

REPORT OF THE HUMAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

JANUARY 21, 2004

A meeting of the Human Affairs Committee was held Wednesday, January 21, 2004 at 7:07 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber.

Chairman Lori Cardin presided.

Members of the Committee present: Alderman Marc W. Plamondon, Vice Chair
Alderman Kevin E. Gage
Alderman-at-Large James R. Tollner
Alderman David D. Lozeau

Also in Attendance: Alderman-at-Large David W. Deane
Paul Newman, Manager, Urban Programs Department
Klaas Nijhuis, Deputy Manager, Urban Programs Dept.
Glenn Levesque, Grants Manager, Nashua Police Dept.

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE CLERK

Chair Cardin called for nominations for a Committee Clerk for 2004/2005

Alderman Gage nominated Alderman Tollner_

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN TOLLNER THAT THE NOMINATIONS BE NOW CLOSED
MOTION CARRIED**

**VOTE ON ELECTION OF ALDERMAN TOLLNER TO THE POSITION OF CLERK OF THE
HUMAN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE FOR THE ENSUING TWO YEARS**

ALDERMAN TOLLNER ELECTED UNANIMOUSLY

COMMUNICATIONS

From: Paul Newman, Manager, Urban Programs Department
Re: Community Development Block Grant and HOME Programs
Schedule for Consideration of Funding

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN PLAMONDON TO ACCEPT AND PLACE ON FILE
MOTION CARRIED**

Chairman Cardin

Paul would you like to address the committee?

Paul Newman

Attached to the communication is a schedule for the committee's consideration, which lays out the meeting dates for adopting a funding plan for this upcoming Community Development Block Grant. The block grant is a federal program that was created back in 1974 to give cities a

continuing reliable source of federal funds to deal with urban bills and it consolidated quite a series of programs that existed within HUD at that time, community facilities, urban renewal, neighborhood development, and so forth into one block grant. The first block grant funding. The city has participated and received funding as an entitlement community so called ever since that time. Entitlement means that the legislation that created the program also set forth a formula to distribute the funds according to certain census data, which is population, age of housing, poverty and so forth. The computers each year once the funds are appropriated determine how those funds are distributed throughout the country. That is how our funding amount is set. It is not competitive. It is a formula.

Beyond that it is a flexible program. It provides each community the opportunity to do a range of things from housing to infrastructure to neighborhood improvement to assisting persons with providing affordable housing. Overall it is principally targeted to the needs of low and moderate-income people. In this case, that means those whose incomes are at 80% of the community's medium income or below. It does tend to be geared toward affordable housing, human service agencies that provide services to that part of the community.

At your next meeting I will provide a bit more of an overview of past funding. We always do that each year just to show where we have been and then where we are going of course was set forth the last time in the city's consolidated plan so called that we prepared in 2000. This was a plan whose contents are set out by federal requirement as a recipient of block grant funds and the home program. Virtually all of the specifics in this plan are mandated that they be included as part of our submission to HUD each year, but we only do this every 5 years. We are looking to redoing this next year, but it is a good reference. At that time, in 2000, it set out needs within the community, it stated goals and objectives, and sets up programs and strategies to accomplish those. It has a lot of useful information. Those of you who have been on the committee have seen it before, and those of you who are new may find it useful as a reference as we go through this process.

Otherwise our funding is down slightly this year somewhat contradictory to the fact that the actual appropriation is up 5% for the Community Development Block Grant, but the reason for that being that 50+ communities have become eligible for it, as a result of the last 2000 census, and are coming on line for the first time this year. Obviously 5% more funding spread over many more communities has diminished it a small amount – about \$20,000.

For the second year we will be a recipient also of the Home Investment Partnership Program Grant – that is a program that has been around for 10+ years, and it was only because of the 2000 census that the city, for the first time, became a recipient in this current year. Those funds are targeted as the name might imply specifically to housing unlike Community Development Block Grant, which can be used for infrastructure and other bricks and mortar type programs. The amount of that will be \$576,000. We will be talking more about how the affect of these funds effectively is multiplied by how they are applied to various projects and programs in the community – it greatly magnifies their impact I believe.

Other than that you will be receiving quite a bit more information at your next meeting on where we stand with regard to past funding, particularly multi-year commitments. In recent years, there have been a number of organizations such as the senior center, the adult learning center, and several others who have come in with substantial requests, and they have been accommodated to a great extent by spreading the funding out over several year commitments to the Block Grant. What these agencies do is they often can proceed with their projects, obtain

gap or bridge financing until such time as each ensuing year funding becomes available. We will describe all of those commitments, and help you and the committee in any way we can as you proceed through this.

Typically there is also a solicitation of proposals, which we would notify in the paper of any individual organization or group in the community who wishes to submit a proposal for your consideration. You can see in the schedule it is suggested that deadline be March 5th so that it provides time for you all to consider those. You may also from time to time there have been proposals from public agencies including departments within city government that have a program that is targeted to this type of program.

Beyond that myself, Klaas Nijhuis, Deputy Manager of Urban Programs, are always available. Should questions come up please do feel free to call us at any time. We will be at each and every meeting as this goes forward.

Chairman Cardin

Paul I have a question about our next meeting and the hearing on past performance, which you always do a very good job of updating us. I am wondering in the multi-year funding – what we funded multi-year, which of those have been completed and which are ongoing. I guess what I would like to know is if someone was granted a 5-year grant where they are – if they have done their project or if they are into their 3rd year and haven't begun the project or ... That is kind of where I am going.

Paul Newman

All right. Let's see some of the activities that will carry over into FY '05 are Nashua Children's Home for the renovation of 123 Amherst Street into 5 living units. The Nashua Pastoral Care Center the third of three grants for the acquisition of the former Norwell Home on Concord Street for transitional housing principally for young, single mothers. The Adult Learning Center actually again the last year of a multi-year grant for renovations to the building at 4 Lake Street. I haven't updated this chart. That is what I will have for you next time, but I can at least read this off for you. Those are the three ones that carry over.

Chairman Cardin

Do we know Nashua Pastoral Care that project is completed?

Paul Newman

Yes. That was an acquisition. Of course they acquired and occupied it well over a year ago.

Chairman Cardin

The Adult Learning Center that project is completed?

Paul Newman

The way that has been undertaken is they have done it incrementally somewhat in contradiction to the way I described before – sometimes an agency will undertake the entire scope of the

project in one step, one project. In the case of the Adult Learning Center, they are doing renovations in a building that, of course, is continually occupied so it actually worked out better for them to do it incrementally so they are spending down each year's funds progressively as they become available. We can give you an update on just where that stands in terms of commitment, but it is active. At least all the prior years' funds have been spent, and I think this year's is all committed as well. Klaas tells me that is the case. They are right up to date with drawing down those funds and applying them.

There are a couple of multi-year projects. Actually just two that are finishing up this year, which were Neighborhood Housing Services and MP Housing for affordable housing projects. We can also give you an update on how those are going. We will give you an overview of the entire slate of active projects.

As often happens and we always hope it happens this way is sometimes projects can be completed for less funds than are budgeted, and in addition to the grant that we get each year there are funds available, which we will give you a tabulation of, that can be re-programmed to new activities. There will be somewhat more funding available than the annual grant itself.

Additionally we receive program income from the housing improvement program. The housing improvement program is targeted to lower income owner occupants of residential properties in target areas, principally in the inner city, and we provide no interest deferred payment loans to parties that qualify strictly for essential work. This is the sort of work that is essential for people to be able to live safely and decently in their homes. That would typically be heating systems, roofing, electrical repairs, and such. Many of the participants are senior, social security as their only source of income. Others may be unemployed, disabled, partially employed, but we provide funding that allows them to stay in their home and again live there safely and decently. We do pay for the improvements and at such time as they sell or transfer the property the funds are repaid to the block grant. It is effectively bringing the money back into the original purpose for which it was intended and it helps to recycle it. The household gets the benefit of the use of the funds if you put it that way during the period that they are able to continue to stay in their home. It helps to preserve older housing, it provides that interim assistance to families that otherwise couldn't afford to do such work. Also it helps to stabilize the neighborhood. There may be properties where if the person could not any longer afford to live there they would have to sell, it might get turned into a rental – one of the other goals of the program, which you can see in the consolidated plan is to try to encourage a good balance of home ownership amongst rental properties in the inner city.

Alderman Tollner

I think it was last year when we were going through the budget – did we use any of the Community Development Block Grant money for the bus service?

Paul Newman

No we didn't. Actually I will qualify that a little bit. There was some funding that was set aside towards the bus garage – bricks and mortar type money, but we cannot use it actually for the service itself.

Alderman Tollner

I remember we had a conversation last year about the bus service over to Hudson. I won't belabor this because I know we are on Community Development Block Grant funds, but given the limitations of the budget and knowing the financial issues that we are having, now might be a good time for us to send a letter over to Hudson to say listen you may be asked to kick in for your share of transportation costs to pick up the residents of Hudson and bring them back over. Do you remember we had that discussion?

Paul Newman

You have a very good memory about that. Absolutely. We did a lot more analysis of that at the time and during the budget process, and while it is true that the total amount of service that we provide to Hudson does not carry itself effectively what we did find in looking at analyzing in great detail was that it is not so much actually the Hudson residents as service to a particular agency in Hudson. Actually Hudson is appropriating sufficient funding at least has to this point for service to the residents of Hudson. We are going to be talking to the agency that we serve over there to try to indicate clearly that under funding budget constraints, as they continue to tighten, that we somehow have to come rather more closer to what it costs actually to deliver that service to them. That is kind of off the subject of block grant and transit.

Alderman Tollner

Thank you.

Paul Newman

I didn't mean to stop the discussion. I was going to say I would be glad to talk about it some more.

Alderman Tollner

That is all right.

Alderman Plamondon

Thank you Madam Chairman. If I might though you to Mr. Newman – What about the soup kitchen and shelter? Have we made the final improvements through the CDBG funded expansions – the kitchen expansion and so on – is this our last year on that?

Paul Newman

You did at your last meeting agree to transfer some additional funds from contingency in the block grant to deal with conditions that were uncovered un-expectantly toward the rear of the facility.

Klaas Nijhuis

The funds have not been drawn down at this point. We are in the process, at the direction of this committee, working on a holistic plan for handicapped accessibility and the best reuse of

the downstairs space for the functions that are taking place at 42 Chestnut Street. We have taken measurements of the existing building, we have drawn up the existing building, we have designed some schemes, but we still need to talk with staff about how the physical arrangement of those spaces works best. We're targeting a start date – this does involve some demolition of the back kitchen area and reconstruction. That is best done in the spring frankly. We are moving ahead on it, but we haven't drawn down those funds. We expect that they will be drawn down by June.

Alderman Plamondon

Do you know offhand is there an expectation that we will be looking for additional funds this year the way things are looking now?

Klaas Nijhuis

The soup kitchen has typically come to this committee for assistance both in program and in capital improvements. They do have an asset management plan from which they are working and that details short term, medium term, and long term improvements and reparations that need to be made on a cyclical basis. For example the roof gets replaced every 20 years or so. The heating system is on the same sort of cycle. Appliances are on a somewhat shorter cycle. I would expect like most of the agencies that do provide a substantial amount of service in this community, they will be coming to you for an application again, yes.

Alderman Plamondon

For bricks and mortar type things?

Klaas Nijhuis

I would expect it yes.

Alderman Plamondon

I just want to make sure that we take care of them. They do a huge amount of service to the community. Also while you are up here, I will bring it up in this committee, and I plan on bringing it up at Infrastructure, there is a piece of property the city has taken over, 42 Pine Street. For over a year now I have been looking at several organizations – all the organizations within the inner city have expressed a huge need for meeting spaces and so on. The two organizations I have worked with thus far for a variety of reasons it has fallen through. I would ask you gentlemen should you know any organization that would have an interest in taking this property and using it for social purposes for the betterment of our mankind – for whatever social needs we have I would certainly like to entertain looking at resolving this.

What I propose to do at Infrastructure is ask for 30 more days from Infrastructure, and if no one comes forward then we really would need to put the building out to bid and get it on our tax rolls. It is centrally located within all the social organizations. It really would help greatly with the needs we currently have and I don't want to see this opportunity go by the wayside.

Paul Newman

I was going to say that as part of this process for Community Development Block Grant one could more directly solicit proposals specifically for a property and then evaluate them. I expect Infrastructure is the ultimate authority of determining that, but one might work – if you are inclined to do that or make some arrangement to work with them on that we could put a notice out as I said soliciting proposals – that is part of what we have to do to meet federal participation requirements, and it is a good thing. One could also more specifically mention proposals that are specifically solicited for that possibility.

Alderman Plamondon

I would certainly be willing to entertain that if there is something we could do and maybe we could speak at more length. In closing, I just want to say these two gentlemen do so much work and are so knowledgeable when it comes to CDBG and home funds and everything else. I want to thank them very, very much for the work that they do and the dedication they have. I can't say enough how much I respect them both. To me Paul is the Godfather of CDBG. Any question on CDBG I am banging on Paul's door. I just want to thank him.

One other question – Home Funds – do home funds have to be in a CDBG approved area as well?

Klaas Nijhuis

They follow our same target map of the CDBG funds yes.

Alderman Deane

You show here that we have \$890,000 available through CDBG. Out of that \$890,000 what has already been committed for this year with the multi-year projects that have been approved in the past?

Paul Newman

The Children's home is \$47,000 – I will update this spreadsheet for your next meeting, but in the meantime then Pastoral Care Center is \$34,500 and the Adult Learning Center is \$50,000.

Alderman Deane

We have already gone through about \$131,500. Is that right?

Paul Newman

Yes.

Alderman Deane

My other question is have you already started receiving applications for funds from any organizations, and if so how many have you received?

Paul Newman

Actually nothing formal at this point. I have gotten some informal inquiries. Klaas you said you expect certainly some that have received funding in the past who are likely to submit again.

Klaas Nijhuis

I have not received the forms for this year's applications. Still don't have a date on them. We were saying March question mark 2004. If we could get that date for March 5th then we will do the process, the public process of announcing for those funds. There are CDBG funds that are blended with 505 funds, and I imagine applications for those funds have been received.

Paul Newman

That is a good point. For those who may not have been through this process before, up to 15% of the Community Development Block Grant may be used for human services. That means actual delivery of services to people. That usually involves staff time and associated costs. The reason it is only 15% is again that is a federal mandate. It is not local. It is because the Community Development Block Grant was always a bricks and mortar program, but they allowed some human services complimentary to bricks and mortar to come into it. The city has traditionally, through the votes on this Board, allocated close to if not all of that full 15% to human service programs. Many years ago the process as the city also does under the community services and activities account, account 505 in the regular city budget, the city has for many years funded human service organizations, non-profits. Rather than have it run two separate competitions for funds all the proposals go through the so-called Review & Comment Commission process.

The Mayor gives the Review & Comment Commission a target, which is a combination of his budget target for 505 account in the city budget and the 15% of the Community Development Block Grant. They are pooled together temporarily for that purpose and then when they come out with their funding recommendations and present those to the Mayor who in turn presents them to you through his budget then they are pulled out separately. In certain agencies for many years, actually it has been 4 particular agencies that because they also target their funding to low-income specifically have been funded through the block grant. It doesn't preclude different or other organizations from getting funded. The other factor about that is just to finish up in the process – you will at a certain point get a recommendation from the Review & Comment Commission together with their whole recommendation for the city's 505 account, which will set out their recommended funding for the 15% of the block grant.

The only distinction I suppose is that and actual implementation under the Community Development Block Grant we sign grant agreements with each of the agencies that spells out, brings along all the federal boiler plate requirements whereas those that get funded through the city budget it is I think a quarterly payment with no other legal contractual type business associated with it.

As we go through this process we will also emphasize how we monitor and must because of being stewards of the federal funds all the various things that come along with these funds – historic, non discrimination, civil rights, waiver standards and various many things that we have to ensure that the city complies with as we spend the funds.

Alderman Deane

I had a scenario I wanted to bring up. There has been a group of 6 people who met in the Mayor's office – I have asked who they are, and they sent forward – there was a brainstorming session associated with the budgetary problems that we have, and one of the recommendations from this group of 6 was to totally not fund the 505 account, which would have been a total of \$450,000 reduction in the budget – 505 is obviously budgeted out of tax dollars. Having said that now if that comes to fruition and the Mayor's office decided not to fund the 505 account then we have the area agencies who depend on those funds every year as part of paying for their operating costs, will be looking elsewhere. One of my concerns is if that is a recommendation, and this Board has to approve it obviously, but we would have to look for another source of funding, and I would imagine if we had to or if this committee had to perhaps if applicable with what the monies are used for – I am sure there are some of those accounts in that 505 that would not be eligible for CDBG funding. Maybe you could answer that. There are a lot of different departments in there, but my question or concern is if that does come to fruition and now we have these organizations that provide services to the needy and whatnot – it is kind of spread out, but where is the money going to come from, and would it be wise to start thinking about using these funds if we could to cover the shortfalls for those different agencies?

Chairman Cardin

Well Alderman Deane we can only use up to 15% of the Community Development Block Grant and we have been doing that year after year funding programs such as the Soup Kitchen and Children's Home and Adult Learning Center, and you know programs that feed the poor and house the low-income of our city. I don't know – I haven't heard anything from the Mayor's office about cutting that 505 account. As part of the Review & Comment Commission I have not been lead to believe anything other than business as usual. I would hope to have heard from the Mayor's office if there were anything different.

Alderman Deane

It was part of their budget presentation a couple of Monday's ago.

Paul Newman

I was there. I could describe it as I understood it. I think there may have been one or two Aldermen there. I think it was boards and commissions rather than Aldermen. We didn't get a copy of the PowerPoint presentation, but it was made rather clear that there were a whole range of prospects to meet the budget target, and that there was a long list of simply possibilities no matter how remote they might actually be. They didn't want to leave anything off the table just as a starting point. The final strategic plan that was concluded the presentation did not include that prospect. That was not one that this team was going to propose.

Alderman Lozeau

A question to Paul – the library is desperately looking for money to put on some front doors that they say are not ADA compliant. Could any of this money be used for the library's doors?

Paul Newman

At first I was going to say that would be difficult, but actually as far as an accessibility issue that is one of the provisions in the block grant regulations that is not income sensitive. That any project that benefits those with disabilities in terms of handicapped accessibility is in deed eligible. We did carry out a similar project at the Hunt Building to construct a ramp into that building and to renovate a bathroom for handicapped access.

Alderman Lozeau

So it is possible.

Paul Newman

Indeed.

Alderman Lozeau

Would the library have to come to you and apply for it like anybody else?

Paul Newman

As any city department they would put a proposal before you all. We field the proposals and try to assess them as to whether they meet the eligibility under this federal program and try to determine what the relative costs are so that you have a clear picture of what the project is. I won't say outright that it is absolutely eligible. I guess it would depend on what the relative scope is, how it affects accessibility...

Alderman Lozeau

It is handicapped to the doors in the bathroom. They believe it is \$115,000 project. I don't remember the price tag.

Chairman Cardin

That is another reason the city needs – could take some lessons from the Soup Kitchen and have some kind of asset management plan going. We do need a committee or someone to oversee our buildings and properties that are falling into disrepair and coming up as emergency items. The police station the library – it is something we could probably take a lesson from someone on. As a whole the city has been lacking in that area and I know it has been talked about for years and is not within the purview of this committee, but it certainly is for the Board of Aldermen.

Alderman Lozeau

Is that Infrastructure?

Chairman Cardin

I would say. I think that would be a good place to start.

Alderman Plamondon

Maybe to continue with what Alderman Deane was talking about – if we look at the multi-year projects that we discussed earlier; Pastoral Care, Adult Learning Center, Children’s Home – about \$131,500 and then 15% to the 505 at \$133,500, which is \$265,000 from the \$290,000 ballpark delta from the difference is about \$625,000 – that will go in a blink of an eye. These are very rough figures, but I just thought I would mention that. It is not a lot of money.

Chairman Cardin

There are a lot of needs in this community.

Alderman Plamondon

I wish we had another zero behind it.

Chairman Cardin

Yes. Are there any other questions regarding this communication? Thank you very much gentlemen.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS

R-04-01

Endorser: Alderman Marc W. Plamondon
Alderman Kevin E. Gage
Alderman Robert A. Dion

**RELATIVE TO THE TRANSFER OF \$82,382.80 FROM ACCOUNT 374-07990
“CDBG CONTINGENCY” INTO ACCOUNT 374-07585 “CDBG INNER-CITY
PLAYGROUNDS” TO FUND IMPROVEMENTS FOR INNER-CITY PLAYGROUNDS**

MOTION BY ALDERMAN PLAMONDON TO RECOMMEND INDEFINITE POSTPONEMENT

ON THE QUESTION

Alderman Plamondon

Especially going through the figures as we have roughly -- the intent of this legislation, the primary focus that I was having was for the Palm Street lot and whenever I mention it people scratch their head and say Palm Street lot where is that? It is a house size lot. It is not bad in size, but it is so overgrown and in disrepair that it is a true abomination, but beyond that it is dangerous, and beyond that because of the current status of it, it is also a magnet for crime. Through the years I have had multiple calls from residents in that area. When this lot was last touched I believe it was in the early ‘70s. With the city obviously having good intentions they put a brick walkway in, well in the inner city a brick walkway on sand lasted less than a summer. The bricks are still ending up in people’s yards and against their homes. This particular situation in this lot is a magnet for drug activity, sexual behavior, etc. Neighbors in this area, particularly one neighbor in a second floor building, told me they periodically in the summer

months when they hear things going on they have a very bright flashlight, and they just start flashing it in there amongst the overgrowth just to try to scare the people out. It is really a horrendous situation, and this needs to be addressed.

The other I was hoping for was some additional work at the Pine Street skateboard park, which was our city's first skateboard park. It kind of broke barriers. Well the kids in that area want a half pike so the intent of this legislation wasn't just for these two parks, but any other inner city parks that could use some funding. In Ward 3 and Ward 7 we certainly have a lot of needs. In going through the numbers what I was hoping to do on the Palm Street lot was a handball court and a splash pad like we put in at Sandy Pond, which has proven to be a huge success – a project that Alderman Dion did a lot of work on, and it has proved very beneficial to that neighborhood. I might add that this Palm Street lot and the entire tree streets neighborhood one of the most congested neighborhoods in the city – if I might even add in the State, the only parks are three postage stamp size play lots; Ash Street, Palm Street, which is really bad, and the Pine Street skateboard park. Those three tiny parks handle all of the tree streets. To have one in such disrepair and unsafe conditions is very, very wrong, and it is our responsibility to address it.

Going through the numbers on a splash pad and looking for the power supply, a building, water supply, concrete, 4 benches, 2 tables, new fencing, 3 lights – all total it is about \$181,600. That is with the city doing the engineering in house and the costs do not include labor. I think these numbers can definitely be brought down and I think I need to go forward and do a comprehensive site plan on this and in doing so then come forward with legislation that will be very specific to this lot and maybe a multi-year funding to address this particular problem. What I may be coming for right away to the Human Affairs Committee once we are in the CDBG process is for \$5,000 to at least go in there and make this park safe. Five thousand dollars would cut back the overgrowth, get rid of the bricks, put in a compact stone dust walkway – open it up and make it at least safer for police to monitor any activity going on there and so forth. That is my main goal for hopefully this fall. Because of other projects going on we can't get in there before fall it doesn't look like. It is unfortunate we have to go through another summer of problems, but that seems to be the reality of the situation. I hope that by fall we can at least go in there and make it safe and then next year actually do a phased rebuilding of this particular playground. Unfortunately I think I am going to pull this back a bit and come back in the regular process.

Chairman Cardin

Alderman Plamondon it concerns me that a city owned park is in such disrepair that we are concerned for the safety matters. I think maybe we need to work with the Park Superintendent to find out what he can do so that it alleviates that concern.

Alderman Plamondon

I have for years.

Alderman Deane

I too am a bit alarmed hearing this. Number one being the liaison to the Board of Public Works I went to the meeting last evening with you. The need of \$5,000 to me is ridiculous because they have material sitting up at that park department – whatever you need – they have stone dust,

they have a bucket truck, they have chain saws, they have back hoes, they have fencing. Anything that you would probably need over there to at least get that facility back up to – to rectify some of the problems associated with the lack of maintenance on it. They should be able to take care of that. The other thing that Commissioner Hall had asked for during their budget was a list of the projects that they were going to do this year. To my knowledge other than Sunset Heights with the way the funding is going to be this year I think they are going to start maintaining what they have just built over the last three years. For them to get in there to take care of that Alderman Plamondon I don't think is going to be that big of a deal. I don't make their schedule up, but when the summer help comes in they can go down there and a couple of three days they should be able to clean that place up for you.

Chairman Cardin

I had a conversation with Nick Caggiano and that was what he expressed his goals were due to budgetary constraints was maintaining what they had and hopefully we can work something in with him to get over there and make that a safer park.

Alderman Plamondon

Just to address some of the points made, this is something that isn't new. I have been trying to raise the flag on this park for years. Other parks have taken the forefront because of hazardous waste materials, being on dumps, etc. We have done a lot of work in the past couple of years on our parks. This one still remains outstanding. I was always promised that it was on the timetable and so on and so forth, but now when we have very severe budgetary cuts I am afraid it is slipping from the radar screen. The current schedule, and again this is also looking at potential less manpower and obviously less funding, but the current schedule is Sunset Heights, which is about 80% complete now and that should be completed by Memorial Day, Belvedere Park we are going to start in the spring and that should be completed around mid June, 11th Street we will be doing work in that area in the spring and that should end around July. That is with Bright spot money. Therefore, with the current schedule that is why I am hoping that we can get in there by fall and that is what I have been told as to when they could probably start on something if not sooner. The message that they are getting is that they are not going to be doing any new projects. I saw the Mayor today and that is not true. Granted we are not going to be doing projects like we have been, but certainly we're not going to be just a maintenance city. Maintenance will be more important, but we still will be doing some projects as time and money allows. I am just trying to get this park as a bigger blip on the radar screen.

Chairman Cardin

Understood.

Alderman Lozeau

I have to agree with Alderman Deane that if there is a problem there we should get Parks & Recreation out there. I would also like to look into some type of neighborhood involvement on something like this. When a neighborhood pitches in and does something or maybe PAL there up in that neighborhood. There is a lot more respect for that property shown when the neighborhood actually pitches in. I was involved in a park project on Worcester Street where it was private land and we put a park in, and it was constant maintenance with the neighborhood. Maybe some kind of a neighborhood pet project or get PAL. I don't know how you can direct

that, but I have a problem spending any more money on playgrounds. I drive by the Pine Street place all the time and that is not very nice either. That is a mess. There was a washer and dryer out there for like two weeks.

Alderman Plamondon

Keep in mind – I have worked with the neighbors, but you have to keep in mind the nature of the neighborhood. This is a very, very transient neighborhood. It is not uncommon for someone to live there 6 months and move out to another apartment and so on. A lot of immigrants, a lot of people who are working 3 jobs, which is common to make their rent – this is the highest crime area of the city. To get neighborhood involvement is very, very tough in this area. Literally if I walk down those streets and if I have a suit on people start going into homes. There is a fear of authority. The countries that these people come from – honestly – the countries they come from are totally different than the United States. I don't know if you can understand the cultural differences that they are extremely unique and very different than what we are accustomed to.

I can tell you all kinds of stories about fire fighters that pulled a gentleman out of a burning building, but because of the fear of being caught, and he may have been an illegal I don't know, went back in the burning building and hid again. I could go on, and on, and on. These are very severe cultural differences that this particular neighborhood is unique on. I think you will find some of these same situations on French Hill as well. To say that neighborhood involvement doesn't happen, it does, and PAL – they are the glue in that area. Especially through the kids PAL has been extremely helpful in this area. They are doing their best with working with Los Amigos on Ash Street – that has been redone. Again the nature of this neighborhood is constant maintenance and upkeep. Whatever we build has to be bullet proof. You are dealing with a very transient, low-income, depressed neighborhood. That is the reality of this situation. Unless there is a huge infusion of money, which will never happen, this is something that we are going to be dealing with as best we can for the foreseeable future. It doesn't mean that we – we certainly can't walk away and look the other way.

The Pine Street skateboard park – it is amazing that the kids there try to take care of it. I have stopped by many times and where they get depressed – they say it is with the adults – the washer and dryer there – adults come by and drop the washer and dryer there, the city puts trashcans out – the kids use the trashcans – the adults come down and steal the trashcans. I go down and talk to the kids and the kids tell me oh yeah one barrel is over there on Chestnut; the other barrel is over on Stevens Ave. It is amazing. It is the nature of the neighborhood. Basically it is what I deal with. Thank you.

MOTION CARRIED

R-04-05

Endorsers: Mayor Bernard A. Streeter
Alderman Lori Cardin
Alderman-at-Large James R. Tollner
Alderman Marc W. Plamondon

RELATIVE TO THE ACCEPTANCE AND APPROPRIATION OF \$63,125 OBTAINED FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE, INTO SPECIAL REVENUE ACCOUNT 331-6294 “DOMESTIC VIOLENCE UNIT 03 FUNDS”

MOTION BY ALDERMAN PLAMONDON TO RECOMMEND FINAL PASSAGE

ON THE QUESTION

Chairman Cardin

I know that Glenn Levesque is here if he would like to join us.

Glenn Levesque

These funds will support the continuing work of our domestic violence unit. It is a continuing grant. We have had it I believe since '97. As far as a match there is a required match of 1/3 of the funds and \$10,000 of that has been budgeted into contingency.

Chairman Cardin

Has there been a change in staffing in the domestic violence?

Glenn Levesque

No. We still have one officer and one advocate.

Chairman Cardin

That will still be budgeted for the coming year?

Glenn Levesque

Yes. The amount of the grant is reducing yearly, which is common with grants, and we are starting to pick up more in our local budget to keep this very valuable unit up and running.

Chairman Cardin

I agree that it is a very valuable unit. I think they do a good job.

Alderman Lozeau

Is domestic violence on the rise? Is it leveling off is it going down?

Glenn Levesque

I would have to say based on yearly reports that I have seen it is still increasing. The number of people that the domestic violent unit is being involved with keeps increasing each year. Again that is with the two out straight. They are doing a great job.

Unidentified Speaker

That is Brenda and Officer Nichols.

Glenn Levesque

Correct.

Alderman Tollner

I just had a question because this is the first time in a while that I have seen a resolution come in for grants where the last sentence says “in an attempt to end the grant program funding for this grant has been decreased and we will be requesting \$18,831 for personal costs to be added to the FY '05 budget to completely fund the program.” A couple of questions on that – first one will be that the police department will have to request an additional \$18,000 and change in their budget for FY '05 and the second was can you break out for me not in huge detail but from 15,000 feet what are the personal costs that will be added to the program and where would this \$18,000, which person would that \$18,000 cover?

Glenn Levesque

Yes the \$18,000 would be requested to continue this program. The money that we receive combined with what is budgeted in contingency does not cover all the costs. Currently we pay in local picks up approximately 45% of the cost of this program at this point, and that will increase as times goes on as federal funds are decreased for the program. As far as to whom the money can be contributed it is – the grant is entered as a unit so it just goes to both salaries, all the benefits, there is some training involved. We have cut it down to bare bones actually to keep the project up and running.

Alderman Tollner

In your conversations with the Chief or Deputy Chief, have there been any discussions as far as cutting in some area to fund this \$18,000 rather than having an addition to the budget?

Glenn Levesque

That has not – the business manager, Mrs. Karen Smith handles the financial end of the grants and I am not sure as to the extent of her conversations at this point.

Alderman Tollner

What would happen if we held this? Would anything happen if we held this until our next meeting, allowed her to look into that to see if there was some way that they could offset this additional cost within the police budget?

Glenn Levesque

The local budget would have to pick this up because we can't ask for any reimbursements until it is accepted so it would just hold off us receiving the federal funds.

Alderman Tollner

We would not be in jeopardy of losing these federal funds if we took this piece of legislation up at our next meeting if that is what the committee chose?

Glenn Levesque

Correct.

Alderman Tollner

This is a difficult one because I think the program first of all is great. I think the police department is going to have a tough time coming in at a level budget to begin with and this is just one item. I fully support the program. What I would like to see is if the business manager could come back in at our next meeting with some recommendations or even supply the committee with a memo with recommendations on how they could possibly offset the cost of this grant. Is it safe to assume that in FY '05 the city would incur even greater cost sharing to keep this program at the level it is at right now?

Glenn Levesque

At this point yes because the federal funds are reducing and it will be up to the city to pick up this program.

Alderman Tollner

How many years have we had two staff people?

Glenn Levesque

I believe since – it started in '97 to my recollection definitely with an officer and the advocate came on shortly thereafter – a year or two perhaps. If not pretty close to that. It has been quite a while.

Alderman Tollner

I guess what I would also like to see if the committee does decide to hold this until our next meeting is the number of incidents over the last 2-3 years and what you anticipate this year. There is no doubt in my mind I am sure that they are on the rise and this program is needed. It is not my concern that the program isn't needed. I think it is needed, but that combined with some of the financial resources that we might be able to look at to fund this unanticipated \$18,000. I want to be very clear that I do support it. I think it is a great program.

Alderman Deane

Through you to Glenn – is there a set percentage with what the grant is being reduced by every year? Do you know that off hand?

Glenn Levesque

No. Actually this is the first year it has taken a reduction. I believe last year it was in the \$70,000 range. Before that it has been level I want to say for 2-3 years.

Alderman Deane

What is the cost to operate this unit? Are some of these cost increases due to reductions plus changes in benefits and things of that nature?

Glenn Levesque

That is basically correct. That is basically the increase in salaries and the benefits.

Alderman Deane

So the \$18,000 – what did we get last year \$70,000 you said?

Glenn Levesque

Seventy something. I am not exactly sure of the figure.

Alderman Deane

This year we are getting \$63,000?

Glenn Levesque

Correct.

Alderman Deane

You say seventy something – is it \$79,000 or \$72,000 or?

Glenn Levesque

Mid 70s – I don't recall - \$75,000 or \$76,000 I want to say that range.

Alderman Deane

How much of this \$18,831 do you believe is associated with – are these union employees?

Glenn Levesque

Yes, well **tape flipped ...**

Alderman Deane

Could you give us the amount of salary and benefit increases associated with this \$18,000? If you look at the one employee that is union you can go out and see because of the ration of multi-year contracts that were approved we kind of know what their increases are, but the merit could go either way. In '06 it's almost like you should see what it is going to cost in '06 as well because even though there is possibly another reduction of the allowable grant – I didn't know if

they had sent you something that stated from here on out this grant is being reduced by 15% a year until you take over the entire funding. Next year the grant might not even be available whatsoever.

Glenn Levesque

That is a possibility yes. More than likely not due to the nature, but as with any grant they are made to start at a certain level and reduce through the years. Basically grants are seed money. They want the local agencies to pick it up and keep the program running, but they cannot give a definite – there are many factors simply starting from administration in Washington on down as to how much funding each program receives.

Alderman Deane

I know in the two years I have been on the Board and I know I head Alderman Tollner state on numerous occasions especially to the health department, that we fully understand that this employee is funded through this grant, but when this grants ends up depleting and there are no more funds available the employee is gone. That has been stated by Alderman Tollner on numerous occasions over there. I don't know what the criteria is with this. It is an important program obviously, but it is time for the police department to step up to the plate and tell us where they will get the \$18,000 from to pay for the balance.

Chairman Cardin

That is true. I believe that is true. Like Officer Levesque said this is meant to be seed money. It is meant to get the program into the community, have the people in the community realize its value and worth over time and then absorb it into your budget. I agree that the police department needs to come in and let us know how they will do that. To just dismiss a person who is actually doing a position to me is not the way to go. I think this is a very valuable program and somehow I think we need to step up to the plate and figure out how it will be funded or the police department does. The purpose of the grant is to get it going and to prove its value to the community. I think it has done that. I would hate to do away with these two people. I am sure they are overworked, I am sure they have more domestic violence out there than these two people can handle and it probably spills over into other employees jobs. I don't know that for sure, but I imagine it probably does. I imagine the numbers have not decreased over the years since 1997. In fact, as you said they have probably increased. I would be curious to see what those numbers are.

Alderman Deane

I agree with you, but what we will see at budget time is when the police department brings its budget forward where this program stands on their – once things are prioritized where this program stands in their list of priorities. Perhaps if the Budget Committee disagrees we will make adjustments accordingly. We have some years of debt in front of us to pay and unfortunately some things are probably going to have to be cut. Once we get the budgets in and they are prioritized and we will all have a better understanding to make our decisions from there.

Chairman Cardin

Right. It is not to say that because this is a grant funded position that its value to the community isn't more than a program or somebody else. Just because it is grant funded doesn't mean it is less valuable than another position somewhere. I guess that is my take on it.

Alderman Deane

It is up to the police department to come in and tell us the success of their personnel and what it means to the community. Then we will have a better understanding.

Alderman Gage

Having been on the Budget Committee the last four years I know several times I have said to department heads when they have talked about grant positions do they understand if this grant position is approved that 3 maybe 4 years down the road we may not have the money to fund this grant position and they may not have a job at that point, do you make that clear to them? A lot of department heads kind of try to go around that – I did have one say yes absolutely we let them know. Most of the time you get department heads that don't want to say that because they expect to be able to keep this person – eventually they will come in and say what will we do just let this person go? Well we have been telling you that year after year in the Budget Committee that you may have to. Regarding the police department the cops' grants were a different situation at one time – in order to get it you had to agree that every year you picked up more of the cost, and eventually would take them on. If I remember correctly 100% for so many years and the first time you didn't do that – you dumped them that was the last money you were going to get from the cops program. Just back to what Alderman Deane was saying they will have to make their pitch as to their priorities – all the departments will. I agree with Alderman Tollner that I would like to see a lot of the information he has asked for – to have them make their arguments perse as to what we should do with this.

Alderman Plamondon

Thank you Madam Chair. Through you to Officer Levesque – It was stated that this particular grant hadn't decreased since '97, and it has been pretty constant, and this '04 grant is the first one to show a really sizable decrease. Then we were talking about '05 and '06 budgets where it would be projected to decrease as well. Is that based on the assumption of the current administration in Washington?

Glenn Levesque

I would say yes. Not being a Washington insider, but under the last administration there were all sorts of funds put out, but now they have been restricted. Then again there are other things going on around the world also that the previous administration didn't have to deal with. It could. It could increase again, it could go down, it could stay level funding.

Alderman Plamondon

Which is pretty much my point – we don't really know. It could go down, it could go back up, it could stay the same. We're dealing with an unknown here and to assume it is going to go down we are missing the other 2/3 of the probabilities. I certainly agree. I would like to see more

information, and with great reservations I would look at having to have to let employees go especially considering what just happened to me, but grants are great, but the ones that are not 100% in these budget times they are going to be hard to deal with. Virtually all the grant money we get they are all - no matter what division comes before us they are very useful and important. These are hard times and I am wrestling with this. I guess my last question is, is there a time sensitivity to this grant whereas we need to act sooner or do we have the time to get more information from the next Human Affairs meeting to move forward and make a decision?

Glenn Levesque

Another month, another meeting wouldn't hinder accessibly. Like I said it would just have to all be put in and we couldn't apply for any reimbursements obviously until it is accepted into the city, but other than that ...

AMENDED MOTION BY ALDERMAN PLAMONDON TO HOLD IN COMMITTEE

ON THE QUESTION

Alderman Lozeau

This is going into the '04 budget this \$18,000? I would assume it is already approved in the '04 budget?

Alderman Tollner

The \$18,000 that they are asking for right now would go into – it would be requested from the FY '05 budget – the one that we have not developed yet.

Alderman Lozeau

So this \$63,000 is for next year?

Glenn Levesque

No. The way this grant works is January 1 through December 31. It is not with anybody's budget cycle. That will cover that period of time – that is when we can request the monies from that for reimbursements for what we have paid out.

Alderman Tollner

The way it would work is we have already done this for '04. The way the grant runs is January 1 of '04 until the end of this year so we can run the program for the first 6 months. The money that we would be looking for, the \$18,000, would be requested from the '05 budget that would start July 1st so the \$18,000 would have to come out of the budget between July 1st through the end of the year to cover the cost of the variance in the grant.

Glenn Levesque

Correct.

Alderman Tollner

I just again want to reiterate that I do think this is a great program, but this program and a couple other ones they are supported by grants, and I think Alderman Cardin positioned it absolutely correctly that a lot of these grants are seed money for great programs that they want cities to implement, and over the course of time the cost shifts where we introduce them to see how it works and then the city would fund them. I guess what we will find out during the budget time period is where the police department views this program in order of priority. I for one would hope that this is high on their priority list. The important thing is it doesn't make any difference right now whether it is the police department, fire, school, DPW, when new requests are coming for additional dollars the first response I think the Board of Aldermen is going to have, and I can't speak for the entire Board of Aldermen, is how do you anticipate funding that. In past years if it was \$15,000 or \$18,000 we could say no big deal we can fund it in next year's budget. I think knowing what we are faced with I think all of the departments are going to have to say well you know what this is very important and I am going to take \$18,000 from this project and re-allocate it to something like this. We did speak with the Chief the other night. He came here to purchase a van I think it was. The communication back to him was not that the van isn't a good purchase, but are there more appropriate or much needed equipment whether it be vests or whatever that would be more appropriate to spend on if we wanted to stretch our dollar and spend our limited resources more wisely. Again, I said it three times, but I don't want to see this program going away. During the budget we will keep a keen eye on this.

Chairman Cardin

Can we be clear about what we are expecting the police department to come back with? I know that we wanted to know the number of incidents and the units of service that are provided.

Alderman Tollner

I think Alderman Deane asked for the salaries of the two individuals, what was broken out by salary, benefits, and any equipment that they use.

Chairman Cardin

I guess the whole budget for that program.

Alderman Tollner

If their role has changed – one of the other things was and we didn't mention it was have any of these two individual received promotions in the last year or two or do we foresee them getting a promotion – really look at it as if we are going to make an investment and we want to know where the money is going to be going if we are going to make that investment.

Chairman Cardin

Do you have any other questions of us Officer Levesque?

Glenn Levesque

No. I am clear on what you are looking for.

MOTION CARRIED

NEW BUSINESS – ORDINANCES - None

DISCUSSION

Alderman Tollner

I just want to make sure that the committee is brought up to date. I have been speaking with Alderman Cardin and I think Alderman Gage is familiar with this. The St. Francis Committee – what we are going to do with St. Francis Church has met now for I would say close to a year. The group is at a point right now where we have gotten some grant money and they are looking for I think it is either \$6,000 or \$8,000 from Community Development Block Grant money to do a site study on the church. There is a very strong opinion in the group and within the community that I can't speak for the diocese nor ever would I speak for the diocese that they might pass the church over to the city. I was asked to sponsor legislation to use Community Development Block Grant money. I want to make sure that this committee is aware of that. I did speak with Alderman Cardin. I don't want to speak for her, but it seems as if she will support that as well. I wanted to know if any of the other committee members wanted to do that or if they had any questions.

Alderman Plamondon

This group has been doing fundraising if I remember. Do you know how much money they have accumulated thus far? What they have in their coffers, the intent on it – would they have any money to put towards the site study?

Alderman Plamondon

I want to be very clear before I make this next statement – I am not speaking for either group because it is a very emotional topic, but I think the group that you are talking about are a number of well intentioned individuals that are looking for contributions to keep that facility open as a church and have a fundraiser to support the structure and get everything done the way it needs to in order to keep it open as a church. This particular committee that Alderman Gage and I have served on has been started by the Mayor and there are a number of people on the committee – Mo Arel is the Chairman, Kathy Hersh, Dave Fredette, John from Destination Downtown, a couple of people from the banking industry and a couple of citizens where we have met 1-2 Fridays a month to discuss it. They have gone on tours; they have gone to Maine, Vermont – a number of communities to look at churches that have been closed by the diocese and converted either into museums, music halls...

Alderman Gage

Community Center.

Alderman Tollner

Things like that. They do have a good breath of what could be done with the building. They have also gone on I think 2-3 tours of St. Francis itself. I will be calling Randy Wilbert this week just to see where the group that you mentioned Alderman Plamondon – where they are in their fundraising efforts because I guess within the next month or two I think we will be at a point where we have to make a decision one way or the other. I myself personally would not want to conflict with this group that is raising funds to keep it open as a church if that is a viable alternative, but at the same time it is a beautiful facility in an area of the city that needs to be respected. If we are to take it over I think before we take it over the city really has to have a legitimate idea or plan as far as what they are going to do with it.

Alderman Plamondon

Is this – to the best of my knowledge the church has not been placed on the national historic register? I have heard there was some discussion about applying for that. Should that come to fruition is there potentially grant money going that route as well as a national historic building?

Alderman Tollner

They are looking for additional grant money and seed money to do that, and I think there are a number of people on the committee that are looking into having the building designated as such. If it is, it would not affect the plan either way whether it would continue to be a church. I think the diocese was very clear that they have little if no interest. It is the passion of the communicants of St. Francis who are very diligent in trying to keep that open and dream alive. Like I said it is a very difficult topic to discuss because there are parishioners that have come to almost every single meeting and continue to holding out some hope that it will work out.

Alderman Plamondon

Without a doubt it is a sensitive issue. We're in tough times. That is all we talk about. We know right off the top \$1.5 million for roof repairs and such that the church needs. Those of us that have been on this committee for a long time can recall 14 Court Street and other buildings. Even those buildings don't compare really to the historic nature of St. Francis Church. It is a landmark. It is another situation where I definitely want to help in whatever way I can in supporting something of a positive nature happening to this landmark. It is just tough times right now. I wish we could postpone it for a year or two, but I don't think we can.

Chairman Cardin

The opportunity may not present itself. It is a jewel in the midst of our city. It is a beautiful facility. I think the small amount of money that is being requested to do that type of study is a good investment on the city's part. That is my own personal feeling.

Alderman Tollner

Again it is just the study to clarify it so we can go back to the diocese and say these are viable alternatives for it; if the diocese accepts that and in turn they pass the building over to the city then it will be money that is well spent. I think it is not the intent of this group nor the city I think if we do take over the building that the city is going to pay for the repairs. Then I think the

discussion has been look for corporate sponsors, if it does become something other than a church, to fund those repairs.

Alderman Gage

As was said earlier it is an extremely emotional roller coaster over the last couple of years has been with the residents especially the residents of Ward 3 up on the hill from members of my extended family to folks you meet on the street or at the market – there was even a mixed reaction from the residents and parishioners of St. Francis that come here to the meetings of the St. Francis committee as to why we are even there at times. They felt there was some interference with the efforts of the St. Francis Foundation, I believe that is what it is called, and you do get some resentment from that, but when you sit down and explain to them for the most part why we sit where we do to look into this in the attempt to make sure that it is taken care of in the years to come and that nothing – it was described as a jewel. We all I think want to make sure that it is taken care of. We differ I think a little bit with our goals and the foundation's goals to return to having a mass and doing all those types of things. It is a very notable goal, and I wish them luck. If that can be done and they can convince the diocese to do that it is a wonderful thing for the French Hill area and for the city. If they can't there has to be some kind of safety net to try to do the right thing by that property. I think that is what those of us that meets here in this Chamber on Friday mornings are trying to do. I would ask that any funding especially the minimal amounts that we ask for at this point for a study would be supported by the rest of you on the Board. Thank you.

Alderman Lozeau

We have to be very careful not to step on the toes of the people that are working to keep it a church. I don't know if we are sending out a message that if they don't do it we will do it and whether that will play somehow in the decision of the diocese. We have to protect it yes, but we also have to support these guys here that are trying to keep it as a church.

Chairman Cardin

I haven't been involved in the ...

Alderman Lozeau

I have relatives that are very involved.

Chairman Cardin

I am sure it is a sensitive issue.

Alderman Lozeau

It is very sensitive.

Chairman Cardin

It seems to me the diocese has – are there masses going on in there now?

Alderman Gage

No.

Alderman Lozeau

It is closed.

Alderman Tollner

It has been closed for a number of months.

Alderman Gage

It has been closed for quite some time now. That again is part of the emotional roller coaster – it was going to be closed on a certain date then it changed, and then it was shut down. The idea that – the diocese has been very, very straightforward and I have sat down with high-ranking members of the diocese – myself a year and a half or almost two years ago when the discussion of closing it came about and then once it did close. They were very adamant that if it is closed it is closed, and it would not be re-opened, it would not come under the – the Bishop would not allow a priest who was not part of the diocese and took his direction from the diocese in Manchester to be there. It is a sad situation to watch, but I don't want people to look and say if we don't do something – if we can't have it as a church what will happen to it. We look at there are two other churches in the city closed in the downtown, and one of them I've heard this, that, and the other thing about one particular church downtown that is closed regarding a sale or a possible sale of the building. I certainly wouldn't want to be the one with the wrecking ball. I just want to make sure in the end that nothing like that happens to that building on French Hill.

Chairman Cardin

I don't think the message going out to the parishioners who are trying to re-open this church is necessarily coming from the city. I think it has come from the diocese and that is unfortunate for those who had hopes that it would re-open. I don't know what the status of that is, but for us to not take any action and not try to move forward at least with a study to see what might be possible for the city would be penny wise and pound foolish for the amount of money that is being requested.

Alderman Deane

I wanted to hit on where Alderman Lozeau kind of beat me to the punch – first and foremost it is a church and it will always be a church. I think a seed has been planted that the city wants to purchase it and use it as a performing arts center or something, which I think is ludicrous. As Alderman Gage had stated we have to be respectful of the other group that is trying to move forward to do something with this facility. I have heard differing accounts of the maintenance that building needs, and it doesn't need a million dollars or a million and a half worth of roof work. I have heard that the roof has a few problem areas. I don't know how it has been

translated to the other group on what the city's intentions are or whether as we have done with the other churches where we started levying property taxes on the facilities, but that hasn't been done there yet either, and I believe there is still – they are still using the religious education program – that part of the building is still being used.

Alderman Tollner

That building is being taxed right now. I don't know I think it was either 2-3 months ago when we started taxing it. Quite frankly I was in favor of them starting to tax it because I think what we want is we want the diocese to make a decision as to what they will do with the building. I think the conversations at least in committee have kind of gone the other way as far as a performing arts center. I think right now I don't think we know what we want to do with it. The one concern that we have is we don't think that the diocese is interested in keeping it as a church. It is a liability right now that they are being taxed on so I think from the diocese perspective let things calm down a bit and then hopefully some time in the next 6-9 months they will make a decision.

We have been I think pretty respectful of the group that is trying to raise money. We have even delayed 2 months worth of meetings to give them an opportunity for additional time to raise money. As a member of that committee, I can only speak for myself, but if there is money that is raised that makes that a viable alternative I absolutely will support it. I think the church has been – the diocese has been very clear that they have no intention of operating that as a church and they are – again I shouldn't speak for the diocese – their opinion is though that they don't want anybody else using it as a church in any way, shape or form – they are very sensitive to that. They are just very conservative in their practices when the building is no longer officially a church in the diocese – part of the agreement, and they have been very clear to the city, is that if they do give the building to the city that in no way, shape or form can that facility ever be used for religious purposes. That is really to maintain its respect – the past history on what has gone on in that building. We are working on and again this study and the results of this study I am sure the committee will release to the group that is also trying – I think it is only fair and appropriate that we release that study when it is completed to the other group that is trying to raise funds to keep that situation moving forward.

The study will be looking at the building, uses of that building, and any serious I guess structural issues that may pop up. I think it is – it is money, but when you look at that building and the history behind it I think it is short money for us to at least investigate it. We can share all that information with both parties regardless of what their intentions are.

Alderman Gage

Just so you are all aware there are several buildings that were former churches that were visited in the northern part of the state; Vermont and Maine, where those diocese's also put that restriction on whom they sold the building to – that it would not become a religious facility for any other denomination. There were agreements where the diocese actually retained control of it as long as whatever organization they sold it to could do their thing, but in terms if you were ever closed out of bailed in that case for the arts project or historical society group or whatever it was that it would automatically return to the diocese – so they retained that control. Those are different agreements made with different dioceses' across the area.

Alderman Tollner

If you want to be endorsers you can just give me a ring and let me know.

Chairman Cardin

Is there any other discussion?

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN PLAMONDON TO ADJOURN
MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Alderman-at-Large James R. Tollner
Committee Clerk