

**COMMITTEE ON FINANCE,
SITTING AS A COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
JUNE 1, 2017 AT 6:00 PM
COMMITTEE ROOM
WOBURN CITY HALL**

Voting Members:

Attending: Chair Michael Concannon, Alderman Michael Anderson,
Alderman Joanne Campbell, Alderman Mark Gaffney
Alderman Richard Gately, Alderman Lindsay Higgins,
Alderman Darlene Mercer-Bruen, Alderman Edward Tedesco,
President Richard Haggerty

Absent: None

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Recreation Commission – Appearing was Recreation Director Rory Lindstrom and she offered documents to the Committee for review. Motion made and 2nd that the documents be received and made part of the record, all in favor, 9-0. Director Lindstrom stated that the department has a level funded budget, that they have improved the program brochure for better promotion and included adult education, and that the part-time clerk position has not been filled since she was appointed. Alderman Gately stated that the Recreation Commission has to be more diligent about Library Park Field use late at night. Director Lindstrom stated that the lights are turned off at 11:00 p.m., that they are trying to obtain a grant for a light timer at the field, that there have been no issues at the Leland Park pool, that bathrooms at that location are on the five year capital plan, that she wants to see if something can be done sooner to upgrade the bathrooms, that the building is solid, that trash is an issue at Leland Park, that the Ferullo Field playground is ten years old and will need work soon, that the department has a travel basketball revolving account, that the department has a second revolving account which is not subject to annual renewal, that all fees except for travel basketball go into the second revolving account, that some summer programs make money which is used for the winter programs and some maintenance, that she is not certain of the current balance in the account, that the department receives \$50,000.00 to \$90,000.00 in the summer from fees which is used to pay the summer help, that about 384 family pool passes were sold last year, that the pools are used by a lot of residents, that the north Woburn pool filter house has to be replaced, that a grant application was submitted for the Clapp School site and they are waiting for a response, that there is another grant program as well which would be awarded in the Fall 2017, that this is a good park project, that the Clapp School building is to be razed by October 2017, and that they are hoping to move forward with the park development by Spring 2018. Alderman Gately stated that the Clapp School building will be razed by October 2017, that the preliminary plans for the park look good, and that there has been some talk about bathrooms and a snack shack on the lower part of the land. Director Lindstrom stated that conceptual design work for a dog park at Ferullo Field has been completed, that the city applied for a grant for the project, and that if the grant is not approved the project can be added to the capital plan.

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Northeast Metropolitan Regional Vocational School District - Appearing was Superintendent-Director David DiBarri and he stated that over 2,000 Woburn students have attended the school over the years, that the school is currently a Level 1 school, that there have been increased MCAS scores, that 73 students received Abigail Adams Scholarships which is a new high rate for the school, and that a robotics course will be instituted next year. Finance Director Jay Picone stated that the FY2018 budget goals are to minimize the impact to member communities and to have an adequate level of funding to support student learning and encourage academic excellence, that there is a 1.86% increase over the FY2017 budget, that Ch. 70 funding is \$440,000.00 more than in FY2017 which offset some of the costs, that \$1,230,000.00 of other funds will be used to reduce the burden on member communities, that funding costs for six labor union contracts are expected, that GIC health insurance, transportation and additional support staffing costs have increased, that there is a 3.8% increase overall but the additional funding reduces this to 1.86%, that Woburn contribution will be \$113,000.00 less for FY2018 than FY2017 due to decreased enrollment and the extra funds, that the GIC health insurance cost increased 4%, that the district pays 85% of health insurance costs and employees pay 15% although for some staff the district pays 82% and the employee pays 18%. School Committee Member Debra Davis stated that there is a waiting list for students wanting to attend the school. Superintendent DiBarri stated that the school has a 1,250 student capacity, and that they would like to design a new school to accommodate 1,500 students. Alderman Gately stated that the programs are impressive and the students are doing well. School Committee Member Davis stated that the administration has hired top notch staff and the students are receiving a tremendous vocational education, that one week the students are in shop and one week in academics, that a full year of academics are covered and this leads to the increased MCAS scores, and that the retention rate is strong. Superintendent DiBarri stated that the school is working on a grant-funded program to allow students who have not attended the school to attend in their senior year on Saturdays if they are not career focused to see what options there are, that the school is looking at a pre-engineering program, expanding the healthcare program and continuing the trades program, that the school is training students to go right to work, that the school is looking at a masonry program which is a filed with an unmet need for skilled workers, and that the school does not want to focus on just high tech careers. Finance Director Picone stated that the per pupil cost per assessment is \$15,935.99 for each Woburn student. School Committee Member Davis stated that there is no one from Woburn currently on the wait list, that the reduction of nine students from Woburn indicates that fluctuation each year, and that more Woburn students graduated this year than are entering the school next year. Alderman Concannon stated that he is interested in the number of students going to the Minuteman Vocational School due to program offerings. School Committee Member Davis stated that there are only two classes offered at Minuteman Vocational School which are not offered at the Northeast Vocational School and those are robotics and horticulture, that the Northeast Vocational School will provide robotics but will not be offering horticulture, that the horticulture class would be the only reason for a student to attend Minuteman Vocational School rather than the Northeast Vocational School, and that she does not have information as to the number of Woburn students who attend Minuteman Vocational School. Alderman Concannon stated that a lot of public schools are starting to create pre-engineering programs, that the city has an obligation to also provide the best education to their students including pre-engineering, and that the question is whether pre-engineering should be a public school or vocational school program.

Superintendent DiBarri stated that if a student will go into the engineering field they will have to attend college, and that the school is now offering robotics because where five years ago robotics required a college degree a high school degree is now sufficient for a robotics technician. Alderman Concannon stated that it is important for the public schools and the vocational school to be complimentary and not be competing with each other. School Committee Member Davis stated that at the vocational school students could have a full week of pre-engineering training while at the high school the pre-engineering course would be part of the regular course schedule, and that quite a few of the vocational school students participating in drafting go onto colleges such as Wentworth, Rhode Island School of Design and architectural colleges. Superintendent DiBarri stated that the cost of a new school building would be related to the number of students coming from the community.

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Board of Assessors – Appearing was Chief Appraiser Andrew Creen and he stated that two Member of the Board of Assessors and three professional office staff members are attending this meeting with him, that the department is ready to perform the FY2018 valuation, that sixty new homes have come online, that there have been thirty new condominiums constructed, that 41 larger tracts of land have been subdivided and will be coming online this year with new tax bills, that these new developments create additional burdens on the office, that seven homeowners filed appeals of their property valuation, that there are more appeals of commercial property valuations, that recently a hotel valuation appeal involved five days of testimony as well as preparation time, that the valuation was upheld, that under the Municipal Modernization Act the certification cycle by the Department of Revenue will be every five years rather than every three years, that this will lead to a reduction in costs for the process, that Verizon landline values have decreased, that cities settled with a decreased valuation back to 2010 but are not required to pay interest, that there was a potential liability for an abatement of over \$1,000,000.00 if the city lost the case, that the personal property audit is conducted to determine the proper valuation of taxable personal property, and that he is still assisting with IT issues for the city.

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Inspectional Services Department – Appearing was Building Commissioner Thomas Quinn and he stated that overtime is paid to inspectors who are called to a site after regular business hours, that more temporary help may have to be hired due to increased development projects, that between January 1, 2016 and April 30, 2016 the department issued 454 permits and collected \$442,331.00 in fees, that between January 1, 2017 and April 30, 2017 the department issued 471 permits and collected \$322,198.00 in fees, that the building permit fee for the new Toyota building on Washington Street was \$140,000.00, and that the Hurd-Wyman School project and Woburn Public Library projects are not required to pay fees but would have generated a fee of about \$500,000.00 combined. Alderman Gately stated that any new vehicles for the department should be SUVs and not passenger cars. Commissioner Quinn stated that in 2014 the department reviewed fees of approximately eight other communities, that after the review the fee for a permit was raised from \$10.00 per \$1,000.00 of valuation to \$13.00 per \$1,000.00 of valuation of the project, that this fee is at the low end for similar communities, and that this change will not generate new revenues but will offset operating costs. Alderman Mercer-Bruen stated that she supports hiring temporary help due to the number and size of pending projects, and that it is difficult for the department to do what they are required to do with the limited staff.

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Conservation Commission – Appearing was Conservation Administrator Theresa Murphy and she stated that the department budget is similar to the last fiscal year budget, that there was a \$250.0 increase in the community gardens line and a \$2,000.00 increase in the maintenance line with new property coming under the jurisdiction of the department, that the cost of plowing and rototilling the community gardens has increased, that the department charges \$30.00 per plot which goes back into paying the maintenance costs of the community gardens, that she has requested that a head clerk be authorized for the department but the request was denied, and that the community garden receipts do not go into the General Fund. President Haggerty stated that care of the new land at Shaker Glen will add burden to the department. Alderman Mercer-Bruen stated that there is more space at the Cranberry Bog that has to be maintained, and that she supports allocation of resources for the upkeep of the conservation lands. Administrator Murphy stated that two of the Conservation Commissioners handle the sign-up for the community garden plots, that she does not know the number of plots at the community garden, that the program is popular and at times there is a waiting list, that the Field Officer makes inspections of the properties, that the department has not had a full-time head clerk since 1994, that the department has had part-time help who can handle some of the tasks, that a full-time clerical position for the department is warranted, and that the part-time staff is paid from the fees collected. Alderman Campbell stated that there is no excuse for the department not having a clerical staff person, that she would support the addition of a head clerk in the department, and that this is a busy office with a lot of work. Administrator Murphy stated that a full-time staff member would be ideal, and that splitting a staff member with another department does not work well due to the cross training needed and not having the individual available when needed. Alderman Higgins stated that there may not be enough money allocated to maintain of the conservation areas. Administrator Murphy stated that she believes that there is only one department revolving fund, that the fees collected go into a special fund which can only be used for implementation of wetland protection, and that then a wetland line is not already established it is better for the petitioner to go before the Conservation Commission before going to the City Council on a petition.

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Council on Aging – Appearing was Director Joanne Collins and she offered documents to the City Council for review. Motion made and 2nd that the documents be received and made part of the record, all in favor, 9-0. Director Collins stated that the department has a new van, that the Senior Center roof is scheduled for repair, that volunteers and fundraising help keep the building operating, that the Department of Public Works also maintains the building and vehicles which helps maintain programs, that there are 25 people working in the Senior Tax Work-off Program, that funds for that program come from another account, that those funds cannot come from the Council on Aging budget, that the department is waiting to make repairs inside the building once it is clear that there are no more leaks in the roof, that the furnace may need to be repaired soon, that unless the city converts to natural gas the department will continue with the current system and purchasing oil, that there were only three days with heat issues this past winter, that a long natural gas line would be needed to bring service to the building, and that she is not certain if the city would realize a return on the investment. Alderman Anderson stated that the Senior Center provides a valuable service to the community. Director Collins stated that residents of other

communities are permitted to use the Senior Center except for the transportation services and some larger events.

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Engineering Department – Appearing was City Engineer John Corey and he stated that all salaries of the department are contractual, that the maintenance budget lines have not changed but are satisfactory for the needs of the department, that the annual costs for the GIS software has been moved to the IT department budget, that the department has done the design work for the proposed dog park, that there will be approximately \$100,000.00 in construction costs for the dog park, that the estimated cost of \$17,900,000.00 for construction of the New Boston Street bridge will be funded by the State, that the cost for the bridge will likely be \$21,000,000.00 just before construction in 2021, that the city is using the complete streets program through GIS, that the department is working on a sign inventory to upgrade signs across the city, and that the department is working on having twelve intersections online with cameras. President Haggerty stated that having GIS on the city’s website is helpful. Engineer Corey stated that the city is going out for bid for additional I&I work in approximately one month, that the temporary water main project on Washington Street is progressing, that there is some punch list work to be completed on the Horn Pond sewer line but the project is mostly finished, and that the Planning Director is moving forward with a functional design of parking and roadway realignment at Woburn Common.

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Motion made and 2nd to take the next department out of order, all in favor, 9-0.

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Department of Public Works – Appearing was Superintendent of Public Works John Duran and he stated that there is an issue this evening at the Horn Pond dam, hat this is a Winchester funded project, that there was a 16-inch water main break this day and this caused the issue to arise at the dam, that the Montvale Avenue project is moving ahead, that the work will extend to Prospect Street and the department wanted to avoid work while school was in session, that Montvale Avenue is scheduled to be paved this year from Prospect Street to Woods Hill, that the Horn Pond interceptor program is nearly complete, that the department budget is level funded, that the department budget has not changed a lot except for a few accounts balances being reduced, that the house worker position would be for the police station, that the position has been vacant for two or three years, that the highway foreman position is open due to a retirement, that the department is continuing with the street tree program, and that the department does a lot of tree replacement as trees are damaged by vehicle collisions. Alderman Gately stated that the Department of Public Works staff is down 38 employees, that there are 25 highway department employees and nine foremen, that he wants to reassess the Deputy Superintendent position, that the hoist equipment operator position has been funded three times and the position has never been filled, that the meter reader position was funded and not filled, that if a position is funded then the position should be filled with an employee hire, that there is not enough staff in the department to meet the needs of the city, that the department needs to go to the Conservation Commission to amend the Order of Conditions relative to stream cleaning, that the Order of Conditions has to be amended both locally and at the State level, and that he would like work to take place on the streams during the summer months.

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Motion made and 2nd to return to the regular order of business, all in favor, 9-0.

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Human Resources Department – Human Resources Director Elaine Pruyne appeared and stated that there has been a lot of hiring including the Purchasing Agent, IT Director, police officers and reserve police officers, that the department ran assessment centers for the police department and fire department and assisted with the new deputy auditor, that the department has received \$60,000.00 in grants, that the department held two open enrollments for health insurance, that the health insurance cost has increased 5.5%, that for an HMO plan the city pays 75% of the cost and the employee pays 25% of the cost, that for a PPO plan the city pays 60% of the cost and the employee pays 40% of the cost, that health insurance rates have increased as much as 9% in some years, that the insurance rates are based on usage and there is a lot of usage, that MIIA came in as the low bidder for insurance last year, that MIIA provides assistance with the plan, that the small department staff would not be able to do all of their other required tasks without the MIIA assistance, that the Police Department and Department of Public Works pay for random drug tests in their departments, that interviews will be conducted for a new Fire Chief next week, and that a new Fire Chief will be appointed by July 1, 2017.

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Law Department – Appearing was City Solicitor Ellen Callahan Doucette and she stated that department secretary was being paid less than for similar positions covered by the union contract, that the salary for the secretary position has been increased to the collective bargaining rate of a secretary, that the \$3,000.00 telephone operator stipend that was being paid to the department secretary has been eliminated and had been an issue with the union, that the money allocated for Westlaw has been reduced and the money allocated for travel and meetings as well as claims has been increased, that the city has been paying smaller claims rather than sending them to MIIA, that the department secretary salary ends up being about the same with the elimination of the telephone operator stipend, that there is one zoning appeal pending, that there are some labor and personnel matters pending, and that the Ledges program is being scheduled for oral argument before the Appeals Court but the matter is being handled by outside counsel. Alderman Anderson stated that he supports the increase in the salary for the department secretary.

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Purchasing Department – Appearing was Purchasing Agent Orazio DeLuca and he stated that he worked for the city of Somerville for nine years, that the department budget is level funded, that he does not anticipate any changes in the department, that thirty bid packages are scheduled, that there are fifteen to twenty community grants in process, that six to eight communities are working as a collaborative, that the department is working on the Hurld-Wyman School project, that the department processed the Senior Center roof project, that the department worked on the new First Burial Ground fence project, that the First Burial Ground gates will be completed soon, that the largest bid project this year is the Woburn Public Library project, that he is continuing with the Hurld-Wyman School project which he picked up from the previous purchasing agent,

and that the department is looking at increasing the terms of Department of Public Works contracts from one year to three years which will result in better pricing.

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Veterans Department – Appearing was Veterans Agent Larry Guisepppe and he stated that the department budget has been level funded as it has been for each year during his tenure, that the cash aid budget changes, that the cash aid line is budgeted at one-half need and he asks for an additional funds by transfer in January, that there are \$35,000.00 per month in expenditures from the account, that he asked for an increase for the part-time employee but the request was denied, that this is a busy office, that the department is looking to perform restoration work on the World War I memorial, that the department wants to erect a flag pole at Ferullo Field, that Cummings Foundation grant funds may be able to be used for the flag poles and to repair the World War I memorial, that there are seven veterans working under the tax work-off program, and that the department did not receive funds for the program next year. Alderman Gately stated that the part-time employee in the department should be made full-time, that there has been a significant increase in walk-in traffic at the department, and that the full-time position should be funded. Alderman Concannon stated that the city cannot add to the budget. President Haggerty stated that is a budget line is not funded there is a process whereby the City Council can increase the budget. Veterans Agent Guisepppe stated that his department hosts a veteran’s coffee hour, that some veterans come into the office seeking assistance related to housing, medical or mental health and some are looking for social activities, that under the Veteran’s Tax Work-Off Program a veteran can volunteer up to 110 hours and receive a \$1,000.00 abatement on tax bills, that he needs help from department heads to make him aware of places where the veterans could assist, that there is no income limitation by the volunteer must be a veteran, that the program has been in place for three years, and that he is not aware why the program has been cut.

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Motion made and 2nd that a communication be sent to the City Auditor requesting a list of all positions and stipends associated with the positions which are outside the regular compensation for the position, all in favor, 9-0. Motion made and 2nd that a communication be sent to the City Auditor requesting a report of the percentage of each budget used year to date as of June 5, 2017, all in favor, 9-0. Motion made and 2nd that a communication be sent to the City Auditor requesting a report of money spent out of the account for legal assistance through June 5, 2017, all in favor, 9-0. Motion made and 2nd that Page 51 of the FY2018 budget relative to Veterans’ Tax Work-Off Program be amended by adding \$10,000.00 to the line, all in favor, 9-0.

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Motion made and 2nd that the meeting be ADJOURNED, all in favor, 9-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Attest: _____
William C. Campbell
Clerk of Committees, Pro Tem