

COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

December 21, 2021 at 7:30 PM

Mayor Craig called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Cavanaugh, Stewart, Long, Roy, T. Sapienza, S. Sharonov, O'Neil, Levasseur, Terrio, E. Sapienza, Barry, Gamache

Absent: Aldermen Shaw and Hirschmann

Resolutions:

1. "Amending the FY2022 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Two Hundred Thirty Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Dollars (\$238,800) for the FY2022 CIP 412122 2021 Homeland Security Grant Program-Network Hardening."

"Amending the FY2022 Community Improvement Program, authorizing, appropriating and transferring funds in the amount of Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$250,000) for the FY2022 CIP 611122 Helping Hands - 140-142 Central Street Renovation Project."

"Amending the FY2022 Community Improvement Program, authorizing and appropriating funds in the amount of Five Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$500,000) for the FY2022 CIP 811722 Southern NH Build Back Better Regional Challenge."

*On motion of **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Roy**, it was voted to waive the reading by titles only.*

***Alderman Long** moved that the Resolutions ought to pass and be Enrolled. Alderman Cavanaugh duly seconded the motion.*

Alderman Levasseur stated I was looking at the numbers on the Helping Hands resolution. We have a \$200,000 loan to them currently and they have a big loan with a bank which I assume puts us in second position and now we are going to give them another \$250,000. Leon, maybe you can help us a little bit. I can't imagine as far as position goes that we are in second place as far as the original loan which it doesn't look like they have paid down at all.

Leon LaFreniere, Planning & Community Development Director, stated they have paid down some of the original principle on that.

Alderman Levasseur stated they didn't mark it off in their budget to us that I saw.

Mr. LaFreniere responded they still have an outstanding balance of which we are in second position.

Alderman Levasseur stated the other issue is they said they were going to put 12 beds on the first floor. Did they actually apply for any permits from the city first or do they have to go through the permitting process before we allocate this money?

Mr. LaFreniere answered no. They prepared a response to the RFP that we put out for HOME funds. They submitted a proposal to do three floors in the building. Their proposal didn't meet the program guidelines so they have reconfigured their proposal to meet the guidelines of the program, which primarily include HUD requirements. They have scaled it back. It was originally at \$600,000 ask and then decreased it to \$250,000.

Alderman Levasseur stated it just raises a red flag because 12 people on the first floor sounds like a lot. I don't know what the square footage is on the first floor but I don't know if there are minimum requirements for space per room or bed that they are going to be allocating. These are handicapped people and not transients coming and going like at a shelter. That is something that I am concerned about. \$250,000 sounds cheap. They are going to be like \$686,000 in debt on this property. I am just wondering what steps have been taken. If the Board allocates these funds do you have the strings to hold it back if they don't say install smoke detectors or have the correct egress and ingress and things like that required under the multitude of laws that there are, especially for a building of this type. I imagine they are really strict.

Mr. LaFreniere responded yes we will have a sub-recipient agreement with them that will spell out all of the requirements and we will do inspections and confirm that they are meeting the standards before the balance of the funds are released. I can assure you that the process will be followed.

Alderman Levasseur asked are the parking requirements met for this property. I think the zoning rules were just changed for parking requirements for sober homes. I don't know if that is the same for any building of this sort.

Mr. LaFreniere answered this property is an inner city property that has very little parking on it but it had historic use as a place of assembly. It was a club for a number of years and in more recent history has been used for services provided by Helping Hands. They have the benefit of a grandfather clause if you will regarding parking requirements.

Alderman Levasseur stated I didn't check the assessed value on the property but I think we should pull back a little bit on this until we see real actual permits pulled.

Mr. LaFreniere replied that will be done and I think that it is safe for me to say that was part of the reason we felt that the \$600,000 ask was overly ambitious for the capacity of the organization at this present time. I think the \$250,000 that they scaled the project to is well within their capacity and would be a benefit to the overall needs of the community.

Alderman Levasseur asked is this a major change from what they were originally doing. My understanding is that this was just a counseling location and now it looks like it is going to be a living facility.

Mr. LaFreniere stated they have always had a residential component on the upper floors. It is changing some of the downstairs square footage. This will add 12 beds to their total capacity. There is a change from that perspective. Their population tends not to generate parking requirements.

Alderman O'Neil stated I thought the gentleman from Helping Hands who came up to speak said they were dropping from 12 to 8.

Mr. LaFreniere stated their original proposal was to redo all three floors and have a higher capacity. They scaled the program back to the first floor so they would add 12

beds on the first floor to the beds on the upper beds. I am sorry I don't have that number but that could be eight.

Alderman O'Neil asked did he say something because that was the respite building at one point if you remember was out of control. He did not say something about a day center did he?

Mr. LaFreniere answered only in so far as that was the previous use of the property.

Alderman O'Neil stated from what I recall it was out of control there.

Mr. LaFreniere replied it was a challenge.

Alderman O'Neil stated not when Mike Tessier ran it but later it was absolutely out of control. There were more drugs going in than people being treated.

Mr. LaFreniere stated this organization had growing pains along the way.

Alderman O'Neil stated they weren't the organization in charge back then though.

Mr. LaFreniere responded Helping Hands was probably the organization but it was a completely different group of people.

Alderman O'Neil asked what group operated out of the old police station.

Mr. LaFreniere answered Serenity Place I believe.

Alderman O'Neil stated yes Serenity had some ties and that is where they were sending people for the first few days when they couldn't find a bed.

Mayor Craig stated that is not what we are talking about.

Alderman O'Neil replied but this is the building Your Honor. I am trying to make sure that it is not going to be the same thing again. It was like a Wild West show as I recall.

Mr. LaFreniere stated this is taking advantage of some of that space that is no longer used for that purpose to provide additional beds.

Mayor Craig called for a vote. *There being none opposed, the motion carried.*

CIP Budget Authorizations:

2. 412122 2021 Homeland Security Grant Program-Network Hardening
611122 Helping Hands - 140-142 Central Street Renovation Project
810222 Housing Initiatives
811722 Southern NH Build Back Better Regional Challenge

Alderman Roy moved that the budget authorizations be approved subject to final adoption of related resolutions. **Alderman Cavanaugh** duly seconded the motion. **Mayor Craig** called for a vote. *The motion carried with Alderman Levasseur being duly recorded in opposition to 611122 Helping Hands.*

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

A True Record. Attest.



City Clerk