

**Committee of the Whole Budget Workshop
May 12, 2020
Meeting Conducted Remotely
6:30 PM**

COUNCILORS PRESENT

Councilor Abbott
Councilor Belken
Councilor Bogan
Councilor Gray
Councilor Hainey
Councilor Hamman
Councilor Hutchinson
Councilor Lachance
Councilor Lachapelle
Councilor Rice
Councilor Walker
Deputy Mayor Lauterborn
Mayor McCarley

OTHERS PRESENT

Blaine Cox, City Manager
Katie Ambrose, Deputy City Manager
Terence O'Rourke, City Attorney
Todd Marsh, Welfare Director
Lauren Krans, Assistant Director of
Recreation & Arena
Chris Bowlen, Director of Recreation
and Arena
Jim Campbell, Director of Planning
Jim Grant, Director of Building, Zoning
and Licensing
Sonja Gonzalez, CIO
Chief Paul Toussaint, Rochester Police
Mike Scala, Director of Economic
Development
Celeste Plaia, Government Channel
Coordinator

Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor McCarley called the remote meeting to order at 6:30 PM and read the preamble as follows:

Good Evening, as Chairperson of the City Council, I am declaring that an emergency exists and I am invoking the provisions of RSA 91-A:2, III (b). Federal, state, and local officials have determined that gatherings of 10 or more people pose a substantial risk to our community in its continuing efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19. In concurring with their determination, I also find that this meeting is imperative to the continued operation of City government and services, which are vital to public safety and confidence during this emergency. As such, this meeting will be conducted without a quorum of this body physically present in the same location.

a.) Providing public access to the meeting by telephone: At this time, I also welcome members of the public accessing this meeting remotely. Even though this meeting is being conducted in a unique manner under unusual circumstances, the usual rules of conduct and decorum apply. Any person found to be disrupting this meeting will be asked to cease the disruption. Should the disruptive behavior continue thereafter, that person will be removed from this meeting. The public can call-in to the below number using the conference code. This is currently set to allow the public to "listen-in" only, there will be no public comment taken during the meeting.

Phone number: 857-444-0744
Conference code: 843095

b.) Public Access Troubleshooting: If any member of the public has difficulty accessing the meeting by phone, please email PublicInput@RochesterNH.net or call 603-332-1167.

c.) Public Input: Due to the ongoing situation with COVID-19, the City of Rochester will be taking extra steps to allow for public input, while still ensuring participant safety and social distancing. In lieu of attending the meeting, those wishing to share comments, when permitted, with the City Council (Public Hearing and/or Workshop settings) are encouraged to do so by the following methods:

- **Mail:** City Clerk/Public Input, 31 Wakefield Street, Rochester, NH 03867 (*must be received at least three full days prior to the anticipated meeting date*)
- **email** PublicInput@rochesternh.net (*must be received no later than 4:00 pm of meeting date*)
- **Voicemail** 603-330-7107 (*must be received no later than 12:00 pm on said meeting date in order to be transcribed*)

Please include with your correspondence the intended meeting date for which you are submitting. *All correspondence will be included with the corresponding meeting packet (Addendum).*

d.) Roll Call: Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote. Let's start the meeting by taking a Roll Call attendance. When each member states their name and ward, also please state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law. Additionally, Council members are required to state their name and ward each time they wish to speak.

Deputy City Clerk Cassie Givara called the roll. All Councilors stated that they were present and were alone in the location from which they were connecting to the meeting, except for Councilor Lachance who stated he was joined by 9-year old Aoife Taylor.

2. Public Input

City Manager Cox read comment from Ray Barnett, resident. This correspondence will be added as an addendum to the online packet for this meeting.

3. Budget Presentations (continued):

3.1. Welfare

Todd Marsh, Director of Welfare, expressed appreciation to Council regarding the recent discussions for a residential housing microloan program. He acknowledged that many Rochester residents are fortunate to not have any prior knowledge of where to turn for assistance in times of need. Mr. Marsh assured the Council and residents that there is “no wrong door” for seeking assistance and stated that local social service agencies, welfare and support organizations all routinely work together to direct residents to the best options. Mr. Marsh reported that the Welfare Department is well equipped to deal with whatever issues come through their door.

Mr. Marsh stated that the proposed budget was prepared and submitted prior to COVID-19. He reported that local welfare agencies have not yet seen an increase in requests for services, but it is anticipated that this increase will occur in the near future.

Mr. Marsh said that the increase in the welfare budget is due to increased healthcare costs as well as a \$7,000 increase in the General Assistance line to accommodate increases in the average monthly rental costs. Mr. Marsh stated that in his tenure as welfare director, the department has never exceeded the budget for general assistance; although he clarified that the welfare department is statutorily obligated to assist regardless of the budget.

Councilor Lachance asked for a clarification on the line item for Homeless Shelter (which has not been budgeted this year) as opposed to Emergency Homeless Services. Mr. Marsh stated that the Homeless Shelter line item was an agreement with the Homeless Shelter of Strafford County. The agreement was for increased funding to the shelter in exchange for first consideration for Rochester residents needing shelter. The City has since

discontinued this funding and moved the \$16,000 budgeted for that shelter into the line item for Emergency Homeless Services, which has been used for warming centers, the current portable shower, and other services for the homeless community.

3.2. Recreation and Arena

Chris Bowlen, Director of Recreation and Arena, introduced Lauren Krans, assistant director, to present the Operating Budget and the Issue & Options request.

Ms. Krans directed Council to page 7, Recreation Revenue. She stated that as a precautionary measure, the department removed the \$63,000 normally allocated for summer camp. Ms. Krans said that it has not yet been determined what will happen with the summer programs in light of COVID-19 and they are in close contact with the NH Department of Parks and Recreation for guidance moving forward.

Ms. Krans directed Council to page 98 and explained that the total budget reflects a 4.2% increase due to two factors; the first factor is due to an increase in the personnel line which was not included in the City Manager's budget; she gave a breakdown of the positions over which this increased funding is spread.

Councilor Lachance asked if, given the potential decrease in the summer camp line item, if there would also be a reduction in the summer camp salary line item. Ms. Krans stated that they would be reluctant to cut anything from the budget at this time due to the uncertainty of what will happen over the summer. She did confirm that there is a possibility the salary line item would be reduced.

Ms. Krans referred Council to Page 99 under the Materials and Supplies line for the second factor of the increase. It was determined that it would be more efficient for the Recreation department to take on the cost of pool chemicals which had previously been in the Buildings and Grounds budget. This accounts for a \$7,510 increase.

Ms. Krans referred Council to page 35 of the Issues and Options book. She stated that they are proposing that the position of Arena Attendant be reclassified to be more encompassing of the department needs. This position has remained unchanged since 1990 when it was introduced. They are asking that the position be reclassified as an Operations Specialist, with \$7,750 coming from each the Recreation side and the Arena side to make up the increase in salary. Mayor McCarley asked for clarification on what this position

currently entails and whether or not the current employee already has these additional duties. Ms. Krans responded that the Arena Attendant position was originally developed to specifically handle Arena ice needs, but the position has taken on a more all-encompassing roll including off ice tasks and assistance on the Recreation side. Ms. Krans said that the position has been filled by the same employee since its inception.

Councilor Walker asked about the increase in the line item for other professional services on page 98. Ms. Krans reported that this increase is to fund the competitive payment of game officials for adult and high school basketball programs as well as the cost of the company which they use in order to do the background checks on their program officials and volunteers.

Councilor Walker asked about the \$1800 increase to "City Wide Programs." Ms. Krans indicated this was to help support Free Comic Book Day. It also funds supplies needed for other programs offered by the Recreation department throughout the year.

Councilor Rice inquired if the \$7,510 budgeted for pool chemicals had been removed from its original Public Buildings and Grounds budget. Deputy Finance Director Mark Sullivan stated that he believed Buildings and Grounds had removed this amount from their budget, but he would verify that to ensure it wasn't accounted for twice.

Ms. Krans directed Council to page 12 of the O&M book for arena revenues. She stated that there are anticipated decreases to Pro Shop, Vending and Advertising which is based on historical trends as opposed to COVID-19.

Councilor Lachapelle asked how the Arena's per-hour ice rate compared to those of neighboring communities. Mr. Bowlen reported that Rochester's rates are similar to those of other local communities and municipalities throughout the State. He said that Rochester's ice rates have not increased since 2014.

Ms. Krans directed Council to page 118 regarding Arena expenses, which reflects a 1.4% increase. There is a request to purchase a sander for the arena truck which would add \$7500 to the budget. Ms. Krans said that the arena parking lot is 65,000 sqf, and while it is typically sanded by the Department of Public Works, their priority is taking care of the major roadways first. There is a manual sander which can be used, but it is very time consuming.

Mr. Bowlen asked Mark Sullivan, Deputy Finance Director, for

clarification on arena expenditures; the audit line item #533001 which currently shows a negative number. Mr. Bowlen wanted to ensure nothing had been missed or needed to be added back into the budget. Deputy Finance Director Sullivan stated that because the arena is now a special revenue fund and not an enterprise fund, the audit fees are absorbed on the general fund side.

Councilor Walker inquired about the line item for other equipment budgeted at \$2,500. Ms. Krans clarified that this is for restocking the Pro Shop and overhauling inventory, and replacing and purchasing new ice skates. Councilor Walker asked what the Contingency line is used for. Ms. Krans indicated this is for any emergency situations which arise such as snow removal or unpredicted services outside of the City.

4. CIP Budget Presentations:

4.1. Planning

Jim Campbell, Director of Planning & Development, directed Council to page 5 of the O&M book. Mr. Campbell indicated the potential increase of \$2,000 to revenues. This projected increase is due to the department collecting inspection fees which it had not previously collected.

Mr. Campbell referred Council to page 68 and 69 to the Other Professional services line item #533000. He stated that they are budgeting \$29,500 which is the same as last year, but the budget for FY20 was revised after City Council voted to remove \$25,000 from that line and moved it into a multi-year account.

Mr. Campbell indicated that the Planning budget stayed within the 2% increase directed by the City Manager, and overall the budget is down this year.

Mr. Campbell stated that the Planning Department has two Issues and Options which are the same requests as the previous year; the first is for an additional staff planner and the second is for stipends for the planning board members. He emphasized that the Planning Board members put in a great deal of work and give up a lot of their personal time to carry out City business.

Mr. Campbell directed Council to pages 26 and 27 of the CIP book for the two planning projects. The first CIP request is for a downtown parking and parking garage feasibility study, which came out of the newly adopted transportation master plan. The second is for a downtown traffic study to determine if the City should keep the same traffic patterns downtown as exist

currently.

Councilor Lauterborn stated that she agreed that a downtown traffic study should be done, but stated that it had been done in the past and no action was taken on the results. Councilor Lauterborn stated that the money should not be spent if there is no intention to take action on the recommendations. Councilor Lauterborn also inquired about the \$25,000 estimated cost for the traffic study and asked if using Strafford Regional Planning Commission would potentially reduce this cost. Mr. Campbell said that they had not looked into using SRPC, they had looked specifically at outside contractors who run traffic models. He referenced a contractor out of Vermont which SRPC had used for a traffic study and potentially looking for a less expensive alternative.

Councilor Walker stated that in the past, the seated Council had not been interested in changing the traffic patterns downtown which is why action had not been taken on the previous traffic study. He suggested that there should be a good sense of whether the Council is open to changing traffic patterns before the money is spent, otherwise the project should be removed from the budget.

4.2. Building, Zoning and Licensing

James Grant, Director of Building, Zoning and Licensing, referred Council to page 6 and 7 for the BZLS budget. He reported that the department is projecting a decrease in revenues of around \$150,000 due to COVID-19 and said that they have seen a 25% decrease in construction value over the past 4 months.

Mr. Grant directed Council to pages 86 and 87. He said the overall budget is down slightly over \$13,000 due to a decrease in insurances and benefits. There is a \$1,200 increase for the administrative equipment line in order to purchase several 4-drawer filing systems for the office.

4.3. IT

Sonja Gonzalez, Chief Information Officer, presented the IT department's CIP budget which consists of 5 projects. Ms. Gonzalez stated that there is some carryover from the previous fiscal year for each project based on two things; COVID-19 and the subsequent budget freeze, which effectively stopped some projects as well as other projects which were not going to be completed in time. Ms. Gonzalez gave an overview of all five projects.

Mayor McCarley inquired if there would be a possibility of any reimbursements for projects and purchases which had been initiated due to COVID-19 and facilitating remote operations. Ms. Gonzalez stated that the department had purchased some mobile hardware devices for remote operations which totaled more than was left in the budget for that item. They in turn used a different line item to cover the cost and will be requesting a reimbursement. Also, Microsoft offered free licensing on Office 365 which allowed the City to save money on software upgrades. Finance Director Katie Ambrose clarified that FEMA has indicated that public assistance funding will not reimburse for IT equipment related to remote operations; however there are some other sources of funding which can be explored to cover these expenses.

Councilor Rice inquired about the \$10,500 on page 10 for MDTs and asked if this was to update all the equipment in the police department vehicles. Ms. Gonzalez stated that as part of the purchasing program, they will purchase a new MDT (mobile device terminal) with each vehicle; because of the way it's been done in the past, some MDTs are out of warranty and the manufacturer does not offer an extended warranty mid-use. This money is to repair or replace these MDTs should it be necessary within the next fiscal year. Ms. Gonzalez said that this money could also be used to replace aging mobile devices such as phones and tablets which are nearing end of life and could be a vector for cyber attacks due to their age.

Ms. Gonzalez gave an overview of the CIP request for Kronos Scheduler, an add-on to the existing Kronos Time Keeper to better manage the complicated shifts and scheduling requirements of departments such as Fire and Police. Councilor Walker asked if Kronos was already in use. Ms. Gonzalez confirmed that the City is already using Kronos, but the add-on Scheduler has not been implemented.

Councilor Rice asked how the Fire department and Police department are currently managing schedules without this software. Ms. Gonzalez stated that they are currently using Excel spreadsheets and manual scheduling on paper.

CIO Gonzalez gave an overview of the request for network upgrades and expansion, including \$170,000 for disaster recovery. The carryover from the prior year is \$280,344. This project would put a plan in place for how to respond if the City's most critical equipment fails and how it will be recovered. She stated that there are many steps which need to occur prior to implementation and these had begun before COVID-19. She also reviewed the \$90,000 for upgrades to security cameras which had previously been put on hold due to the pandemic.

Councilor Walker asked if the request for an additional \$40,000 in FY21 is necessary with the large carryover amount from the previous year. Ms. Gonzalez answered that the carryover amount is already earmarked for previous projects which were unable to be started in the previous fiscal year due to COVID-19; however they will be completed and the additional money is needed for other necessary projects.

4.4. Police and Dispatch

Chief Toussaint reviewed the department's two CIP requests for a total request of \$202,000, the bulk of which is vehicle replacement and additions. The request is for 3 frontline vehicles and 2 backline vehicles, 3 of which are replacements of current vehicles. The department is looking to hire two more officers and already the authorized amount of staff exceeds the vehicles available during a shift. The Chief reported that the department frequently runs out of vehicles especially during day shifts. This request will increase the fleet by 2 vehicles, one frontline and one backline. He gave specific details on the vehicles being replaced.

The second project is a continuation of the Taser 60 replacement plan to replace the older, obsolete taser models. This is year 4 of the 5-year plan and the cost would be \$16,000.

Chief Toussaint reviewed an upcoming dispatch project that will not be requested for FY21, but rather the following year. The department is looking to move the dispatch center up to the third floor of the police department and combine it with the City EOC. The department is outgrowing the current space and needs to expand and improve the dispatch center.

4.5 City Manager

City Manager Cox introduced Samantha Rodgerson, Executive Secretary, to discuss the Government Channel CIP request.

Ms. Rodgerson directed Council to page 11 of the CIP book. This CIP item is the \$27,000 received from Comcast as grant money. These non-lapsing funds are received yearly and are used to upgrade and replace equipment and provide the programing which goes out to the public. Ms. Rodgerson reviewed several upcoming projects which would utilize this grant money: The editing system is past due to be replaced and is currently unable to utilize current software or receive updates. The microphones for Council Chambers are also in need of replacement.

Councilor Lachapelle asked if the grant money was coming from Atlantic Broadband as opposed to Comcast. Celeste Plaia, Government Channel Coordinator, stated that the grant was part of the franchise agreement between the City and Comcast; there was no such stipulation in the agreement with Atlantic Broadband. Councilor Lachapelle asked City Manager Cox if the franchise agreement had been executed with Atlantic Broadband. City Manager Cox reported that the franchise agreement was in place, but that there had been a trade off when Metrocast was purchased by Atlantic Broadband; in exchange for the black fiber that Atlantic provides, the City is no longer receiving a grant. Comcast does not provide the black fiber, so they offer the grant.

5. Other

Mayor McCarley reminded Council of the budget adjustment forms which had been distributed and recommended utilizing these forms when reviewing the budget. City Manager Cox advised Council to contact Finance Director Ambrose if any assistance is needed in regards to specific budget figures.

Councilor Walker asked Mike Scala, Director of Economic Development, for clarification on the \$40,000 increase in the "Consulting, other" line. Mr. Scala answered that the department had gone through the original \$40,000 allocation quickly and he felt like it was underfunded. He increased the amount to cover any prospective projects that may arise such as surveying or consulting. Councilor Walker asked for further clarification in the \$20,000 increase in the "Community Service" line. Ms. Scala stated that this item was for \$5,000 additional for the Arts program and another \$15,000 for Main Street.

City Manager Cox reminded the public about the option for live public input during Council Meetings and advised those wanting to participate to fill out the preregistration form online.

Councilor Lachance asked for an update on the Wayfinding signage projects which had last been discussed early in the year. Mr. Scala said the signs are currently being made, although COVID-19 has pushed the project back approximately a month. He stated that the signs should be completed and installed within the next several weeks.

6. Non-Public/Non-Meeting

6.1. Non-Public Session – Land, RSA 91-A:3, II (d)

Councilor Lauterborn **MOVED** to enter into a non-public session at 8:07 PM under RSA 91-A:3, II (d). Councilor Lachapelle seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous roll call vote with Councilors Rice, Walker, Belken, Bogan, Lachapelle, Hamann, Lauterborn, Hainey, Abbott, Gray, Hutchinson, Lachance and Mayor McCarley all voting in favor.

Councilor Lachapelle **MOVED** to exit the non-public session at 8:38 PM. Councilor Rice seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a majority roll call vote with Councilors Hainey, Lauterborn, Abbott, Hutchinson, Rice, Lachapelle, Walker, Gray, Bogan, Hamann, Belken, Lachance and Mayor McCarley voting in favor.

Councilor Lauterborn **MOVED** to seal the minutes of the non-public session because disclosure would render the proposed action ineffective. Councilor Lachapelle seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a 12 to 1 roll call vote with Councilors Hamann, Walker, Belken, Lachance, Abbott, Gray, Rice, Bogan, Hainey, Lachapelle, Lauterborn, and Mayor McCarley voting in favor and Councilor Hutchinson voting opposed.

7. Adjournment

Mayor McCarley **MOVED** to **ADJOURN** the Committee of the Whole Budget Workshop at 8:41 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cassie Givara
Deputy City Clerk