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March 23, 2010

### **REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE**

The Committee on Finance convened on March 23, 2010, with Chairman Maryann Heuston presiding and Committee Members Aldermen William White, John Connolly and Rebekah Gewirtz also present and voting. Also present were Aldermen Walter Pero and Dennis Sullivan, Administrative Assistant Matt Dias, City Solicitor Frank Wright, Chief Fire Engineer Kevin Kelleher, DPW Director of Operations Richard Willette, Water Superintendent Carol Antonelli, Ginger Barrett from the DPW, Assessor Mark Levy, David Lutes and Anne Thomas from OSPCD and Finance Director Ed Bean.

#### **188967 - approval of an appropriation for vertical pointing of the east wall at the Winter Hill School:**

Ms. Barrett told the members that the horizontal pointing has been completed and that the cost for the vertical pointing would be paid from unused funds remaining from the Trum Field field-house project. Mr. Bean verified that this would be a qualified use of the funds and that Board of Aldermen approval is needed in order to proceed.

#### **188966 - approval of an appropriation to install lighted bollards at various schools:**

The members were informed that the bollards would be installed at the Capuano, Kennedy, West Somerville and Healy Schools.

#### **188969 - approval to expend a grant for technical rescue training and rescue equipment:**

Chief Kelleher told the members that these funds would be used to train 16 fire fighters in trench rescue and to purchase additional rescue equipment. The training course will begin at the end of the summer and the rescue truck should be in the city by September.

#### **188965 - approval to amend the appropriation to purchase and install water meters:**

Ms. Antonelli told the members that an additional \$400,000 is needed to purchase and install new water meters. The additional cost is due in part to the large number of properties having large meters. Mr. Bean told the members that action by the Board of Aldermen is required to amend the original appropriation of \$4,400,000 to \$4,824,000.

#### **188970 - approval to expend a grant for a solar panel on the Central Library, several solar area lighting units, and a sustainability fair:**

Mr. Lutes told the members that the city has received a grant of \$56,334 from the MA Technology Collaborative's Clean Energy Choice program and that the funds would be used for a solar panel on the Central Library, several solar area lighting units and a sustainability fair. Alderman White requested that a cost/benefit analysis of electrical savings on new energy be provided.

**189005 - authorization to execute a deed conveying the city's interest in a parcel of land:**

Attorney Adam Dash addressed the members regarding a parcel at 202 Elm Street. An examination of records dating back to 1845 indicates that over the years the city's zoning codes have been changed and that the city reconfigured Elm Street, giving the balance of land to abutters. Apparently, somewhere along the way, the title to the property became clouded. The title company involved in this matter feels that the execution of this deed would resolve the issue. City Solicitor Wright agrees with Attorney Dash and told the members that the title should have been corrected 90 years ago. Mr. Wright noted that the owner of the property has been taxed on the parcel since the 1920's.

**188757 - programs assisting seniors and low income homeowners who have difficulty paying their property taxes:**

Mr. Levy told the members that seniors and/or homeowners who need a residential or statutory exemption have until March 31, 2010 to apply. Mr. Levy also stated that there is a program available that would allow seniors to work off \$750 of their tax burden through the Council on aging providing that certain criteria are met. The program involves 20 hours of work per week for a period of 5 weeks. Mr. Levy encouraged all homeowners to view their real estate information on the city's website to see how their property is assessed. Mr. Levy also noted that approximately 30 abatements were appealed to the State Appellate Tax Board and that a majority of those were for commercial properties. Alderman Gewirtz inquired about the 8% tax deferral rate and Alderman White asked Mr. Levy to determine if that rate is set by the city or state.

**188669 - authorization to file an application to qualify authorized but un-issued bonds:**

Mr. Bean told the members that borrowing on bonds in Massachusetts is restrictive and that Governor Patrick is trying to address this issue. Mr. Bean spoke about the Qualifying Bond Act and said that bonds can only be amortized on repayment. If bonds are qualified, they may be structured as extending the life of the bond. The city wants to extend the bond on ECSCO in an attempt to mitigate a difficult financial situation because of the deficit and to minimize shortfalls anywhere it can. Mr. Bean told the members that the city will examine all of its outstanding bonds to determine if it makes sense to extend any of them. Chairman Heuston raised the point that this looks like a blanket authorization and that the Board of Aldermen would want to know about using this method on a case by case basis. Alderman White concurred and requested that the BOA receive a list in conjunction with this request which would specify projects which the City would like to use this provision for.

**188877- approval to return \$20,000 from the Max Pak stabilization fund to KSS Investment LLC**

Ms. Thomas discussed a revised covenant Agreement which has not yet been signed but which stipulates that the City would return \$20,000 from MAXPAK to KSS LLC but that those funds would be returned to the city upon finalization of the 3<sup>rd</sup> building in the project. Both Aldermen White and Chairman Heuston said they would prefer that the \$20,000 be returned to the City upon either completion or sale of the 1<sup>st</sup> building. Chairman Heuston said that since this item had not been submitted as part of the agenda, it would be put on the Agenda for the next Committee meeting and discussed in full at that time in order to give members of the Board the opportunity to participate in the discussion.

The committee discussed matters before it and took action on the following 7 items:

**188757:** Communication - Acting Chief Assessor, responding to #188636 re: programs that assist seniors and low income homeowners who have difficulty paying their property taxes.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Should be placed on file

**VOTE:** Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

**188965:** Communication from Mayor - Requesting approval to amend the appropriation of \$4,400,000 (#185830, approved 7/10/08) to purchase and install water meters, by increasing it to \$4,824,000, and authorizing issuance of a bond to meet the appropriation.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Should be approved

**VOTE:** Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

**188966:** Communication from Mayor - Requesting approval of an appropriation of \$18,853 from the remaining balance of \$34,687 in the Trum Field House Project, to the School Traffic Safety Bollards Acct., to install LED lighted bollards at various schools citywide.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Should be approved

**VOTE:** Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

**188967:** Communication from Mayor - Requesting approval of an appropriation of \$15,350 from the remaining balance of \$34,687 in the Trum Field House Project, to the Winter Hill School Repairs Acct., for vertical pointing of the east wall at the school.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Should be approved

**VOTE:** Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

**188969:** Communication from Mayor - Requesting approval to expend a grant of \$105,356 from FEMA's Dept. of Homeland Security for technical rescue training and rescue equipment in the Fire Dept.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Should be approved

**VOTE:** Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

**188970:** Communication from Mayor - Requesting approval to expend a grant of \$56,334 from the MA Technology Collaborative's Clean Energy Choice program to the Office of Sustainability and Environment, for a solar panel on the Central Library, several solar area lighting units, and a sustainability fair.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Should be approved

**VOTE:** Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

**189005:** Communication from Mayor - Requesting authorization to execute a deed conveying the city's interest in land located at 202 Elm St., so the owners can clear title to allow the sale of the property.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Should be approved

**VOTE:** Unanimous, 4 - 0 in favor

Committee on Finance