

ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

The Accounts Committee met on *Wednesday, December 6, 2023 at 6:00 PM* in the *City Council Chamber, Brockton City Hall, 45 School Street*, to consider the following:

1. Discussion about outstanding requests for City/School by Accounts Committee on 9/26/23

Councilor D'Agostino

- It's a shame that has come to the point that we needed to submit a FOIA request and should not be a necessary step for the council to request public information.

Councilor Lally

- Spoke with Interim Building Superintendent and there was only an inquiry Monday and we have been talking about it since well before Monday.
- Disappointing that there is a code word requirement for getting information.

Irene Giannopoulos- Assistant Auditor

- Inquiries have been made several times over the last several months.
- There have been discussions with the CFO and Interim Superintendent during our weekly roundtables about having our grant agreements, contracts, lease agreements. Need to know what is going on to justify payments.
- The forum of how inquiry was made is where we will change. Emails will be utilized vs verbal requests.

Councilor Lally

- Puts the committee in a predicament when requested information is tough to obtain. Not sure everything is even being done correctly.
- This is not the attitude to be taken in light of the rest of the departments troubles and would hope information can be produced more timely

Councilor D'Agostino

- Will pass info to the next committee members for 2024.
- FOIA's have a 10-day turnaround.

2. Discussion regarding DPW shortfall \$900K

Irene Giannopoulos- Assistant Auditor

- Outstanding FY23 bills for DPW. Item was spoken about in the Finance Committee meeting this past Monday (12/4/23).
- Want to explain what happened and how we got to this point. We are mandated by Mass General Laws. Supposed to close books June 30th, have until July 15th to open requisitions to cover any outstanding June bills, possibly May. The expectation is that we have received all other bills and paid them.
- Given the practices of the city for a number of years, predating my employment here, we have followed the guide-lines of a 'soft close' that goes into the fall, allowing prior fiscal bills to be paid well into September and October.

- Given the fact that we are under a microscope, we have decided to take more of a hard approach in adhering to the law when it comes to payments coming out of the city auditor's office. Which has been a learning curve for the departments.
- I feel it was explained well by the DPW Commissioner previously, the vendor bills were not received timely.
- Departments were given a hard deadline for submission otherwise we could not close the fiscal books. Outstanding bills would need to be brought to council for approval for FY24 funds to be utilized for FY23 bills.
- Sent memo referencing Mass Gen Law Ch 44 §56A. Understanding of a new process and needing time to implement however following the law is best practice.
- CFO is here for additional questions. Vendors were Veolia and Constellation.

Councilor D'Agostino

- Not the fault of anyone in the city if the bills are not received in a timely fashion.
- How enforceable is it to say if we don't have the bill we don't pay it?
- Do other municipalities have this issue?
- Do we have vendors with a chronic issue of late invoicing?

Irene Giannopoulos- Assistant Auditor

- Should be enforceable, showing them this memo alone should prove the necessity.
- I came from another municipality this size and I have not heard of a lack of understanding from vendors being aware of procurement and payment laws that we are required to follow.
- Given the circumstances I can't see why it would be difficult for a vendor to produce a bill within a month or two of closing the books, ideally by June 30th.
- We do not need an actual bill to open the requisition before the June 30th deadline, just a quote to be able to encumber the funds.
- We can inquire with departments if there are repeat offenders. Meter reads can be a factor in producing a bill in some cases.

Councilor Teixeira

- The \$900k, how many invoices?

Irene Giannopoulos- Assistant Auditor

- It is several invoices.

Troy Clarkson- Chief Financial Officer

- As discussed at the Finance Committee Meeting, sewer bills are less of a case of bills coming late and more of an unexpected increase in capital and operational costs at the sewer plant.
- There has been a new contract created with Veolia based on the home rule petition to address the necessary operations.
- Current bills are for sludge removal and increased costs for improving the plant.
- Unpaid bills for the water department are more about the bills after the deadline.
- Once free cash is completed, we should be able to make transfers in January.

Councilor Teixeira

- The \$900k, was that included in the FY23 budget?

Troy Clarkson- Chief Financial Officer

- Yes but because of inflationary costs we asked to defer these expenses from FY23 and pay with FY24 money and hopefully once we certify the free cash from FY23 there will be sufficient retained earnings to cover the transfers.

3. Update on open checkbook

Irene Giannopoulos- Assistant Auditor

- Thank you for your patience. We are still working on finalizing the free cash reporting requirements with the DOR.
- Open checkbook project should finally go live once the balance sheet is complete.
- Given the extraordinary circumstances we have been very diligent in making sure we have accurate numbers and are proceeding cautiously.
- Apologized for delay in producing open checkbook.

Councilor D'Agostino

- Acknowledged difficult circumstances amongst daily duties.

4. Review of Vendor Warrants P24-033 through P24-047

Councilor Lally

- Crescent Ridge, What are 'humanistic supplies'?
- Can't fault for treating the seniors well.
- DS Services of America, Also 'humanistic supplies'
- Town of Hanson, tuition and training. What are they teaching us?
- The library, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.
- Homer Contracting Construction.
- General question, BHS uniforms. I thought we abandoned the idea of uniforms.

Irene Giannopoulos- Assistant Auditor

- This is for council on aging, they bought orange juice. Must have had an event.
- DS is also for COA, from the general fund. Water delivery for Crystal Rock.
- Drug and Alcohol prevention training. DARE
- Museum passes that are grant funded for the library.
- Roof replacement for War Memorial, through ARPA funds.
- Half time band and cheer uniforms. Vendor is A Wish Come True.

Councilor D'Agostino

- Air Gas East Inc. A lot of times it isn't the amount of money its wondering what they do for us.
- Astronaut Security Technologies, What were they in a bucket truck doing for us?
- Capital Strategic Solutions, 'other contract services'

Irene Giannopoulos- Assistant Auditor

- Equipment for the pools at the high school. Out of general fund. CO2 cylinders.
- Has to do with city hall upgrade, electricians and such.
- Grant funded deferred to CFO.

Troy Clarkson- Chief Financial Officer

- Put out a competitive bid package for consulting firm to assist us with seeking out and writing grants. Paid out of ARPA funds. Have been tremendous assistance.
- \$8M planning grant from Federal DOT for 7 or 8 years of planning for downtown.
- \$1.5M smart grant to help with traffic fixtures around the public safety building.
- Procured 2 firms on an as needed bases with rates defined by the bid.

Councilor D'Agostino

- Dig-It Construction LLC, my assumption was wrong, glad I asked.
- Environmental Response Services Inc
- First Student, Motor Vehicle Excise revenue
- Kaestle Boos Associates Inc, architecture and design.
- Marlin Controls Inc, Traffic lanes/signs etc,. I think it is good for the public to have the knowledge of what some of these things cost.
- O'Brien and Sons Inc, other contract services. Installation, maintenance?
- Page Building Construction company
- Italian Home for Children Inc, Special Ed tuition
- 617Media Group LLC
- Where's the Bus LLC, length of service charged, Oct-June? Not as significant if spread over months.
- Turf Products Corp.

Irene Giannopoulos- Assistant Auditor

- DPW Enterprise funds, construction on N Main water project.
- The Raymond School Asbestos removal.
- Checks without PO #'s are often refunds from the tax office.
- Public safety building architecture.
- School signs
- Through the Mayors office, grant funded for the Marvin Hagler statue bench.
- Page is for senior center remodel.
- Special Ed day school program
- School transportation general fund expenditure, GPS tech services for the busses. Appears most of fiscal year.
- Recreation enterprise funds for the golf course. Will get more detail.

Troy Clarkson, Chief Financial Officer

- 617Media Group is a media consultant for the Mayors office.

Councilor Teixeira

- Academic Artists Reaching Towards Success
- Brody, Hardoon, Perkins & Kestin
- CHA Consulting
- Fuller Craft Museum
- Allied Waste/Republic
- Chartwells
- Comm-Trac
- Lindenmeyer Munroe
- Motorola

- Next-Gen
- B&B Car Wash
- Foley Hoag

Irene Giannopoulos- Assistant Auditor

- Through the Cultural Council, comes out of my office and will gather more info, invoice was missed in attachment.
- Services for the Law Dept re: a court case.
- Cultural Council payment, grant funded payment to Fuller Craft Museum.
- Republic- Refuse department for trash collection. Committee reviewed previously
- Revolving funds, I believe Chartwells is school lunch. Will obtain more info.
- Through Mayor's office, for the city's network. State contract.
- Print shop supplies/specialty paper
- Fire Dept radios, grant funded
- Soap buckets & mops. Supplies from the general fund. Fragrance and dye free soap is not cheap but is environmentally friendly.
- Police Dept car washes, from the general fund. Listing all vehicles washed.
- A settlement that came before the law dept. Can get more detailed information.

Troy Clarkson- Chief Financial Officer

- CHA is the project manager for the public safety building.

5. Questions/Comments?

Councilor D'Agostino

- Any additional questions or concerns to address?
- Will be last Accounts Committee meeting, appreciative of the work done by staff.
- Thanking all councilors on the subcommittee.