

A special meeting of the Board of Aldermen was held Monday, August 21, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the aldermanic chamber.

President Lori Wilshire presided; Clerk, Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr. recorded.

Prayer was offered by Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien; Alderman Tyler Gouveia led in the Pledge to the Flag.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance.

Alderman Patricia Klee called the roll.

The roll call was taken with 10 members of the Board of Aldermen present: Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Sullivan, Alderman Klee, Alderman Lopez, Alderwoman Kelly (via Zoom), Alderman Dowd, Alderman Gouveia, Alderman Caron, Alderwoman Timmons, Alderman Wilshire.

Alderman Moran, Alderman Jette, Alderman Clemons, Alderman Comeau, Alderman Thibeault were recorded absent.

Mayor James W. Donchess, Community Development Division Director, Matt Sullivan were also in attendance.

PUBLIC HEARING

R-23-140

RELATIVE TO THE ACCEPTANCE AND APPROPRIATION OF \$3,000,000 FROM THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PLANNING GRANT PROGRAM FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE NASHUA LIBRARY PLAZA AREA

President Wilshire

As is customary, I will turn the public hearing over to the Chair of the Human Affairs Committee Alderman Lopez.

Chairman Lopez

Good evening. This is a public hearing relative to the acceptance and appropriation of \$3,000,000 from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Planning Grant Program for the reconstruction of the Nashua Library Plaza area. I believe Mayor Donchess and Director Sullivan want to do presentations and then we'll take testimony in favor and in opposition. So Mayor and Director?

Mayor Donchess

Well thank you Mr. Chair. We are here to testify about R-23-140 which involves the acceptance of \$3,000,000 from the federal government to be matched with local dollars already appropriated to build a new park next to the library between the library and the Court Street building. So the total project cost will be about \$4,500,000. This is a great project. One we've been working on for a long time. We have some wonderful parks in the City. The most renowned being Greeley Park in the north end, Mine Falls Park, Roby in the south end but this will be a really fine park right in the middle of the city. Our parks are important to everyone because everyone can participate regardless of age, economic status of neighborhood, anyone can go to any of our public parks and this will be a wonderful addition.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Director, is going to give a few more details regarding the timing. Jen McCormack the Library Director is going to show you during the regular meeting of the Human Affairs Committee a presentation showing you mock ups and everything regarding what this park can look like. I just want to thank the library and Miss McCormack for all of their help and support during this time that we've been working on this and also particularly Congresswoman Kuster and Senator Shaheen who worked hard to get this money appropriated by Congress. So this was a special appropriation - congressionally designated spending they call it - that was designed for Nashua. Without them, we wouldn't have been able to get this. So we appreciate everybody's efforts. So now I'm going to turn it over to Matt Sullivan for a few more details.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Division Director

Good evening. I also would like to thank the Mayor for his vision in particularly vision on some of the recreational spaces that we're considering as part of this important project and also Director McCormack for her dedication over

the last years when really the future was uncertain relative to the ability to actually execute this project. We are fortunate now to be before you in a position to accept this \$3,000,000 from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, for reconstruction of the library plaza.

The Mayor's comments were spot on in the sense that although this is really intended to be a library focused project, I'd like us all to sort of think about this as an opportunity to create new and vibrant urban park in our downtown corridor that will provide a variety of different community spaces, active recreational, and passive recreational spaces that in some way will have relationships to different uses and functions for the library but will also be there own independent space that we hope that many generations and users will enjoy for decades and years to come of course.

So really before you this evening is simply the acceptance of the \$3,000,000 from US HUD. There are obviously some strings attached in the sense of recording and how we use the funds but it's intended broadly for the use of this project. Where we're at in the process right and Director McCormack will get into a bit more detail during the regular meeting as the Mayor stated, we're really in the process of actually going back and looking at the community feedback that was collected, looking at the designs that were initially developed in sort of a three-phase when the project was first contemplated, doing a level of ground truthing as far as what current interests might be, and actually working to tweak those designs and bring forward a more final project for construction in this area. There are sort of three contemplations with the initial design that many have seen as part of either the initial outreach process or of course the ARPA process but there's really an active recreational, a passive recreational, and sort of a community space that's intended to be created by this project.

Again, we'll get into a bit more detail about some of the design elements and where we're at in the project as we go into the more formal regular meeting but at this point, I'd like to any questions you might have about the specifics of this HUD grant, what the timing might look like for the project, and any others that you may have.

Chairman Lopez

Members of the Board if you could ask any brief clarifying questions to paraphrase Alderman Dowd. We will be having the full Committee meeting after this.

Alderman Dowd

Are there any restrictions on the money as to what can and can't be done?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Division Director

That's an excellent question Mr. Chair if I may respond to that?

There are restrictions in the sense that the money must be used for this project. Beyond that, I've been struck by the really broad nature of the application that was actually submitted for the project and the feedback from HUD on what we intend to do. We're actually at the point right now we're submitting a full project detail statement to HUD in an effort to accept the monies. So we sort of define what our project looks like but they don't require you to have every nut, every bolt, or in this case, you know, every shrub picked out. They're really looking for broad community intent of the project and so while we have to stick within that, there aren't a lot of boundaries there.

Alderman Dowd

Follow up. Is there any intention of using cameras to monitor what goes on in the park? I say that because the School Department we have high definition cameras at all of our schools because of vandalism. The few events that we've had recently, we've been able to capture who did it and make them pay for it. So if we're spending this money to beautify this area, it might not be a bad idea to keep an eye on it.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Division Director

We're doing a few things to address that concern but I would suggest the first steps that we're going take Alderman Dowd are actually going to be more passive security and safety measures. What I mean by that is that we're taking a fresh look at different lighting, how open the spaces are in front of the library plaza, how much vegetation makes areas secluded or not. We're going to be making some changes in that regard because I think to your point while we want a very vibrant community space, we want it to be used in the right way I guess.

What I can't speak to is whether or not specifically security cameras will be a part of that safety and security infrastructure but I think more to come on that front. So I don't want to answer that with a yes or no at this point in time but I know we'll be taking steps to improve the safety and security of that plaza area.

Chairman Lopez

Any further questions Alderman Dowd?

Alderman Dowd

All set.

Chairman Lopez

Alderman O'Brien?

Alderman O'Brien

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Sullivan for taking my question. I think this is a wonderful idea and thank you for working with our Congressional delegation and bringing this forward. I'm wondering what is the total scope. We have talked in the past in Infrastructure looking at the courtyard in between the library and 14 Court Street. Is that going to be included or is that perhaps maybe a different project in looking at it?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Division Director

Mr. Chair, if I may respond?

Chairman Lopez

Please.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Division Director

That's an excellent question. Perhaps I should have started with a visual of the project as part of this conversation. I think we'll get to that a little bit later but if you're thinking about the library plaza, the area that we're really talking about is the front face of the library to the entrance of 14 Court Street up to the walkway area and then bounded on either side by really Court Street itself and then by the library parking lot. Everything within there will be reconstructed as part of the project with a few exceptions. We have a few sections of the courtyard that we may need to avoid for various reasons based on some infrastructure and other things that might be in place but it's really that entire rectangle that we're looking at and that includes some accessible walkways that service multiple facilities beyond the library as well and that may include 14 Court Street.

Alderman O'Brien

Very good. Thank you.

Chairman Lopez

Alderman Sullivan and then Kelly?

Alderman Sullivan

Thank you very much. Director Sullivan you had mentioned that the \$3,000,000 that we'll be getting from this grant goes towards the project. Could you go maybe one level deeper? Does the money have to be spent - does it just include materials, or does it include materials and labor, or just anything that's involved in this project?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Division Director

So Mr. Chair, I'll respond to that. It's really any scope that the City defines and that could include and this is not something that we suggest at this point in time but it could include some labor costs at the City level if someone was needed to manage the project or something to that effect but those monies are all encompassing. I'll tell you at this

moment in time, we intend to leverage outside construction expertise and outside construction resources for the project. This is substantial enough where we don't anticipate the ability to use DPW or Parks and Rec resources to actually build out the full construction and design. So we will have a mix of soft costs, architecture, engineer, and design, some hard costs for construction, and any onsite testing services and that sort of thing, and then of course material purchase as well. It will include all of those things within the grant monies.

I should just be clear, too, the Mayor had mentioned this. On the matching side of the house, this grant actually does not require a true match in the sense that you know its 80%, 20% but the City is part of the reallocation of the ARPA dollars that actually are allocate \$1.5 million to this very same program. That was before we actually knew we were going to be receiving monies. That allowed us to move from a one limited phase project up to this full three phase project and so I just want to again thank this Board for the wisdom or really foresight to be prepared for some additional congressional funding to come in that would allow us to do the whole project. So we're at a \$4.5 million budget right now.

Alderman Sullivan

Okay. Thanks. One follow-up if I may. You had mentioned management of the project. Obviously, there's a chain of command. There's hierarchy when it comes to something like this very public project. Who manages the day to day if the project is not going according to plan who is in charge of that?

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Division Director

Great question. So in this case, it's both myself and Director McCormack that are managing sort of the design phase of the project. What we have not determined at this point in time because we haven't finalized the design is whether or not we'll be using a CM process (a construction manager process), a general contractor process, and we haven't really determined at this moment whether or not we intend to have somebody on the City side sort of watching as a GC to the program. What we do know is that we will need some expertise in that realm so we'll certainly be brining on construction administration services done by a design team by the design team. So really when you're talking about project managers Alderman Sullivan, it's myself and Director McCormack on the City side but there will be outside professional consultants assisting us and perhaps even a City staff person that has a more direct conduit to the construction component of the project when that starts.

Alderman Sullivan

Okay, thanks.

Chairman Lopez

Alderwoman Kelly you're up next.

Alderwoman Kelly

I wanted to start out by asking you as Chair if you'd like committee members to hold their questions for the second portion.

Chairman Lopez

Clarifying questions to what is being presented so that the public can offer public comment but if we can restrain any opinions or detailed discussion then we address that at Human Affairs Committee.

Alderwoman Kelly

Okay. Perfectly fine. I can always wait but I wanted to ask someone who's been in a rough shape in terms of getting around it sounded like you were looking at the accessibility. We talked about it being open to everybody and I know that the library plaza is getting old so I just wanted to make sure this was a component of the design.

Matt Sullivan, Community Development Division Director

Alderwoman Kelly that's a great question. It's one of the fundamental core tenants of this project I would say and that is at a minimum achieving ADA accessibility across the plaza area that we're looking at. You

know I don't want to say with certainty that there are areas that are not accessible or compliant at this point in time but we know there are some challenging spots based on the grades and the topography over there. I guess I'd be remiss if I didn't say that it will go beyond ADA accessibility however. We're actually looking at in some of our active recreational areas different sensory interactive features, different play features that will allow those that may be differently abled to actually have the same experience or like experience as those who may be more abled. So I think we're going to be taking a very broad view of accessibility in every component of the plaza. I think it will not just be, again, ADA accessibility but actual feature accessibility.

Then of course improving accessibility to the library and that's one of the things that you're going to see in some of our preliminary designs as their unveiled. If you go down to the library right now, the walkways the way they're laid out, they aren't necessarily conducive to moving folks directly into the library entrance. So taking away some of those right angles, creating some smoother spaces, so more curve, better access, that's going to be something that we're looking at too. So I think there are really three components of accessibility that we're looking at with the plaza project.

Alderwoman Kelly

That's great to hear, thank you.

Chairman Lopez

Any additional questions from the Board before we go to the public comment part? All right seeing none. Thank you for your presentation Director Sullivan. I look forward to seeing you at the Human Affairs Committee.

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION - None

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION - None

Chairman Lopez closed the public hearing on Resolution R-23-140 at 7:17 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN THAT THE AUGUST 21, 2023, SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN BE ADJOURNED BY ROLL CALL

A viva voce roll call was taken to adjourn the Special Board of Aldermen meeting which resulted as follows:

Yea:	Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Sullivan, Alderman Klee, Alderman Lopez Alderwoman Kelly, Alderman Dowd, Alderman Gouveia, Alderman Caron, Alderwoman Timmons, Alderman Wilshire	10
Nay:		0

MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was declared adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Attest: Dan Healey, City Clerk