**CAN Notes on Special Meeting of the City Council**

**January 31, 2022**

The following is the **unofficial minutes** of the Special Council meeting held on January, 31, 2022.

The meeting started at 5:00 with two items on the agenda – first, a discussion of the American Rescue Plan Allocation (ARPA) and second, the Form of Government. The Acting City Manager then added two more items – a request from the School Board to fund metal detectors and a bonus for the Police Department.

The Acting City Manager, David Deutsch, had prepared a memo for the discussion of the ARPA funds which stated that the City had received $6,039,640 from the Federal government to help with Covid relief. Of that amount, $1,563,939 has already been allocated by the Council to fund a new aerial tower fire truck. He also recommended that 10% of the remaining balance to be set aside to fund requests from the City’s non-profits. He also noted that the City would receive another $6million from the same federal fund this summer.

The Acting City Manager also pushed for funding of an ambulance for the fire department at a cost of $1.3 million. He noted that if the Council did not approve this funding last night, the cost will increase about $108,000.

The Council discussion revolved around three items:

First, The Council, led by Brian Roche, did not want to make piecemeal decisions on how to allocate the funds. The Council agreed that it was more important to get all the requests than to do it ad hoc. With that discussion in mind, they asked the Acting City Manager to prioritize the City Department’s needs and come back to them with a list of needs. They turned down the request to fund the ambulance last night but noted it was a high priority.

Second, There was a long discussion on how to handle the allocation to the non-profits. There was a discussion on the Acting City Manager’s request to set aside $450,000 for non-profits and this could be increased when the City receives the second allocation this summer. After discussion, Chad Malkus made the motion to increase the amount to $500,000 which was agreed to by all the Commissioners.

There was also a suggestion by Brian Roche to form a citizens committee to review and make recommendations to the Council on which non-profits to fund and how much each would receive. After discussion, it was agreed that each Commissioner would pick a Cambridge citizen to be on the committee (but not necessarily in their Ward) to represent them.

The final action on this area of non-profits was a discussion on what the form for submission from the non-profits would look like. After several suggestions as to what should be on the form, Commissioner Malkus suggested that a sub-group of Commissioners – Roche and L. Cephas work with the Acting City Manager to come up with a form. That suggestion was approved.

The Council then moved on to the Dorchester School Board request for the City to fund metal detectors for the Schools. I was temporarily distracted so I am not sure as to the amount of funds requested or whether the request included both high schools and/or elementary schools. The Council had questions about the request and voted to postpone any action on the request until more details are known.

The Council then took up the request from the Acting City Manager to give $400,000 in cash bonuses to the Cambridge Police Department. It was noted by Chief Lewis that his Department was losing officers to other cities that paid them more and that something needed to be done now to stop the exodus. The Department is currently down to 35 officers from the 46 authorized in the budget. The proposal was to give a one-time $10,000 bonus to each officer in return for a 3 year commitment. If the officer left before that period then he/she would have to pay it back. After some discussion on how the bonus amount was arrived at, the Council voted to approve the request.

Commissioner L. Cephas brought up the other City Employees and discussed the possibility of giving them hazardous duty pay ranging from $100 to $350 per paycheck. The Acting City Manager noted that Departments, other than the Police department, were not experiencing attrition like the CPD. After discussion, that motion was tabled until a later date.

Finally at 6:30, the last item, the proposed change to the Charter to do away with the position of mayor, was discussed. There was no background information provided. The City Attorney said he had checked with the County Board of Elections and they would not hold any City elections due to their commitments to hold primaries and elections for the County and State positions. The City Attorney said the last City election, done by a private firm, cost $25,000. There was a discussion on how much it would cost if a sitting Commissioner ran for Mayor and the answer was $50,000 to $100,000 depending on run-off elections.

There was a short discussion on how progressive the Council members felt the new proposal, doing away with the Mayor’s position, was, and how it would streamline the governing process. The Council then decided to let the City Attorney revise the City Charter, eliminating the Mayor’s position, and then the Council would move forward with the proposal. There was no discussion of the details – how long was term, duties, how it would be decided who would be President of the Council, would there be a salary increase, how would ties be broken, etc. There was mention of the Charter’s rule citing the need for a prompt election to fill a vacancy in the position of mayor, but that was overturned by what the Council called the “unique” opportunity of the moment.

 After this half hour discussion of the Charter change the meeting ended a little before 7 pm.