

**COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**  
**As a Committee of the Whole**  
**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2, 2021, at 5:30 p.m.**  
**CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**  
**WOBURN CITY HALL**

Voting Members present: Chairman Darlene Mercer-Bruen, Alderman Michael Concannon, Alderman Robert Ferullo, Alderman Joanne Campbell, Alderman Michael Lannan, Alderman Jeffrey Dillon, and Alderman Joseph Demers. Absent: President Edward Tedesco and Alderman Richard Gately

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**Discussion of the FY 2022 Budget:** Chairman Mercer-Bruen asked for a moment of silence to honor former Woburn Police Chief Richard Kelley, who died on Wednesday. Chairman Mercer-Bruen said there is a slight change to the agenda and the Planning Director will not be appearing tonight. She said the first department head to appear tonight will be Building Commissioner Thomas Quinn, who is representing the Inspectional Services Dept. She said the Inspectional Services budget can be found on page 22 of the mayor's municipal budget. **Inspectional Services** - Commissioner Quinn said not much has changed with his budget, and that it is level funded. He said he is concerned about two-line items, one of which is the temporary help line item. He said it was level funded at \$10,000 but as of last week he only has \$800 remaining for the rest of this fiscal year. He said money from that account goes to pay for inspections when the plumbing and electrical inspectors are sick or on vacation. He said he may have to come back and ask for more money for that account. He said those two positions are critical to the department, particularly with all the development that is going on in the city. He said his department cannot afford to delay inspections by two or three days if the inspectors are not available. He said this will be a big concern in the coming fiscal year. He said his second concern is his overtime account. He said the line item is \$2,500. Chairman Mercer-Bruen thanked Commissioner Quinn for the support he provides to her and Ward 5. She said she appreciates everything Commissioner Quinn and his staff does. Commissioner Quinn said his staff has gone above and beyond. He said every department and every city employee has gone above and beyond. He said he gives credit to every city employee. **Woburn Public Library** – Woburn Public Library interim director Chuck Flaherty said this budget meeting is a first for him in Woburn. He said he is in the midst of his second stint in Woburn, after previously working as library director in Framingham and Brookline. He said it is his privilege to be here. He said when the mayor called in February, he was in Florida. He said he wanted to come back but had to convince his wife. He said he is breathing a little easier with the budget. He said he will be filling vacancies over the next several months. He said they are looking to hire about 10 people. He said they have hired a youth services director who is going to be a great addition to the staff. He said a new teens librarian was hired. He said considerable space in the addition to the library was set aside for teens and children, and he is looking forward to the next several months. He said he was here when the addition was completed. He said he has never seen so many people excited about the prospect of an expanded and renovated library. He said he sees a real re-birth coming in the next six months. He said the facility is nothing short of magnificent. He said technology was added without butchering the building. He said the renovation took the best of what was

there and augmented it. As far as the library budget is concerned, he said he has cobbled together enough money to get the carpets cleaned professionally for the first time. He said this is scheduled for next weekend. He said he would like to get the windows cleaned professionally as well. He said there is on-going maintenance but he would like to accomplish a thorough cleaning with staging and equipment. He said there are a few dollars in the budget for new materials. He said next year's budget is level funded. He said filling the vacant positions will add to the level of service. He said Covid was so polarizing that it put the staff in challenging positions, from both sides of the mask issue. He said he has not encountered a group of employees who are more dedicated than the employees at the library. He said it is truly a remarkable group. He said given the recent resignations, the remaining staff could have gone in a different direction, but they were able to get over a difficult time. He said he is looking forward to playing more golf in the fall when there is a new director. Alderman Dillon thanked Director Flaherty for his effort. He said there are two crown jewels in Woburn – the public library and Horn Pond. He said the library staff does a great job. He said he is a volunteer and he is glad to be returning in that capacity on June 14. He said library staff works very hard. He said it is a great place and he has made good friends. Alderman Campbell asked Director Flaherty to address what is happening with the archives. She said she has gotten comments from constituents who are telling her they feel the archives were pushed to the side. Director Flaherty said the archivist position will be filled as soon as the budget is approved. He said he has a small amount of money from the foundation to put together three specific assignments within the archives. Chairman Mercer-Bruen thanked Director Flaherty for coming back to the city during a difficult time for the library. **Parks** – Chairman Mercer-Bruen said the Parks Dept. budget is on page 58. Parks Supt. James DeLong asked if members of the committee have any specific questions. Alderman Concannon asked the Parks Dept. can get the job done with a level funded budget. Supt. DeLong said the Parks Dept. is back where it was in 1972. He said the department is spiraling down the drain. He said the department has gone from seven full-time employees to six to five. He said they are relying more on part-time help. He said they are back in 1972, when the department was a complete failure for eight years. He said there is too much property to maintain with the current staffing levels. He said this is the 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive year the Parks Dept.'s budget has been level funded. He said that's not sustainable, assuming 2 percent inflation every year for the cost of equipment and materials. He said that amounts to a 36 percent increase over 18 years. He said he is working with the same budget he had in 2003. Alderman Ferullo thanked Supt. DeLong for all the work he and his staff do. He said he is proud when he looks at the condition of Ferullo Field and Leland Park. **Police** – Police Chief Robert Rufo said his departmental budget is level funded except for overtime and sick leave buy back. He said he is very concerned about staffing levels, particularly with the robust development that is taking place in North Woburn, at the former Kraft foods site in East Woburn and in West Woburn. He said the Police Dept. is going to require an increase in staffing within a short period of time. He said it may be time to look at increasing public safety services along with the Fire Dept. He said this is the year the city needs to start putting police officers on the street. He said the Police Dept. cannot hire reserves in the capacity it once did. He said recruits will have to complete a 26-week training course at the academy. He said their bank of reserves is gone. He said if five officers retire, he is going to be at a loss to fill those positions. Chairman Mercer-Bruen said she shares Chief Rufo's concerns, particularly with the influx of new development. She said she has same concerns about the Fire Dept. She said there has to be a conversation about public safety. Chief Rufo said right now there is no grant funding available for additional personnel. He said in order to expand public safety

services, there would have to be an expansion of the budget. He said in a very short time the Police Dept. is going to have to spend a disproportionate amount of resources in North Woburn. He said that needs to be addressed soon. Alderman Demers thanked Chief Rufo and his department for their professionalism and dedication to the community. He agreed there has to be a conversation about expanding public safety in East Woburn. He suggested forming a group to discuss the possibility of a substation. He said the city needs to come up with a plan to address the growing needs of public safety. He said the work force in the city doubles or triples the population during the day. Chief Rufo agreed as people return to work post-Covid, the population of the city will increase exponentially. Alderman Demers said the big picture needs to be looked at. He said the city needs to make sure it is taking care of new development. Alderman Dillon asked if the staffing issues have been coming down the pike for a while, or if they are new. Chief Rufo said the biggest change was the passage of the police reform bill. He said one of the tenets of the new law is the training requirement. He said in the past they had a reserve crew to cover events or walking beats downtown or to augment regular patrols. He said that is going to go away. Alderman Dillon said he wishes the police reform bill was not pushed through as quickly as it was. He said the new regulations will have a deleterious effect. Chief Rufo agreed the law will be detrimental. He said he feels badly for small summer communities that rely on a large seasonal reserve force. Alderman Dillon thanked Chief Rufo and his department for all they do. Alderman Campbell said the city is fortunate to have Chief Rufo and his department. He said what the chief is saying about staffing is unacceptable. She said the police department needs more people. She said she thinks this needs to happen immediately. She said the city cannot be down this many policemen. She said the Commerce Way area is becoming a small city. She said the council keeps saying yes to new development and it gets frustrating. She said he thinks a substation is a great idea. She said the city has the money. She said the city needs to hire more police and fire personnel. She said she will support that effort completely. She said she will support any type of increase. Chief Rufo said the city cannot be caught unaware. He said he likes the idea of a co-mingled substation with the Fire Dept. He said calls for services will accelerate as new development comes on line. He said he has not even discussed public safety issues at the Kraft Foods site. Alderman Ferullo said Chief Rufo is 100 percent correct about the cycle of training for new officers. He said it will be at least a year. He said the Civil Service pool is low. Chief Rufo said the numbers in the Civil Service pool are horrific. He said they had 59 people sign up for the Civil Service exam. He said it is a huge concern. He said he may have to look into hiring outside of Civil Service. He said one of the important components of any police job has become the level of education. He said the more education one acquires, the more tools they have in their tool box. Alderman Ferullo said the reputation of Woburn's police department is second to none in the state. He said Det. Brian McManus is recognized across that state as operating the model narcotics and human trafficking divisions. He said he commends the department's efforts. Alderman Concannon said he is very proud to be from Woburn. He said the city offers the level of services no one else can offer. He said the city charter limits the City Council from expanding the budget, and there are times it is frustrating to not be able to offer amendments. He said he shares the chief's concerns about expanding the residential and commercial bases. He said he thinks it is time to discuss a substation. He said it is time to add bodies and staffing levels. He said the council's role is to balance the right of petitioners to develop their property within the rules with the strain on the city's resources. He said the council does not have a lot to do with making sure resources meet the standard for allocation of services. He asked the chief to convey to his staff that the council appreciates what the police department

does. He said there were unintended consequences with the police reform bill. He said there was demand from loud voices from a small minority. He said he thinks the majority of people respect and appreciate what police do. Chairman Mercer-Bruen said she enjoys working with Chief Rufo. She said the chief's team makes everyone feel safe, no matter which part of the city they live in. She acknowledged there are challenges. She said the economic engine is there to make the city affordable so people who have lived here for generations can continue to live here. She said at the same time the city needs to make sure it maintains services. She thanked Chief Rufo and his staff for everything.

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**MOTION** made by Alderman Concannon and seconded by Alderman Ferullo to adjourn; approved, 7-0. Chairman Mercer-Bruen adjourned the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

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Gordon Vincent  
Clerk of Committees