

CAN's Unofficial notes on the City Commissioners Work Session on the FY22-23 Budget

The work session started at 6 pm on Monday, June 6, 2023. All members present except Commissioner Harrington, who attended by phone.

1. The first order of business concerned the formation of a Dorchester Task Force on Gun Safety and Gun Violence Prevention. The idea was presented by Council President, Cephas in which she described a county wide task force with members from the 9 largest municipalities having representatives to discuss ways to reduce gun violence in the County. The City Manager was tasked with finding out if those communities are willing to participate. If so, then the Council will make a formal proposal.
2. The rest of the meeting was lead by the new City Manager, Tom Carroll, who presented an 18 page document outlining 15 major priorities and noting that some things such as the sewer overflows and pumping station still needed more analysis before presenting them to the Council. A short outline of the discussion is as follows:
 - a. The City will end this fiscal year with a surplus, as it did last year. That money goes into the Unassigned Fund Balance or Rainy Day fund. That fund will be at approximately \$5.2 million, which is way over (twice) the recommended lever by the National Municipal Association. While this was good news, it was noted doing the meeting that the City has not paved any roads in the last 4 years and the salaries of employees are too low.
 - b. The City received \$6.04 million in ARPA funding in the current budget and has allocated \$1.6 million for a fire truck, \$340,000 for police bonuses, \$500,000 to Non-profits, and \$100,000 to fire truck repairs. That leaves \$3.5 million yet to be spent. The City will also receive another \$6 million in the up-coming budget and the City Manager had a preliminary plan to allocate those funds.

- c. The two biggest issues outstanding in the budget were funding for fixing the sewers along Water St. and Hambrooks Av. which overflow and dump sewage into the River. The City paid \$68,000 in fines last year and more again this year. Included in this discussion was the Pumping station at Trenton St. which was built 100 years ago and needs an upgrade. Preliminary estimates are around \$6 to 7 million and the City Manager wanted to look at ways to finance the projects but did not have the time in the six weeks on the job to get a real handle on the situation.
- d. The City Manager recommended using \$1.2 million of the ARPA funds to offset shortfalls in the up-coming budgets. He proposed using \$500,000 next year, \$400,000 in 23/24 budget and \$300,000 in 24/25 budget
- e. The City Manager than began a discussion of the General fund which is about \$13.3 million. Half of that money goes to fund the Police Dept, \$1 million to the Volunteer Fire Dept and the balance to Administration and the Department of Public Works. The major priorities are:
 - i. 4% wage increases for all employees except the City Manager
 - ii. \$300,000 for increases in employee's base pay.
 - iii. Community Oriented Policing - \$100,000
 - iv. Public Works equipment - \$500,000
 - v. Better employee health insurance - \$135,000
 - vi. Cambridge Harbor - \$300,000
 - vii. Additional Non-Profit support - \$500,000
 - viii. Harriet Tubman Mural and Cannery Way Improvements - \$200,000
 - ix. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - \$36,000
 - x. Pandemic Pay - \$165,000
 - xi. Road Resurfacing - \$500,000
 - xii. Technology -\$57,231
 - xiii. Public Facilities Investment - \$100,000
 - xiv. Demolition of condemned houses - \$100,000

- xv. Cannery Park - \$500,000
 - xvi. Art in Public Places - \$18,900
3. There was a lengthy discussion by Council Members who wanted to add to the budget priorities, as follows:
- a. Redo City Hall
 - b. Discussion on impact fees of new communities using City water and sewer
 - c. \$1 million for “land banking”
 - d. \$1 million for affordable housing
 - e. Fixing up Washington St – slowing traffic down, sidewalks, etc.
 - f. Bike lanes
 - g. The Council President wanted a special fund to cover out of pocket expenses for coffee and food at the many meetings she has to attend.
 - h. \$30,000 for this summer’s Mayoral election
 - i. A very long discussion on the low salaries at DPW
 - j. The City Manager wanted to get to \$250,000 for City wide Technology
 - k. The Council wants to reduce the lawyers’ fees which are \$11,000 per month and go on an as needed basis.
 - l. The City Manager noted that code enforcement was reduced by one-half of a position.

There will be another meeting on June 21st to discuss the new Special Projects fund, the Sewer Fund, Municipal Utilities and the Marina. With those items discussed, hopefully, the Council will vote on a new budget on June 27, in time to start the new fiscal year. The meeting ended at 9 pm.

Again, thanks to the new City Manager, Tom Carroll and the new Finance Director, Deborah Cooper for all the work they did to get this budget together.

Charles McFadden,

President, CAN