

Chair Beauregard called the regular meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Members present: Councilor Finocchiaro, Clr. McCarty, Councilor Saba, Councilor Saffie, Councilor Simard, Councilor Beauregard, Councilor DiZoglio, Councilor Faretra, and Chair Beauregard.

Acceptance of Agenda

MOTION BY: Councilor Zeigler, seconded by Councilor Faretra to accept the agenda.

MOTION BY: Councilor Simard, seconded by Councilor Saffie to amend to move contracts C-22-57 and C-22-58 out of order as Item 6A.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS.

MOTION BY: Councilor Zeigler, seconded by Councilor Simard to accept the agenda, as amended. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS.

Pledge of Allegiance/Invocation

Everyone stood for the Pledge of Allegiance and remained standing for the Invocation given by Councilor Zeigler.

Organizational Business

Chair Beauregard opened nominations for Election of Chair

Councilor Saffie nominated Councilor Zeigler for Chair, seconded by Councilor Simard. Councilor Zeigler accepted the nomination.

Chair Beauregard closed nominations for Chair. UPON ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 yes, 1 no (Clr. Finocchiaro) 2023 Council Chair – Eunice Zeigler

Chair Zeigler opened nominations for Vice-Chair

Councilor Simard nominated Councilor Faretra for Vice-Chair, seconded by Councilor Saffie. Councilor Faretra accepted the nomination. UPON ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 yes, 1 present (Clr. Finocchiaro) Vice-Chair 2023 – Joel Faretra

Appointment of Council Clerk Linda Gagnon

MOTION BY: Councilor DiZoglio, seconded by Councilor Beauregard to appoint.

Councilor DiZoglio Linda has been a great help to all of us and she continues to do a great job. Linda has done great things for us as a Council. This is an important appointment for us tonight.

Councilor Beauregard, given his experience as Chair for the past year, Linda Gagnon has been incredibly, incredibly helpful. She works hard and does a great job.

Councilor Simard thanked the clerk and noted he is glad she's back for another year.

Vice Chair Faretra said when Ms. Gagnon's contract came up, he wants to make sure she knows not it was the contract, not the person. He is very happy to vote in favor of this appointment.

Chair Zeigler echoed everything that has been said. Our Madam clerk has been very resourceful and is just a wealth of knowledge for this Council. She is happy to vote in support. UPON ROLL CALL VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Appointment of City Solicitor Kenneth Rossetti

MOTION BY: Councilor Beauregard, seconded by Councilor Saba to appoint.

Councilor Beauregard said City Solicitor Rossetti is an outstanding resource for this Council. Whenever he had any questions to seek his guidance on literally any issue, he's been very accessible. He is very deserving of serving the city with this appointment.

Chair Zeigler said he has been immensely helpful. The Solicitor has been very accessible to us when we have a question and is very thorough in his responses as well. She appreciates that and happy to be in support.

UPON ROLL CALL VOTE: UNANIMOUS.

Acceptance of Minutes from Previous Meetings: December 19, 2022 regular meeting

MOTION BY: Councilor Simard, seconded by Councilor Saffie to approve.

UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Proclamations/Correspondence – None

C-23-57 Employment Contract by and between the City of Methuen and Randy R. Haggar, Deputy Chief

MOTION BY: Councilor Simard, seconded by Councilor DiZoglio to approve.

In response to Chair Zeigler's question for clarification, Solicitor Rossetti explained the item was Charter objected which is to stop vote. Council can deliberate.

UPON ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 yes, 1 no (Clr. McCarty)

C-23-58 2022 Memorandum of Agreement Between City of Methuen and Randy R. Haggar (remove from table)

MOTION BY: Councilor DiZoglio, seconded by Councilor Faretra to remove from the table. UPON ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 yes, 1 no (Clr. McCarty)

MOTION BY: Councilor DiZoglio, seconded by Councilor Faretra to approve. UPON ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 yes, 1 no (Clr. McCarty)

Consideration of Appointments

Vincent Ferrero – Superintendent of Vehicle Maintenance

MOTION BY: Councilor Saffie, seconded by Councilor Faretra to appoint.

Director, Pat Bower, stated Vincent has been with Methuen since 2012. Prior to that he worked for the City of Lawrence for about eleven years where he spent four years as a working foreman as the head mechanic. He has a degree in automotive technology. Vinnie stepped up when the last Superintendent retired last Spring. He has been filling the obligations of that role since then. He has done a tremendous job. It is a pleasure to nominate him to this position.

Councilor Simard said he had the pleasure of working with Vinnie when he worked for vehicle maintenance in Lawrence. He was that "go to guy" all the time and as a police officer when the equipment goes down, the cruiser, it usually has to get on line pretty fast. Vinnie knew

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how to prioritize, always honest. He told it like it was and as a supervisor at the time he really appreciated that. He appreciated his hard work then and will appreciate it in the future.

UPON ROLL CALL VOTE: UNANIMOUS yes

Shadi Kassis – Community Development Board

MOTION BY: Councilor Saffie, seconded by Councilor Simard to appoint.

Councilor Faretra reported that earlier today Council received an updated list of Boards and Commissions. Even though Council has had many of these come forward, there’s still a lot of work to do.

UPON ROLL CALL VOTE: 8 yes, 1 abstention (Clr. Saba)

Presentations/Department updates – None

Public Participation

Susan Riccio, 35 East Street, read a prepared statement (attached)

Vice-Chair Faretra read a letter from Jennifer Kannan regarding Chapter 278 of the acts of 2018 due to the \$3,785,000 overspending of the Methuen School Department (attached)

Mayor’s Report

Mayor Perry congratulated the Chair, Vice-Chair, the Clerk and City Solicitor. He wished everyone a happy and healthy new year. He spoke about an editorial he read in the Eagle Tribune. It talked about using fact vs. emotion in making decisions. It is important.

He really appreciates Council approving the contract for the Deputy Chief. There were some comments made by a purported agent that he wants to address here even though it was on social media. The fact first is important for us all to understand. The FY’20 his first year in office there was a Chief and five Captains and the budget for the police department was 12.67 million after Council worked with him to cut it from 15 million originally submitted by the Chief. That included one Chief and five Captains. The FY’23 the budget as you probably well know for the Methuen police department is 12.57 million less than what was funded in FY’20 despite the fact that we’ve added eight patrol officers and a number of Sergeants. We have a command staff that consists of one Chief, one Deputy Chief, and two Captains. It is important for the residents to understand we are not spending more. We’re spending less. We’re getting more value out of our money putting patrol officers out on the street. The Mayor addressed the comments on Chapter 278 oversight. He would be remiss if he did not represent the CAFO who is not here tonight due to illness and talk to Council about the fact that there are statements being made such as one being made does not negatively impact the taxpayers if we don’t pay it off. That is an incorrect statement. The City of Methuen’s Free Cash situation is such that when we go to borrow collectively, all of us, to do our Capital Improvement Projects, it will cost us more money if we don’t pay off that note. That’s the simple fact of economics. That’s not emotion. That’s not opinion. That is fact. To the residents watching, Council could make a decision not to pay off that 2.5 million. It will cost more every time we borrow. It will cost more because lending agencies will look at it and say you have enough Free Cash on hand to do some of these things. You should use that. That is the plain and simple fact. He is always open to healthy debate on topics like this but it is important that we understand that the only thing that would happen is the nature of our relationship with Sean Cronin would never change and you can do a FOIYA of my emails and you’ll see the email from me to Sean when he opined “we need to stay connected” The plan and simple fact of the economics is we will be costing money if we don’t pay off that 2.5 million dollars remaining on the loan.

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There was a meeting on trash today talking about the pros and cons and he wanted to start with some good news. We had a ballpark of 27 % improvement in reduction of trash in the third quarter of the year. That's significant. We still have neighborhoods that are struggling to adhere to the program. We are about to launch the next phase of the trash program which is reeducation to include door tags to targeted neighborhoods, scheduling neighborhood sessions, and also having one of our interns go around and talk to residents about recycling and what's involved in recycling before the stickers come out. There are four steps before we start doing stickers saying trash won't be picked up.

The Mayor thanked Sue Riccio for the comments. He also read an article over the holidays. One in every six families in the state is struggling to pay their utility bills. Meanwhile the big utilities reported a profit in the third quarter of 13.8 billion dollars. That is outrageous. We must do everything. He would enlist the Council's help to start talking to our soon to be new Governor and talk about what we can do to kind of cut back on that because 13.8 billion dollars profit. That's just the profit. That's an egregious number.

He reminded Council at the next City Council meeting we are going to start a new award for some of our small businesses. It's called "community foundations award" and the first recipient will be John Vargas from Bada Bing. He will be here in the chamber. It is well deserved and overdue.

The Mayor reported he is planning for a State of the City address before the end of the month. He will get the date and invite the entire Council to that. He noted there is a lot that has been accomplished that we need to talk about.

The Mayor read a letter dated 12/30/22 "*Mr. Mayor, I have lived in Methuen for over twenty-four years on Sampson Street. But all these years we have never had a water pipe break until this past Christmas day. As you could imagine it was quite a surprise and through a wrench into our family gathering. I am certain that those affected by this in our neighborhood were equally surprised. "What were we going to do?" Can't wash dishes or use the restroom and I have all these guests at my house. Fortunately, the city's DPW reacted quickly and we were without water for only a few hours. The crew came out, called out on Christmas day and through the cold fixed the problem. I want to express to you our sincere appreciation to the crew who took care of this. It was very much appreciated, and I just want to express our thanks to the workers who fixed the problem. Please pass on our gratitude to them. It is signed by James and Debra Twomey, 8 Sampson Street.*" The Mayor publicly acknowledged Director Bower and Superintendent Daryl Laurenza and the entire crew that responded on Christmas day with less than one hour's notice and fixed that water main break within two hours. Congratulations on an outstanding job.

Councilor Finocchiaro said during the last Finance Committee meeting she asked that the quarterly ARPA reports go on the city website. The CAFO said she would be willing to do that.

Mayor Perry indicated they are in the process of putting them up.

Councilor Finocchiaro said some of the things they've talked about in the past she wanted to follow up on. One being where are we at with the DPW building and how much will be allocated in a couple of years? She knows that is an ongoing discussion. She wanted to bring it up to see if there's any updates on it. Last year, Council asked about the election workers' increase that the Mayor said he would be doing. She reminded the Mayor and the administration

that the minimum wage increased to fifteen dollars an hour. She asked where we are at with the Election workers. She asked if there are any other positions that are looking to increase due to the increase in the minimum wage and if so, is that already allocated into our budget?

Mayor Perry said they have every intent on increasing the wage in the FY'24 budget. He wouldn't increase the budget without coming back to Council. He is well aware that the minimum wage went up to \$15 per hour.

The Mayor said they are revisiting the study regarding the DPW building. They've got several projects in the plan. There's four million dollars that Council allocated to that effort. It includes studying the Battye site to see if that is acceptable. That has started. We have to be committed by FY'24, not spent. We've come before this Council with a vast number of the ARPA projects started, specifically engineering. We are doing the same thing with the DPW building and won't spend a Nickle of that without coming back to Council and telling them what it is because it will be a contract. We are revisiting the study that was done several years ago to see if that is good. It is fully their intent to commit to all of the ARPA projects, not just the DPW structure, that we committed to and this Council selected.

Councilor Finocchiaro indicated she would follow up with the CAFO with regards to if there are any increases that we would be having and if we have already allocated for that. With regards to Mayor Perry asked for clarification on increases. Councilor Finocchiaro said anybody who is being paid less than \$15 per hour, if there are any employees. Mayor Perry said we do not have any employees that are being paid less than \$15 per hour.

Councilor Finocchiaro said from time to time she reviews the public records requests and look at what our responses are. In doing so, she looked at one document, the topic aside seemed to have several HR policies as a copy that were given to a new employee. She was concerned to see that a brand-new employee was receiving policies that were signed by several administrations back. She knows that we have all said that this Council and the administration going back to 2017 wanted for all of those to be redone and to be updated as those are changing year to year in a very significant way with best practices. She is trying to understand what our current goal is starting from today, how we can change that so the documents that are being given are evaluated by your administration, updated to most current best practices. *"What is the timeline that you see on that?"*

Mayor Perry said he is not going to give a timeline because she just wants to hold him to something that she could come back. We bought a brand-new system because the process of giving procedure. The HR Director will tell you this is something he's talked to her about that is outdated. We are in the process of switching our policy and procedures over to an online process where the procedures are sent out to every employee. Each employee acknowledges that they received and understand the procedure. That system is set to go live within the next 30 days. Once he sees how that works, he'll come back to Council and tell them what specific policies and procedures are going to be updated and when they are going to be done.

Councilor Finocchiaro currently said this software is sending the current policies and procedures and then you would be updating them as you go at some point. Mayor Perry agreed.

Councilor Simard said he has noticed some inconsistencies in the way we do our job postings and the information that comes to Council. He noticed in some meetings the material doesn't have an address and in some meetings they do. He asked if that is a new policy change.

Mayor Perry responded, no. They are redacted when they go public posting. That's required.

Councilor Simard noted that because they are not redacted, everybody's address is online, and it wasn't last time. A recent appointment that came before Council the home address was not even on the sheet that was presented to Council.

Mayor Perry explained the home address should not be posted. It should be redacted for any employee.

Councilor Simard reiterated there seems to be some inconsistencies with the job postings and when questions were addressed to our HR Director, the response that one of the Councilors got, was insulting to him when he read the answers to the questions. One was being that a department head would have to have residence in the city and then there was a kind of play on words which was insulting to him, in the answer that was given to him. It seems like we are taking one step forward and two steps back in HR, as we know under our previous administration Attorney/HR Director. Now it seems like we are taking two steps back. He said he is looking for some consistency as to what they can get. Councilors who review hundred million-dollar contracts or ten million-dollar contracts and two hundred million-dollar budgets can't even get a home address of an appointee before Council so they could make an educated decision. It seems like every time there's an important decision he gets reminded that he is just a part-time city councilor and his job is not important. When it comes before him, he is going to do his homework.

Mayor Perry said he didn't get that from the Mayor.

Councilor Simard responded, no. But that is the feeling he gets and sometimes from city hall. Keep in mind moving forward when it does come before him, he's going to scrutinize it and going to make sure and he's putting too much trust sometimes and it's kind of backfired on him.

Mayor Perry said he is not tougher on anybody in city hall than he is on the HR Director because he expects more. Having said that, respectfully people make mistakes. When you have an issue with the HR Director, your issue is with him. Councilors are free to call him anytime. Since you bring up the previous appointment that is still in abeyance, he reminded the Council that he gave the Council the appointment two plus weeks in advance. Not once did he receive an email or a phone call from any of the Councilors. We appointed Felix the Deputy Director of DPW. We appointed Vinnie Ferraro the Superintendent of Vehicles. This Council sat here at the previous meeting and talked to him about the process. The process is the same for whoever. One of the things that Council has to do you have to help him. You have to move past the old Methuen. You use the comment when you talk about it. Inconsistencies, Councilor you have every right to complain about that. If anybody in this building tells you that you are just a part-time Councilor, then your next call should be to him so he can speak to those individuals and make sure they understand.

Councilor Simard said that is the feeling he gets. He's gotten it before and maybe some of the other Councilors have. It just seemed like there was a concerted effort to hide information from Council to make an educated guess. Maybe he put his trust where maybe he shouldn't have.

Mayor Perry explained all addresses and personal information other than the name should be redacted. You can ask the Solicitor. That is the process. If we didn't follow through, shame on us. Shame on me. You should hold me accountable not the HR Director because she works for him.

Councilor Simard said he is confused because there seems to be inconsistencies. We've got to get better with job postings. The information should be available to Council to make that decision that doesn't come back to us in a year or two.

Mayor Perry said there is no obvious attempt on his part or anybody he is aware of to confiscate or hide things from this Council. This administration has been more transparent than any. He doesn't want the Councilor walking around thinking that the administration is trying keep things from Council. He would disagree with that.

Councilor DiZoglio followed up with the storm damage that we had about a week and a half ago. We had a few school incidents and there was some damage to Branch Street as well.

Mayor Perry said he didn't have the update on Branch Street, but he will get that. The Councilor is referring to the sign at the top of the building got hammered significantly. We are looking at that. As far as the Tenney School roof which was the most significant issue, the school department and maintenance has done a great job in patching it up. It is not a permanent fix. When we do the Capital Plan this year (there is a contract on the agenda tonight for the CGS roof), you can plan on seeing capital requests for improvements to the Tenney roof now because the fixes that are being made are not permanent in nature. They will be enough to get us through the year. We will need to redo that roof as well. That is the only information he has but he will share anything with the Council that he gets well in advance of the Capital Improvement projects. He will get that when he goes to the School Committee meeting on Monday night and bring it back to Council.

Councilor DiZoglio said just be mindful too. He knows that this takes precedence over the course over any other Capital Improvement projects that are ongoing. We just want to make sure the school is up and running, both by the next school year.

Councilor Saba agreed with Councilor Simard on the questions he asked. Councilor Saba said he thought the process last week, at the last meeting the Council was misled. He was ready to support that candidate and then the more he dug, the more he just feels like Council was purposely misled by the HR Director. He is losing faith in the HR Director. He doesn't know when her appointment comes up next, but it would be unfair of him to vote "no" then, without giving her a warning now. There were issues on that appointment. There was no address. It wasn't redacted. The Mayor is elected by the people and so are Councilors. We all run the city and appointments come before Council. Nothing should be redacted from the City Council. When it has access to the public there is certain information that should be redacted but he doesn't really care, nor does he need to see a person's date of birth or social security. Everything else needs to be provided for Council. Normally, he has asked the Mayor, he's sent an email and said can you please give me the address of this candidate or that candidate. He's always gotten it. But in this case, he thought that everything had been covered. There was a requirement of certification that was listed on the job posting that was not met. There was an expiration on the job posting of November 2023. The address wasn't provided. Although there's a fifteen-mile limit outside of the city., if we are going to do away with that, let's do away with it. Let's do an

MOU on police contracts and get it out of there and get it done. But to this Council, or at least to him, the Council was misled with the information. He wants it clarified because we will have a problem if we are ever told again on an email request that says "*I can't provide you with it*" and quoting a law that says *I can't provide you with the information you requested*. That is not acceptable. If we are concerned about security and protecting a person, then if we must go into an executive session and it must be distributed to us and collected, that's fine. But, do not allow a department head to tell Council they are not privy to information because that was a big problem.

Mayor Perry explained in the first case, that came from Council's employee, the City Solicitor. The request was not for an address. The request was for the applications and that was the only response. He was copied on the response that went to the Chairwoman. The request was for the applications. It was not for an address. For over two weeks this Council sat and said nothing, didn't ask him a question, didn't ask him anything about it. And then when we get out on the floor, it's "*gotcha*". If you want this to work, it's got to work both ways.

Councilor Saba agreed. It was a "*gotcha*" to him too.

Mayor Perry said they don't have the 15-mile radius in DPW in the contract that this Council approved. There is a one-hour return time. That's why he read the email tonight.

Councilor Saba said he is glad brought up the other resumes because now it has come to Council's concern that perhaps the process wasn't done right. If Council wants to see the other resumes, then Council has the right to that information. If it must be done in Executive Session meeting, Council could do a 2-11 investigation into how things are getting done, which we don't want to do.

Mayor go ahead Councilor. The same process that was used for Felix Garcia is the same process that was used for Vinnie Ferrara to appoint tonight was used for this employee.

Mayor Perry said were there errors and inconsistencies absolutely. He agrees with what Councilor Simard said, absolutely. But that is the right candidate.

Councilor Saba said Council asked for the information on that particular employee and we were basically told "*I can't give you these applications*" "*I can't give you that info*" He is simply saying if you want to get a clarification from the Solicitor, you can. But as a City Council they are privy to this information. If Council is going to vote, nine representatives of a city of 53,000, and the Mayor is number ten. When we're voting on approving a contract, Council must have the proper information in front of them.

Mayor Perry said he wouldn't put them in front of Council if they weren't the right people.

Councilor McCarty said in the discussion relative to DPW, as far as the training goes, he believes the training is under way, department wide. There's a lot of employees in the department. We can't do them all at once. If they're training people here every day. But there is a plan to have full certification in the department and its ongoing. As far as the residency requirement, he looked into the CBA for the Superintendents and the residency requirement there. The current deal was a fifteen-mile radius within ten months. He doesn't have a problem appointing somebody per the agreement and giving that person the time per the agreement to satisfy that requirement. For him, it seems like on this appointment he knows Council will talk about it again at the next meeting. But he's heard a lot of the arguments through the back

channels of the Councilors. To him it seems like every day there is a different argument. Some of them get debunked. Some of them don't. The DPW is not immune to the dueling factions that are at play. Some of the information going around is misleading. He knows the applicant is a squeaky-clean person and it seems like there's a lot of slandering going on in the back channels, a lot of misinformation. He looks to the CBA. He doesn't have a problem giving someone a contingent appointment to satisfy a residency requirement and they're in line to go through the training. It seems like a lot of this is getting personal. We need to communicate a little bit more freely to debunk some of these things. He believes that the discussion is healthy, but we must be cognizant of the background of this position.

Councilor Faretra said one of the Councilors was looking for resumes whether redacted or not so I am hoping you can answer that question along with the questions Councilor Saba had when it comes to all of this. He yielded his time to the Solicitor to answer all the questions.

Solicitor Rossetti said a public forum like this would not be appropriate for him to get into specific advice and Counsel that he provided to city officials or advice that he didn't give to city officials. There is case law addressing discovery of ability of employment related materials that holds, and there was a case from early 2000 where it was held that 2000 applications and other similar documentation does enjoy protection from public disclosure. If a person is applying for a job it is likely the person is employed elsewhere and if applications and resumes get put out into the public square at that point then that could be very embarrassing to the person who has applied, sent a resume in, if that person does not get hired. There are protections afforded under that case interpreted Exemption C under the public records statute which is known as the personnel exemption. There are differences though when with respect to appointments by an appointing authority that does not come before this body for an approval of an appointment vs. an applicant who must be approved by this body. For example, when he applied to be City Solicitor and he became a finalist for the position his resume became discoverable because this body would have to openly deliberate his credentials. By agreeing to become a finalist he put himself out there. The same would be true for if there were an opening in the position of clerk. This Council has the original appointment authority once the candidate becomes a finalist that resume becomes discoverable. It is a different calculus when you are talking about someone who doesn't get appointed or get approved for appointment through a public deliberation. All of that must be factored into advising on the discoverability of application materials in the scope with which those application materials can be distributed.

Councilor Faretra said if five individuals applied for a position and all you wanted was redacted applications and resumes, no names, we are not entitled to that information. All people are looking for is the information to make sure that the candidate in front of us did have the most qualifications out of everyone that applied.

Solicitor Rossetti said he wouldn't want to make a snap judgement. At this point, a key question here would be whether the position is one that requires approval authority of the body. It's a much closer question if the person is required to be approved by the body vs. someone who could be appointed by an appointing authority other than this body and doesn't require to be put before this body for approval.

Chair Zeigler pointed out that the item relative to the appointment Council has been discussing is not on the agenda. She doesn't want to take up any more time of this meeting discussing it.

Councilor DiZoglio Point of Clarification asked the Solicitor if his opinion was asked about this matter.

Solicitor Rossetti declined to get into deliberations in a public forum regarding a conversation that he had or didn't have with city personnel.

Councilor Saba Point of Clarification the question was asked if Councilors ask to see the resumes and we are the body that must appoint, you are saying it depends on if we are the appointing authority. In this case Council must approve an appointment. *"If we ask for the information, whether it is public or in an executive session, does Council have access to that information?"*

Solicitor Rossetti said as he mentioned to the Vice-Chair it is a much closer question when the person appointed must be approved by this body. He wouldn't want to make a snap judgement on a universal rule that would apply in each instance. But he is happy to follow up with a formal opinion that he can put together for this body after he can give it more consideration.

Councilor Saba basically you're not answering the question right now. We had a conversation and you said that if it were in executive session Council could request that information. He can wait for a clarification but for the record, the Solicitor didn't answer it tonight.

Chair Zeigler indicated the Solicitor has stated he will give a thorough response later.

Public Service:

Grants: None

Licenses: Secondhand Dealer Application - Cash N Gold, LLC. 211 Merrimack Street, Methuen, MA

MOTION BY: Councilor Saffie, seconded by Councilor Simard to approve. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Contracts:

C-23-59 Capeway Roofing Systems, Inc., 664 Sanford Road, Westport, MA 02790 for Low-Slope Roof Replacement Phase II at the CGS – 100 Howe Street in the Amount of \$1,655,500.00

MOTION BY: Councilor Beauregard, seconded by Councilor DiZoglio to approve. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

Other Officers and Committee Reports – None

Unfinished Business

Resolutions:

TR-22-109 Resolution Authorizing Transfer \$2,550,000 from Free Cash, to be transferred to Debt Service Expenses to fund the payoff of the State Qualified Deficit Financing Loan

MOTION BY: Councilor Beauregard, seconded by Councilor Faretra to approve.

Councilor Saba said our relationship with Sean Cronin will change. He is available just not in an official capacity. Because we have so much Free Cash a loan is not needed.

Mayor Perry said the CAFO noted in her report the interest rate would be lower because of need.

Councilor Saba commented the city would save a minimum of \$265,000.

Mayor Perry explained there is a \$400,000 payment annually going into the budget.

Councilor Saba liked the idea of moving money to stabilization from Free Cash. When it is time to certify Free Cash there is no access to it. It would require 2/3 vote of the Council and give city more control over moving that money.

Mayor Perry said he would prefer to speak with the CAFO first.

Councilor Beauregard read a portion of Sean Cronin's opinion. He views this as a "prudent decision".

Councilor McCarty said it is a good thing for the city to get bad debt off the books. It gives room for growth.

Councilor Faretra asked if \$400,000 has been paid this year and noted there would be a cost savings this year as well.

Councilor DiZoglio recalled five years ago there were nine other school departs. All but two could pay for it. if we had this Free Cash in 2017 the city could have done much better. The Mayor is doing a good job.

Councilor Finocchiaro mentioned unfunded liabilities in our pension system. It was repeatedly said to Council DPW employees are working in an unacceptable building. The CAFO is not present and there is no reason to rush this vote. Four Councilors will be gone by the next election and will be replaced. We need to guarantee them the state will be looking over our shoulder.

Councilor Saba explained there is good debt and bad debt. Renovating a building is good debt. This is bad debt. The school department was misrun. Nine went over and seven were able to pay. Four Councilors voted to omnibus authority to the Mayor and never did that again. We could not cover the debt. Several cities had to have oversight. Methuen needed the state to bail us out. He is not minimalizing writing 268.

Councilor DiZoglio spoke of a Mayor who left twelve million dollars in Free Cash. Another Mayor came in and depleted funding. At the time he was on the School Committee. A lot of people were misled.

TR-22-110 Resolution Authorizing Acceptance of Massachusetts Executive Office for Administration and Finance \$200,000 Community Compact Grant

MOTION BY: Councilor Saffie, seconded by Councilor Faretra to approve. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

TR-22-111 Resolution Authorizing Acceptance of a Fiscal Year 2022 Massachusetts
Emergency Management Agency Emergency Management Performance Grant

MOTION BY: Councilor Saffie, seconded by Councilor DiZoglio to approve. UPON
VOTE: UNANIMOUS.

TR-22-112 Resolution Authorizing Expenditures of \$41,000 from the Edwin J. Castle
Fund

MOTION BY: Councilor Saffie, seconded by Councilor Faretra to approve. UPON
VOTE: UNANIMOUS.

Ordinances: None

New Business

Resolutions: None

Ordinances: None

Request of Councilors

Councilor Saba requested working with MCTV to turn up the speakers in the back of the
hall. Residents have difficulty hearing the meeting.

Chair Zeigler reported she started a conversation with MCS and Luis Santiago about
reconfiguration of this space. They should have a solution in the next couple of months.

Councilor DiZoglio said the city could use an investment in the seating area, a redesign to
make it look better. (His drawer is held up by tape.)

Vice-Chair Faretra requested that the Chair work towards a joint meeting with the School
Committee.

Councilor Simard requested inhouse meetings for all boards and commissions.

Mayor Perry said he doesn't have the authority to tell Boards and Commissions to meet
in person. There is no reason they should not be meeting in person.

Councilor McCarty said he would like Council to be apprised of the BBO matter and not
have to wait twelve months for an update.

Councilor Saffie said she spoke with a senior citizen who was upset about Zoom
meetings. They are not reliable for anybody. "Why are boards not coming in?"

Councilor Finocchiaro said the city cannot afford the cosmetics of new desks in the Great
Hall. She read an excerpt of Exemption C from the Guide to Public Records. Before the next
meeting or as soon as possible she would like the

Chair Zeigler announced that she and the Vice-Chair want to work on tracking for all
requests by Council. Several dozen requests come to the floor. She and the Vice-Chair will be
working with the Clerk to come up with a better process to follow up and tracking requests.

Methuen City Council Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 3rd, 2023 @ 7:00 p.m.

Great Hall, Searles Building

Any Other Business for the Good and Welfare of the Community

Councilor Finocchiaro reported Senator DiZoglio swearing in ceremony is January 18th, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. at Methuen High School.

Adjourn

MOTION BY: Councilor DiZoglio, seconded by Councilor Saffie to adjourn. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS

I do hereby certify that at a meeting of which a quorum was present, the foregoing minutes were approved by the Methuen City Council by a unanimous vote on January 17, 2023.

Linda Gagnon

COUNCIL CLERK