

Methuen City Council Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 21, 2023 – 7:00 pm
Great Hall, Searles Building, Third Floor
41 Pleasant Street, Methuen, MA 01844

Chair Zeigler called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members present: Councilor Faretra, Councilor Finocchiaro, Councilor McCarty, Councilor Simard, Councilor Saba, and Chair Zeigler. Acting Mayor D. J. Beauregard was also present.

Acceptance of the Agenda

MOTION BY: Councilor Faretra, seconded by Councilor Simard to accept. UPON VOTE: UNANIMOUS.

Organizational Business

Update on Audio System in Great Hall

Chair Zeigler gave an update. There were technical issues. There was piece of equipment that failed. Individuals were present to test the equipment which took a couple of hours. Several microphones were replaced. It was suggested to change microphones to push button to speak. The goal is to have audio and sound accessible. This will continue to be on the agenda for updates.

Councilor Finocchiaro said audio to push to switch that keeps pertinent information from the floor. Push to speak would be picking up conversations that should not be happening. That should be taken into consideration. Everything is fair game.

Chair Zeigler said that was a recommendation that came from IT.

Reading and Acceptance of Minutes from Previous Meetings

February 6, 2023 – Regular Meeting MOTION BY: Councilor Faretra, seconded by Councilor Simard to approve. UPON VOTE: 5 yes, 1 present (Clr. Finocchiaro) 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

Proclamations/Correspondence

- None

Consideration of Appointments: None

Presentations/Projects/Department Updates

The Community Foundation Award: February 2023, Don Smeriglio

Acting Mayor D.J. Beauregard read the award created by Mayor Perry to recognize individuals that support our community. He congratulated February's recipient Don Smeriglio from Borelli's Italian Deli.

Discussion on new trash system presented by DPW Director

DPW Director, Pat Bower, reported that based on information up to December 31, 2022 there is a 28% decrease in trash, curbside. There is a 12% to 15% increase in recycling. He explained when the automatic arms put carts back down, they are supposed to be down where it came from.

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Sometimes barrels land on wheels and roll. If the driver interacts with them, it will be slowing them down. He said when trash is missed a call comes into his office. they will create a seeclickfix ticket. They couldn't respond fast enough. DPW can interact. Residents calls DPW if trash or recycling is missed and they will know (via the camera) it was or was not out. As far as the old trash barrels, DPW would be more than happy to take them. Residents are welcome to bring them to the transfer station.

Councilor Faretra said he sees the barrels in his neighborhood in the street which is densely populated. When we get a storm, we could lose space.

Pat Bower indicated he expects to see improvement and will speak to them about that. The densely populated neighborhoods need extra attention.

Councilor Faretra said if the barrels in the street get damaged, there is a delay in getting extra carts.

Pat Bower said Harvey is willing to do that. He will get all hands-on deck to make sure they get all carts out to residents. Residents who receive carts late their start date will be when they get their barrel.

Councilor Faretra asked when overflowing recycling and trash barrels will be tagged.

Pat Bower said they've talked about creating a brochure to do a phase of education, a warning first, then they will start with stickers. If Harvey doesn't pickup, the city is going to have to pick up trash and recycling. He explained the city is going to have to pay for contamination which is a considerable amount. DPW will re-educate then start ticketing. They are working on door handle flyers.

Councilor Simard thanked Mr. Bower for being here this evening. He asked if there is someone from Harvey on site.

Pat Bower said he had someone who could come to the next meeting. There is someone who would visit. There are GPSs and cameras on trucks. There are ways for us to address that. When it comes to missed trash/recycling cameras do not lie. He encouraged residents to recycling and noted people are doing better.

Councilor Simard asked who residents should file a complaint with.

Pat Bower indicated people are staffing phones at Harvey but if residents call directly to Harvey, he doesn't see it.

Councilor Simard asked about identifying homeowners and triggering fines.

Pat Bower said the health department will contact owners.

Councilor Saba asked if the reduction of trash could be bulk items.

Pat Bower indicated they are inundated with calls for bulk items.

Councilor Saba mentioned the small trash and recycling lids are same.

Pat Bower said there is an abundance of stickers. They will work on the lids. He will make sure they have a sticker on them.

Councilor Finocchiaro asked about 45 degrees angle for an open lid is acceptable.

Pat Bower said the lid must be closed. They want to make sure it is over the truck. He hesitates to make an open lid a rule.

Councilor Finocchiaro asked if residents must hold off when they have too much until next time or if there are any options for extra pickup.

Pat Bower said it has been talked about, but it becomes an additional expense for the city. They could provide more recycling bins. If residents need an additional cart the city wants to provide that and make it available.

Public Participation

Mercedes Abreu, 26 Myona Street, Methuen, asked for support to allow her to park a school bus overnight. Now she has to talk over the bridge to get her bus before work. She is tired. She cannot enjoy her house. A call was made to her employer and it was said she hit someone. Her neighbors are kicking her out, calling her black, ghetto, a nobody. She doesn't need to be reminded she is black. It is so hard to buy a house. The fire department put a stove outside that had caught fire. The neighbor called city hall right away for her to remove it. She has two children and is working very hard, getting home at 6:30 p.m. She urged the Council to help her as she needs to park the bus overnight at her house.

Mayor's Report

- a. Motion Response – Vice Chair Faretra – Req. Mayor. Provide a snow and ice line item update of 2/1/23 **Snow and Ice Status Provided on 2/6/23**
- b. Motion Response – Vice Chair Faretra- Req. Mayor. Provide an update from HR regarding workman's comp being outsourced as of 7/1/22. For example, the number of claims, length, any claims contested by the city, etc. **Workman's Comp Breakdown provided on 2/6/23**

Acting Mayor D.J. Beaugard reported that Mayor Perry's situation continues to improve. He's been in touch with him and knows how excited he is to get back to work as soon as possible. The Mayor is grateful for our community's collective well wishes. We are all looking forward to having him back on the job as well.

He reported in the past week the government in Methuen has continued to operate normally and without interruption. He has been in close touch with Director Bower because we've had some bouts of winter weather over the past two days. DPW has been on top of preparing for and dealing with the weather that we've had and are expected to potentially have later in the week.

This is a holiday week. We have President's Day on Monday. Trash and recycling pickup are delayed by one day this week.

He stated he has been in touch with Chief McNamara about this issue our community has been dealing with, but it is becoming something that is increasingly frequent. All over our country we are dealing with and right here in Methuen, mental health crisis. It is right here in our back yard and it is something that our neighbors, our loved ones are dealing with. He reiterated something has been shared (on social media). There is a suicide and crisis hotline. It is dialing 988. He reminded residents of the resource that is available. During a future meeting there are plans to bring forward an item that in part would help fund more mental health training for our first responders. This is a conversation that we need to continue to have, we need to take more action. He knows we have the collective resolve to do what we need to do on that front.

He touched upon the resolution regarding the Methuen C.A.R.E.S. Initiative. It has been a tremendously helpful program that Mayor Perry had launched at the onset of the pandemic. There are challenges associated with government creating a non-profit. So, we have an

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opportunity to initiate a handoff to the “Y” which in turn has the capability to partner with organizations like the Greater Boston Food Bank. This would allow this program, created by the Perry Administration, to continue in the most effective way possible. On behalf of Mayor Perry, he respectfully requested Council consideration in support of that item.

Requests of Councilors

- a. Councilor Saffie – Req. CAFO. Provide an update the City’s longevity policy and its impact on pension liability

Councilor Faretra said he spoke with Councilor Saffie who is not present this evening. There is a website in town that published something about individuals from prior administrations getting credit for years in other municipalities. Therefore, having extra years onto their pension. We are basically trying to find out “What is our policy currently on the books?” “Is there any way of reversing anything that has been put in place in the past?” If someone has been given credit for years that they did not work in the City of Methuen “Is there any way of that being reversed?”

- b. Councilor Saffie – Req. Superintendent. Provide a budget breakdown for the mental health services investment from 2020 – present. For example: direct payments for positions (added, if so, how many) and programming materials and supplies, list of relative programs and service offerings.

Chair Zeigler said she has been in communication with the Superintendent and she will be providing a response to this request furnishing a response to the Mayor’s office.

Councilor Faretra said this item came up during one of their Youth Action Committee meetings where there was another incident of a student losing his life by suicide. The discussion came up. The students in Methuen really didn’t feel like the services were available to them. Councilor Saffie and he requested something to get an idea of what Methuen is offering and providing and making sure parents and students are aware of what services are out there.

- c. Vice-Chair Faretra Req. DPW Director. Provide a Status Update on Start of the Summer Worker Program

Councilor Faretra said he hopes to get the discussion started now rather than wait until budget time. Maybe it is something we can look at about bringing in summer help to help cover for vacations and give some job opportunities to local youth vs. talking about in June when it is too late. There was money put in there from the budget for fiscal 2023.

Councilor Finocchiaro asked where on the agenda the resolution regarding C.A.R.E.S. is located.

Acting Mayor Beauregard indicated it is on the agenda as TR-23-12 A Resolution Declaring Surplus Equipment and Authorizing Granting of Surplus Equipment. It is not highlighted in the title but in terms of the content and the result of what that resolution would do.

Public Service

- d. Grants: None

- e. Licenses: None

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f. Contracts:

C-23-68 LAN-TEL Communications Inc., 3 Edgewood Drive, Suite 202, Norwood, MA 02062 for License Plate Recognition Readers in the Amount of \$89,707.50

WITHDRAWN

C-23-69 CDS Unlimited, LLC, 279 Bible Hill Road, Bennington, NH 03442 for the Removal and Replacement of HVAC Unit at the Water Treatment Plant in the Electric Room in the Amount of \$76,845.00 Materials/Supplies: \$42,485.22 Labor: \$34,359.78

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

UPON VOTE: 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

C-23-70 Donovan Equipment Co., Inc., 6 Enterprise Drive, Londonderry, NH 03053 for (2) Monroe Stainless Steel Sanders 3.5 CU. YD capacity in the Amount of \$35,600.00

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

Councilor Finocchiaro asked how many other sands the city has.

Pat Bower said these are smaller one-ton sanders, something quicker, to use in smaller neighborhoods or around buildings.

UPON VOTE: 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

C-23-71 Industrial Protection Service, LLC \$80,920.00 Compressor/Air Filling Station for SCBA Bottles

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

Councilor Finocchiaro questioned the procurement procedure. She asked if Methuen should be more specific in the request. Often in the bid someone may put the cheaper one to get the bid. others don't do that. You don't know if they have the higher quality. Is Methuen evaluating on specifics?

CAFO, Maggie Duprey, explained everyone gets same specifications. The city reviews all the bids to see what makes the most sense, what the department needs or wants, etc. This was purchased off the Mass State Contract. It gives us that flexibility. As far as procurement, everyone gets the same specifications, and they respond in kind.

Fire Chief Sheehy said Methuen does business with both companies on a lot of different equipment. The other company was \$3,000 more. There are other departments in the area that already have this same equipment. It is compatible and was \$10,000 less than what they were estimating. The big difference was the engine. The RPMs are higher and probably won't have as much trouble. It is a better machine. Sometimes he doesn't know all the specs.

Councilor Finocchiaro suggested being more specific in the bid, such as the higher horsepower.

The CAFO explained they put as much as they can in the bid but sometimes during the process Methuen gets more information that they were not aware of and didn't realize the different levels. In that case we would do something similar and then go back out to the other

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vendors who bid and say we have this new information and how would you handle this. In this case, we went back to them and said we want this level, is there something you can do? If you can, how much would that be?

Chief Sheehy said you can't tell them to rebid prices.

UPON VOTE: 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

Chief Sheehy offered to discuss the longevity issue. The CAFO suggested they meet and discuss it. She will respond to Council.

2023 Municipal Preliminary Election Date - September 12, 2023

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

MOTION BY: Councilor Simard, seconded by Councilor Faretra to amend the title to include the preliminary election date of September 12, 2023 as recommended by the Solicitor.

UPON VOTE: 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

UPON VOTE: (as amended) 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

Other Officers and Committee Reports

Councilor Finocchiaro reported the Substance Abuse Mental Health and Homelessness Committee intend on having a meeting in the coming months. They are working on a couple of things with community groups putting information together. The Veterans' Affairs Committee will meet in March. She is waiting for confirmation on the time. There will be a meeting on March 16th of the Youth Action Collaborative Committee at 7:00 p.m. in the Great Hall with a Zoom option. They had a few meetings of mental health in the schools with the students. It was very collaborative. Superintendent Kwong and Mr. Crocker from the schools attended the meetings and were very receptive to the students who were honest and gave a lot of feedback. The overall sense was there was positive things about the programs that are available currently that many of the students don't know. For example, it is always free and confidential. There is an effort from the students in that meeting in collaboration with the administrators working on "how do we explain what we currently have?" "How do we make sure that students know what is available?" "Are there better ways to improve access?" "Are there other services that are needed as well?"

Unfinished Business

Resolutions:

TR-23-7 A Resolution Providing for the Submission of a Home Rule Petition Rescinding Chapter 60 of the Acts of 2017 – An Act Authorizing the Appointment of Sean Fountain to the Position of Permanent Intermittent Police Officer of the Police Department of the City Known as the Town of Methuen (Req. of Clr. Beauregard, Simard, Saba, and Finocchiaro) (remove from the table)

MOTION BY: Councilor Faretra, seconded by Councilor Simard to remove from the table.
UPON VOTE: 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

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

Councilor Faretra said this was amended to reflect the full Council as sponsors.

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Solicitor Rossetti recommended that Council confine discussion to the Home Rule Petition and the Civil Service Report that made the recommendation prompting this measure.

UPON ROLL CALL VOTE: 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

TR-23-8 Resolution Authorizing Transfer \$175,000 from the General Fund Employee Benefits other expenses budget line, to the Police Department Personal Services budget to fund the agreed upon Police Superior Officer Association’s Collective Bargaining Agreement

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

UPON ROLL CALL VOTE: 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

TR-23-9 Order Authorizing a Borrowing of \$950,000 to Pay Costs for the City’s Lead Service Line Inventory Project

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

Councilor Finocchiaro asked if anything has changed and the full amount is going to be forgiven according to the program.

The CAFO responded, yes, and if anything were to change it would come back in a different form to Council.

UPON VOTE: 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

Ordinances:

TO-23-2 An Ordinance Amending the Wage and Salary Schedule of Chapter 6 of the Methuen Municipal Code, Unaffiliated, to create the position of Finance Director (remove from the table) **WITHDRAWN**

TO-23-3 An Ordinance Amending the Wage and Salary Schedule of Chapter 6 of the Methuen Municipal Code, AFSCME A, to create the position of Environmental and Energy Planner

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

UPON ROLL CALL VOTE: 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

New Business

Resolutions:

TR-23-10 A Resolution to Rescind TR-16-49 (Req. of Clr. Faretra and Clr. Saffie)

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

MOTION BY: Councilor Faretra, seconded by Councilor Simard to table.

UPON VOTE: 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

TR-23-11 Resolution Authorizing Transfer from Free Cash of \$100,000 for the funding of unanticipated police department expenditures **WITHDRAWN**

TR-23-12 Resolution Declaring Surplus Equipment and Authorizing Granting of Surplus Equipment

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

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Councilor Finocchiaro said there is a group that is requesting shelving and had been funded a small amount at different times by Historic Commission. That was for the school on Pleasant Valley Street where they are itemizing all of Methuen's memorabilia of historical significance. She is trying to understand through this process when we are declaring surplus equipment, do we go and see if there is anyone else who could use those items. She asked if an email goes out, no response, and then do we go out and donate to non-profit.

CAFO, Maggie Duprey, explained that is not what we are looking to do here is ask the Council to declare this specific equipment as surplus with the intention of granting it to this non-profit. Methuen requested guidance from the IGs office, and this is the way they told us to move forward. This all what the intention of this surplus would be. Different surplus we may do differently. It really depends on what we are looking to do. For example, a few months ago we asked for the Council to declare surplus equipment on all our old equipment and trucks, etc., taking in over \$100,000 in auction on those items. In this case we've written it as such that is specifically going to be declared and be granted specifically for this non-profit. The Historic District does have funds available either in a special revenue fund or in the budget. She'd be happy to talk to them about what they have available and if they want to reach out.

Councilor Finocchiaro said her understanding was how much they would need to get that collection with all the bells and whistles that and inventory should have and safe storage. It sounds like the goal and intention requested to the state was specifically to disperse it to a non-profit.

MOTION BY: Councilor Finocchiaro, seconded by Councilor Simard to amend the title to add the language "from Methuen C.A.R.E.S. Center.

UPON VOTE: 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

Councilor Faretra asked about the financials.

The CAFO said there are no city assets transferred, just this equipment.

Councilor Faretra said the money donated to Methuen C.A.R.E.S. for food for those in need. He asked if food would be purchased then given to the YMCA for the purpose of donating to those who need it.

The CAFO said by the time that this goes through, with the agreement, the city would have spent all the money we have to do that. The only thing left at that point is the equipment.

Councilor Faretra asked if at some point C.A.R.E.S. is going to stop accepting donations.

The CAFO explained the city has already done that.

Councilor Saba asked if the plan is for the "Y" to come in and run the center.

The CAFO responded, no. The intention is to give them the equipment to put in their own facilities.

Councilor Saba asked if the "Y" is already set up to do this type of program.

The CAFO explained they could partner with people, groups that we can't.

Councilor Saba said with this equipment we have a public-school system with cafeterias in all our schools. There is the Boosters' Club that runs concession stands in town. Methuen has youth sports organizations that do fundraising themselves and running concession stands. He asked if there's been a consideration of turning some of this equipment over to these volunteer services within the city before we just give it away to someone that is already set up to do that.

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The CAFO said she believes the intention is to continue to help support insecurity within the city by transferring that program to the “Y” in order to provide them with the ability to continue what we’ve done here. She believes that was always the goal to provide this to continue somewhere else. This was always the goal.

Councilor Saba asked if there is any agreement that will be entered into with the “Y” if they accept this, they will continue that program.

The CAFO responded yes. If the Council approves this it is also granting us the ability to put into an agreement that we are going to grant them this equipment for this specific purpose.

Councilor Saba commented we can expect to see them helping needy people in our community because of this.

The CAFO said it would be specifically for food insecurities within the city.

Councilor Saba said they would be running it out of their own location. The CAFO responded, yes.

Acting Mayor Beauregard said the overall idea is that the program as it stands is out of money, something that doesn’t really belong in the confines of being run by the government any longer. In essence what this does is it lifts the program and places it in a new venue.

Councilor Saba said if there is any extra money a good use of that would be to turn it over to the backpack program at the school department who is also operating now. They are in desperate need of supplies.

The CAFO said they will bring that up in the Mayor’s office.

Councilor Simard said two years ago there was a huge fire on West Street that destroyed the home. C.A.R.E.S. had a room full of clothing. Last year, during COVID, they housed Methuen basketball there. During that process he got to know the Director and the Regional Director of the Y. Not only did they do a clothing drive for that person, they do periodic food drives. He was there several times he was there, and they were feeding about 300 families that were driving in during COVID getting the food. It was all about food insecurity. He is confident that the Y is in it for the people to address food insecurity as well as the people that had the fire.

UPON ROLL CALL VOTE: (as amended) 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

Ordinances: None

Any Other Business for the Good and Welfare of the Community

Councilor Faretra announced Mann Inc. is getting ready for their golf tournament on Monday, May 22nd at the Merrimack Valley Golf Course. There is an early bird special. If you sign up early, it is \$125 then it goes up to \$150 if you sign up later than mid-April. Individuals may reach out to him or Linda Soucy.

Councilor Finocchiaro announced the First Congregational Church will host a Washington dinner on February 25th from 4:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

On March 10 to 12 there is a Beyond the Stars Dance Competition at the high school.

There is a Valley Patriot bash for several students who are getting scholarships on March 31st.

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Chair Zeigler reported there was a “Credit for Life Fair” last Friday which had over 250 seniors in attendance. She thanked the community members that volunteered to help our youth go through the transitions of considering credit, housing, and fiscal planning. That is a great program which she hopes to see continue. Also, February is black history month and the club at Methuen High School along with the city have partnered to hold their first film festival that started today. The second day will be Wednesday from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. They’ll be showing “Fences”. From 3:00 to 5:00 they’ll be showing the movie “Race” which is about a track and field athletes showing courage. It is free of charge to attend.

Adjourn

MOTION BY: Councilor Faretra, seconded by Councilor McCarty to adjourn.

UPON VOTE: 6 yes, 2 absent (Clr. Saffie, Clr. DiZoglio)

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 7 yes 1 present vote on March 6, 2023.

Linda Gagnon
COUNCIL CLERK