

A special meeting of the Board of Aldermen was held Monday, November 27, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the aldermanic chamber.

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

Prayer was offered by Acting Clerk, Alderman-at-Large, Michael B. O'Brien, Sr.; Alderman Ernest A. Jette led in the Pledge to the Flag.

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

Alderman-at-Large Michael B. O'Brien, Sr., called the roll.

The roll call was taken with 14 members of the Board of Aldermen present: Alderman O'Brien, Alderman Sullivan, Alderman Klee, Alderman Moran, Alderman Lopez, Alderman Jette, Alderman Clemons, Alderwoman Kelly, Alderman Dowd, Alderman Gouveia, Alderman Sennott, Alderman Thibeault, Alderwoman Timmons, Alderman Wilshire.

Alderman Comeau was recorded absent.

President Wilshire turned the meeting over to the Chairman of Budget, Alderman Dowd.

Chairman Dowd

Yes, this evening we have two public hearings on two pieces of legislation. The first is R-23-171. Director Cummings will give us a little overview of this.

### **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

#### **R-23-171**

#### **AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO ENTER INTO AN AMENDED FEDERAL AID PROJECT AGREEMENT WITH THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONSTRUCTING AN ACCESSIBLE RAMP TO THE COTTON MILL TRANSFER BRIDGE AND TO ACCEPT AND APPROPRIATE \$724,186 FOR THE PROJECT**

Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the Committee for the record, Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services. I rise before you to ask for your favorable consideration of R-23-171. What this is, is additional monies that were made available to us from the New Hampshire Department of Transportation for \$724,186. That money is going explicitly to the ADA accessible ramp off of the Cotton Mill Pedestrian Bridge on the Cotton Mill side of the Nashua River or the northern river bank if you will. This is monies that we got, as I said, that was unanticipated. We originally got just over \$300,000 through federally directed spending through Congresswoman Kusters efforts and then because we were one of the few shovel-ready projects in the State, the State of New Hampshire had some additional monies that they need to expend and not turned back to US DOT and so therefore, they reached out to us and sought our assistance with trying to get this money infused into the project.

The project is just over a million dollars in total so this will go a long way in almost fully funding the entire cost of the project. This is, again, an ADA accessibility project. One that we had committed to US DOT very early on in doing because we had an ADA accessible ramp on the other side of the bridge if you recall. That would be the Clocktower side but we didn't have one on the corresponding other side of the bridge and so next year, we would go under construction in earnest. We started already a few months back. Some of you may have been at the ribbon cutting or the shovel ceremony but we will do the actual construction of this project in earnest in the spring and we would anticipate it being done by early fall of '24. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Dowd

Before we open up the testimony is there any questions that any of the Aldermen might have of Director Cummings? Seeing none, thank you.

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION - None

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION - None

Chairman Dowd closed the public hearing on Resolution R-23-171 at 7:06 p.m.

**R-23-172**

**AUTHORIZING THE CITY TO ENTER INTO A COMMUNITY CENTER INVESTMENT PROGRAM LOAN AGREEMENT WITH THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FINANCE AUTHORITY AND BORROW AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED ONE MILLION DOLLARS (\$1,000,000) FOR REPAIRS AND RENOVATIONS OF THE ARLINGTON STREET COMMUNITY CENTER**

Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services

Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the record, Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services. Again, I rise before you and ask for your favorable consideration of R-23-172. What this piece of legislation is, it is an award that we got from CDFA, a public/private statewide New Hampshire organization, that looks to give out money for various types of community development type projects. City of Nashua was the recipient of what is termed a loan but it acts essentially as a grant for \$1 million for community center renovation.

So, the Arlington Street Community Center submitted an application. We were awarded this \$1 million loan which is forgivable. So, the way this works is the CDFA as a matter of practice issues their grants if you will in the form of a loan but it's forgivable so long as you adhere to certain terms. Some of the terms that were relative to this is the Arlington Street Community Center would only be used for the next 10 years as a community center and we have to use it for the explicit purposes that were outlined in the in the "grant application". So, this is a renovation project. As some of you may or may not know, that building is very old. It was a former fire station and so there's some serious deficiencies with the building. S three main priorities that we would be looking to take care of is: 1) making the building ADA accessible. After being ADA accessible, there's a rear wall that is failing. It's safe as of right now to habitate and occupy the building but according to our Building Inspector Bill McKinney, it is definitely deficient and something we need to pay attention to. So, to continue using the building no matter what, we're going to have to rehab the rear wall of the building. Thirdly, we'd be looking to make HVAC and mechanical type of upgrades.

So, we have just over \$1 million dollars. There was a 20% match that was set aside in this year's fiscal budget for just over \$200,000. We would be looking to do these three projects in earnest and then anything additional that we're able to do in scope, we would look to add on to whether that's roof repair, gutter replacement, typical "building envelope" type of improvements, brick repointing, window replacement. These would all be items we would explore as we continued along with the project. We would anticipate going under construction this spring. It will take us I would say a solid 6 to 8 months of construction. We try to wrap it up in calendar year 2024. I'd be happy to take any questions, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman Dowd

Before I open it up to testimony, are there any questions? Alderman Moran.

Alderman Moran

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Director Cummings this forgivable loan are there any period of time where we'd have to make any type of payments until it's forgiven?

Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services

No, there's no payments required.

Alderman Moran

Is there any - follow up Mr. Chairman?

Chairman Dowd

Yes, go ahead.

Alderman Moran

If we weren't to meet the forgivable requirements of the loan will we be on the hook for any back interest or anything like that?

Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services

We would have an obligation to pay back the loan if we weren't to adhere to basically the terms of the contract with CDFA. The big one is the building being put into service being used as a community center and then making the repairs as I just outlined. If we were to use it for other reasons, that would put us in potential jeopardy or default but that is definitely not our intention if anyone knows that building.

Alderman Moran

Great. That's exactly what I wanted to hear.

One final question. Could you just remind the citizens what is done at the community center so everyone can understand why we need to fix this place?

Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services

Mr. Chairman, Alderman Moran raises an excellent point. We've actually prepared a slide deck for you answering those exact questions. We're going to do that at the Committee level. Jessica Hagg, the Director, is here this evening. We're going to spend about 5 to 10 minutes giving everyone a quick orientation as to what actually occurs at the Arlington Street Community Center but in consultation with the Chair, it was advised best to do that at the Committee meeting.

Alderman Moran

Great. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Alderman Klee, then Alderman Lopez.

Alderman Klee

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My question is just there's two parts to that building. If we were to use the other part, I know it's in rough shape, but if we were to use the other part of that building that would not violate the terms of this as long as we maintain a community center. It doesn't have to be the entire building just at least the part that we are using now is that correct?

Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services

That's correct. It is two separate distinct structures. Wherever we were to make the improvements, we would have to commit to keeping it as a community center. A million dollars for a building project like this is not very far. I would suggest we wouldn't even be able to entertain doing anything in the second building.

Chairman Dowd

Follow up?

Alderman Klee

Yes, please. Thank you. Yeah, no I was not assuming that we would. I just - if the city decided at a later date to use that piece for something else, that's all I just wanted to clarify so thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Alderman Lopez.

Alderman Lopez

So, I have two questions for Director Cummings. When you presented, you had said that one of the terms is going to be that it'd be used as a community center only for 10 years. Now did you mean community center only, for 10 years, or were you thinking, or is there concern that the community center might not be around after 10 years?

Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services

It could be longer than 10 years but the minimum commitment for this to be considered in good standing is we would have to commit to maintaining the Arlington Street Community Center at that site for 10 years.

Alderman Lopez

Okay. So, your intention was to say that only a community center can be in that site not that there might be an expiration date on it?

Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services

I can't forecast what will happen in the future. What I want to make this body aware of is and over the next 10 years, it would need to be maintained as a community center. After that, you'd be free and clear to do whatever you liked at the facility but I've never heard or I don't believe there's an ambition to do anything else but have it as a community center.

Alderman Lopez

Okay. Then the second question I had was kind of...

Chairman Dowd

Follow up?

Alderman Lopez

Kind of different question. With regards to the CDFA loan/grant have we done these before and is this the other loan/grant that has been referred to as a loan but might have been shown on a ridiculous presentation of how the CDFA system works as a grant?

Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services

Great question and somewhat nuanced. So, have we done this before? The answer to that is this specific program we have not. Actually, as I understand it, this program that CDFA is putting out for community centers is a brand-new program actually. I believe we were actually in the first round to receive funds for that application. I think there'll be more rounds coming in the future.

Putting that aside, within the organization of CDFA, I believe they tend to - I wouldn't say always - but they tend to offer their monies in the form of a loan and they put certain terms in and then it's forgiven.

Then to answer your question specifically, yes, we have done this before for the Performing Arts Center for a tax credit program run through the CDFA for just over \$400,000, I believe. They gave it to us in the form of a loan and we had the similar type terms that they're asking for here. Ten year's adherence, a mortgage, or a lien put on that specific property.

Alderman Lopez

That was it.

Chairman Dowd

Alderwoman Timmons.

Alderwoman Timmons

Thank you, Alderman Dowd. Director Cummings since I was on the ground floor of the Arlington Street Community Center which is like a baby to me so I know the history of it. You said it was the fire station but the fire station is actually the next door. That's the ballet. Just for clarification, it's where the ballet studio used to be and this is the second time it would be renovated because I was on the first renovation. Could you clarify those two structures for the public?

Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services

Sure. So, I don't know the numbers off the top of my head. I'm gonna say something like 36 & 38 Arlington Street. If you were to be looking from Arlington Street at the two structures, the building to your right would be that "fire station" and you'd know that because of the overhead doors. The building to the left would be more of like an office building which you're absolutely correct. It has been renovated and used in years past as like a community center and specifically ballet was housed at that facility for a good number of years here in the city. About 5ish years ago, there was a few hundred thousand dollars in renovation done to the building. It might have been up to about \$600,000 - almost a half a million dollars of city monies spent to make building improvements, base building improvements to the site.

Alderwoman Timmons

May I have a...?

Chairman Dowd

Follow up?

Alderwoman Timmons

Yes, thank you. Director Cummings the building 38 is there any future plans for that building? Should it come down and be a parking lot and make more parking for that particular center?

Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services

You know I think that is a great question that I don't have a good answer to at this time. I would welcome an opportunity for this body along with a few other stakeholders to get together to talk about the future of the building. I would love to see that building put into productive use. Again, to be clear, we are not talking about the building that the Arlington Street Community Center is in right now. We're talking about the empty fire station where it could be used to the benefit of the community. I would not recommend tearing it down and making it a parking lot but I do think we could probably find some better, more creative uses for the neighborhood's benefit.

Chairman Dowd

All set?

Alderwoman Timmons

Yes, thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Alderman Thibeault.

Alderman Thibeault

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So, my question is about the term. So, and I may have missed this and if I missed this I'm sorry Director Cummings, are the terms in any of the documents that we got sent to us? Is there a lot of terms? I'm sorry if I missed it.

Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services

I believe the agreement was sent to you and is part of the Resolution and no. The two or three major terms are it's structured as a loan, not as a traditional grant, ten-year commitment, and you need to use the funds how you described in your application. Those are the major terms.

Alderman Thibeault

Great, thank you. I'll take a look.

Chairman Dowd

Yes, Alderman Sennott.

Alderman Sennott

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a really quick question in regard to the construction timeline. You're talking spring of 2024 six to eight months. Do you anticipate any interruption in the use of the community center during that time?

Tim Cummings, Director of Administrative Services

Thank you. I think that is a really good question that until we have a construction manager on board and really studying it, I wouldn't be able to say with any definity or specificity but I would believe our intention would be to keep it operational as much as possible.

Alderman Sennott

Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Any other questions? Thank you Director Cummings.

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - NoneTESTIMONY IN OPPOSITIONBeth Scaer

Beth Scaer, 111 East Hobart Street. I'm an opposition to this because I live in Ward 7 and this has seemed like a boondoggle to me from the very beginning. I don't know how much we paid for it but we've already put in half a million and now you want to put another \$1 million. It's a very old dilapidated building. How much are we paying in annual maintenance? I hope that figures in to this into your decision. It just seems like good money thrown after bad.

From the very beginning - I mean at the beginning it was being run by the Arlington Street Community Center Committee and there was also the My Brother's Keeper Committee were both integral to starting the center and then the whole thing just fizzled out. Both those committees just stopped meeting. Gosh knows what happened to it. It's like whoever was in charge just lost their enthusiasm for it.

During the pandemic it was closed for years. At one point, the former Director said that the HVAC system was unsalvageable, had to have a whole new HVAC system, and then I heard nothing. That problem apparently just disappeared. I don't know what happened.

Last time I went in there, I mean it was just a trashy old dilapidated building. I don't know what else to say about it. It has a tiny parking lot. I think there's better things that could be done with this money. It's just sad that it's just like this was created as some kind of virtue signaling project and its fizzled out a long time ago and now it's just dragging along taking more money from our pockets. So that's it. Thank you.

Chairman Dowd

Any other testimony in opposition?

TESTIMONY IN FAVOR - None

TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION - None

Chairman Dowd closed the public hearing on Resolution R-23-172 at 7:22 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN O'BRIEN THAT THE NOVEMBER 27, 2023, SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF ALDERMEN BE ADJOURNED  
MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Attest: Alderman-at-Large, Michael B. O'Brien, Clerk