



Lowell City Council

Regular Meeting Minutes

Michael Q. Geary
City Clerk

Date: June 8, 2021

Time: 6:30 PM

Location: City Council Chamber, 375 Merrimack Street, 2nd Floor, Lowell, MA

1. ROLL CALL

Roll Call showed 9 present.

M. Leahy presiding.

2. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

2.1. Accept - Communication From City Auditor.

In City Council, **Motion** "To accept and place on file" by C. Conway, seconded by C. Drinkwater. So voted.

3. CITY CLERK

3.1. Minutes Of Economic/Downtown Development SC May 25th; Housing SC Joint With Zoning SC May 25th; City Council Regular Meeting May 25th; Election Laws/Redistricting SC June 2nd, For Acceptance.

In City Council, minutes read, **Motion** "To accept and place on file" by C. Samaras, seconded by C. Rourke. So voted.

Motion by C. Rourke, seconded by C. Nuon to take Item #10.5 out of order. So voted.

4. GENERAL PUBLIC HEARINGS

4.1. Vote - FY22 Appropriation Order.

In City Council, Given 2nd Reading, hearing held. No Remonstrants. **Motion** to adopt the FY 2022 City of Lowell budget in the amount of \$414,618,254, by C. Mercier, seconded by C. Elliott. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted. C. Mercier questioned if all department heads were present to respond to any inquiries. C. Mercier commented that she was pleased with budget and that in the future it should be given a stand-alone meeting. C. Mercier questioned the ability of the City to repair roads and berms. Manager Donoghue noted that end of fiscal years the accounts are depleted due the increase in the materials needed to repair same. Manager Donoghue noted that the Council can set budget hearing in any fashion they choose. C. Elliott noted public hearing is set for today and they should move forward. C. Elliott commented on the fixed costs associated with the budget which include debt service;



charter school assessment; unemployment costs; pension amounts; and Medicare tax. Conor Baldwin (CFO) commented on the formula to stagger the debt service and the formula to estimate the Medicare tax amount. C. Elliott commented on the amount budgeted for claims and judgements and the fluctuation from year to year. City Solicitor O'Connor noted there is a lot of flexibility noting the amount is manageable for a City this size. C. Elliott noted the education element portion of budget ensures that the City has met and exceeded the Net Spending requirement. C. Elliott noted the Covid recovery money would be useful to make up for budget shortfalls due to the pandemic. C. Elliott noted a problem area in the budget is recycling costs. Manager Donoghue noted that it remains a serious issue and that more aggressive solutions will be used to ensure compliance so that City is not paying the additional costs under the contract. C. Elliott supported the use of the surplus cash in the budget. C. Samaras noted the public trust regarding this administration. C. Samaras commented on the levy increase surrounding the Lowell High School project. Mr. Baldwin outlined constraints with Proposition 2 ½ as well as the effect that it has on the tax levy in the City. C. Samaras noted the budget maintained level of service by the City. C. Samaras noted that you will never catch up with charter school assessments unless changes are made at the State level. Manager Donoghue noted that they are constantly searching for means to reduce that amount. **Motion** by C. Samaras, seconded by C. Elliott to have City Manager and Mayor explore possible coalitions with other like communities to reduce that charter school assessment levied by State. So voted. C. Samaras noted the inclusion of equity and diversity built into the budget. C. Rourke requested explanation of level funding formula. Mr. Baldwin outlined process of setting budget parameters. Manager Donoghue noted the avoidance of cuts and the addition of new positions with cost benefits. C. Rourke noted the addition of safety personnel in the budget. Manager Donoghue noted there were a substantial number coming on board that are funded by this budget. C. Rourke commented on the projected cost of the Lowell High School project and questioned adjustments being made due to vast increase of cost of materials. Manager Donoghue noted that hired consultants on the project are addressing the matter. C. Drinkwater commented on charter school assessment increasing for each seat added to the school, noting that it cannot be sustained by the City and that corrective action must be taken at State level. C. Drinkwater noted that the Student Opportunity Act is increasing that re-imbursment from the State and is a positive step forward. C. Drinkwater noted it was a fair budget noting responsible investments ie, new positions of grant writer and cyber expert. C. Nuon noted confidence in the administration with the budget and that new positions will pay for themselves. C. Nuon recognized the equity positions in the budget and that federal relief money could be formulated to reduce property taxes and assists with enterprise funds loss of revenue. Mr. Baldwin reviewed proposed approach to assist enterprise funds and to reduce taxes by replacing loss revenues. C. Conway noted proper budget that was crafted during a difficult time. C. Conway questioned amount of police officers from the academy who will be joining the force. Manager Donoghue commented on the budget noting safety personnel has increased as well as grants used for repair of schools and purchase of fire equipment. Manager Donoghue noted positive fiscal approach with budget which will ensure high bond rating for the City. Manager Donoghue noted the challenges faced with recycling costs. C. Chau noted the proper construction of the budget and questioned the moving of the police precinct from lower



Highlands. Manager Donoghue noted the move was needed due to renovations of the premises and that the police will still have a heavy presence in that area including establishing a PAL in that neighborhood. M. Leahy commented on the recycling costs and noted that possible revenue could be derived from illegally parked cars in the City. C. Elliott commented on new cyber position and the need. Manager Donoghue noted the position and commented on continued issues with hiring Transportation Engineer. C. Elliott commented on proposed Capital Plan with five year forecast. Mr. Baldwin commented on the assumptions made in formulating the plan.

4.2. Vote - Endorse 5 Year Capital Plan.

In City Council, Given 2nd Reading, hearing held. No Remonstrants. **Motion** to adopt by C. Drinkwater, seconded by C. Rourke. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted. C. Drinkwater commented on the amount and the need for the plan indicating the needs for road and sidewalk repairs. C. Drinkwater noted there must be investments made in the City and as costs increase investments increase. C. Elliott commented on the projects noting there were a lot of priorities that are being dealt with properly. C. Rourke commented on the preference lists for firehouses. Manager Donoghue explained how the list is formulated and altered. C. Elliott commented on work for lighting in Clemente Field and renovations at Lowell Police Department.

4.3. Loan Order - Capital Plan Loan Order FY22.

In City Council, Given 2nd Reading, hearing held. No Remonstrants. **Motion** to adopt and refer to Clerk's Office for 20 days by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Drinkwater. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted.

4.4. Ordinance- Create Cyber Security Administrator Position In MIS Position And Salary.

In City Council, Given 2nd Reading, hearing held. No Remonstrants. **Motion** to adopt by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Nuon. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted.

4.5. Ordinance- Create Grant Writer Position In Fire And Establish Salary.

In City Council, Given 2nd Reading, hearing held. No Remonstrants. **Motion** to adopt by C. Nuon, seconded by C. Rourke. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted.

4.6. Ordinance- Create Utility Engineer Position In Water And Establish Salary.

In City Council, Given 2nd Reading, hearing held. No Remonstrants. **Motion** to adopt by C. Chau, seconded by C. Drinkwater. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted.

5. UTILITY PUBLIC HEARING

5.1. Comcast - Request Installation Of Communications Conduit To Provide Service From 138 To 160 Middlesex Street.



In City Council, Given 2nd Reading. Hearing held. No Remonstrants. **Motion** to refer to Wire Inspector for report and recommendation by C. Mercier, seconded by C. Samaras. So voted.

6. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY MANAGER

6.1. Motion Responses.

In City Council, **Motion** "To accept and place on file" by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Drinkwater. So voted.

A) Motion Response - Parks Trash Disposal – C. Chau noted the increase of trash in the parks due to pandemic and requested more barrels be placed there to reduce the trash. C. Nuon noted the need for more barrels in the parks and in the business districts. C. Mercier recognized the DPW for the clean-up of the South Common.

B) Motion Response - Pollywog Pond – C. Conway noted the effort of the DPW in that area and that the action taken will help preserve that area.

C) Motion Response - Yard Waste Pickup – C. Conway recognized the budget constraints with added pick-up but noted that it should be worked into next budget as it is a valuable service. Manager Donoghue noted that current schedule is not being adhered to by the vendor. Christine Clancy (DPW) commented on addressing yard waste and that the City assisted the vendor in catching up with collection but long term solutions are needed.

D) Motion Response - Maple Street Issues – C. Mercier noted the resolution and has not heard further complaints and that oversight should be in place.

E) Motion Response - Keenan Square Relocation – C. Mercier noted the support of the Monument Committee to move marker and that there would be a rededication of the monument.

F) Motion Response - American Rescue Plan Funds – C. Chau noted guidelines were developed and this extensive report will assist in understanding how the money can be used to possibly lower taxes. C. Chau noted that the report will be sent to Non-Profit Organizations SC for further discussion. C. Samaras noted it was a complete report with many rules and regulations and that information should be available on the website. Manager Donoghue noted there were many details involving the use of the money. C. Elliott noted that this report was referred to Finance SC as well for further discussion. Mr. Baldwin noted priority would be for tax relief and revenue relief for the various enterprise funds. C. Samaras questioned if use could be broadband improvements. C. Nuon noted guidelines include equity and diversity distribution and that there is community input.

G) Motion Response - Juneteenth Holiday – Manager Donoghue noted temporary recognition as there are union negotiations to be addressed. C. Elliott agreed with the recognition and noted Council vote was not required. Manager Donoghue noted that



she had such authority on temporary basis. M. Leahy announced flag raising ceremony with it and he would supply further information.

H) Motion Response - 51A Reports in Greater Lowell Area – C. Elliott commented on reports and that attention was needed. C. Chau noted drilling down the numbers indicated not as bad as it appeared. C. Nuon commented on original report indicating that story did not give complete picture and that statistics were better understood when reviewed.

6.2. Communication - Resignation Of Mary Katherine Lapinski.

In City Council, **Motion** “To accept and place on file” by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Conway. So voted.

Motion to bundle and waive full reading of Items #7.1 to #7.4, inclusive by C. Mercier, seconded by C. Nuon. So voted.

7. VOTES FROM THE CITY MANAGER

7.1. Vote- Auth City Manager Exec Maintenance Agr – MassDOT.

In City Council, Read twice, full reading waived with no objections. **Motion** to adopt by C. Rourke, seconded by C. Mercier. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted.

7.2. Vote- Auth City Manager Exec Temp License Agr - Swamp Locks.

In City Council, Read twice, full reading waived with no objections. **Motion** to adopt by C. Rourke, seconded by C. Mercier. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted.

7.3. Vote-Apply.Accept.Expend MassWorks Grant \$1150000.00.

In City Council, Read twice, full reading waived with no objections. **Motion** to adopt by C. Rourke, seconded by C. Mercier. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted.

7.4. Vote-Auth City Manager Exec License Agreement - Signature Bridge.

In City Council, Read twice, full reading waived with no objections. **Motion** to adopt by C. Rourke, seconded by C. Mercier. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted.

8. REPORTS (SUB/COMMITTEE, IF ANY)

8.1. Election Laws/Redistricting SC June 8, 2021.

In City Council, C. Rourke provided report noting the attendance and discussion regarding election rules and regulations under the new hybrid electoral system with district and at large representation. **Motion** to accept the report as report of progress and adopt motions by C. Mercier, seconded by C. Elliott. So voted.



Motion to suspend rules to allow report of the Finance SC held June 8, 2021 by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Rourke. So voted.

In City Council, C. Elliott provided report regarding Finance SC on June 8, 2021 noting the discussion of the vote to approve and submit FY 2021-2022 City of Lowell Action Plan. C. Elliott stated that subcommittee recommends approving the Lowell Action Plan to the full body. **Motion** to accept the report as report of progress and adopt motions by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Chau. So voted.

Motion to suspend rules to allow Vote – Authorizing approval and submission of the Federal Fiscal Year 2021-2022 City of Lowell Annual Action Plan to HUD by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Rourke. So voted.

Vote-Authorize Manager Execute Annual Action Plan FY21-22.

In City Council, Given 2nd Reading, full reading waived with no objections. **Motion** to adopt by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Drinkwater. Adopted per Roll Call vote 9 yeas. So voted. C. Conway questioned how non-profits become involved with the process. Manager Donoghue noted that applications for grants are available for all entities and outlined the process which is not automatic. Christine McCall (DPD) commented on the public process in approving grant applications. Mr. Baldwin noted that each non-profit has federal filing requirements.

8.2. Wire Insp. - National Grid/Verizon NE - Request Relocation Of (1) JO Pole At 61-69 Rock Street.

In City Council, **Motion** to adopt and accept the accompanying order by C. Drinkwater, seconded by C. Conway. So voted.

9. PETITIONS

9.1. Claim - (1) Property Damage.

In City Council, **Motion** to refer to Law Department for report and recommendation by C. Rourke, seconded by C. Nuon. So voted.

9.2. National Grid - Request Installation Of New Handhole And (2) Four Inch Conduits Connecting To It At 197 Appleton Street.

In City Council, Given 1st Reading, **Motion** to refer to public hearing on June 22, 2021 at 7PM by C. Samaras, seconded by C. Mercier. So voted.

9.3. University Of Massachusetts Lowell (UML) - Request Installation Of Electric Conduit At Sarah Avenue Under Riverside Street For New Source Feeder For UML North Campus.

In City Council, Given 1st Reading, **Motion** to refer to public hearing on June 22, 2021 at 7PM by C. Chau, seconded by C. Nuon. So voted.



10. CITY COUNCIL - MOTIONS

10.1. C. Conway - Req. City Mgr. Meet With The Appropriate Department To Provide A Report Regarding Tree And Stump Removal; Also Include Tree Maintenance And Provide The Cost Of Each Procedure.

In City Council, seconded by C. Elliott, referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Conway noted the need for information on the process and information on cost savings that may be present. M. Leahy commented on trees recently planted on Luce Street.

10.2. C. Rourke - Req. City Mgr. Look Into Eligible Projects Under The Massachusetts Parkland Acquisitions And Renovations Communities (PARC) And The Local Acquisitions For Natural Diversity (LAND) Grants.

In City Council, seconded by C. Nuon, referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Rourke noted the grants are similar and exist for conservation and recreation purposes. C. Rourke noted city such as Lowell fits the eligibility requirements for the grants.

10.3. C. Rourke - Req. City Mgr. Contact State Officials Regarding The Re-Opening Of The Registry Of Motor Vehicles In Lowell.

In City Council, seconded by C. Nuon, referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Rourke noted many complaints regarding access especially since the Lawrence facility is open. Manager Donoghue noted the Rep. Golden has made inquiry into the status. C. Samaras commented on the number of complaints and stated that on-line is not sufficient.

10.4. C. Rourke/C. Samaras - Req. City Mgr. Look Into The Options For Repaving Parking Lot At Cawley Stadium.

In City Council, no second needed, referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Samaras noted lot is in bad condition for parents and students and needs attention. Manager Donoghue noted future projects in that area which may complicate access. C. Rourke noted that PARC grant may fit this situation. C. Mercier commented on infrastructure plan on Douglas Road.

10.5. C. Rourke/C. Samaras - Req. City Council Name The Girls And Boys Locker Rooms At Cawley Memorial Stadium After John Blake Galvin, Jr. Following The Renovation.

In City Council, no second needed, referred to City Manager. So voted. Registered speakers, Michael Kuenzler and Matt LeLacheur, addressed the body and presented check to the City of Lowell in the amount of one-hundred thousand dollars. C. Rourke commented on the effort of the City and private foundation to enhance the property. C. Samaras commented on Mr. Galvin and his contribution to the City; especially the children. C. Chau recognized the agency that raised the funds. Manager Donoghue noted the efforts of the non-profit work with the City to renovate locker rooms which



were in deplorable condition. C. Conway commented on the motion and the positive results. C. Elliott noted it was a fitting tribute noting commitment to community.

10.6. C. Drinkwater - Req. City Mgr. Provide An Update On The MA Department Of Public Health's Targeted Outreach Initiative For COVID Vaccine Equity And Awareness In Lowell.

In City Council, seconded by C. Chau, referred to City Manager. So voted. C. Drinkwater commented on outreach to those who may need it the most and noted the update was helpful.

10.7. M. Leahy - Req. Economic/Downtown Development SC Meet In Cooperation With DPD And The Mayor's Office To Hold A Meeting With Downtown Businesses To Discuss The Rapid Relief Plan; Ensure DPD Send Invites To Downtown Businesses.

In City Council, seconded by C. Elliott referred to Economic/Downtown Development SC. So voted. M. Leahy noted meeting would provide opportunity for community input. C. Elliott requested Mayor provide dates and possible location.

11. ANNOUNCEMENTS

In City Council, Manager Donoghue noted meeting for feedback regarding Clay Pit Brook. Manager Donoghue recognized department heads and employees regarding preparation and approval of recent budget. **Motion** to suspend rules to discuss selection of City Auditor by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Rourke. So voted. M. Leahy commented on the process. C. Elliott noted the need for totally different approach as there has not been success in recent past. **Motion** by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Rourke to engage recruiter to assist with hiring process for the City Auditor. So voted. C. Rourke recommended C. Elliott be involved in that process as chair of the Finance SC. C. Nuon noted need to hire Transportation Engineer and City Assessor. Manager Donoghue noted that they would work through Mayor's Office on the matter. M. Leahy noted that the vaccination site on the boulevard will be closing and that they will be having a gathering to note the success. M. Leahy noted efforts of fire department during past months in dealing with several fires the City.

12. ADJOURNMENT

In City Council, **Motion** to Adjourn by C. Elliott, seconded by C. Drinkwater. So voted.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50 PM.

Michael Q. Geary, City Clerk