

FINANCE COMMITTEE
Lewiston, ME
Minutes of
February 14, 2022

PRESENT: Councilor Clement, Councilor McCarthy, Roger Philippon, Robert Bisson and Phoenix McLaughlin

ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: Assistant Finance Director, Allen Ward, Deputy Director of Planning and Code Enforcement, Doug Greene, and City Engineer, Jeff Beaulé

Meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by the Chairman.

On motion of Councilor McCarthy, seconded by Mr. Philippon it was

VOTED:

(010-2022) To approve the minutes of the previous meeting dated January 24, 2022 and to accept and place them on file as presented by the Clerk.

VOTE: 5-0

On motion of Mr. Bisson, seconded by Councilor McCarthy, it was

VOTED:

(011-2022) To award RFP 2021-100 for Riverfront Island Master Plan Update Consultant Services to Halvorson Tighe and Bond Studio, Portland, ME, and to accept their schedule of fees proposal.

VOTE: 5-0

On motion of Mr. Philippon, seconded by Councilor McCarthy, it was

VOTED:

(012-2022) To reject all bids for 2022-009 Lead Abatement 242-244 Park Street and rebid the project after the completion of the tenant screenings.

VOTE: 5-0

On motion of Councilor McCarthy, seconded by Mr. Bisson, it was

VOTED:

(013-2022) To award bid 2022-003 for the Birch Street Improvements project to St. Laurent and Son, Lewiston, ME, at their revised estimated bid price of \$457,143 based upon the itemized bid costs using estimated quantities prepared by the City Engineer.

VOTE: 5-0

On motion of Mr. Philippon, seconded by Mr. Bisson, it was

VOTED:

(014-2022) To award bid 2022-005 for the Sylvan-Hammond-Lowell Sidewalk and Paving Improvements project to St. Laurent and Son, Lewiston, ME, at their revised estimated bid price of \$800,423 based upon the itemized bid costs using estimated quantities prepared by the City Engineer.

VOTE: 5-0

In other business, the Chair requested the Purchasing Agent place the \$19,987 TJD&A Task Order for Franklin Pasture Signage Design voted down (vote 205-2021, Dec 6, 2021) on the February 28, 2022 meeting agenda for consideration of a potential motion to reconsider by the committee. Doing so will allow the City Engineer time to prepare a reduced scope of services and pricing for the task order funded from Choice Neighborhood funding.

On motion of Councilor McCarthy, seconded by Mr. Bisson, it was

VOTED:

(015-2022) To publish and forward the following FY23 LCIP recommendation to the City Council subject to acceptance of the final revision language content.

TO: Mayor Carl Sheline and Members of the City Council
FROM: Finance Committee
SUBJECT: FY22 Lewiston Capital Improvement Plan Recommendation
DATE: February 14, 2022

At a regular meeting of the Lewiston Finance Committee, Monday February 14, 2022, the committee took the following action relative to the review and recommendation concerning the FY23 LCIP:

On motion of Councilor McCarthy, seconded by Mr. Bisson, it was voted unanimously to publish and forward the following recommendation to the City Council as is its charge under the Lewiston City Charter.

The LCIP is a long-range planning tool created to assist the City Council with prioritizing and funding capital improvements approved to keep the city moving forward. All projects presented within are funded subject to the scrutiny of the annual budget process. With 3/4 of the Mayor and Council being new members and given that the LCIP as presented significantly exceeds the 80% bond issue authorization limitation set forth by the code of ordinances, (Chapter 2, Article II, Section 2-34) this committee recommends a systemic review rather than an item-by-item review of projects. We feel this manner of presentation will best aid them in their deliberations.

Lewiston has several projects that have been phased in and should not be deferred. We need to move forward with the plan to upgrade our remaining fire sub-stations and also take advantage of an opportunity to save significant money on replacing our police headquarters at Bates Mill 7 as opposed to starting from scratch elsewhere.

We recognize that Lewiston's financial picture has improved dramatically in recent years, but one year's worth of excessive bonding could easily overshadow any long-term gains. We recommend the continued use of fund balance to assist in funding projects. An excessive fund balance is as

much a concern as it is a safety net. Keeping excessive reserves may result in a loss in the future rather than employing it, within reason, to maintain our infrastructure and improve our quality of life here in the present while bonding to fund projects.

Given current economic conditions and a predicted increase in interest rates, consideration should be given to initiating a conversation concerning an adjustment in the aforementioned 80% bond issue limitation. Again the committee recommends this investigatory approach but urges circumspection be employed from the very outset. Such a move cannot be recommended without a clear and demonstrated advantage until such time as efforts to improve sustainable economic development have come to fruition.

Recognizing government's primary obligation to public safety, consideration to capital improvements in this area deserve priority. Education is a necessary area for consideration as well but the committee suggests that expenditures be targeted toward those that will improve the quality of student outcomes.

There are other considerations as well. The committee recognizes a recent resolve concerning support for our seniors, a group that has all-too-often been minimized or overlooked when it comes to resources and programs and seeing as how seniors contribute heavily to the community we encourage consideration be given them.

The city has done quite well over the past two years, given the pandemic and the predicted economic downturn. We have managed to reduce our mill rate by \$0-41 per year and have seen a rise in total valuation exceeding our estimates. Let us not slide into complacency. The committee understands the city's bond rating holds steady at AA- and most likely would remain as such even given a modest increase in our self-imposed limit.

While the temptation to sit with red pen and strike out item by item is great, this is not a productive activity at this stage of the process. We encourage the council to enter into deliberations in the budget process and consider the LCIP as the budget takes place. There are wants and there are needs. We trust staff will justify the needs before they are approved. Wants, by necessity, will have to wait a bit. If they are valid and a method of funding can be implemented without throwing the city's indebtedness off a cliff of no return, then they can be considered.

The committee has sought to address policies and planning for the LCIP to be utilized as a planning tool and not a line-item review of projects. The committee does not view its purpose to be micromanagement but rather as an advisory panel to assist the council in setting these policies which will enable the requesting departments/agencies to establish their capital priorities which will ultimately be considered within available resources.

As always the committee stands ready to assist the council and administration in any way as the entire team seeks to move Lewiston forward.

VOTED:

To adjourn at 6:32 p.m.

Allen Ward
Clerk
Finance Committee