



Finance Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Monday, February 13, 2023

Present: Councilors Grossman (Chair), Noel, Kalis, Malakie, Norton and Humphrey

Absent: Councilors Oliver and Gentile

City staff present: Comptroller Steve Curley, Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux, Senior Financial Analyst Perry Rosenfeld, Senior Financial Analyst Connor Roach, Director of Utilities Tom Fitzgerald, Deputy Commissioner of Public Works Shawna Sullivan, Assistant Fire Chief Mike Bianchi, Director of Senior Services Mignonne Murray

For more information regarding this meeting, a video recording can be found at the following link: [Finance Committee February 13, 2023 \(newtv.org\)](https://www.newtv.org/finance-committee-february-13-2023)

#54-23 Acceptance of \$2,677 from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security Senior SAFE Grant.

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to accept and expend the sum of two thousand six hundred and seventy seven dollars (\$2,677) in grant funding from the Executive Office of Public Safety for a Senior SAFE Grant that has been awarded to the Fire Department to purchase smoke and carbon monoxide detectors for Newton's seniors.

Action: **Finance Approved 6-0**

Note: Assistant Fire Chief Mike Bianchi presented this item and explained that this grant is crucial for their community outreach for seniors. He described how the Newton FD training division works with the Senior Center to create a list of seniors that are in need of replacement smoke detectors or CO2 detectors. They have two teams of two firefighters that will go through the list and install or replace smoke or CO2 detectors, as well as help seniors identify hazards in their homes and discuss fire prevention. Deputy Chief Bianchi noted that this funding should allow them to purchase and install 10-15 sets of smoke and CO2 detectors.

Without any questions or comments from the Committee, Councilor Kalis motioned to approve the item, which passed unanimously.

#53-23 Acceptance of \$25,600 from a Massachusetts Emergency Management Association Emergency Preparedness Grant

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to accept and expend the sum of twenty-five thousand six hundred dollars (\$25,600) in grant funding from a Massachusetts

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Emergency Management Association (MEMA) Emergency Management Preparedness Grant (EMPG) that has been awarded to the Fire Department for technology and protective gear.

Action: **Finance Approved 6-0**

Note: Assistant Fire Chief Bianchi presented this item, explaining that this grant will help cover the recurring cost of internet connection and maintaining all their equipment in their emergency management and operations center. He added that these funds also help provide laptops and iPads for emergency operations and training. Assistant Chief also noted that they will use these funds to purchase additional ballistic gear for active shooter training purposes.

Councilors asked the following questions:

Q: What is the existing ballistic protective gear that the Department has, and how will this new gear supplement it?

A: Deputy Fire Chief Bianchi explained that they have approximately 14 sets of gear currently on their trucks. This gear would be added to the existing supply to help achieve their goal of every position on the fire trucks per shift to have that gear. He clarified that this does not mean every person in the Fire Department, but only every position on the trucks.

Councilor Kalis motioned to approve the item, which passed unanimously.

#569-22 **Acceptance of \$10,610.01 from Audrey M. Cooper Estate**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to accept and expend the sum of ten thousand six hundred ten dollars and one cent (\$10,601.01) bequest from the estate of Audrey M. Cooper for the purpose of supporting the programs and services of the Newton Senior Center.

Action: **Finance Approved 6-0**

Note: Director of Senior Services Mignonne Murray presented this item, explaining that Ms. Cooper's estate donated these funds to continue her legacy as an avid supporter of the Newton Senior Center and its programs and services. Director Murray added that since she is new to this position, she cannot be certain of the details as to which programs and services would be funded by this donation.

Councilors made the following comments:

Numerous Councilors expressed their admiration and gratitude for Ms. Cooper's work and donation.

Councilor Noel motioned to approve the item, which passed unanimously.

Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees

#58-23 **Appropriate \$280,000 to Complete Phase 1 of the City's Phosphorus Control Plan**
HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend one hundred sixty thousand dollars (\$160,000) from Stormwater- Full-time Wages Acct # 62A40101-511002 and one hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$120,000) from Stormwater – Drainage System Acct # 62A40101 -586004 for a total of two hundred eighty thousand dollars (\$280,000) to cover the completion of Phase 1 of the City's Phosphorus Control Plan.

Public Facilities Approved 8-0 on 2-8-23

Action: **Finance Approved 6-0**

Note: Deputy Commissioner of Public Works Shawna Sullivan presented this item, explaining that the City is required to complete Phase 1 of the Phosphorus Control Plan by June 30th, 2023 in order to remain in compliance with the MS4 permit. She added that the City is working with consultants Woodard and Curran to develop and advance Phase 1 of the Phosphorus Control Plan. Deputy Commissioner Sullivan noted that these funds will be used to advance or refine items already in progress, as well as fund any outstanding tasks required to be completed to provide a compliant Phosphorus Control Plan.

Councilors asked the following questions:

Q: Could you explain how much money has already been spent on this plan?

A: Deputy Commissioner Sullivan stated that the City had already entered into a contract for \$300,000 for the initial work on this plan, which would make the total cost of the plan around \$690,000. She added that \$280,000 is coming from within the stormwater budget for transfers, and there is additional leftover funding from their engineering consultants fund.

Q: According to the backup, there is an optional scope for this plan that would increase the grand total to \$953,000. Could you explain what the optional scope is?

A: Deputy Commissioner Sullivan explained that the City will be unsure of whether the optional services are required until the initial plans are complete.

Q: Has anything changed since the 2/8/23 Public Facilities Committee meeting regarding the possibility of identifying flood mitigation opportunities while we're identifying phosphorus reduction opportunities?

A: Deputy Commissioner Sullivan stated that not much has changed. She added that some of this work will have flood mitigating benefits, but it's not the focus of the work.

Q: It was stated during the Public Facilities Committee meeting on 2/8/23 that the EPA will require private property owners of more than one acre of land to have also have phosphorus control plans and targets. Will the City get credit for those reductions as part of our target reduction?

A: Deputy Commissioner Sullivan hypothesized that yes, the City will be getting credit for private reductions. She added that the scope of this project is to look at public-private partnerships. Deputy Commissioner Sullivan also noted that this is a recent development and she cannot say for sure.

Q: Can the City impose stricter targets on private property owners than the EPA?

A: Deputy Commissioner Sullivan explained that some of this will be taken care of through the stormwater ordinance, since they will need to mitigate their runoff and file an Operations and Maintenance plan.

Q: Do we have any sense of what the overall cost is going to be in order to meet these targets?

A: Deputy Commissioner Sullivan stated that it will be quite costly. She estimated that the average cost of a Phosphorus Control Plan related project is about \$300,000, adding that the library project for this plan cost roughly \$725,000 for 2.6 pounds of phosphorus reduction.

Q: Will there be an increase in the stormwater fees to cover the cost of these projects?

A: CFO Lemieux estimated that stormwater fees will gradually rise over time. She added that it may be some time until the stormwater fee structure is presented to the Finance Committee.

Q: Will the cemetery corporation's exemption for area-based stormwater fees be revisited?

A: CFO Lemieux was uncertain if that would be revisited by Woodard and Curran, adding that restructuring has not been looked at very deeply yet.

Councilors made the following comments:

It was expressed that it would be unfortunate to lose the opportunity to find out what the City could be doing differently in order to help mitigate floods, or identify what flood mitigation benefits would be.

Deputy Commissioner Sullivan agreed to speak with Woodard and Curran regarding a floodwater mitigation analysis and report back to both the Public Facilities and Finance Committees.

CFO Lemieux stated that the total cost of the phosphorus reducing projects will be astronomical. She explained that the 10-year targets set forth by the EPA are not affordable for any municipality.

It was stated that while Newton's cost will be higher than most due to its land use and high development, many other communities are able to comply with the EPA's targets. In addition, the new mandate on private properties over 1 acre will help, as it adds to the existing bylaw that only required new construction over 1 acre to provide a Phosphorus Control Plan and stormwater management plan. When asked if there were any other relevant points made at the 2/8/23 Public Facilities meeting, Councilors added that the permit is currently being updated, and there may be more restrictions coming to the City regarding phosphorus reduction.

Councilor Kalis motioned to approve the item, which passed unanimously.

#55-23 **Appropriate \$1,500 from Handicapped Parking Fines for Me2/ Orchestra Concert**
HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend the sum of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500) from Handicapped Parking Fines to Law Department Grants to engage the Me2/ Orchestra to give a concert to the Newton community.

Action: **Finance Approved 6-0**

Note: Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux presented this item, explaining that this money is going toward a concert performed by an orchestra composed of disabled individuals. She added that the Commission on Disability is able to vote on and approve the expenditures from the handicap parking fines. Notably, audible pedestrian signals have been approved in the past.

Councilors made the following comments:

It was noted that the backup for this item is clear and provides a good outline of the Commission on Disability's ability to expend funds from this account, as well as how the language of the docketed item needs to be amended.

It was stated that this item should be amended to reflect the correct accurate account numbers. Account # 0110851579700 should be replaced by Account # 0110320571600

Councilor Humphrey motioned to amend the item, which passed unanimously.

Councilor Humphrey motioned to approve the item as amended, which passed unanimously.

#52-23 **Reappointment of James Shaughnessy to the Board of Assessors**
HER HONOR THE MAYOR reappointing James Shaughnessy, 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton 02459 as a member of the Board of Assessors for a term of office to expire February 1, 2026. (60 days: 3/31/23)

Action: **Finance Approved 6-0**

Note: With no questions or comments from the Committee, Councilor Norton motioned to approve the item, which passed unanimously.

The Committee adjourned at 7:43 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Walker Grossman, Chair