

**COMMITTEE ON FINANCE
APRIL 24, 2018 AT 6:00 p.m.
COMMITTEE ROOM
WOBURN CITY HALL**

Voting Members present: Chairman Michael Concannon,
Alderman Richard Gately, Alderman Lindsay Higgins and Alderman Michael Anderson. Absent:
Alderman Edward Tedesco.

Non-Voting Members present: Alderman Darlene Mercer-Bruen and Alderman Joanne
Campbell. Absent: President Richard Haggerty and Alderman Mark Gaffney

Also present: Mayor Scott Galvin and City Engineer Jay Corey

On the Order to transfer \$2,000,000 from Overlay Reserve account to OPEB Trust Fund, Assessor Appraisals, Personal Property Audit and Stabilization accounts: Mayor Galvin said the money is being transferred out of the overlay account, which was augmented last year by the City Council in anticipation of the possibility of an abatement request of personal property taxes by Amazon. Mayor Galvin said Amazon has not appealed its tax assessment and the money is now available for transfer. Mayor Galvin said the independent auditor will be brought in just before budget time. Mayor Galvin said \$1.175 million will go toward the Stabilization Account to restore money that had been previously transferred out of that account. Mayor Galvin said \$750,000 will go toward the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) account. Mayor Galvin said the city is required to pay \$17 million-\$18 million for health insurance for retirees and the city is about \$9 million short. He said the overall expected obligation is about \$250 million and that every community is facing huge OPEB costs and not all cities and towns are setting money aside like Woburn. Mayor Galvin He said the \$1.175 million going to the Stabilization Account is money that was removed from the account when the city paid for land-takings for the Montvale Avenue widening project. He said there is about \$11.8 million in the Stabilization Account. Alderman Gately asked why the \$50,000 transfer to Assessors Appraisals isn't a line item in the Assessors' budget. Mayor Galvin replied Chief Assessor Andrew Creen hired an accountant last year who found the Amazon personal property tax and would he like to do hire the accountant again this year. He said it will probably be a line item in the budget this year, but that Chief Assessor Creen needs money up front to get the contract going. Mayor Galvin said the cost will be about the same and Chief Assessor Creen will have the money for next year. Alderman Anderson asked if the line items for Assessor Appraisals and Personal Property Audit are linked. Mayor Galvin replied one is for personal property and the other is for real estate. Motion made by Alderman Anderson and seconded by Alderman Higgins that the transfer "ought to pass," approved, 4-0.

On the Order to transfer the sum of \$14,000 from the Traffic Improvements East Woburn Account to the Cedar Street Ramp Study Account: City Engineer Corey said the city solicited three proposals for a preliminary study that will lead to the construction of a ramp that was identified in an I-93/I-95 transportation study report issued in 2007, among a number of traffic mitigation elements. City Engineer Corey said the project consists of the construction of a slip ramp onto I-93 that will ease congestion on Washington Street and ultimately Montvale Avenue.

City Engineer Corey said Woburn developer William Cummings is in support of building the ramp because it will empty out traffic in areas of the city he owns. Alderman Anderson asked if the goal of the ramp is to get traffic off local streets and on to I-93. City Engineer Corey said 25 percent of the traffic will be dispersed in each direction toward the two highways that run through Woburn and said the project offers a good traffic mitigation measure. City Engineer Corey said Stantec, a Civil Engineering firm based in Burlington, has given the city the best proposal, which will cost the city around \$16,000, or whatever the amount is in the proposed transfer. City Engineer Corey said he thinks Stantec and one of its engineers, Rick Azzalina, will do an excellent job. He said once the design study is finished the city will look to put the project on the Transportation Improvement Program under the auspices of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization. City Engineer Corey said he is looking at this project as a very real possibility. Alderman Mercer-Bruen said Mass. Highway said the Cedar Street ramp was considered an interim solution to an overhaul of the I-93/I-95 interchange, but added if the ramp is built, it will likely not be taken away. Alderman Mercer-Bruen said Cummings Properties has indicated it will participate in funding the design study. Dennis Clarke, President and CEO of Cummings Properties, said Cummings is willing to split the costs of the feasibility study. He agreed with Alderman Mercer-Bruen in that once the ramp is built, it probably won't be taken away. Mr. Clarke said the goal is to reduce traffic to Montvale Avenue. Alderman Higgins asked if the ramp will go by the Nissan car dealership. Mr. Clarke said there is a cul-de-sac there right now. City Engineer Corey said the end of the right-of-way goes onto MassDOT property. Mr. Clarke said if any property owned by Cummings is required to build the ramp, he can see that happening. Chairman Concannon asked about the time line. Chairman Concannon assumed the project is at the beginning and that the city is being asked to spend only a small amount of money right now. City Engineer Corey said the design study could be completed in three months. Alderman Mercer-Bruen submitted a copy of a report entitled "I-93/I-95 Interchange Transportation Study Final Report – June 2007" for the record. Motion made by Alderman Anderson and seconded by Alderman Higgins to accept the aforementioned report from Alderman Mercer-Bruen and make it part of the permanent record; approved, 4-0. Alderman Gately said the funding for the design study for the ramp is a good investment and the ramp will be beneficial if it is done. Chairman Concannon said the interchange project is still way off on the horizon and the construction of the ramp may give the federal and state government some incentive to push it along. Motion made by Alderman Anderson and seconded by Alderman Higgins that the transfer "ought to pass;" approved, 5-0.

Motion made by Alderman Anderson and seconded by Alderman Higgins to adjourn, all in favor, 5-0. Chairman Concannon adjourned the meeting at 6:16 p.m.

Attest: _____
Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees