

**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
JULY 27, 2020**

*NOTE: Due to COVID-19, this meeting was held virtually (via ZOOM),
and was live streamed on the City's website*

Mayor Casavant called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Roll Call: William Emhiser, John McCurry, Jr., Stephen St. Cyr, Amy Clearwater, Norman Belanger, Michael Ready, Doris Ortiz, Marc Lessard

Robert Quattrone, Jr. was excused.

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

Orders of the Day:

2020.65

IN BOARD OF CITY COUNCIL..JULY 27, 2020

BE IT ORDERED, that the City Council of the City of Biddeford does hereby authorize the City Manager to execute an agreement with DDI Construction, Inc in the amount of \$371,129 as an extension of the Main Street Sewer Separation Agreement adding Foss Street sewer separation and associated work.

NOTE: Funding for the project is proposed to be Bond 417 with an estimated balance of \$1,600,000.

Motion by Councilor McCurry, seconded by Councilor Clearwater to grant the order.

Vote: Unanimous.

**Committee-of-the-Whole: Discussion of Bond Referendum Questions for
November 3, 2020 Election**

Motion by Councilor McCurry, seconded by Councilor Lessard to move into Committee-of-the-Whole.

Vote: Unanimous.

Time: 5:37 p.m.

City Manager, James Bennett gave an overview of what Staff is proposing in regards to potential bond issues. He also reviewed the timeline of when the council needs to approve a first reading, second reading and hold a public hearing in order to make the deadline for absentee ballots to be prepared for the November 2, 2020 Election. He talked through the seven different categories being proposed for bonds, which include the following:

- CSO General
- CSO Matching
- Roadwork
- WWTP Revenue Bond
- City Hall Improvements
- Community Center Renovations
- Other Municipal Improvements

Councilor McCurry supports the CSO items because these are mandated. He asked Public Works Director, Jeff Demers how much road work can actually be done in any given year, meaning dollar-wise. Jeff estimated around \$2 to \$2.5 million work of roadwork can be done in a year.

Councilor McCurry asked when we can expect to have figures from DEP so that we can determine what matching funds will actually be needed. Jim thinks the City may be notified in about two to three weeks. Councilor McCurry would like to ensure that the bonding numbers can be finalized once the DEP amounts are actually received. Jim noted that the final date for the Council to decide is the first Council Meeting in September.

Councilor Clearwater agrees with Councilor McCurry and supports the CSO items, again, due to the mandates and threat of financial fines. She asked if Bond Counsel has been consulted to ensure these bonds can be drafted in time. Jim said that he has asked Staff to make that contact

and confirm these can get done. With everything going on and so many folks refinancing, Councilor Clearwater is concerned that it will take quite some time for Bond Counsel to get the bond language put together. She thinks it's important that Council take a close look at what capital projects really need to get done that's what should be focused on.

Councilor St. Cyr is mostly in support of the CSO matching funds of \$2,000,000, assuming DEP comes through with funds. He generally supports the other CSO General bonding due to the mandates for getting that work done. In regards to the other items, he is leery in light of our economic situation due to the current pandemic and where citizens are financially. He feels that the interest rate will stay where it is for the next year or two, so there's no rush to go to bond for that reason. He's in no hurry to put these items out to vote and putting folks in the position to pay for these bonds in a year or two.

Councilor Belanger agrees with the CSO items being supported for bonding. He agrees with Councilor St. Cyr that the interest rates will not go up dramatically over the next year or two, so this would appear to be a good time to go out to bond. He would like to only bond for those items that are absolutely needed, and where we can get the best bang for our buck.

Councilor Lessard agrees with Councilor Belanger that the City needs to take advantage of the low interest rate now and put items on the ballot this year. He is confident that the current Council will support the capital projects that need to be done, but is not as sure what the next Council would support. The CSO items are a no brainer; City Hall has to be taken care of as the building is a direct reflection of how the City maintains it's properties; is ready to sell the Community Center; and agrees with another \$20 million for other necessary projects, including the public safety radios.

Councilor Emhiser agrees that the timing is right to bond now, but the needs of the citizens needs to be kept in mind. He understands that the voters will let the Council know what they want to spend money on, especially with the November election undoubtedly having a large turnout. He definitely supports the CSO projects for the same reasons already stated.

Councilor Clearwater broadly agrees with Councilor Lessard's comments. She likes the thought that the work these bonds will produce could likely be awarded to local businesses, which in turn, helps the economy.

Councilor Ortiz agrees with all the comments that have been made. She agrees with Councilor St. Cyr's concerns that we are still in a pandemic and that needs to be considered. On the other hand, she sees the need of bonding for most of the projects proposed, from CSO, roads, City Hall and making a decision about the Community Center. She echoed Councilor Emhiser's sentiment that the voters will tell us what they would like to spend money on.

Councilor Lessard feels that there should be a Wastewater Treatment Plant west of the Turnpike, and at some point in the near future, a serious conversation needs to be had about this. Development west of the Turnpike will offer a real diversification to the City's tax base and a Wastewater Treatment Plant would be necessary if the City moves in that direction.

Councilor St. Cyr would also be interested in taking a look at development west of the Turnpike. He would also like to see an attempt to match the growth with valuation.

City Manager, Jim Bennett brought up the public safety radios and wanted to ensure this item was on the Council's radar. He noted that this is a very important item and the City will undoubtedly have to invest in in the next year or so.

Councilor Clearwater cautioned that the Council needs to be aware of the political ramifications of bonding the public safety radio system. She believes that there needs to be some consideration of public perception. Jim clarified that the radio system is for the entire public safety system – not just the Police Department. The proposed public safety radio system would also benefit the Fire Department, Department of Public Works and even the Recreation Department.

Councilor St. Cyr is still uncomfortable with the price tag for the radio system and he finds it unbelievable that \$4.2 million is the cost.

Councilor Belanger believes that the projects need to be packaged together, and not all itemized out. He also thinks all the constituents throughout the City need to be considered, as opposed to just certain areas of the City, which is another reason to package all the bonds together.

Mayor Casavant believes that everything on the bonding list has merit, but questions how does one rank them? How do you decide what's most important? People generally like to see projects that are most visible to them, like roads/sidewalks. He echoed the comments that this election will have a large turnout and we will definitely hear what the voters want. He also stressed that whatever is put out to bond will have to be well publicized and the public will need to be educated on why the proposed bond issues are being put out for a vote.

Jim reminded the Council of the timeline and asked for some guidance on what the Council would like to have for more information so that Staff can prepare for newspaper notices and to get Bond Counsel a sense of what we need and when we need it.

Councilor Clearwater suggested getting a feel for what the Council wants by putting out some sort of survey. Also, she would like to see what roads are being proposed to be done in the Roadwork Bond.

Councilor McCurry mentioned that if CSO work is going to be done, then roadwork will probably go hand and hand with that work. He would like some more information and clarity on the public safety radio system.

Jim recapped that the idea is to put out a survey and schedule another discussion on potential bonding on the August 4th Council Meeting agenda.

Motion by Councilor McCurry, seconded by Councilor Clearwater to move out of Committee-of-the-Whole.

Vote: Unanimous.

Time: 6:26 p.m.

Executive Session:

- **1 MRSA 405(6)(D)...Labor Contract Negotiations**
- **1 MRSA 405(6)(A)...Personnel Matter**

Motion by Councilor McCurry, seconded by Councilor Clearwater to move into Executive Session.

Vote: Unanimous.

Time: 6:26 p.m.

It was noted that the ZOOM meeting will go off the air, and there will be no further Council action.

Motion by Councilor McCurry, seconded by Councilor Belanger to move out of Executive Session.

Vote: Unanimous.

Time: 7:57 p.m.

Motion by Councilor McCurry, seconded by Councilor Clearwater to adjourn.

Vote: Unanimous.

Time: 7:57 p.m.

Attest by: _____
Carmen J. Morris, City Clerk