

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

January 16, 2024 at 5:30 PM

Chairman Morgan called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Morgan, Terrio, Kantor, Long, Burkush

Messrs.: F. McNeill, J. Belanger, T. Fleming, R. Cashin

Chairman Morgan advised that the first purpose of the meeting is organizational in nature, and requested the Clerk to provide a brief overview regarding typical issues addressed by the Committee.

Matthew Normand, City Clerk, stated this committee has jurisdiction over policy regarding vehicle maintenance and purchases, public works functions and services, and programs funded by the federal and state government, and such other matters as may be referred by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. This committee shall review all such referrals and where required after due and careful consideration shall report back to the BMA.

2. Summary of abatement requests submitted by Fred McNeill, Chief Engineer.

Alderman Long moved to approve. **Alderman Burkush** duly seconded the motion.

Alderman Long asked how did the 250% come to be. What was the rationale?

Fred McNeill, Chief Engineer, stated I am the Chief Engineer of the city's Environmental Protection Division and that is actually the wastewater utility under the Department of Public Works. I will be having the pleasure of seeing you monthly with these sewer abatements. This is a program that we instituted back in 2011. It is a formal policy. You can go on our website and see the criteria of the policy and also the application. This is for people who have accidents at home where water is discharged somewhere other than the sewer system. What happens is someone may have a pipe break in their basement or a leaky toilet or something like that and they will get a huge water bill and a huge wastewater bill. If they can prove that that water did not go through the sewer system, which is fairly straightforward and again that criteria is established in the policy, we will grant them an abatement. You will usually see anywhere from 10-20 abatements a month with a total cost of anywhere from \$5,000 to \$15,000 that we grant routinely. This month, if I take a peek at it we have a total of 15 abatements and we recommend granting 12 of them for about \$10,000.

Alderman Long stated the question is how did you come up with the 250% threshold.

Mr. McNeill replied again there were no hard and fast rules. We felt that 250% of normal usage, a normal five-year usage, would constitute an extraordinary event. It could have been 230% or it could have been 280%. We were looking for a round number.

Alderman Terrio asked how often can you apply. Let's say your toilet leaks and you apply for an abatement and get it is that just once in your lifetime or every five years or how often can you apply?

Mr. McNeill answered the policy states that one is granted every five years.

Chairman Terrio asked so if this happens again in six months or a year, I have to wait.

Mr. McNeill replied again we don't expect extraordinary events to happen twice a year.

Chairman Morgan called for a vote. *There being none opposed, the motion carried.*

3. Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$73,341.99 to return to CDBG unprogrammed funds.

Alderman Long stated this is the first time I have sat on this committee. For example, let's say we have a CIP project to do whatever. Do we know what the deliverables are? Do we get the deliverables in this committee? We are approving CIP numbers but I am wondering if we get the deliverables so we know...one of them is \$200,000 for Health for 200 units of lead. I don't know if we met the 200 or was it 150 or 120.

Chairman Morgan asked Jeff Belanger to come forward.

Jeff Belanger, Planning & Community Development Director, stated with me is Todd Fleming, our CIP Manager. Todd and I together work on the CIP committee. In general, we will report back when there is something major to report. We will often times give a little report at the end of the lead grant or if we receive a significant amount of money from the state or something like that we will kind of make a bigger deal of it. There are many CIP projects that come and go through this committee. In the past, it hasn't been worth your while to see a hit list of what has happened but as Todd and I were just talking, there are other ways that we report it out.

Todd Fleming, CIP Manager, stated on our HUD funded projects, we have to report to HUD on an annual basis so there is what we call a Caper report. We complete that every year and it gets posted on the city website on our department page. That has the specifics on how many housing units were rehabilitated and how many individuals received public service and that type of thing.

Alderman Long asked so if we are decreasing or increasing a CIP number, we can assume if we don't get a report that they are on target for the deliverables.

Mr. Belanger replied yes. We sign what are called sub-recipient agreements which are contracts with numerous recipients of these funds. They are contractually obligated to do what this committee has approved them to do.

Alderman Long asked and you will flag us if they are supposed to have 200 units for example and they only have 15.

Mr. Fleming responded the other important thing to note is as we are processing invoices, CIP staff are also getting monthly beneficiary reports so we know on a monthly basis what they have done. If they are not providing any beneficiary information, then at that point we would go to them and say what is the problem and let them know that we can't process any further invoices until we get some beneficiary reports.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Burkush**, it was voted to approve.*

4. Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$4,995 for CIP 412424 Police Academy Cadre.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Burkush**, it was voted to approve.*

5. Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$200,000 for CIP 611123 Lead-Based Paint Healthy Homes Supplemental Funding.

Alderman Long stated this is the example I spoke about. It was for 200 units and from what I heard, we are on target so that is okay. I just wanted to make sure that we are not committing more money to something that is not working.

Alderman Terrio asked so there is a \$200,000 increase from the property owner match. I think I know what that means but can you explain what a property owner match is?

Mr. Belanger answered to participate in the lead program, property owners need to submit a matching amount of funds in order to qualify for our funds. They need to have skin in the game if they are going to renovate and get our funds for that. Todd do you have anything to add?

Mr. Fleming stated that is correct. Actually, sometimes a project will go over budget and it will be more than what the city can contribute toward the project. In that case, the owner has to contribute more money. This is basically allowing us to accept those funds.

Alderman Terrio asked so this is 50/50.

Mr. Belanger replied it can often be less than 50% on our end and more than 50% on their end.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Burkush**, it was voted to approve.*

6. Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the acceptance and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$36,000 for the CIP 713124 Lake Massabesic Feasibility Study-Mill Pond Dam Level."

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Burkush**, it was voted to approve.*

7. Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization providing for the transfer and expenditure of funds in the amount of \$336.90 for CIP 810624 Planning Studies.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Burkush**, it was voted to approve.*

8. Communication from Ryan Cashin, Fire Chief, requesting authorization to apply for a 2023 Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER) grant to hire 12 additional firefighters.

***Alderman Burkush** moved to approve. **Alderman Long** duly seconded the motion.*

Alderman Terrio asked Chief Cashin to come forward. I am looking at the cover letter and it is \$4 million for 12 firefighters. How many years?

Ryan Cashin, Fire Chief, answered three years.

Alderman Terrio asked what do 12 firefighters cost as far as salary and benefits per person.

Chief Cashin replied the average firefighter starting pay is right around \$45,000 and benefits depend on whether they have a family plan or single plan. You can usually bank on another \$20,000 or \$30,000 for that. Those numbers could be off but I can get you an accurate account if you want.

Alderman Terrio stated so that is about \$900,000 a year give or take. You said three years so that is about \$2.7 million. What happens at the end of the three years? We still have the firefighters right? That would roll into our budget I assume?

Chief Cashin responded you are not required to but yes that is how that would work.

Alderman Terrio asked so at the end of the three years we would then fund the \$1 million or whatever it is or we would have to have layoffs or something correct.

Chief Cashin answered it depends on the situation at that point but yes. There could be vacancies or retirements. There could be a lot of things that happen between now and then.

Alderman Terrio stated so you could maybe move the 12 into any vacancies you may have or something. Thank you.

Alderman Long asked are you guaranteed this SAFER grant.

Chief Cashin replied no. We are just asking for apply. We would apply for the grant and then we would come back before this committee if we were given the grant. We are looking at probably 18-24 months before we would be back here and know for sure whether we got it or not. It is really slow right now.

Alderman Long asked and if you got the grant you would come back to the committee to get authorization to spend it.

Chief Cashin responded yes and then you guys would say yea or nay at that point.

Alderman Terrio asked let's say we get the grant but say you know what it is going to be too expensive so we will take six firefighters. Are we flexible on how many we hire?

Chief Cashin replied no. We are applying for 12 so we have to hire 12.

Alderman Levasseur asked why does it say up to \$4 million. In your cover letter it says not to cost more than \$4 million. What is the \$4 million about?

Chief Cashin answered we have to kind of take into consideration possibly pay raises and what it looks like three to four years from now. If it is two years before we get the grant and we are talking three years from there, we go a little high. If it is less than that then the cost is less.

Alderman Levasseur asked what does the \$4 million mean. When you actually apply for a grant for 12, we don't have any money on the hook for those 12 for what three years?

Chief Cashin responded correct.

Alderman Levasseur asked so where does the \$4 million come from. We don't have any skin in the game for the first three years. What does up to \$4 million mean? Is that for the next three years or for life?

Chief Cashin replied the grant is only for three years. If it comes in less, say the pay comes out to \$3.5 million over three years a few years from now then they would only give us \$3.5 million.

Alderman Levasseur asked so when you say up to \$4 million you are saying they are on the hook for the \$4 million not the city.

Chief Cashin answered yes. The city is absolutely not on the hook.

Alderman Levasseur stated and you just told us it was \$70,000 for each guy and that is \$2.7 million and now you are saying \$3.5 million with raises and Yarger Decker and all of this other stuff. I was told when we were hiring firefighters in the past that you actually figured in about \$100,000 per firefighter.

Chief Cashin stated it could be closer to that depending on where they come in on the scale.

Alderman Levasseur stated so \$1.2 million per year or \$3.6 million for three years and then once the grant expires then the city is on the hook for a minimum of \$1.2 million assuming no Yarger Decker increases, insurance increases, etc. We are on the hook for the 12 after that?

Chief Cashin responded yes. After the three years the city is on the hook for them.

Alderman Levasseur asked why do you need 12 firefighters.

Chief Cashin stated our goal is to get to 50% staffing according to NFPA 1710 on the apparatus. We currently have four apparatus staffed with four. We would like to staff another three and that would get us to 50% of the units in the city in Manchester staffed appropriately to NFPA 1710.

Alderman Levasseur asked do you currently have any vacancies in your department right now.

Chief Cashin answered no. We just filled them. They aren't quite here yet but they are coming.

Chairman Morgan called for a vote. *The motion failed with Aldermen Morgan, Kantor and Terrio duly recorded in opposition.*

9. Communication from Jeff Belanger, Planning & Community Development Director, requesting various CIP project extensions.

Alderman Long moved to approve. **Alderman Burkush** duly seconded the motion.

Alderman Long stated I just want to verify that there are six of them extending to February 6, 2024. Is that correct?

Mr. Fleming replied those are the projects from Item 3. Basically those projects would be expired now so we are extending them until the February BMA meeting to allow us to close those projects out.

Chairman Morgan called for a vote. *There being none opposed, the motion carried.*

10. Communication from the Planning & Community Development Director requesting a line item adjustment to CIP 810724 Part-Time Planner.

On motion of Alderman Long, duly seconded by Alderman Burkush, it was voted to approve.

11. Communication from Anna Thomas, Public Health Director, requesting a line item adjustment to CIP 210723 School-Based Dental Medicaid.

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Burkush**, it was voted to approve.*

TABLED ITEM

12. Communication from Bryce Kaw-uh, Chair, Manchester Planning Board, requesting one-time funding in the amount of \$150,000 to hire a consultant to draft an updated Bicycle Master Plan.
(Note: This item was referred to the Committee on Community Improvement by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen at their meeting held on September 5, 2023; the item was tabled on October 3, 2023.)

*On motion of **Alderman Terrio**, duly seconded by **Alderman Kantor**, it was voted to remove this item from the table.*

***Alderman Terrio** moved to receive and file. **Alderman Kantor** duly seconded the motion.*

Alderman Long stated there was a meeting with respect to the Amoskeag Bridge and there were probably 20-25 people there and they were all about the bikes and safely riding their bikes over the bridge. That is my issue. I want to encourage people to ride their bikes in the city. I think that at some point we need to address this. I like this proposal. What it is doing is letting people know what streets are safe and what streets are harder to navigate. We do have people that are bikers and they have interest in looking at these streets and rating them like if it is for the highest level user or for a first time bike rider. I think that would be helpful.

Alderman Terrio stated I don't have a problem with what Alderman Long is talking about. My concern here is the cost of \$150,000 to hire a consultant to tell us that. The Mayor said we are not going to do non-essential hires and we are trying to save some money and \$150,000 seems excessive for that type of information.

Alderman Long stated it doesn't have to be \$150,000. That was just a number that Mr. Kaw-uh put out. It could be whatever. We could have the QC Bike Collective maybe do some of this at a lower cost. The \$150,000 was just what Mr. Kaw-uh thought was the highest end. The \$150,000 isn't the number. It could be \$10,000 or \$5,000 or \$150,000.

Alderman Terrio called the question.

***Chairman Morgan** called for a vote. The motion carried with Aldermen Long and Burkush duly recorded in opposition.*

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Kantor**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Clerk of Committee