COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT

December 1, 2009 **5:30 PM**

Chairman Garrity called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Garrity, Gatsas, Shea, O'Neil, Smith

Messrs: D. Mara, L. LaFreniere, T. Soucy, K. O'Maley

Chairman Garrity addressed item 3 of the agenda:

3. Discussion relative to the Weed 'n' Seed Program.
(Note: Attached is an Amending Resolution and Budget Authorization)

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Shea, it was voted to discuss this item.

Alderman O'Neil stated there was some confusion last week when we met on this. Am I correct that we are talking about two positions: the coordinator's position where there is a shortfall of funding and the police officer position that technically comes under the Weed 'n' Seed Program where there is no funding?

Chief David Mara, Police Chief, stated right, there is no funding. That officer was previously covered under the Weed 'n' Seed grant.

Alderman O'Neil stated I don't know if CIP staff has had a chance to come up with a recommendation.

Mr. Leon LaFreniere, Director of Planning, stated yes, we have, Alderman. It is in your agenda. We have recommended a transfer of funds out of the CIP 7011610 Municipal School Facilities Maintenance line item. We have communicated with Kevin Sheppard who is in agreement that it would be appropriate to do that given the fact that these funds will not be utilized as part of the school maintenance.

Alderman Garrity asked Leon, is this going to solve all the issues?

Mr. LaFreniere replied we believe it will, yes.

Mr. Tim Soucy, Health Department Director, replied for this fiscal year, yes.

Alderman O'Neil asked $62,000 is the shortfall, but we are asking for $89,500? I'm double checking with Alderman Smith who keeps every piece of paper. Is $89,500 the right number?

Mr. LaFreniere replied that is the current budget as has been submitted to us by Mr. Soucy.

Alderman O'Neil asked are both departments comfortable with that number?

Alderman Gatsas stated I guess I'll try this one more time. Obviously, the $600,000 that is in Facilities is not going anywhere. Certainly, we will cover the shortfall in both your departments should it occur in April or May, but I would ask if you could find that funding in your current budget rather than taking it out of here. Going forward, we can look at other programs that we may have in the City. If you are short, we would certainly fund you. I tried this once before and like a boy scout I'll try again. If my colleague would accept a friendly amendment that we cover them going forward and allow them to try to do it within their budget and if they do come short we would cover it in the April or May period as we have always done in the past…

Alderman Garrity asked are you asking that we cover it out of this fund?

Alderman Gatsas replied no. I'm asking that we don't touch this fund and we allow the two departments to go back and work through their budget process to keep the programs going and if they are short in their budget process in April or May we will fund it not necessarily out of this fund, but it could be out of additional revenues that we may have in other departments.

Alderman O'Neil asked you are suggesting that they continue to move forward? That would give the Chief the ability to fund the community police officers funded out of Weed 'n' Seed and any shortfalls at the end of his fiscal year we will cover out of some account, whether it is this or something else. Also, I understand that the coordinator, if she hasn't left, is leaving.

Chief Mara replied Friday is her last day.

Alderman O'Neil stated there must be some severance involved. Have you put in the paperwork so you can start the process on recruiting a successor?

Mr. Soucy replied yes, we have. We're waiting for approval.

Alderman O'Neil stated if I understand your motion, Alderman, it is to keep everything going and we're going to monitor and cover them at the end of the year. We're not suggesting that they don't do other actions to make this work.

Alderman Gatsas stated absolutely not.

Alderman O'Neil stated this is a move forward and we've got your back covered.

Alderman Gatsas stated correct.

Alderman Shea stated my understanding was that the person who is leaving, something I wasn't aware of, has a certain amount of money that was due in April. Now his suggestion is that whenever your situation requires us to fund any kind of program you bring it back to our attention prior to the end of the year so that we're aware of that and therefore, if it's not in your budget we would make the necessary monetary provisions. Am I correct in that?

Mr. Soucy replied that's correct. The $12,000 that we needed to continue the position was only for a couple months for the fiscal year.

Alderman Shea stated in your case, Chief, the officer salary will be made up somehow. In the course of time, if it isn't, you will come back to us in April or May. What is your understanding of when you would come back in order to meet that obligation?

Chief Mara replied correct me if I'm wrong, but my understanding is that we would try to fund the position through our current budget and at the end of the fiscal year if we weren't able to do it, we would come back and explain that we weren't able to and then we would get additional funding.

Alderman Smith asked do you feel comfortable with this arrangement and that we'll be able to fund you in April or May if the necessary funds are needed?

Chief Mara replied we do feel comfortable with the understanding that if there is a shortfall in our budget it will be covered.

Alderman Lopez stated I have no problem with the motion that is going to take place. I've had discussions with you, but I didn't have a chance to talk to the Chief. I've been in on the program from day one and I think we all support it because it is successful. I'm wondering if you can look at something. If you get another director, and you know the problems we had years ago with a new director every year…could you look at it and make some recommendations on how we can better this program if we are going to continue to fund it? That's my only comment.

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Shea, it was voted to instruct the Police Chief to move forward with the two positions from their current budget and if needed come back to the Board for additional funding.

Alderman O'Neil stated we are publicly stating that we are going to support the department if necessary regarding these two positions and the Weed 'n' Seed Program moving forward.

Chairman Garrity addressed item 4 of the agenda:

4. Communication from Pamela Goucher, Deputy Director of Planning & Zoning, regarding funds for Fire Station 8 roof repairs.
(Note: Attached are Resolutions and a Budget Authorization)

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Shea it was voted that the monies as identified by the Planning Department for ventilation and insulation repairs to Fire Station 8 be approved.

Alderman Smith asked if we do this renovation will this be secure? Is anybody here from Facilities? Will the same situation happen in three or four years? I hate to do something with a Band Aid approach and then have to do the same thing all over in three or four years. Is this going to work?

Alderman O'Neil replied in my discussions, primarily with Mr. O'Maley, the Facilities Director, he is fairly confident. Nothing is 100% at this point, that this $12,000 will correct the problem. He didn't say that he was 100% sure, but this is his recommendation before we spend any additional funds that this would be the prudent thing to do.

Alderman Garrity stated there are no guarantees. It is a two year old roof that leaked.

Alderman O'Neil stated after conversations with Mr. O'Maley I support this effort. He is pretty comfortable. They have put a lot of time into researching this. He is comfortable, hopeful and optimistic that these improvements with the fans will change the whole heating situation near the roof line.

Mr. Kevin O'Maley, Facilities Director, stated we're not 100% sure what the problem is exactly. It is difficult with the roofing and the underlayment to identify exactly where the problem is. As Alderman O'Neil said, we're hoping that this will take care of it. It may be a step by step process. This work is needed one way or another so it is not going to be bad money thrown at this project.

Alderman Garrity stated we have some new business from Alderman Gatsas before we go into non-public session. These are some recommendations that we talked about for the First Time Home Buyers review. If you want to see any other changes, let CIP staff know. I don't think we have to get into a discussion about it tonight. CIP staff has thrown out some suggestions.

Alderman O'Neil stated this came from NeighborWorks. Is this going to be applicable to any of the…we have so many different programs I want to make sure this is applicable to specific programs.

Mr. O'Maley stated this is for the down payment of the First Time Home Buyer's Program.

Alderman O'Neil asked it doesn't include some of the other programs we have talked about?

Mr. O'Maley replied that's a requisite program.

Alderman Gatsas stated Kevin, the last time you were before us I asked you to come back with a number of what it would cost to reverse Elm Street to the way we all recognize it with four lanes, two in each direction and no bump out. Have you come back with a number on that?

Mr. O'Maley replied yes, we took a quick look at that. Without the labor cost, assuming it is done during the day, it will probably be about $2,000 for materials. We would have to pull out the curbing, pave that area where the bump out is, remove the striping, and put in new striping as discussed. If we are going to move forward with that, I would ask that we move forward as soon as possible because the paving plant could close any day.

On motion of Alderman Gatsas, duly seconded by Alderman Smith, it was voted that Elm Street should be reconfigured to its original set up and the Parking Division should be responsible for the associated costs.

Alderman Garrity asked what is the funding source? Take it out of contingency tonight?

Alderman Gatsas replied I think he probably has it in his budget.

Alderman Garrity asked Kevin, do you have that in your budget?

Mr. O'Maley replied we'll work with the Parking Division.

Alderman Garrity stated we'll make sure it is on the agenda for this evening.

Alderman Shea asked does that alter the parking arrangement that is now in place? If there is some sort of discussion with the Traffic Division…

Mr. O'Maley interjected when we moved forward with this project, I know Brandy Stanley had informed us that there was additional revenue that would be generated from the angled parking that would carry in her budget. I'm not too sure what that revenue is.

Alderman Garrity stated every time I drive by, no one is parked there.

Mr. O'Maley stated I can't answer that question.

Alderman Shea stated in other words, she has assumed that additional revenue in her budget. Is that correct?

Mr. O'Maley replied that's what she has told me.

Alderman Shea stated we would have to find out what impact that would have on her budget. In other words, there are added expenses involved other than what you are indicating.

Mr. O'Maley replied my assumption is yes, based on what she has told me. I'm not too sure what that number is.

Alderman Smith stated I think it is a matter of safety. I have been down there an awful lot and it is a very dangerous intersection. When you start travelling south you are in the wrong lane. It is terrible trying to take a left hand turn onto Elm Street even though we have traffic lights. I think it is the wrong set up, even if it is going to hurt the Parking Division revenue wise. I think safety is the most important thing and it is a very dangerous situation down there.

Alderman Shea stated I'm saying that we have to look at the financial impact so that if she has a shortfall we are not holding her accountable for that shortfall if she indicated that she would have that money in her budget. That's all I'm saying. As far as safety, yes, all of us want safety.

Alderman O'Neil stated Parking should pay for this. This shouldn't be taken out of his budget in my opinion. Parking paid to do the construction. Secondly, I have to believe that the revenue number is minimal. Like you, I have driven there several times and there is nobody. The only time I saw it used was the night of a hockey

game. Unfortunately, this information was not presented to us when this was originally approved. It needs to be.

Alderman Garrity asked should part of the motion be that the Parking Division pays for the removal?

Alderman Lopez stated I want to voice my comment. I believe the Traffic Committee approved this and it came before the full Board. If this Committee does anything, they should send it back to Committee because Brandy is not here to defend this. The Traffic Committee Chairman went through that and the reason for it. There is a lot of parking down there for a couple businesses. I think there is more to the story than just saying let's not do it.

Alderman Garrity stated we want cold patch down there if we are going to remove it in the middle of December when the asphalt plant is closed.

Mr. O'Maley stated I'm not voicing my opinion whether I agree with it or not. I'm saying that if you do want to remove it, it needs to be done very soon because we anticipate the asphalt company closing.

Alderman O'Neil stated I respect the comments from the Chairman of the Board, but I believe that if we are going to do this it needs to be done. I believe it needs to be done as soon as possible. The funding of this should come out of Parking.

Alderman Garrity stated Alderman Shea is the Chair of the Traffic Committee. Do you have a comment?

Alderman Shea stated I disagree about where the money should come from if it is going to be changed now. Kevin can do it. I don't see why Parking should pay for it. If we want to expedite it, we can, but we have to be aware of the minimal financial impact. We should still know what that is. We shouldn't go back to the Traffic Division and say to them that we allowed them to do this and now we're telling them they have to do the removal and they have to pay for it when there is a provision in your budget that you have agreed on to pay for it. I disagree with Alderman O'Neil. As far as the appropriation, I'm not in favor of that.

Alderman O'Neil stated I respect Alderman Shea's position, but the Parking fund paid for this. I don't think this was fully presented in the detail it should have been. It was a quick discussion. Because the Parking revenues paid to do this, the Parking revenues should pay to correct it. I think we need to slow down on these parking changes. We create them without knowing what the impact is going to be. I think we need to slow down and let the system work itself out. I'm going to stand

by my motion. If it is voted down and it doesn't come out of Parking, that's fine, but I'm standing by it.

Chairman Garrity addressed item 5 of the agenda:

5. Communication from Leon LaFreniere, Director of Planning & Community Development, requesting that the Committee enter into a non-public session to discuss property acquisitions as part of the Neighborhood Stabilization Program.
(Note: Information previously forwarded under confidential cover)

On motion of Alderman O'Neil, duly seconded by Alderman Shea, it was voted to enter into non-public session.

A roll call vote was required on the motion. Aldermen Garrity, Gatsas, Shea, O'Neil, and Lopez voted yea. The motion passed.

On motion of Alderman Shea, duly seconded by Alderman Gatsas, it was voted to execute the purchase and sale agreement for the property identified in non-public session.

There being no further business, on motion of Alderman Shea, duly seconded by Alderman Gatsas, it was voted to adjourn.

A True Record. Attest.

Clerk of Committee