

Mar 10 2022 7:20 am



**City of Fitchburg
Massachusetts 01420**

CITY COUNCIL

Councilors at Large

Marcus L. DiNatale
Sally H. Cragin
Amy L. Green
Samantha M. Squailia
Anthony M. Zarrella

President

Anthony M. Zarrella

Vice President

Andrew J. Van Hazinga

Ward Councilors

Ward 1 – Bernard J. Schultz, III
Ward 2 – Paul R. Beauchemin
Ward 3 – Andrew J. Couture
Ward 4 – Andrew J. Van Hazinga
Ward 5 – Marisa R. Fleming
Ward 6 – Derrick J. Cruz

Finance Committee

A meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order by Councilor DiNatale on Tuesday, March 8, 2022 at 6:02 PM in the Legislative Building, 700 Main Street, Fitchburg, MA.

Committee Members present: Councilors Paul Beauchemin, Derrick Cruz, Marcus DiNatale, Andrew Van Hazinga, and Anthony Zarrella.

Committee Members absent: None.

The chairman read an announcement regarding the recording of public meetings, noting that FATV was recording and broadcasting the meeting. No other person stated that they were recording the meeting.

The chairman opened the meeting for public comment. No one spoke.

030-22 ORDER: that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts grant in the approximate amount of \$30,000.00 (THIRTY THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of said grant, which is to provide outreach services to the homeless population in the city.

031-22 ORDER: that the City of Fitchburg hereby approves the expenditure of funds from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Housing and Community Development grant in the approximate amount of \$100,000.00 (ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND AND 00/100 DOLLARS) for the purpose of said grant, which is to provide outreach services to the homeless population in the city.

Discussion: The chairman announced he was taking Items #030-22 and #031-22 together. Public Health Director Steve Curry and Substance Abuse Coordinator Susan Christensen were present.

Mr. Curry said that the department is looking to expand its street outreach program by using these funds as well as Block Grant funds to be discussed later in the meeting to increase hours of coverage to include evenings and weekends.

Councilors stated that they hoped various city departments will work on this problem as a team. Mr. Curry replied that the Police Department work is more clinical and the Health Department outreach leans toward overdose and homeless outreach. Both departments work together. Councilors suggested that there was not a unified effort, but a collaborative effort.

Police Chief Ernest Martineau stepped forward and said that his department is trying to break away from the homeless issue because it fits better with the Health Department. It is a model used by other communities.

Action: On a motion by Councilor Beauchemin, second by Councilor Zarrella, the committee voted unanimously to approve Orders #030-22 and #031-22.

COMMUNICATION: Proposed budget for Community Development Block Grant Year 48

Discussion: Community Development Director Tom Skwierawski, Housing Director Liz Murphy, and Community Development Administrator Cynthia Dalton were present. The chairman read a letter from the mayor dated February 22, 2022.

Mr. Skwierawski noted that over \$500,000 in streetscapes and sidewalks projects were submitted and that, with the cooperation of the Public Works Department, they were combined into one project with the expectation that additional funding will be found to complete all projects on the submitted list.

The chairman noted that each group has already presented its project to the Planning Board, so they would be expected to speak only if councilors had questions. He then indicated he would take the items one project at a time. After a short discussion among committee members, he indicated that he would take the projects in groups (see attached proposals).

The first group was Public Facilities and Improvements consisting of seven project totaling \$380,499. Councilors asked if the Public Works Department has the manpower to do the work. Public Works Director Nick Erickson stated that he believes he has enough staffing, although there is work from last year that has to be completed. Some work will be done by outside contractors. Councilors were pleased with the projects being addressed.

Action: On a motion by Councilor Beauchemin, second by Councilor Zarrella, the committee voted unanimously to approve the Public Facilities and Improvements totaling \$380,499.

The second group was Public Services consisting of seven projects totaling \$149,887. Councilors asked about the YMCA program and whether students who are truant are being brought to school. Ted McDonnell, Executive Director, and Angaw Kahassai, Spartacus Program Director, from YMCA answered that they are not truant officers, but they do encourage students to do well in school. Councilors expressed a desire to spend more on programs for children. Mr. Skwierawski stated that there is a spending cap on Public Services and the city is at the cap. Elizabeth Coveney from the Boys & Girls Club was also present.

Action: On a motion by Councilor Zarrella, second by Councilor Beauchemin, the committee voted unanimously to approve the Public Services totaling \$149,887.

The third group was Economic Development consisting of four projects totaling \$175,000. Councilors asked about the Sign and Façade Program, given the graffiti and worn out signs on some downtown properties. Mr. Skwierawski said that this project is the carrot that goes with the stick of building code enforcement.

One Councilor also expressed his disapproval of the Fitchburg Downtown Coordinator project. Another Councilor noted that this line item has been in previous Block Grant budgets. The position is not just about attracting new businesses, but also in helping them to survive. It also brings in Fitchburg State University as a partner, which also benefits the city. Councilors wondered if the Economic Development Director should be handling this work. Councilors responded that if the Economic Development Director had to do this work, they would have less time to spend on businesses in other parts of the city, such as Cleghorn.

Action: On a motion by Councilor Zarrella, second by Councilor Van Hazinga, the committee voted unanimously to approve three projects—Small Business Technical Assistance Program (\$25,000), Fitchburg Business Assistance (\$55,000), and Sign & Façade Program (\$60,000).

Action: On a motion by Councilor Zarrella, second by Councilor Van Hazinga, the committee voted to approve the Fitchburg Downtown Coordinator for \$35,000 with Councilors Cruz, DiNatale, Van Hazinga, and Zarrella in favor and Councilor Beauchemin in opposition.

The next group was Rehabilitation and Preservation consisting of two projects totaling \$123,456. Councilors noted that Habitat for Humanity has done their work throughout the city. Carolyn Read from Habitat for Humanity was present.

Action: On a motion by Councilor Beauchemin, second by Councilor Cruz, the committee voted unanimously to approve the Rehabilitation and Preservation projects.

The final group was Planning and Administration consisting of one project totaling \$200,225. The chairman noted that this group may not exceed 20% of the total budget. Mayor Stephen L. DiNatale thanked the folks in Community Development for doing a great job in delivering this package of projects.

Action: On a motion by Councilor Beauchemin, second by Councilor Zarrella, the committee voted unanimously to approve the Planning and Administration projects.

On a motion made by Councilor Beauchemin, second by Councilor Zarrella, the committee voted unanimously to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 6:58 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Calvin D. Brooks, Clerk



Natalia Oliver
Chief of Staff
noliver@fitchburgma.gov

The City of Fitchburg
Massachusetts
Office of the Mayor

STEPHEN L. DINATALE

FITCHBURG CITY CLERK

Feb 23 2022 4:24 pm

Joan David
Executive Administrative Assistant
j david@fitchburgma.gov

February 22, 2022

President Anthony Zarrella
Fitchburg City Council
718 Main Street
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Dear President Zarrella:

In consideration of the recommendation of the Planning Board and comments by various citizens regarding the Year 48 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), I hereby submit to the City Council the following year 48 CDBG application for your review. Attached, please find Year 48 Estimated Funding, Year 48 Funding Requested, and Year 48 Funding Recommended.

The Year 48 Consolidated Plan must be submitted to the Department of Housing and Urban Development no later than May 15, 2022 to ensure funds will be available by July 1, 2022. In order to meet the submission deadline for Year 48 CDBG program, comments must be received by the City Council's March 15, 2022 meeting.

Sincerely,

Stephen L. DiNatale
Mayor of Fitchburg

Cc: Fitchburg City Council
Calvin Brooks, City Auditor
Cindy Dalton, Community Development Coordinator

YEAR 48 ESTIMATED FUNDING

Estimated CDBG funds available for Year 48 (2022-2023) are as follows:

Year 48 Estimated Entitlement*	\$1,001,125
Year 47 Entitlement	\$1,001,125
Estimated Program Income available from prior years (Misc.)	\$500
Reprogrammed Funds	\$27,442

*** This figure may fluctuate pending budget approval by Congress**

CDBG YEAR 48 FUNDING REQUESTED

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS (12)	\$805,113
PUBLIC SERVICES (9)	\$329,787
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (4)	\$220,000
REHABILITATION AND PRESERVATION (2)	\$123,456
PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION (1)	\$210,000
TOTAL YEAR 48 FUNDING REQUESTS (28)	\$1,688,356
ESTIMATED FUNDS AVAILABLE:	\$1,029,067

CDBG YEAR 48 FUNDING RECOMMENDED

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS (7)	\$380,499
PUBLIC SERVICES (7)	\$149,887
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (4)	\$175,000
REHABILITATION AND PRESERVATION (2)	\$123,456
PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION (1)	\$200,225
TOTAL YEAR 48 FUNDING RECOMMENDED (21)	\$1,029,067
ESTIMATED FUNDS AVAILABLE:	\$1,029,067

SUMMARY OF YEAR 48 PROPOSALS

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS

	PROJECT	SPONSOR	YEAR 48 REQUEST	YEAR 48 RECOMMENDATION
A	Parkhill Park Phase II	Parks & Recreation	\$60,000	\$60,000
	Continuation of projects at Parkhill Park to make improvements to the stonework along Sand Brook and repairs to the BMX Bike Park, the Ryan C, Joubert Skate Park and the baseball fields. The project will improve/preserve the stone bridges that lead hikers to the wooded sections of the park. Finally the important recreational features of the park (BMX, skate and baseball field) will be repaired to restore their usefulness to the neighborhood.			
B	Parks & Playgrounds	Community Development	\$80,000	\$80,000
	<p>Replace old and outdated play equipment at Parkhill Park and JoAnn "Mama" Fitz Park, Reconstruct Basketball Court at Mama Fitz Park, Related Site work.</p> <p>Removal/disposal of existing play features and site furnishings and replacement with new, code compliant, inviting play options and site furnishings. Renovation of the basketball court at Mama Fitz Park will also take place. Replacement and/or addition of some pathways will be required to meet accessibility standards. Plantings will be added to provide shade and interest to the area. Public outreach, land survey and design work will be a part of the project. City Staff, a Landscape Architect (consultant) and a contractor will be needed to complete the work.</p>			
C	Sidewalk Accessibility	Disability Commission	\$43,000	\$43,000
	Installation or replacement of curb ramps and sidewalk at key locations within the city to improve accessibility. Priority area one is the intersection of Wallace Ave and Elm Street - new curb ramps are required at all four corners. Priority Area two is the intersection of Main Street and Caldwell Ave where curb ramps are needed. Additionally, 175 feet of new sidewalk and replacement of new 3 curb ramps (two on Senior Center side, one on Court House side) is needed on Elm Street near the court house. This area of work connects to the intersection of Wallace Ave and Elm Street.			
D	Streetscape Improvements*	Community Development	\$130,000	\$167,499
	<p>Streetscape improvements within the urban core, city gateways or school walking routes. Funds may be utilized as match for Safe Routes to School, Complete Streets or other identified funding program. Work may include design, installation or replacement of sidewalks, curbcuts, fencing, lighting, plantings, intersection improvements or other infrastructure or accessibility improvements along City Gateways, in the urban core or other strategic locations.</p> <p><i>*Streetscapes includes Boutelle/Goodrich application as top priority. If this project is funded with other sources, other DPW work from their queue will be completed.</i></p>			
E	Pleasant Street Sidewalk Improvements	Fitchburg DPW	\$58,472	\$0
	Proposed scope of project consist of replacing the current asphalt sidewalk with ADA compliant concrete sidewalk on the South side of Pleasant Street from the intersection of Pleasant Street and Spring Street to the existing concrete sidewalk on the South East side of the Longsjo Middle School and the addition of ADA compliant wheelchair accessible ramps on Pleasant Street at Spring Street with RRFB's and a painted crosswalk.			
F	Boutelle/Goodrich Sidewalk Improvements	Fitchburg DPW	\$71,419	See Streetscapes
	Proposed scope of project consist of replacing the current asphalt sidewalk with ADA compliant concrete wheelchair accessible ramps on three (3) of the four (4) corners of the intersection of Boutelle Street and Goodrich Street with RRFB's and a painted crosswalk. This project was conceived by Ward 6 City Counselor Derrick Cruz to address pedestrian safety issues at the intersection of Goodrich Street and Boutelle Street. See the attached email thread discussing the project.			

G	Franklin Road Sidewalk Improvements	Fitchburg DPW	\$151,222	\$0
	Proposed scope of project consist of replacing the current asphalt sidewalk with ADA compliant concrete sidewalk on the North side of Franklin Road from the intersection of Franklin Road and Oakhill Road to the existing asphalt sidewalk at the intersection of Franklin Road and Depot Street and the addition of ADA compliant wheelchair accessible ramps at all intersecting cross street on the North side of Franklin road along Franklin Road with RRFB's and a painted crosswalk. The project also includes the proposal for ADA compliant wheelchair accessible ramps and concrete sidewalk at the intersection of Depot Street and Appleton Circle with RRFB's and a painted crosswalk.			
H	North Street Sidewalk Improvements	Councilor Van Hazinga	\$176,000	\$0
	To install a sidewalk along the easterly side of North St between McKay Avenue and Lincoln Street. There is presently no sidewalk on either side of the street, but this roadway provides pedestrian access to the McKay School and Fitchburg State University.			
I	Abolitionist Park Phase III	Friends of the Fitchburg Abolitionist Park	\$5,000	\$5,000
	If funded again, CDBG funds would help FFAP complete the third and final phase of the Park's development, which includes: the development of an interactive display board, where images of abolitionists come to life to tell their stories and how they were connected to Fitchburg; hiring an artist to paint a mural reflecting Fitchburg's role in the Abolitionist Movement and Underground Railroad; installation of a brick and paver patio; ornamental fencing to fill the gap between the Park and Hotel Raymond parking lot, and of a flagpole light.			
J	Summer Street Art Improvements	NCM Assoc. of Realtors	\$5,000	\$5,000
	This application is to obtain 'Improve Public Facility or Infrastructure' funds in the amount of \$5,000 to improve a commonly "tagged" area of Summer Street with a City of Fitchburg themed mural. Activities will include our Fitchburg resident artist creating a Fitchburg themed design for the mural. Disruption to everyday activities on Summer Street will be little to none as this artist is able to freehand the mural. He will be using spray paint only to complete the project.			
K	Public Art Project	Community Development	\$25,000	\$20,000
	This project will expand the public art offerings in Fitchburg in the Downtown, Rail Trail, and/or Gateways. Public Art may include murals, sculpture, and interactive art installations.			
L	Food Pantry	Highland Baptist Church	\$45,000	\$0
	The room where food is stored is in need of complete restructuring and securing in order to safely hold all food, freezers, and refrigerators. The organization has a drawn out blueprint of the plan from a company and have received bids to complete the project which is estimated at 40,000. The pantry is also in need of another commercial grade freezer and refrigerator in order to safely store more perishable food items.			

12 PROPOSALS – \$850,113 □ 7 Recommendation – \$380,499

PUBLIC SERVICES

	PROJECT	SPONSOR	YEAR 48 REQUEST	YEAR 48 RECOMMENDATION
M	Street Outreach	Fitchburg Health Dept.	\$28,000	\$28,000
	Outreach activities will be conducted in coordination with partnering agencies including referrals to medical/mental health/substance use treatment, shelter, etc. Outreach activities will include supplying necessary health, hygiene and safety items as deemed appropriate by the Outreach Workers.			
N	Fitchburg Farmers' Market	Growing Places	\$7,887	\$7,887
	Project funds will be used to support the Fitchburg Farmers' Market, which helps expand access to healthy food for Fitchburg families, especially marginalized populations, including low-income residents. The Fitchburg Farmers Market Manager, Assistant Market and Activity Coordinator, Community Nutrition Coordinator, and Translator will be paid through these funds.			
O	Spartacus Program	Montachusett Regional YMCA	\$25,000	\$12,000
	<p>Program funds will be used to support staff salaries of the Teen Center Spartacus Program. Spartacus is a signature YMCA Of Central Massachusetts initiative designed to assist at-risk teens that are vulnerable to issues like substance abuse, failing school, anger management and more make healthy decisions. The program engages participants through physical engagement, academic tutoring, community service, leadership development, anger management counseling and workshops around substance abuse and gender violence – among other topics.</p> <p>Youth are presented with challenges and empowered with the knowledge and confidence to help them implement creative solutions. These skills help teens build a bright future for themselves. The initiative, offered through the YMCA's Montachusett Teen Center in Fitchburg, provides students with role models from within their communities, an adult-supervised environment in which to spend time after school and practical skills they can apply in academic environments and beyond. An increase in funds is requested so that the program can grow from 50 to 100 teens due to an increased demand brought on by the ongoing pandemic and the history of the program's success and impact on Fitchburg teens.</p>			
P	Drug Enforcement Patrol Program	Fitchburg Police Department	\$65,000	\$65,000
	Program funds will be used to provide police overtime monies to conduct drug related investigations within the designated CDBG areas. Project activities will include arrest, surveillance, and execution of search warrants, drug seizures, weapons seizures, US currency seizures, and vehicle seizures. Additionally, funds will be used to conduct additional, targeted proactive patrols in the CDBG areas, primarily the Downtown and Main St district.			
Q	Family Homeless Shelter	North Star Family Services	\$12,000	\$10,000
	North Star provides emergency shelter, comprehensive support services, basic needs, self-sufficiency case management, and a pathway to permanently affordable housing. The organization documents improvement in: Safety & Stabilization, Basic Needs, Parenting, Child Development & Social Emotional Learning, Education, Finances, Employment, Housing, Health, and Well-Being. The CDBG funds will be used to pay for staff salary costs.			
R	Homelessness Prevention Project	Community Legal Aid	\$20,000	\$11,000
	Funds from the Fitchburg CDBG program will allow CLA to continue to assist tenants with eviction cases before their court dates and to represent subsidy program participants threatened with termination from the programs, work that we are unable to prioritize in the absence of dedicated funding. This project allows CLA to target specialized housing resources to Fitchburg residents, in an effort to ensure that the City's most vulnerable individuals and families get the legal help they need to prevent homelessness. The ability to focus attention on Fitchburg allows CLA to identify systemic issues that affect many more tenants than just our clients.			

	Other cases involve housing that is in dire need of repair. CLA is able to assert legal claims that result in improvement to housing conditions, which has the effect of making the unit more livable for the tenant and also increases the quality of the community's housing stock. Landlords in eviction cases are often represented by an attorney, making representation of tenants all the more critical. This is particularly the case in central Massachusetts. In FY 2021, in the Central Division of the Housing Court, only 8.6 percent of tenants were represented, compared to 75 percent of landlords. This demonstrates the continued crucial need for our services among tenants, as the percentage of represented landlords has grown since 2018 (when 66% were represented).			
S	Access to Recovery	Restoration Recovery	\$28,000	\$0
	Restoration Recovery Center (RRC) is a non-profit, community-based recovery center located in Fitchburg. RRC is guided by a mission to respond to people seeking recovery using a person-centered approach that promotes long-term recovery by providing holistic and faith-based alternatives. RRC is primarily a volunteer-run and peer driven service model. Program funds will be used to pay occupancy, utilities, office supplies, etc.			
T	Transportation to Full STEAM Ahead After School Program	Boys and Girls Club of Fitchburg and Leominster	\$20,000	\$16,000
	Program funds will be used to provide one-way transportation from Fitchburg schools to the Boys and Girls Club Afterschool Program located at 365 Lindell Street in Leominster. Approximately 300 youth will be served.			
U	Population Health	SproutChange	\$78,900	\$0
	Project funds will be used to provide public services in Fitchburg to improve population health among elderly, low-income, disabled persons, as well as those with chronic diseases (heart, lung, diabetes), and behavioral health disorders in Fitchburg through wellness and sustainable gardening programming that includes a budget to provide free of cost transportation stipends, childcare, and translation. Workshops include wellness programs on Food as Medicine & Natural Remedies, Mental Health, Emergency First Aid in Your Kitchen, Heart Health, Lung Health, Healthy Blood Sugar, Healthy Aging, Gut-Brain Connection, DIY Cultured/Fermented Medicinal Foods, and more. Funding will be used for workshops, staff wages, and project management expenses.			

9 PROPOSALS – \$284,787 □ 7 Recommendation – \$149,887

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	PROJECT	SPONSOR	YEAR 48 REQUEST	YEAR 48 RECOMMENDATION
V	Small Business Technical Assistance Program	NewVue Communities	\$25,000	\$25,000
	NewVue Communities seeks funding to continue to provide technical assistance to small business owners and those positioned to start a small business. Providing business owner counseling, serving minority business owners, and packaging loan (and grant) applications will be the activities that drive our effort to impact the economy in Fitchburg. Funds will be used to pay staff salary costs.			
W	Fitchburg Business Assistance	Community Development	\$100,000	\$55,000
	Project funds will be used to provide loans/grants to Fitchburg businesses or property owners for business start-up, expansion, or to make required accessibility improvements.			
X	Sign & Façade Program	Community Development	\$60,000	\$60,000
	The program will be one tool of many in the City and downtown's economic development toolbox. The City will be working with downtown property owners and code officials to eliminate blighting signage, broken windows, graffiti, and other blighting factors of downtown. This will allow the City to provide an incentive for business owners to replace signs and create a more attractive storefront within consistent design standards. This program will leverage other work as a part of the agreement. Business owners will be responsible for some match funding or in-kind improvements. Part of the assistance will include professional sign design using the City's updated design standards.			
Y	Fitchburg Downtown Coordinator	Fitchburg State University	\$35,000	\$35,000
	The Downtown Coordinator position, developed and supported collaboratively by the ReImagine partnership, Fitchburg State University, and The City of Fitchburg, is a critical component in the revitalization efforts underway in downtown Fitchburg. This position works directly with microenterprises by offering marketing and promotional services to grow sales and revenue for the overall economic development of downtown. The Downtown Coordinator is also responsible for developing and implementing events and activities that attract more visitors to the downtown area. Program funding will pay a portion of the Coordinator's salary.			

4 Proposals – \$220,000 □ 4 Recommendation – \$175,000

REHABILITATION AND PRESERVATION

	PROJECT	SPONSOR	YEAR 48 REQUEST	YEAR 48 RECOMMENDATION
Z	Critical Home Repair	Habitat for Humanity	\$20,000	\$20,000
	Critical Home Repair is exterior or interior work to alleviate critical health, life, and safety issues or code violations for homeowners in need. Participants must own their own home and have a verifiable need that falls within scope and capabilities. The home must be a primary principal residence, current on mortgage, property taxes and insurance. Repairs must be necessary to function in the home and homeowners must partner with Habitat.			
W	Code Enforcement	Board of Health	\$103,456	\$103,456
	The Health Department will provide comprehensive code enforcement to encourage housing rehabilitation, in the City of Fitchburg lower income neighborhoods. Code Enforcement activities will continue with goals to address substandard housing conditions and conditions of slum and blight in target neighborhoods. Funds will be used to pay for one sanitary code inspector and 50% of one clerk position.			

2 PROPOSALS – \$123,456 □ 2 Recommendation – \$123,456

PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATION

	PROJECT	SPONSOR	YEAR 48 REQUEST	YEAR 48 RECOMMENDATION
X	CDBG Administration	Community Development	\$210,000	\$200,225
	Project funds will provide for the necessary administration of CDBG programs and sub-recipient contracts in accordance with federal guidelines, including staffing, technical services, and planning activities. This also includes the cost of various activities such as the Consolidated Plan; Consolidated Annual Performance Report; Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing; and other strategic plans and services. These funds enable the City to apply for, receive, and administer additional federal and state grants. (Funding will not to exceed 20% of entitlement.)			
	<i>*If allocation is increased above estimate, admin line will increase to 20% of the allocation.</i>			

1 PROPOSAL – \$210,000 □ 1 Recommendation – \$200,225