

Budget & Finance Standing Committee
Thursday, May 19, 2022 – 5:30 p.m.
REMOTE MEETING
-Minutes-

Present: Chair, Councilor Scott Memhard; Vice Chair, Councilor Tony Gross; Councilor Jeff Worthley (left the meeting at 6:02 p.m.)

Also Present: Auditor, Kenny Costa; Economic Development Director, Sal DiStefano; Clerk of Committees, Sherry Karvelas

This meeting was conducted remotely through ZOOM. All votes were by ROLL CALL.

Meeting called to order at 5:30 p.m.

Councilor Memhard announced, “Consistent with chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting will be conducted by remote participation. The public may not physically attend this meeting but every effort will be made to allow the public to view and listen to the meeting in real-time and participate when necessary. If you are calling in on a phone, you can press Star 9 to request to speak. If you are watching on a computer or a device, there is a raised hand button that you can tap or press to request to speak. Please use either of these options to be recognized to speak.”

Councilor Memhard announced the names of the B&F Committee members in attendance (Councilors Gross, Worthley and himself), and City staff who were attending via Zoom.

1. Memorandum from the Economic Development Director requesting acceptance of a grant from the Massachusetts Office of Business Development – City of Gloucester Retail Commercial District Signage Program in the amount of \$100,000

Summary of Discussion: The **Economic Development Director, Sal DiStefano**, stated that the City has been awarded a grant in the amount of \$100,000 for a program that came out of the Local Rapid Recovery Plan. He explained that the grant is from the Massachusetts Office of Business Development and that under the Mayor’s leadership a signage grant program would be launched for small businesses which will provide grants of up to \$5,000 for signage for businesses in the City’s retail districts. He stated that the work would be in collaboration with the Building Department to get proper signage permitted and installed to help the look and feel of the City’s retail districts.

Councilor Memhard asked the **Economic Development Director** to describe what the process will be to distribute the funds. The **Economic Development Director** stated that there is a partnership with the Greater Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce to help promote the program and stated that there would be an application process. He added that the guidelines were still being determined but stated that the hope was that the funding would go where the need is the greatest for small businesses. Upon selection, an applicant would then need to work with the **Building Department** to ensure that the signage is appropriate and in line with the signage ordinance.

Councilor Worthley asked if it would be helpful to work with the same singular vendor for all of the signage through the grant program so that the signs would be identical looking. The **Economic Development Director** stated that a sign that might work on Main Street may not work at the retail stores on Lexington Ave and that there was the possibility of working with different vendors. **Councilor Worthley** wished to point out that parts of downtown are in the Historic District which would add another layer of regulations. The **Economic Development Director** stated that he was working closely with the **Building Inspector** on this issue and stated that there is a responsibility of the selected applicant and the sign company to propose something that will ultimately be passed and

permitted by the Building Department. **Councilor Gross** suggested possibly coming up with a size criteria to help alleviate the cost. **Councilor Memhard** added that part of the charm of this kind of program is that businesses have a chance to maintain their own identity and distinct character. The **Economic Development Director** also stated that an applicant did not need to be a member of the Chamber of Commerce to be eligible for the grant.

There was a brief discussion about the Downtown Development Commission versus the Chamber of Commerce and the regulations of each.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor Memhard, seconded by Councilor Gross, the Budget & Finance Committee voted by ROLL CALL 2 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 (Worthley) absent, to recommend that the City Council accept under MGL c. 44, §53A, a state grant from the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD) and passed through the North Shore Alliance for Economic Development, Inc., a 2022 Regional Economic Development Organization Grant Program, in the amount of \$100,000 for the purpose of supporting Gloucester's Retail Commercial Districts Signage Program. The grant period is from May 2, 2022 to May 15, 2023. There is no match or in-kind requirements.

2. Memorandum from the Economic Development Director requesting acceptance of a grant from the Massachusetts Office of Business Development – Retail Pop-Up Incubator Program in the amount of \$50,000

Summary of Discussion: The **Economic Development Director, Sal DiStefano**, stated that this grant was for \$50,000 and was in partnership with Action Inc. at their location at 206 Main Street. He explained that this grant would offer the opportunity for multiple small business retailers to try their hand at actually moving to a retail space with very little risk or investment as Action Inc. has absorbed much of the upfront expense.

The **Economic Development Director** stated that there would be a consultant working with the retailers to teach them everything from point-of-sale terminal to merchandising to presentation. He further stated that Action Inc. was also bringing in in-kind donations and the City would help with promotion to drive foot traffic to that area. He explained that the idea is that there would be two to three retailers in the space at the same time and they would rotate out every few months. He stated that the hope was that the retailers that participate in the Pop-Up Incubator Program would eventually fill an empty storefront within the City to ultimately attract additional foot traffic downtown.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: On a motion by Councilor Memhard, seconded by Councilor Gross, the Budget & Finance Committee voted by ROLL CALL 2 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 (Worthley) absent, to recommend that the City Council accept under MGL c. 44, §53A, a state grant from the Massachusetts Office of Business Development (MOBD) and passed through the North Shore Alliance for Economic Development, Inc., a 2022 Regional Economic Development Organization Grant Program, in the amount of \$50,000 for the purpose of supporting "Pop-up Gloucester Retail Incubator," a pilot pop-up program held in a commercial unit in the building owned by Action Inc. at 206 Main Street. The grant period is from May 2, 2022 to May 15, 2023. There is no match or in-kind requirements.

3. Memorandum from City Auditor regarding accounts having expenditures which exceed their authorization & Auditor's Report and other related business

Summary of Discussion: The **Auditor, Kenny Costa**, stated that there were 49 accounts on the City's Overdrawn Report. He stated that the accounts would be cleaned up as year-end approaches.

MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Gross, seconded by Councilor Memhard, the Budget and Finance Committee voted by ROLL CALL 2 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 (Worthley) absent to adjourn the meeting at 6:12 p.m.

Submitted by: Sherry Karvelas, Clerk of Committees

Documents submitted at the meeting: None.

Meeting Recording: <https://www.gloucester-ma.gov/1212/May-2022-Past-Meetings>