals from City staff and had made recommendations on which projects to approve. She recommended that the Finance Committee review the projects as listed and make additional suggestions if needed.

Mayor Lauterborn clarified that the process did not need to be rushed given the timeline. She suggested that instead of waiting until there were projects equaling the total allocation, the Committee could make recommendations on individual proposals upon their review.

Councilor Lachapelle **MOVED** to recommend to full council to accept the total funds from the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. Council Walker seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous voice vote.

City Manager Blaine Cox gave a brief overview of the ARPA proposal document and explained the format and summary showing which projects he had included in his recommendations. He suggested briefly going over each proposal to help generate questions and discussion, starting with the three proposals he had recommended including. The first of the three proposals is the "Sheltering Homeless Initiative". City Manager Cox reminded the committee that the Tri-City Mayors had formed a task force to address shelter for the homeless; one specific project is the Willand Warming Center located in Somersworth. Funding is only available for the upcoming winter season for this project without plans for future fiscal years. There has been talk about a seasonal shelter within the three communities and although there is no specific detail for how this money would be allocated to assist with the homeless, he recommended designating \$1,000,000.00 for this proposal.

Councilor Walker requested more specific proposals on where the \$1,000,000.00 for the "sheltering homeless" instead of a general allocation. City Manager Cox stated that the Tri-City

Mayors would likely meet and give the three City Managers direction on how this money could be best allocated.

City Manager Cox gave a brief overview of his second proposal for the “Community Health Coordinator” position. He explained that although this position would be out of the Welfare department, its primary function would be in assisting the Police Department. He recommended allocating \$916,000 for this position over a 5-year span. The purpose of this position would be to respond to calls through the Police Department for issues involving mental health crises and substance misuse, which ideally should be referred to a social work resource. Councilor Walker stated that he does not support using the ARPA money to find positions due to the State money only funding the salary for 5-years at which the point the City would either need to eliminate the position or budget for the position going forward. Chief Toussaint emphasized the importance of this position and spoke about the constant strain the police department is under from calls regarding the homeless population, substance misuse and mental health issues. He clarified that the police do the best they are able in these situations, but they are not the best equipped, nor do they have adequate time to be handling these circumstances. Chief Toussaint said the prevalence of these calls are a drain on police resources and that funding the proposed position would be beneficial long term in helping the residents the department deals with regularly.

There was a discussion on how the position would be structured, with administrative support and resources, and how the position would function following police calls. It was determined that the need was great enough that multiple staff members in this area would be beneficial, but approving this single position would be a good way to start. City Manager Cox stated he could get the committee additional information based on other municipalities who have enacted similar programs. Chief Toussaint acknowledged that this City would need to budget for the position once the ARPA money runs out, but said there was a large amount of hidden costs that would be saved in having these calls handled in a more effective manner.

Councilor Bogan **MOVED** to send the proposal for a Community Health Coordinator position to full council at the October workshop. Councilor Hamann seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous voice vote.

City Manager Cox gave a brief overview of his third proposal for an Employer Assisted Childcare Co-op. He recommended allocating \$1,400,000.00 for this proposal. Mr. Cox stated that there is currently a childcare shortage within the community, and as a result, he did not see that this program would be competing with childcare providers within the private sector. He commented that there would be a feasibility study done to determine the demand for this type of program for City employees. Mr. Cox stated that ideally, we would provide the space and contract with a provider from the private sector to run the childcare center. Mayor Lauterborn commented that she supported this proposal and spoke about how funding could work moving forward to avoid the program being a taxpayer expense. Mr. Cox also added that if all childcare spots were not filled by employees, than it would open up to the public.

Finance Director Katie Ambrose gave a brief overview of the Human Resource Finance Department Position Premium Pay proposal, which would provide stipends in the amount of \$1,000.00 (plus taxes) to City Employees that were deemed essential workers and whose physical

wellbeing were at risk during the COVID-19 emergency.

Commissioner Peter Nourse gave a brief overview of the Water Fund proposal which would provide services to treat and place an epoxy lining on the water transmission line originating from the Water Treatment Plant on the West side of the city connecting to Washington Street. Mr. Nourse stated that this pipe is approximately 12,000 feet long and was installed around 1890; about 50 years prior to the City starting the chlorination of water. He explained the process in which a shuttle goes through the pipe and grinds down the corroded areas; another shuttle sprays inert epoxy on the inside of the pipe, essentially producing a new pipe. The proposal request is for \$2,000,000.00 dollars to complete the treatment on this 12,000 feet of pipe. The previously approved CIP for this project had been \$400,000.00, which would need be deauthorized if this proposal is approved. Councilor Lachapelle questioned how long the newly treated pipe would last. Commissioner Nourse stated he would find out the exact answer, but speculated it would likely be for 100 years, plus.

Chris Bowlen, Director of Recreation and Arena, gave a brief overview of the proposal to replenish the Arena Fund in an amount of \$129,815.00 to help the Arena Department recover loss of revenue experienced over the last year due to COVID-19. Mayor Lauterborn recommended that the Committee make a decision to send this proposal to full Council. She stated that this approval is important due to the Arena fund currently having a negative balance. Councilor Lachapelle **MOVED** to recommend the proposal to replenish the Arena Fund to full Council. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous voice vote.

Reports from Finance & Administration

5.2.1 Monthly Financial Report Summary-August 31, 2021, Pg. 15

5. Other

Finance Director Katie Ambrose introduced the City of Rochester's new Director of Human Resource, Kim Conley.

6. Adjournment

Mayor Lauterborn **ADJOURNED** the Finance Committee meeting at 7:17 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ashley Greene
Administrative Technician II
&
Cassie Givara
Deputy City Clerk