

A Special Meeting of the **Capital Improvement and Strategic Planning Committee** was held on March 20, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. in Meeting Room 1, City Hall West, 131 North Main Street, Bristol, Connecticut.

Members Present: Mayor Caggiano, John Smith (arrived 4:10 p.m.), Glenn Heiser, Tom Hislop, Sebastian Panioto, Marie O'Brien, Jacqueline Olsen, and Cheryl Thibeault.

Also Present: Diane Waldron, Robin Manuele, Jessica Pilgrim, Richard Hart, Peter Fusco, Ray Rogozinski

1. Call to order

Mayor Caggiano called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

2. Approval of the March 9, 2023 minutes and to take any action as necessary

Commissioner Panioto made a motion seconded by Commission Thibeault "to approve the minutes from February 22, 2023." Motion approved.

3. To review Debt Projections with the Comptroller and to take any action as necessary

Diane Waldron reviewed the Debt Service Projections and explained the City is issuing bonds on Wednesday for City Hall renovations, Communications upgrade project and Fire Station 3 Renovations.

The City currently has approximately \$84 million in net authorized unissued debt (net of anticipated grants) which includes the \$9,163,417 in progress for projects noted on the FY2024 Proposed Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The total issued after Financing #1 is only \$80 million. This will essentially fund the majority of what is currently authorized and unissued. It does not include projections for any future CIP authorizations for FY2024 or later that total \$125 million as outlined above.

Increases of approximately \$500,000 in debt service have been incorporated in the General Fund budget over the last few fiscal years. This was achieved by phasing in use of bond premium from prior issues to offset interest costs. It is unknown at this time if there will be a premium on the 2023 bonds that may be used to mitigate future short term increases in debt service interest costs.

General Fund debt service is projected to increase from the current year (FY2023) level of \$11 million to \$13.3 million in FY2025; \$16.2 million in FY2026; and reach a high of \$18.2 million in 2031. Debt Service as a % of Budget gradually increases from 5.1% to a high that occurs in FY2032 of 6.9%. This is still below the 10% level the rating agencies use as a guide. The mill rate impact is the highest in FY2027 at 1.59%.

Assumptions used for budget and mill rate projections are as follows; Estimated FY2024 budget based on requests/changes to date of \$224 million, Average 2.5% increase in

expenditures (aligned with 2.5% statutory cap), 10/1/22 Revaluation Grand List - Adjustment in FY23 mill rate accordingly.

The NEMS project still needs to be approved by State, it is in the design phase, with a projected 2024 bid and expected cash flow.

Commissioner Olsen questioned how it is determined how much to bond and which fiscal year. Diane explained it depends on cash flow, and once a project is authorized, the City has three years once a dollar is spent to issue financing.

Commissioner Heiser questioned where the City was in respect to pension plans, due to returns, should that ever change. Diane explained the City is currently 128.1% funded as of 7/1/22, actuaries do a calculation in the report projecting out over next few years, and they do have the City making a contribution in 2027/28 of under \$2 million with a 6.5% return.

4. To review the Capital Improvement Program and to take any action as necessary.

Diane reviewed the current year and five year capital project reports by funding source and by department. She highlighted the total bonding amount projected over the next six years.

Mayor Caggiano stated the Edgewood and NEMS projects are part of Reimaging Bristol Public Schools, the goal is to get kids into those schools. There is no commitment to the future years. Commissioner Thibeault stated she looks at projects where there was a study done, what is the point of the study if aren't going to do the project.

Commissioner Thibeault discussed the fire apparatus requests as she did not realize the fire ladder truck also meant there would be an increase for staffing of 16 men with the truck. Discussion was held as the capital cost not only affects capital, but operating costs.

Chief Hart reviewed the recommended industry standards, with the benchmark being a single family house fire. The minimum should be 17 people on scene, which increases for apartment and high rises. The City puts 14 on scene, and with a second ladder truck that would increase and put 18 on scene. With every fire, Bristol is taxed to the limit, every company is there and mutual aid is relied on. Most recently, New Britain couldn't respond as mutual aid. Commissioner Smith stated he is for entertaining the ladder truck and staffing, but where can the City save money before a commitment is made on both.

Commissioner O'Brien questioned if this can be implemented over two to three years working with the unions to staff it. If we are going to do it, do it right. Implementation right.

5. To review and approve the Capital Budget for 2023-2024 and to take any action as necessary

Diane stated projects have been added for LoCIP funding. There weren't projects in the CIP that qualified for LoCIP but in review of the operating budget there were Capital Outlay projects that would qualify. These projects need to be on the Capital Plan so they were moved here and need to be approved.

Mayor Caggiano stated he asked the Commissioners to review projects that were ranked below 125. The other project added from the last meeting is the City Hall West Swing Space Reuse, that includes \$450,000 for Architectural Services in 2023-24 and funding in the outyears for construction.

Commissioner Thibeault discussed the Hoppers/Birge project and recommend pushing the project out. Mayor Caggiano stated the planning study could potentially be paid for by ARPA. Also, the current Parks Staff has trouble maintaining what we have.

The Committee discussed the Bike Path which is a low priority. \$80,000 has been allocated to date of City funds for the grant application, however if the grant is received it will cover the remaining costs. Ray Rogozinski stated he would not move forward to construction if we do not get the grant. NVCOG had a public information meeting on this last week at the Library.

Discussion was held on the Truck Wash, overall it's not a bad idea in concept however needs more information and research from all Departments involved in using.

Ray Rogozinski discussed the PW Storage building which is proposed to be a joint building with PW/BPD. The cost per square foot was questioned, as it is a \$4.8 million building for a storage building. The Committee stated an engineering study could be done, could this project potentially be done for less.

The Fire Department apparatus requests if funded now would be \$1,700,000 for the Aerial and \$850,000 Pumper.

Commissioner Heiser stated the City is saving by committing to the trucks now. Commissioner Thibeault stated it is important to procure the vehicle but don't want this tied that we are not funding 16 new firefighters Mayor Caggiano stated the Committee is agreeing to the aerial apparatus, but apparatus alone, and reserve right to come back to talk about staffing.

Mayor Caggiano stated the Committee is in agreement the following projects will be pushed to next year for possible funding Birge/Hoppers, Public Works Truck Wash & Storage Building.

Commissioner Smith made a motion seconded by Commissioner Thibeault “To approve the Capital Budget, as amended.” Motion approved.

6. Adjournment

Commissioner Sebastian made a motion seconded by Commission Smith “to adjourn” at 5:46 p.m. Motion approved.

Jodi A. McGrane
Recording Secretary