

City Council Meeting Minutes

October 17, 2022

Dale Hamilton

I'll call to order that October 17, 2022 Ellsworth city council meeting. First order of business Pledge of Allegiance. For the record, all counselors are present.

Robert Miller

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to make a motion to add another item to the agenda as item number 13. The bid award for 2022 waste water department truck.

Marc Blanchette

Second

Dale Hamilton

motion and second, any discussion? All those in favor? Aye. All those opposed? (6-1) Motion passes. Item three rules of order. We follow Robert's Rules of Order. And any other rules adopted by the council. item four adoption of minutes from the following meeting of the Ellsworth City Council 9/19/2022, regular monthly meeting.

Marc Blanchette

So move.

Robert Miller

Second

Dale Hamilton

motion and second. Any discussion? All those in favor? Unanimous. Item five city manager's report.

Glenn Moshier

Good evening counselors. First off, I just like to take a brief second to thank all of the city staff as well as folks from Woodard and Curran and Frenchman Bay conservancy who assisted with the public forest cleanup that we conducted a week or so ago. And it was a great outpouring of community involvement. And the trail maintenance was very well received out there. trails were somewhat overgrown, so the Highway Department and other city staff volunteered their time to go out there and clean things up. So thank you to all of those folks who participated in that. And just a couple of other quick announcements. Before I get into a brief summary of the recent audit and figures that we've received. The meet the candidate program is tomorrow night 10/18 at six to eight at the Grand it will also be broadcast live for those who can't attend in person. And with the upcoming election absentee ballots are available. On Thursday, the third November 3, we City Hall will be open until 7pm For absentee and voter registration. And the election of course is on November 8, polls will be open at 8am.

And they will stay open until 8pm. So that's all I had for those announcements. And Friday morning, the finance committee asked for me to just do a brief summary of some of the financial information that we receive from our FY 2021 Excuse me audit, the audit is we've received a draft version and are expecting a final version of the FY 21 audit any day. And that being said the audit firm has also already begun the work for FY 22. And we're anticipating to have that completed audit sometime in either late November or early December. So put us on a much better track for getting our audits audited financials in a timely manner. So first off some of the highlights from this FY 21 audit is just that the as of June 30, 2021, the city maintained a healthy general fund balance of 6.9 million. The city has solid financials and there are no immediate concerns. at June 30 2021, the city's the city school department maintained a healthy general fund balance of 4.2 million. In this audit cycle, the auditors did note that the city struggled internally with best practices and financial reporting for FY 21 and 22. we'll be receiving as part of the final audit product with detailed management letter regarding some of those concerns. This has been largely in part because of significant turnover and and change in the finance office. And we'll continue to work with the auditors to make sure that ensure that going forward we are using best practices and any new policies that they're suggesting are implemented put in place and implemented to ensure consistency going forward. It appears that there are some reconciliation issues with capital projects post Jul 1, 2021. And we're still continuing, we're continuing to work with the audit as we go into the FY 22. To see if we can tie up some of these issues, these reconciliation, reconciliation issues of past capital projects. It could be due to a lack of reconciliation, reconciliation of individual capital projects. And we'll continue to work with them to see if we can identify where some of those additions need to be made to identify those funds. And finally, one of the highlights from the report was dealing with the wastewater fund. And the wastewater fund has accumulated an operating deficit of 3.3 million. This appears to be a chronic problem predating fy 21. We've looked back and can identify issues with, you know, finances dealing with wastewater, all the way back to at least and beyond fy 17. That's how far back we looked. It looks like this is simply a lack of proper accounting techniques, in some instances, such as paying for large projects from multiple funding sources, but not making those journal entries to reflect that auditors recommends better tracking and transfers needed when this occurs. We currently also in FY 23, Mike, and in this for this current budget cycle, did some rate increases. And we're going to continue to work with the auditors, to look at probably a long term planning for the wastewater to begin to, hopefully chip away at this, this deficit, while also maintaining proper funding for the largest portion of the deficit deals with depreciation of our plant, so ensuring that we have operating costs but that we also beginning to put some money in the bank, so to speak, for future needs of the plant repairs and so forth, so forth. So we'll be once we get the full audit, we'll have the audit firm come to a meeting here at the city council level to do a summary of that audit and provide you much greater detail than what I was just able to

Dale Hamilton

So before we open up for questions or comments, I just want to correct myself. In terms of the first item, the motion and second to add an item it was not unanimous therefore it cannot be added to the agenda. So that item is not not added. So with that said, going back to opening it up for questions, comments. Seeing none, move on to committee reports. Any councillors attend any committee with any reports. Move to item seven citizens comments is portion of the agenda where citizens can make comments on any items. If an item is on the agenda. You'll have a chance at that time to talk about that

specific item. But you're welcome to speak on any other topic that you wish just go to the podium state your name and you have three minutes to speak.

Gordon Workman

Thank you. My name is Gordon Workman resident of Ellsworth. I know everyone was talking about having a charter commission to do a review if I am running for city council so if I'm locked out like to be on that commission, but if I'm not as a citizen, I like to be put on that commission as well to review that, and so far, having a fun time running the election. I've been evidently endorsed by some groups in Ellsworth, which is awesome. You can see the display up at the corner of Main and Oak which works out pretty well. They have confidence. So that's that's all I want to say. Thank you

John Linnehan

John Linnehan 157 shore road and Ellsworth. I'm running for the City Council and also running for the House of Representatives for district 13. Waltham Ellsworth and central Hancock better known as Fletcher's Landing to those of us who've been here all our lives. I'm really concerned about finances matter of fact, that's the core of my message is how to reduce spending and how to get our spending under control here in the city and also in the State as well, I found an interesting item online today, it's called the have to have two items inflation basket, this will prepare the latest inflation data from the US government. And I just want to give you a couple of highlights on it. This is from year to year, gasoline up 18.2% of groceries up 13.2%. Utilities up 33.1%. So that basket and those three items, which is a common basket that every citizen has to deal with, has gone up 21.4%. I really am running for the Council on a couple of things. I think we need to reduce the spending here in the city of Ellsworth, and this state as well. I don't know how many of you familiar with what's called a sovereign debt crisis. Sovereign debt is when a government agency, whether it's a government or at any local level, cannot afford to pay its interest or meet its obligations. I believe that the debt of the United States is to the point now at over 30 trillion on the books and another 180 trillion unfounded off the books, it's at a point where the the we couldn't find people to buy our Federal Reserve notes. Therefore, when it was at zero interest, we will couldn't sell it, there's a liquidity problem in the United States of America. Therefore, they had to raise the interest rates. Now it's up to 7%. trying to find people that will pay enough money by those notes if the risk is mitigated. So the interest rates is going to keep going higher and higher and higher. Every time that happens, our economy keeps going down south, I've signed a pledge to that I will not support any budget for the city of Ellsworth from any department that didn't contain a 5% deficit. I've also signed a pledge that my first item to sponsor as a state representative would be to totally eliminate the state income tax. And I believe it's a matter of very easily handling those things by monitoring your spending. So I encourage the council even now, I hope I get on it in a couple of months. But even now to really take a strong look at your spending. I firmly believe in an individual and a government spending is our ending. And I encourage the city of Ellsworth counselors to take a strong look at that. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Jon Stein

Evening, everybody, I'm Jon Stein, Vice President of heart of Ellsworth, here in Phyllis his stead. She's our president, with some good news. I have here in my hand presentation of an award from T Mobile. This was for a grant to support a multi phase project to transform the area along the union river to leverage existing riverfront investment focused on sustainability on ecology and community river

access. We're really excited about this. We work with Frenchmen Bay Conservancy, Heart of Ellsworth, with the city of Ellsworth, a lot of departments with more than 500 nationwide applications. Last quarter Heart of Ellsworth's proposal was one of only 25 selected for funding from across the whole country. So that really speaks to our community here and what we put forward. The city of Ellsworth Economic Development Department wrote a letter of support as did five other organizations within the Ellsworth community and this all work together to get us this grant. Because of T Mobile partnerships with Smart Growth America and mainstreet America only municipalities or Main Street or affiliate communities like heart of Ellsworth, and like this municipality, were able to actually submit proposals. If anybody has been down to the library, it's really incredible. The transformation that's taking place is the first stage of this project, the opening of the trail. Fortunately, a lot of members of the city and councillors came to support the opening, and it's really beautiful. I suggest everybody take a walk down behind the library and see the beautiful transformation that's taking place down there. So with that, I'll present this award to our city manager the grant total by the way it was \$29,454.

Paul Markosian

Thank you, Mr. Chair, counselors. As the second longest serving elected official in the city of Ellsworth, I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation for the longest serving elected official in the city of Ellsworth, councillor Marc Blanchette for your service to our city since you were first elected in a special election in summer of 2013 I believe, elected again that following November in a regular election and you've been with us ever since. And I as a school board member, I've sat on many Finance Committee workshops with you and I've had other opportunities to discuss relationship and between the city and the school department and our budget. And I've come to have great respect for you and your dedication to doing what's best for all of our citizens. You and I have not always agreed, but I think we both have a great deal of mutual respect for each other. I think we agree on the major things. And I'm gonna miss having you around and but I look forward to seeing on the walking path where we sometimes encounter each other, and where we've always taken time to have a nice chat, and I look forward to more of those chats. Thank you. I want to wish you good luck in your retirement. I hope you get to do some traveling in the winter like you've said you want to do and all the best to you my friend.

Marc Blanchette

Thank you very much.

Dale Hamilton

Anybody else? Seeing none, we will move on to Item eight presentation of awards. Ray Robidoux. In recognition of 35 years of service to the City of Ellsworth and proudly presents a certificate of service to Ray Robidoux in recognition of your 35 years of service of wastewater operator for the city of Ellsworth wastewater department, your devotion to duty and loyalty has contributed to the City of Ellsworth presented this 17 day of October 2022 Thank you very much. Next, I would like to present this to Michelle Kaplan city councilor. So, this is presented to Michelle Kaplan, appreciation for your dedicated service to the city of Ellsworth city council 11/2019 to 11/2022. So thank you. And I just want to say how much I appreciate getting to know you better. I really appreciated the opportunity. I had been invited me down to your house and we've had a great conversation talked about a lot of different things. I appreciate it. I wish other people had the chance to recognize that we can have differences but we can talk and work for the betterment of the city

Michelle Kaplan

Just you know, I thought running for city council. I was gonna change the world. At least our quarter of it. But you know, it's not. You know, you want you say, oh, yeah, I'll just cut taxes. I'll do this. I'll do that. The seven voices here. And you have to work together. That's the biggest thing is we all have to work together. There's some very divisive things in our city right now. And you know, you and I, we sat down over a cup of coffee, and we were able to iron out differences friendly, in a friendly manner. I sat down with the people with the rainbow crosswalks and heard them even though I may not have agreed at first, but reaching out and just listening. It's not about me. It's not about my views. It's about what's right for everybody. And sometimes you just have to open your heart and mind and realize we're all in this together. We're one city, one city and if we screw it up we got nothing.

Dale Hamilton

Marc Blanchette city councilor presented to Marc Blanchette with deepest appreciation for your outstanding leadership and devoted service to the city of Ellsworth, city council 11/2013 to 11/2022. Chairman 11/2017 to 11/2019. I'll just say that, I really appreciate it my first year. I think one of the first people I talked to was you, you sat down, and just kind of gave me an understanding of what this was going to be like, You lied. But it sounded so much better. Now, I really appreciate that Marc. And I very appreciated being able to talk to you. Again, we're not always on the same page in terms of some of the issues. But I've always found that you're, you're willing to listen, you're you're there to call have had a lot of conversations. You I think the one thing that that kind of what the councilor Kaplan is talking about is that you always use, you always talk about why you're voting a certain way, you share that you share it with the community, whether you know, we, sometimes the community agrees, there's always a pocket that's gonna agree with what you're doing. But I always appreciate that upfront. This is who you are, this is what you're thinking. And you put that out there. And you've always been willing to listen. So. And furthermore, I think that anybody that that devotes the amount of time to this kind of role for the city deserves great appreciation and admiration. You were also on the planning board. How many years was a couple of years. So I mean, that kind of dedication to the city giving up your time to be a part of that to help the city move forward. You know, I don't think we can say enough positive thing. So. So thank you, for all of that. It's appreciated.

Marc Blanchette

Thank you very much. It's very nice. group of people, one of the groups of people I'd like to thank, first and foremost are the residents of Ellsworth for their trust that they put in me it was very, very much appreciated. I went into it blind, kind of sorta, as my grandchildren would say. And I think it's worked out well. Another group that I would like to thank the employees they've made this very, very easy. All of them every time that I've gone to an employee with a question about this or that they've always explained it in full even the TIF district financing if you need somebody to ask about TIF financing. But seriously, they they've all been wonderful. There have been a the employees here. They're special to me. And they always will be. The other people are the current and past counselors that I've served with. I've learned a lot from them. They too, if I had questions would take the time to explain. Sometimes they take the time to roll their eyes. What the hell was he thinking? And I appreciated that too. But I've made some very good friends here. friendships that I continue will continue to nurture. And lastly, my wife we get to travel now. She's gonna have me hanging around. I've been told I need to work on the honey do list even more. But the main thing we plan on traveling we plan on spoiling the grandchildren.

And I get to go to route 66. We have a convertible and that's one of the on my bucket list. To go ride what's left 66 from one end to the other. So and I hope whoever was elected to the council comes at it with the same vigor and excitement that I think I came at it with thank you all very much

Dale Hamilton

and make sure you talk to Jason before you leave so you can learn how to hit the internet because every third Monday you can tune into this show once you learn how to use the internet.

Marc Blanchette

iPad and one hand and pina colada and the other

Dale Hamilton

unfinished business item number nine Council order number 101700 requests of the public works director to enter into a lease agreement for the water department

Lisa Sekulich

good evening counselors Lisa Sekulich public works director. so I'm here tonight because the water department office building is in need of extensive repairs to the roof. Brick facia and Windows, the elements snow and water come into the building and in some cases flood the lowest area of the shop was standing water. For two years, the water superintendent attempted to include these repairs to the building and its capital request during budget season in an amount about at that time about \$150,000 to fix the building, if discussed during FY 21 that the department should look into a rental facility. And the council did not want to spend that kind of money on that old building. This rental would be a short term rental. Because the idea was that a new office building facility would be included during any new water plant project that was being discussed at that time, and would be moving forward. We are here tonight because we have found a facility after having looked around toward multiple options citywide that we think can serve best the department for the next few years until a new office building can be built. the lease for this office space in a garage type area is at the Maine coast Mall. The lease agreement is for three years with a two year potential extension. The rental rates is \$11 a square foot for the office space and \$6.50 a square foot for the garage space for the first three years and then an increase of 5% in years four and five there's also included what they call common area maintenance fees as part of the rental agreement and that is for plowing, parking lot all the common areas taxes, cost, costs overall cost at the mall has they will those costs potentially will fluctuate each year based on the malls direct costs.

Casey Hanson

I just had a question about how many other places you looked at or how many places there are in Ellsworth that

Lisa Sekulich

so we began looking about two years ago we've toured five places we've looked at we've driven around and perspectivevely looked at dozens more you know just kind of drive bys when we see them for sale or for lease or if we see a sign and this one actually was not the original one we looked at in the mall but it's actually one that'll probably meet our needs the best at this point.

Marc Blanchette

Lisa, the common area maintenance charges. Yep. Even for the garage.

Lisa Sekulich

I think it's I mean plowing, taxes, all that stuff is based on the whole property right? So they break it down by percentage of what you lease essentially.

Marc Blanchette

But other parts of that charge. And I read it earlier today. I don't see a right here. We're paying a prorated share for the janitor, the manager, their social security, their vacation time And there were two or three other charges in there. Why isn't that, there's a cost of doing business. But shouldn't that be borne by them?

Lisa Sekulich

mean, I can't say that I specialize in commercial leases. I can tell you that right now. not my wheelhouse. But I do know, our lawyer did have conversations with them about the common area maintenance. And it's something that it's basically it's standard for them. It's standard practice. And I think it's I don't think there's much wiggle room on it.

Marc Blanchette

This is a former storefront. Correct.

Lisa Sekulich

It's in the former Payless shoe stores Yes.

Marc Blanchette

Oh, I'll go back much further than

Lisa Sekulich

whichever, and then whatever it was before that.

Marc Blanchette

Okay, thank you.

Lisa Sekulich

And there is, you know, the office, the office area, part of it is there will be an office area part, there's also a indoor storage type area where they used to keep the extra shoes, you know, that has a lot of heated storage for us for meters, and in different things that we can keep in a heated storage area. And then that garage actually is also heated with like a smaller heat pump type unit. So I mean, we are, you know, it will get us the ability to keep our stuff in a reasonably heated garage space, which is one of the things that was harder for us to find

Marc Blanchette

in a garage space, that doesn't flood,

Lisa Sekulich

right? Well, it's not even our garage space that floods, it's our meter testing space that has our, our heater and our everything else in it.

Marc Blanchette

I'm aware there are very, very severe issues with the current building.

Steven O'Halloran

I'll be the first to tell you that when I was elected a year ago, I got to the city manager took me around to different facilities. And there's a lot of aging infrastructure that the city is having to deal with, and be the first to admit I, I would be the first to be in favor of leases. I think you have predictable costs. I think that you know where you stand. It's off balance sheet. I like all of that. The one thing that that catches me is the city of Ellsworth borrowed \$4.7 million and put it into the Moore school in 2014/15. And leased it for \$1 a year. And the payments this year are \$26,000 a month, this year. And I struggle with going out and leasing a building when the city has borrowed this much money, and that lease ends in two years. And the Moore school I don't know the the will of the people but renovating a building for 4.7 million and then leasing it for \$1. And then giving the the Y \$62,000 a year to benefit their programs and pay the maintenance on the building. I struggle and I wonder if there's not space in that building. When that lease is up in two years.

Lisa Sekulich

I don't love the full extent of the Moore center. But I do not believe that there's garage space there. I know of from what I've walked around when my kids are in daycare. The other thing I mean there would potentially be office space and other thing that would be lacking is that indoor storage type of space for pipe fittings and and all that stuff. I don't I can't speak to whether they would have space for that or not. But

Steven O'Halloran

I'm not saying it's optimal. I'm just saying that it's hard for me to see the city go lease properties when they've already spent, you know the payment is \$26,000 per month and the lease is ending in two years. Is there a renovation that we could do or something is there some use for that building with the crowded situation that we have? That's my only

Lisa Sekulich

I don't know that I have a great answer for that one. I don't think I mean, the one thing I will say is that, you know, the water department is an enterprise account. So, you know, the city is paying this, the water department it's not taxes, it's different money. You know what I mean? It's different bank money.

Dale Hamilton

To that point, the, the increase in terms of with this lease, how does that factor into the current budget?

Lisa Sekulich

It's in the current budget right now, the FY 2023 budget. You know, the other thing is, is what do we do with the property once we vacate it? That's a decision you guys will have to make? You know what I

mean? Do we turn it into a park? Do we sell it? Do we? What do we do with the pump station point property? So there's always that discussion to be had later, too. But right now, we have the money budgeted for a full year of this lease. And we're already into, you know, month three or four, that we haven't moved yet. So we have plenty of funding there.

Glenn Moshier

And we're in the process with the PUC for a rate case.

Dale Hamilton

Counsel O'Halloran's point that we are definitely in a situation with, you know, our facilities. And this is going to be something we're going to hear more about, as well as that we're at a place where we have to have appropriate space for our workforce. And there's a cost to that. We've, we've gone out to bid, we've looked at all kinds of things, we could build a \$20 million building. That's not going to happen. That's not realistic. And so now we're, we're in this situation of what do we do. And that those that gets into the priorities, ideally, it would be nice if these issues coincide with budgets so that they can be vetted that way. But that's not how the world works. But I do think it's one of those issues that as we look at new expenses that should be factored in into the next budget and discussion should be had around that. But I think we have an obligation to make sure that we have appropriate space. And that that facility is not a good facility, and anybody that doesn't believe it should go on a tour. Because your eyes would be wide open around that. So I do appreciate the fact that you looked at other options, and didn't just take this one opportunity, you looked at many

Casey Hanson

I was just gonna make a motion. But if you have a question do that first.

Gene Lyons

So what really makes this one the best property?

Lisa Sekulich

Honestly, the storage space, both the heated garage and the heated storage space. So a lot of the places we looked at were were office buildings, or unheated garage spaces, or no garage space. And this one had room to do all the different things. So, you know, what we need is not necessarily just an office building, it's not just a place for people, we do need that. But we also need a lot of storage space, like I said, fittings and all that just different parts and pieces for the water department. And that has a storage space such attached to the office part and that it also has the detached garage space, which will also help hold our our back trailer and air compressor. So those will be unfrozen and accessible year round. You know, 'cause God forbid, water breaks happen when it's negative 20 below

Steven O'Halloran

what kind of efficiencies does your department gain from this? There must be something here. I mean, out of all the facilities in Ellsworth, certainly yours is the most antiquated. There are efficiencies that we're not seeing that we can pay for this four grand a month or \$4,200 a month is something

Lisa Sekulich

I don't know that there's necessarily any increase in efficiencies. You know, our current office is in town this one's in town which is something in my opinion is in efficiency. I don't, I don't believe that the office should be my personal opinion, I don't think it should be out at the lake because all the customers and all the houses are here and in town. So having the office here and in town would make sense. Outside of just having better organized storage space, and a safe work environment, I think those are the two biggest.

Glenn Moshier

the efficiency piece, particularly with the meters and a lot of the equipment that they that they need access to. And this is just kind of elaborating on what what Lisa was getting at, if if we were to relocate everything out to the lake, where the treatment plan is, in order for them to do work here in town, they're gonna have to send somebody out all the way out to the lake to get the equipment they need to get through the, you know, the meters or, or pipe fittings and those type of things when they have a break. So having a location in town, where they have access to that is adds to their efficiency and lessens the travel time and distance that they have to get that equipment. So that's that's why when we looked for space, you know, we were focusing on the immediate downtown area because we wanted to have that capacity to be able to get that equipment, get it quickly and have it not be 15-20 miles outside of town.

Lisa Sekulich

And we did look at a couple of spaces that were further out. But some of them were actually further out and then the plant we just we said no it just didn't make sense to have people doing that drive back and forth

Casey Hanson

move to approve the request of the public works director to enter an agreement with the Main Coast Mall for rental office and garage they allow city manager to sign required documentation lease to be funded from the water department operating budget.

Robert Miller

Second.

Dale Hamilton

motion a second further discussion. All those in favor Aye. All those opposed? Motion passes. Thank you

Lisa Sekulich

So we'll sign the lease probably in the next few days and I think they have some work to clean it up for us to move in but the idea is to be moving in. What is it so probably mid November somewhere in there and start to move during the winter which is when they're the slowest usually anyway so that'll.

Dale Hamilton

All right. Consent agenda there are no items new business item 10 public hearing and action on the application for the following license. Hane Yee incorporated DBA China Hill restaurant 301 high street for renewal of a city Class B license Victualer liquor and amusement and renewal of a state restaurant class 1,2,3,4 malt spirits vinoius liquor license. This is a public hearing open the public hearing. Public Hearing is open. Anybody would like to speak on this. They may do so now. Seeing none I will close the public hearing. Public Hearing is closed.

Marc Blanchette

Move approval. Mr. Chairman.

Robert Miller

Second

Dale Hamilton

A motion a second. Any discussion? All those in favor? Unanimous. Item 11 public hearing and action on amendments to the city of Ellsworth code of ordinances chapter 36 General Assistance ordinance

Toni Dyer

Good evening councillors. I'm here for Tina this evening. This is an annual adoption the state this is a state ordinance and the state every year we'll change the funding mechanism. The we call the maximums as to what certain types of assistance are annually. And so this is just to adopt this year's changes are very minimal changes as they usually are. But you do have to adopt these, hold the public hearing and then sign the ordinance. and the state reimbursement this year is remaining at 70%.

Dale Hamilton

Questions so public hearing open the public hearing. Public Hearing is open. If anybody would like to speak on this. They may do so. Seeing none I will close the public hearing. Public Hearing is close

Marc Blanchette

Mr. Chairman, Move to approve the amendments to the Ellsworth code of ordinances chapter 36. General Assistance ordinance as presented.

Casey Hanson

Second.

Dale Hamilton

motion a second. Any discussion? All those in favor? Unanimous.

Glenn Moshier

Chair before we move on, I just wanted to make an announcement that they're apparently having some technical difficulties with the face book live streaming of the meeting. So just understand that there's some issues going on. I guess it's currently not working. But they're working on it.

Casey Hanson

Will it be recorded? So even if you can't watch it now? You could watch it later.

Dale Hamilton

All right, where are we? Item 12 discussion of potential potential action on on an abandoned dangerous building located at 16 Fifth Street.

Lori Roberts

I'm Lori Roberts with the code enforcement office. And I was tasked with this particular building. It's ours due to tax unpaid taxes. And it obviously is abandoned. It's nobody's living in it. So I hired Andrew McCullough to go by and see if it could be something that could be rehabilitated, or did it need to be demolished? And his suggestion is that can be rehabilitated. And I was wondering if you wish to put it on the market through a sealed bid process or something like that, for that property taxes, any water payment that's due and any sewer that's due.

Marc Blanchette

Are you mean, those items that are due that would be the minimum bid? Is that what you're saying? Okay.

Dale Hamilton

And just so the public's aware, could you just give a summary in terms of the process that goes through in terms of this isn't something that somebody didn't pay taxes in September, and now we're going to take that property and add all of that. So can you just talk a little bit about that. So people understand

Lori Roberts

the tax collection process, I'm not as good knowing as the process itself, it was just taken back due to a lien process because they didn't pay I think it's two years, you want to talk about that.

Toni Dyer

So taxes get leaned 18 months after their due date in the foreclosure happens after that. So this probably has at least three years of taxes owed on it, if not more, I'm not familiar with the account myself, but it's usually at least a three year process to get to this point.

Lori Roberts

I just found out today there were sewer liens.

Glenn Moshier

And there's no one living in the property hasn't been for,

Lori Roberts

for quite some time. And without someone living there, you know, the lawns not mowed. It's just not taken care of.

Glenn Moshier

I also would like to just add quickly on this issue, I met briefly today with the economic development director. And as all of you are well aware, housing is an is a concern. It's an issue for our community as it is for many communities all over the country. And she was she was exploring the idea of this property and other properties of potentially the city looking into, rather than because the reality is if we set if we put it out to bid, it's likely to be bid on someone who's going to rehab it, probably not to live in it but probably to rent, maybe Airbnb, you know, that type of thing and where there's a concern for for viable, affordable housing in our community. She was suggesting which she has not worked out the details on. But she was suggesting, perhaps through economic development, and EBDC, that perhaps the building infrastructure could be rehabbed. And an RFP could be completed the building could be rehabbed, and then it could be structured in such a way that it's sold for the purpose of a family living in it or, or even a single or a young couple or something, as opposed to just the open market where, you know, the city doesn't have any real influence over what happens to the property. So just an an idea that she wanted to float that for the council's consideration to think of a way that perhaps we can end ensure that this if the house is rehabbed and brought forward for, it has a positive impact on the need that we have in our community, as opposed to turning into a rental property that could be short term rentals, and not really helping to support the need that we have for housing in our community.

Robert Miller

How would it, how would we fairly sell it, then that's opposed to what we're doing now.

Glenn Moshier

So her her idea, again, this is just something that she wanted me to kind of propose for your consideration is that through the RFP process, we would put parameters, regulations, rules, if you will, within, so the individuals who are bidding on that property for the rehab of the property and the purchase and owning the property would have in their deed restrictions as to what they can do. And typically, it's timed out. So you might have maybe a 20 year, you know, top requirement on it before that, they could do whatever they wanted to it. But in doing that we could require, you know, we could put certain parameters on the sale of the house. And, and, in some fashion, the actual use of the property.

Robert Miller

I'm just confused. Why can't we do that now? With before we do anything else?

Glenn Moshier

Well, I don't know that we couldn't do that. We just don't have a mechanism in place. Typically, when we sell foreclosed property, we just we put some minimum bid, and we just take the bid. And whatever, when we do the bid openings, whatever the best bid is, and that's who gets the property. There's, there's not any parameters put into the use of the property from the buyers. But that's something that we can certainly look in to see what you know, what our capacity is to do that, just even in the regular bid process

Steven O'Halloran

has been great lengths to reach out to this family and put them ahead of everybody else. If there's any reclaim opportunities. I don't know how that works. But the last thing I want to be involved in is getting somebody's house that maybe some family member would want.

Toni Dyer

Yeah, so I'm not the tax collector. But I can hopefully answer that. It's through the tax lien and foreclosure process certified mailings that were signed for were received by that taxpayer, I would guess at least three times. So they have had fair shot. That's all that the state law requires is that we send a certified mail, which was received. I don't know that the city has looked into like heirs or next of kin or anything. I don't know the circumstances of that taxpayer. Because I'm not the tax collector, but lien notices that are certified requiring signature were sent and were received.

Steven O'Halloran

So they're aware of what's going on?

Dale Hamilton

Major was given, given what the idea was, I don't think letting this sit for another month is going to create a major problem. So I'm wondering if there's an idea or proposal that maybe your team wants to just think about a little bit and bring this back to say, here's what we think this is what what it would look like, and as opposed to us making a decision without that kind of information that might make the most sense.

Glenn Moshier

Yeah, yeah, I can certainly, again, this was something that Janna and I just discussed briefly today. And it was something that she wanted to explore further. So I'm certain that she would be willing to come back, we table to come back and with a more detailed idea of what what she would like to propose

Robert Miller

Is there is there a record requirement that attacks acquired property has to go out to bid first, before that? We look into that.

Glenn Moshier

That's just been I mean, there's no legal obligation. It's been. It's been our standard practice with tax acquired property in the past, to go out to bid to sell it. But we can certainly do some more research. I can also do some more research into the previous owners and follow up with Mr. O'Halloran's question to make sure that there's no interests

Casey Hanson

motion to table for this month with a request to bring it back next month with information about whether and how we can I add a requirement that the house is used for people who live there rather than rentals. Okay,

Gene Lyons

Second.

Dale Hamilton

Motion a second All in favor of the table. All opposed? motion passes. Item 13 discussion and potential action on relocating the Ellsworth Police Department.

Shawn Willey

Good evening, Shawn Willey, Captain Ellsworth police department and I'm here tonight to speak with you folks about relocating the police department to 416 High Street, hopefully at the end have some type of motion on the on the issue. We've had several meetings with the Public Safety building committee along with public workshops with the council just about the overall issues at hand, the history of the department, where it's been, where we're looking to go and things like that. So this is just kind of a little bit more brief presentation to you all, obviously open for questions but some of the history of the Department its location. We were originally over in the other side of city hall in 98/99. They really located the police department temporary to a building where the basketball court facility was while they completed renovations on this section that we're currently in. It's about 1500 square feet. And it consists of a small lobby, one interview room a dispatch area for two dispatchers, a large squad room area, detectives office, Sergeant corporals office, one small bathroom with one toilet, one sink, one shower and small locker room. There is a storage area that's been combined with communications equipment, radio equipment, things like that. And there's a evidence room along with my office and the deputy chief's office as far back as 98/99 when they actually completed the renovations it was my understanding from past numbers that it was only a 10 year fix and the plan was to have some type of new facility built to for the growth of the department in the city at that time. Some past options that the city has looked at one of them the Bryant E Moore school so on that was decided to be made into what it was. It all kind of went along with the sale of Colliers nursing home and all that land up there. So we also did look at using Colliers nursing home rehabbing that, with that building had some significant deficiencies to include flooding. We looked at the old DMV building that's right down here. That didn't pan out. And then obviously, in both 2014-2015 the city underwent a study for a new public safety building. And that went on for about two years and came back to the tune of around \$20 million for police and fire for a new new facility that would have been located on the high school baseball field right along State Street. Most recently, we had been approached about 416 High Street back when manager Cole was here. There was no traction on that at that point. And then we also looked at 190 Bangor Road, which is the large building that's right next to the state police barracks that it's been for sale. That property doesn't allow for any growth because of the water that runs behind it in the facility was really not not suitable to be constructed into a police department. Most recently, we were approached about 416 High Street with a possibility to lease that for a term. And we'll get into that a little bit more. It's just a photo outlining of City Hall, in the yellow is is what the police department is the original original design of it, many of those rooms have changed or been cut up with other walls to try to make enough space for everything. Some functional deficiencies throughout the facility, there's lack of signage, lack of parking. And we have several issues with public access for people that are handicapped, that we don't meet the standards that that need to be met for that. We have one interview room that was constructed in 2015, because of state laws that pass where we have to record certain crime type interviews. So we made the interview room that the lobby actually became the interview room. The problem with that is is

it's not a sterile environment, meaning it's not quiet. When you're conducting interviews, you can hear if somebody's in the lobby talking to someone through the window at dispatch, you can hear those conversations, and oftentimes that person can hear the conversations that are going on in the interview room, which are sometimes sensitive. With the call volume we currently have, we need to need a second additional interview room on top of the one we already have. Currently, right now, there are two people working out of a 12 by 12 area for the communications for the police department and fire department along with public works. The area is cramped, it's not ergonomically acceptable. And there's several security concerns because of windows and things like that. In that area. The squad room went over with a revamp, if you will, in 2014 when Chris Coleman was here as the chief, trying to make the area look a bit more professional. So we added some cubicles and things like that, but the area's ultimately, it's cramped, and it's not conducive to people being able to concentrate. It's the central hub. People need to be able to concentrate to type reports and things like that. And it just doesn't work for that anymore. Our evidence storage and handling. The room is is very small, it's about 10 by eight. It's not properly ventilated. And we have to store weapons, narcotics, crime scene evidence and DNA. Some of that stuff we have to store forever just based on statutory requirements by law. Maintaining weapons that are seized in there, we have to maintain those in the original condition. And so we have to make sure that humidity is not not too high. And that's a sometimes and often challenged with no ventilation. We often have to store weapons from Protection Order violations or things like that. And we can end up having to hold on to people's weapons for two years. So the the room is very cramped for space. Our evidence processing area is outdated, it's too small. And it's currently in the area where the kitchen is there is no ventilation in that area. And it's it's lacking the proper industry standards for evidence process processing to be able to be completed our locker room has been moved around the building several times trying to make enough room for things currently only holds 14 lockers we have 20 sworn officers. The locker room has been a interview room. It has been a supervisor's office has been many things but it currently holds 14 lockers and we have four more lockers in the bathroom because of the space issues. You literally can only open the door about 26 inches to get in to the room. Only one person in there it's co-ed locker. So it makes it difficult for staff at it sometimes. And the lockers are there not adequate size for all the police gear and equipment that we issue everyone to be secured. Our bathroom is a one toilet, one sink one one shower bathroom, we've moved four lockers into that room. And it also holds all the cleaning supplies for the building. And once again, there is no ventilation in that room as well. We don't have a break room right now. It was repurposed for the evidence processing area and where the detectives worked out of two workstations. We also don't have a training room or conference area that we would use for meetings, overview of case prep in progress, things like that. The sergeant Corporal workspace four supervisors work out of that it lacks privacy to deal with sensitive issues. It's it's right next to the patrol room. So it's it's loud. And they need the proper area to be able to prepare cases to go to the DA's office and in review things. The detective workspace like I said is it's right off, it's on the backside of where all the evidence is processed. And there's about 20 inches between the chairs that the two people work out of in that room. Common common thing throughout the facility is storage. We have no storage, there's items that are stored up right up to the ceiling, which which put us in code violation or in the hallway because we have no place to store those items. In 2022, March of this year, the agency became one of the first of 10 agencies in the state of Maine to be accredited, and one of the recommendations from the accreditation team that came and reviewed our facility. And everything we do from our policies to to the handling of calls was that we needed a bigger space. The same thing has been echoed since June of

2012 when the city hired the Maine Chiefs of Police Association to complete evaluation of the police department. And they also noted that it was inadequate for the police department. So in 2015, the vision of the city council was to change the department's morale and overall professionalism. We've done that over the years. We've updated our core values our mission statement technology training, we've purchased state of the art equipment. Like I said, we've achieved the state of Maine accreditation, there's only 10 agencies that currently hold that accreditation throughout the state. And the overall facility just brings down morale, morale, and professionalism. It has not been a easy time hiring police officers and at times, we do know that the when we've interviewed people, we brought them through our facility that is definitely been a turn off for hiring already qualified candidates. So this list kind of summarizes what our current functional and operational needs would be additional parking, ADA compliance lobbies interview rooms, a place to be able to properly deescalate situations, make sure they're properly recorded. A flexible and ergonomically correct dispatch area with multiple stations. Security of the police department adequate evidence storage processing and ventilation break room male and female locker rooms shower facilities adequate ammunition storage and gun handling storage again it goes back to having the proper storage area for for things that were required to to just to get to Indus industry standards. Proper workstations improve traffic flow and a fitness area and inside in some type of insight Bay for be able to clean cars, wash cars, and also be able to secure them when they've been seized for evidence. This next little part is the fire department.

Scott Guillerault

So part of part of this, I apologize because I hadn't seen this slide yet. And the discussion with the police department talking about this this transition, it's also come to light that the fire department downstairs with the increased call volume, the potential growth for for fire and EMS in the future, we're going to need to expand also, what we've come to come to realize is that if the police department is capable of moving from City Hall to the proposed location, it will increase the ability for the fire department to stay on site, and to move the administrative staff upstairs along with the training room and be able to expand the area downstairs to add additional bedroom space as we add additional personnel. It will also help with the morale with the fire department because we'll slowly transition the office space downstairs to where the administration is now. So we can separate a working area from a living area. Right now the fire department personnel have both together, so they really can't shut down or shut off when it's time for them to start to relax. As you guys know, they stay busy quite a bit overnight. So for us, it would increase their workspace downstairs by giving them more room to work more room to do their reports. Right now the fire department has two workstations in a modified closet area. So two workstations two people not enough room for them, by moving them down into the offices where the current administration is it gives them a larger area to put two workstations in the additional sleep space. With administration move upstairs, it also opens up an additional room to create another bunk room, which will continue to add as we add potential EMS in the future, it adds future bunk rooms without having to redesign the back back of the building. So there'll be already in place for just the ability to secure narcotics and EMS supplies, that's your old evidence room. As we get into Paramedicine, we're going to start to deal with controlled substances that have to be locked in a dual lock system. So right now, downstairs, we couldn't do that. So by being able to come upstairs, we would have that ability to control medications for EMS. The fire, the fire inspector currently is down with the administrative assistant for the fire department, he would also come upstairs, he would have an office in the off from what we would call the squad room right now, he would be able to move in there,

which will allow him to work with developers and plans review by utilizing that classroom area to be able to review those plans and meet with them on a one on one, as opposed to now where he has an office space with an administrative assistant. There's no privacy to have those discussions. It also as far as the command staff by bringing us up here, one for the command staff, it puts us upstairs here with the regular administration for the city. It's which reduces that separation that currently we have. Obviously being downstairs were really remote to the rest of the city operations. It also makes it easier with ADA compliance for people to be able to come through the lobby and come straight to the fire department. So business as usual for the fire department wouldn't change administratively for people coming in, it just would be a little bit more ease of access. With that. It would also open up that squad room becoming a training room, which means we could host classes here now which we can't. typically what we do right now is we have to wait till nights or weekends to try and use the auditorium upstairs. And that's contingent on somebody else using it. So by giving us that that ability to have our own classroom, it opens up for internal use, so I can bring the guys upstairs into a classroom. Their classroom space right now is the kitchen and the day room, which is not conducive for a learning environment. So by being able to bring them upstairs and put them in a learning environment, that we would hope that would bring a positive, positive learning environment to them in that manner. It also allows us to conduct our meetings as command staff without having to worry about the public back and forth through our office space as guests come through and go upstairs to the dayroom or go back and forth. By having us up here we can now have those those meetings that we need to have outside of the public that we can have with again, city staff or outside. This is what the proposal is through the the old police department space as you can see what we're talking about. The administrative assistant would take over the dispatch area. The waiting room would be cross utilized with the police department so the police depart would still have direct access to use of that space so that when they're here in the area or they can meet somebody here in the area, so there would be still some police activity here at City Hall. conference room, that's where the break room is now we would that would be a dual utilized as a break room. You can see the radio would stay intact, that is specific to the city's radios for fire police. The secure storage, that's what we were talking about with medication control, and then the chief's office in back the training room. Again, if you've been in the police department right now, you see all the cubicles that take up that entire space, those would all be gone and we would move to tables and chairs which would make it a far better classroom fit for us. So utilization of space downstairs, as you can notice, we've moved the captain's from upstairs to downstairs, we've taken their office, currently, they share their offices, is also their bunk room. So again, they can't shut off when it's time to go to bed because they have a computer and a desk right next to them. So by moving them downstairs, it separates them from their office. So now they can shut down at night. And the same thing goes for the firefighters upstairs. The bunk rooms in the back. That's where EMS used to be. That would eventually be renovated to house more bunk room spaces we continue to grow. But that's that's a delayed project we can hold on with the number of staff we have currently. So that gives us the ability to grow without having to go outside.

Shawn Willey

So for the proposed new side of the Ellsworth Police Department again, it's 416 High Street formerly Associated Builders business, the building's about 8400 square feet. We'd be looking at a 20 year lease term proposed the building would remain on the tax base. Renovations would be take place by coastal Maine general contracting, the city would be responsible for the insurance, the electricity, the heating,

snow removal and premise landscape. We would be able to take occupancy of that building by July of next year 2023. And really, by moving up there, the daily operations of the police department would not change they continue on as they always have officers would still be out on patrol responding to calls anywhere in the city. You know, oftentimes officers may be out on the Bangor road dealing with traffic things and have to respond clear to Walmart, for instance, there or out on the Bucksport road and we may be coming from happy town road or anywhere. So basically just because the building is located where it is it doesn't really change anything how we do business. And we already have some patrol zones currently set up just to make sure that we afford proper response times for things and people are in their positions where they need to be at different times throughout the day of the city. Here's some renders of what the outside would look like. This is the first floor consists of some office space for supervisors detectives provides us with the two interview rooms that I spoke of a large area for the patrol room. A waiting waiting area. Currently we can fit one person in the chair in the waiting area. So this has multiple seats for people. Oftentimes people are out in City Hall because there's no place for them to be able to be at the police department. The dispatch area is about doubled in size and allows plenty of room for dispatch also for IT's items. We have some administrative offices storage. We have a kitchen with a with a break room for the most part. Still to the left of this this facility is already disrupted inside and we wouldn't be much renovation, then the basement is kind of an open slate but it provides us with a garage base we can secure vehicles if we need to, that are dealing with fatal motor vehicle accidents or search warrants. We currently have to store those in a facility at one of the towing companies which relies on a little bit of extra work making sure the vehicle is secure to be able to get the warrant complete. We have a large evidence storage area. Industry standards there's evidence pass through lockers to that storage area. So everything can be processed properly training training area, exercise room, some general storage here. And then this area right here really consists of the male and female locker rooms. And we've planned enough space for the growth of the department over the next 20 years so that they won't be cramped up again, like we are at the spot now. This is a little bit about what's being proposed for the lease, it's \$13.50 a square foot with a 3% annual increase in a 10 year review option, either on the city's side or the renter side. At the end of the 20 year lease, the cost will be 3 million, just about \$3 million. upfront costs are about 600,000 that covers the remodel of both floors. Code Review, painting, upgrading all the plumbing and heating, electrical and lighting, replace and add doors as needed. A new roof there was a car port on the back from the backside of the buildings, we keep things out of the weather, when people are coming in and out of work, getting their cars ready. And it would also be some privacy fencing along the side and the rear furnishings, we're gonna be bringing several things with us as much as we can as far as desks and cubicles to reuse those. And then the IT infrastructure totals \$267,557. Some extras to consider there's three options. They deal with speciality items on if the council was inclined to patch them up with the motion to lease the facility, what type of safety features they would like to see in the building along with the generator to power the building, if the power is. So that concludes that.

Marc Blanchette

Captain Willey in a presentation week and half to two weeks ago about this. You happen to mention drug seizure. What happens when those drugs are seized? Are they brought here? And do we have the correct facility? To open them inspect them? And by Correct? I mean, safe?

Shawn Willey

Yeah, currently right now. We process those drugs, about 36 inches away from the microwave in the coffeepot next to the refrigerator in the sink. And there is no ventilation in that room we do we don't have a place to put a proper ventilation system in. We've looked at buying one there about \$10,000. But we just don't have any space to be able to put the item. We try not to process a lot of drugs, but there are times when we have to do presumptive testing on the drugs to be able to charge the person with the proper crime. And sometimes that requires that the substances is out in that room. Is it safe? Absolutely not. But that is what we have to do.

Marc Blanchette

So it's not only is it harmful to the officers in that room, but also the employees that are working here in City Hall. I assume some,

Shawn Willey

I suppose potentially through the AC or something like that, maybe but I think that would be a stretch. Okay.

Glenn Moshier

I think it is important, though, to recognize that there is danger, maybe not through drug contamination, but through when you have a police department in a building like City Hall, where people are coming here conduct City Business, pay their taxes to register their cars and have police type of activity which is much different from that and to oftentimes collide. And sometimes that happens in the parking lot. Sometimes it happens right out here. And there's certainly a level of concern by the staff on the first floor when those types of incidents incidences erupt and if I know that that type of exchange between law enforcement activity and City Hall activity is it's sometimes not pleasant.

Marc Blanchette

I have seen, I want to say three of those interactions. And I quickly learned that generally the people that are here to talk with the police against their will. Not exactly happy people. And they're rather upset. I've also seen crying mothers and children right inside the front door, waiting their turn, lord knows what happened. But there was no room inside the PD, for them to have some private time with the child or the parent. And to me, that's just as difficult to see as, as a police interaction was someone who was not cooperative, and something that they do not deserve.

Glenn Moshier

If I could just others like to take a couple of minutes just to talk about how I see this option as a viable option for the city and opening up opportunity to address many of the other needs that we have in the city. Since I took over as city manager two years ago, there's been a lot of a lot of issues that have been raised a lot of concerns, infrastructure needs that the city has, that we've kind of shed shed light on. And a lot of these things are not new, they've existed for a great many number of years. And this being one of them, the need for the police department to be relocated into more suitable space has been identified for years. And one of the things that we know that we recognize is that we can't tackle all of them all at once is just too much financially, the city can't afford it can't possibly begin to, you know, pay for all of the needs in certainly in a timely fashion. And so we have to start prioritizing, we

have to start, you know, taking projects as we can, as they're presented as what makes sense for our community, what's affordable for our community, and frees us up to then move on to address the next big issue. One issue tonight that we addressed earlier was with the water department. And that was one of the first things that I identified as a tremendous need for the city when I went out and toured that space for those folks. And, you know, it's it's literally see the snow blowing in through the window and see the bricks falling off of the side of the building and the other dramatic needs that that building had. And you know, when we talked about the cost of what it would have been, then to repair the building, not even considering what that cost is now, two years later. And so, you know, we move forward with looking for alternative location for them to work out of. And that's what you saw, the result of that is what you saw earlier tonight, and passed earlier tonight. And, and this is no different, you know, this opportunity was presented to us to the city. And the staff within the police department has worked, put a lot of effort in with the property owner to kind of finalize this draft and make changes to the proposal and to the building itself. And we've presented it to, to council at numerous different opportunities. And you know, I see this as an opportunity for the city to rectify a long standing wrong, if you will, and fix a long standing identified need that the city has, while also providing some short term relief for the fire department and the crowding issue that we have in the fire department as we continue to look towards growth in EMS, we've identified as a major need for our city, we're going to continue to need to grow in that area to provide that service to our citizens. And longer term. It gives us the opportunity we have now, with this proposal. we've resolved this Police Department issue for the next 20 years and beyond this building this facility is is adequate. Captain Willey suggested that we plan for growth, and he and I have served almost 20 years on the department and and in our 20 years we've seen about seven positions added. So that's kind of what we were targeting is the next 20 years, somewhere in that same type of growth pattern, and this facility provides that provides that for the police department into the future. And what that does is you take that out of the equation, you resolve that problem. And now, and you do it in an economical, and in my opinion, financial, financially responsible way going forward for the city, and you free up future capital, future bond proceeds, future grant funding and other, you know, other resources to be able to start addressing other issues. We've got many irons in the fire, if you will, to address some of our infrastructure needs of wastewater, water stormwater issues, that we're working on our drainage. And, you know, we're going to continue to pursue those funding sources. But as was mentioned earlier, you know, we have a need in the not so distant future for water treatment plant, you know, we've got infrastructure needs roads that are in, you know, in a state of disrepair that we need to be able to focus on and, and focus not only our attention, but our finances on our highway garages and is in need of some pretty significant repairs in the future. So these are all issues that now we can start to prioritize and address those issues, as opportunities present those, because we resolved one issue here tonight with this opportunity. So just wanted to kind of shed a little bit of light into the fact that this, although this certainly benefits the police department as a whole, and I believe it benefits the city and the community as a whole. But the benefits go far beyond just the police department. And I think that's an important thing to recognize.

Robert Miller

I was listening to it the other day when you were talking about it, and having the drugs as councillor Marc said, the other day, it's not it's not acceptable. The city has needs and the city has wants, this is a need, that you're processing drugs within three feet of where people eat, on the other side of the short

wall of where people are working. It's a safety issue. We expect our city police to protect and serve us, we can at least give them a safe place to do it. They do not have a safe place to do that from right now.

Dale Hamilton

If it's alright, I think there's some comments from the public with everybody. Okay, I let the public speak now. And then we'll come resumes or does anybody want to speak before that? I

Casey Hanson

I have questions. I'm happy to have you let the public speak first.

Dale Hamilton

So why don't we do that? And then then we'll come back to a discussion. Does anybody from the public want to speak? If you do? Go to the podium state your name? You'll have three minutes.

Gordon Workman

Hi, my name is Gordon Workman, evidently obvious 1935. Police Department. It's outdated. It's no doubt Fire Department outdated no doubt. 1935. Right. But is there a way? How much property is on the books right now the city owns it could be sold off? To make up that difference money?

Glenn Moshier

We don't have that answer. I mean, the City owns property throughout. Every time we have a viable piece of property for sale, or potential sale, we bring it forward to the council to explore that option as to whether they want to sell it or not.

Gordon Workman

Right? And I know that out on the Bangor road that property still in our books Correct. How about the one on the bucksport road, they're still on our books. Now you got this little piece, point less than a half acre, then you've got the pump station property that was going to be now available for sale. My brain I hear maybe \$600,000 between all the properties. If you throw it out there as retail market that will go a long ways towards that budget. Now the other thing that Councilman O'Halloran brought up is there any way I possibly could use the Moore school? Say, two years could we hold out for two years and use the Moore School since we already put so much money into that? Now if I remember right, it used to be a gym downstairs and that Moore school that was all cement? Is that still there? There that? Yeah. So that could be good for evidence and car storage whatever down there too. So is there any way that could perhaps be used as a police station? Since that's kind of centrally located, the other thing I'm thinking about up at that intersection during the summer, holy crap, have fun getting out of that road, you know, when you have to have a call, so So I see viable options is sell off property before I can see using Moore school, because that's really a good setup, you could add a couple of days on the back, that'd be lost money. And also another thing I was thinking about. Now, one time that piece was offered up to the city for 850,000. If I remember right, is that another option that may come up in the future that we can buy that property after you put them renovation costs into it? If the city wants to buy, because technically with the least amount, you're paying the taxes. All right, so at least now you're paying the taxes on 850 was 5600 bucks, I think per month, so you're basically paying the taxes anyway. Anyway, that's my thoughts on that. Oh, thank you.

John Linnehan

John Linnehan in Ellsworth. I totally agree that the police department needed to move I liked the arrangement with moving the fire department and everything you so they I thought that was excellent. Is my concern about the whole thing. I want to ask one question, because somebody just texted me that was sick and couldn't come to the meeting. The question was, is the 3% escalator simple income compound interest? Compound? Okay, thank you. I'm asking if somebody says listening in is his my thought. I want to see everybody be treated fairly on this. And I don't think this is treating all of our taxpayers here in the City of Ellsworth with fair by not giving them an opportunity to bid on a project of this type. And it was a question should happen, it should something should be done. I look at like the Maine coast mall, I look at the mill mall, they've got plenty of land up there that they could put a new facility in and do exactly the same thing you're talking about. And then I also like Council O'Halloran's thoughts about the Moore school building up there, utilize existing facilities that we've got millions of dollars worth in there, we're not getting a return on investment for the taxpayers in there. So I'm in favor of the project. But I'm not in favor of, of doing a project of that magnitude 3,600,000 and upgrades and things of that type without putting it out to bid with a standardized sheet. And the several businessmen in this community that pay heavy taxes that had the opportunity and the capability to do a project and the size. So just, you know, I could agree to the the existing taxpayers, I'd like to see it put out to a bid to do that. Other than that, I'm totally in favor of it. I mean, I love the police department love the fire department. They need to have that move done. But I want to be fair to our existing taxpayers to pay a hefty amount of taxpayers commercially Maine Coast Mall, mill mall, and there's probably others. I just jotted them down when I was sitting there. Thank you very much for your time. I appreciate it.

Molly Freidland

Hi, I'm Molly Friedland. I'm a resident here in Ellsworth and also a regular voting Planning Board member. So I see your project. It's obviously hugely needed. I just have some questions from planning perspective and site choice perspective. Obviously, you've explored a couple different options. Those seemed, in my understanding, were those options were looked at a few years ago. Was there any other properties looked at this time around in consideration of this project? Right. Okay. And then, on the planning board, we scrutinize projects, like from landscape design to traffic studies. So I'm just curious, do we have some sort of like, municipal exemption that city projects don't need that level of review and approval? Or is it is this project going to fall on the code office? Will you come for planning board? I've only been on planning board for about two years. So these are really just I'd like to know the process for a project of this scale that's within the city, where I see so many other projects, heavily reviewed. Each time they come, there's a public hearing associated. And today it was the first time I really saw this project on the agenda. And I remember when you guys appointed the Public Safety Committee in July at our joint planning board and council workshop to discuss the solar moratorium which was not like a regular meeting. So I wondered from that point. How many times did that committee meet? Were there public hearings associated, just sort of what the process looks like to get to here where my understanding is you're hoping to vote tonight to move into this lease agreement.

Glenn Moshier

So they were we had to we have two meetings that were posted. They were public meetings with the council. One was a public safety building committee meeting, and the other one was a evening Finance Committee meeting. And, unfortunately, like many of our meetings, those were not well attended. So in,

in some instances, in many instances, this is what's been presented tonight. And what was in the counselor packet is the first time that people have seen this. But this certainly the concept of the police department moving isn't shouldn't be new to anybody, because it's been something we've discussed for at least the last 10 years. Absolutely. My understanding and Matt may know better, but my understanding is that at this point, the renovation that's being done because it's all internal. It's not a dramatic change in use, that wouldn't require playing board approval code has been in fire life safety code has been out to the property to do some assessment and determine what needs would be needed to met for ordinance requirements. But I don't think at this point that it would be something that we build through planning board. Strictly coding, gotcha.

Molly Friedland

Cool. Thanks for explaining it.

Dale Hamilton

Anyone else?

Todd Little-Seibold

So my name is Todd little Seibold. I'm a Ellsworth resident. So, I know this has been talked about for a long time. I came tonight, because I actually follow pretty closely I don't come to a lot of meetings. But the coverage of this particular proposal for the general public who hasn't come to those meetings, has not been great, just in the sense that I I have I read the paper, I pay attention. So I just have a few questions, because I'm looking at this, and I'm just making sure I want to make sure I understand this. So we're going to pay out \$3 million in lease. At the end of that we will not own the building as a city, we're going to put 600,000 into a building, that at the end of it, we will not own. And that's \$150,000 a year in lease expenses. And then I don't understand the total from undesignated fund balance if all options so if somebody could explain to me why this is a better option than just purchasing a piece of property and building something. When it looks to me like somebody else is going to make \$3 million over 20 years. Why the town wouldn't do that for themselves and have that money come to us? Well, certainly,

Glenn Moshier

I can certainly try. So if we were to build a community similar to ours, Caribou is in the process of looking at building a new police department, standalone Police Department. And their current plan is in excess of \$10 million to construct. And so if we were to build rather than \$3 million, over the next 20 years, we'd be looking at a \$20 million expense.

Todd Little-Seibold

Oh, for the layout that's here, for what was proposed tonight will be a \$20 million building a \$10 million \$10 million,

Glenn Moshier

At least 10 million. That's that's the starting point for the Caribou, which is a similar size police department. So the which is why earlier I stated I believe this is a economically responsible way to address this problem this need for the city because you're talking through 3 million expense over the

next 20 years as opposed to 10 million. Now, this property under this agreement will also stay on the tax rolls. So the property tax will be paid by the by the property owner. In addition to that a building envelope needs over the next 20 years will be at the expense of the property owner. So as opposed to us, we have we build a new building and 10 years from now we need a new furnace. Well that's going to be the expense of the city. With a lease agreement, that expense doesn't come to the city. So those are just some of the benefits of leasing as opposed to constructing ourselves. And also, this is a situation where we can get into this facility In July, if we were looking at construction for ourselves, we'd be five years before we could be able to occupy that building. So those are some of the reasons that motivated us to pursue this, this avenue as opposed to building a new building.

Todd Little-Seibold

Okay, and so you're saying that the brand new facility in in the other in the other town is basically the same 8200 square feet,

Glenn Moshier

I don't know their exact square footage, I just know that their department is 15 Man. So similar in size to what we have. And my conversations with, with the police chief and caribou is that they're just beginning the process. And at this point, it's, it's going to be in excess of 10 million. Now, when, we did the public safety building plans a couple of years ago, which you may be familiar with that, at that point, in 2015, when that work was completed, it was an estimated cost of 20 million for the public safety building. And it was estimated that 7 million of that would have been police department. So then that was in 2015. So here we are in 2022. And everything's astronomically more expensive. So that 7 million I think 10 is a very conservative estimate of what it cost to build a standalone police department.

Todd Little-Seibold

So I again, I'm not I don't want to quibble too much. But then if you put \$7 million into a new police facility, at the end of those 20 years, you own a \$7 million building,

Nick

right? But you got depreciation,

Todd Little-Seibold

I'm just trying to make sure that we're talking apples, apples and apples and not sort of comparing apples and oranges. And from my perspective, you know, everybody understands that our police and fire need a new space. But it does, you know, I think that the when I look at these numbers, I'm like, wow, okay, so yes, we need it, the rapid response is one thing. But again, it's, it's in the end, not an asset for the, for the, you know, for the city, and that's why I was like, Oh, why would we do that? So I think your answer is, is a good one. I've, you know, I'm still thinking through in my head, and when I thought, honestly, I live over on the bayside road, when I thought of that spot is said like, that's, you know, a not an ideal spot for getting in and out of, and getting people across town. So my immediate thought was, like, you know, would work well, for Trenton? I think but, you know,

Glenn Moshier

I think that that's been a concern that's been echoed. But I think that's echoed by people who don't understand police work. And police work is very different from fire service, very different from other emergency services in the sense that our police officers aren't sitting at a desk in a squad room, they're out on patrol, they're all over the community all over the city. And when we have an emergency, which we never know where the next emergency is going to be, we probably spend an inordinate amount of time at Walmart. Well, this is going to reduce our response time to Walmart. Yeah, for certain, but the point being that we never know where the next emergency is gonna be. And our our officers aren't sitting in the squad room waiting for the call. They're out

Todd Little-Seibold

And I just want to say up front, I appreciate the work you all put into this, because it's it's obvious. I guess the from my perspective, you know, seeing this, you just started processing and thinking about that. And I know that but you know, again, it's one of those things about the question of the financial prudence. Thank you. Absolutely.

Jim Karst

Jim Karst, live on Oak Street. Like the chief said, As a retired military police officer, I know exactly what he's talking about. The police department and their officers are not right there at the building waiting to call out they're out in the field. They're in their own little portable office, which is their patrol car. So they may have a one second response and they may have a five because they're out all over the city. They're not right there in that building. Just quickly, I love this plan. You got my thumbs up as a citizen. I like what the fire department did. They want to use some of the space for their benefits as well. If you want to raise my taxes a little bit to help support them. You got my thumbs up.

Toby Stevenson

Toby Stevenson citizen here in Ellsworth. And I know that I think this is great. I support it. A number of people have mentioned the Community Center as a potential source for for for public facilities and things. And I just would like to remind the community that it is a community center and the intention of that facility the Moore center was to serve the community of Ellsworth and it works as a daycare it houses the Ellsworth Community Music Institute for Health. The not the healthy Acadia but a other other thank you other organizations have served there. And I just want to keep that in mind that that is a pretty important facility for the for the citizens and for various capacities in the state. It's not necessarily a great location for the municipality building. That's all.

Gordon Workman

Well, I'll tell you what, if this does get passed tonight, which this city needs it, there's no doubt, if we could wait two years and figure out how often selling our property and stuff to help pay for it, that'd be awesome, I would think. But if you guys need a place to park your car during the day, I've offered it several times, you could park in the back side of that building next to the park behind the tree. So you can sit there and relax, do your stuff in your car. So.

Nick

Nick I just moved here four months ago from big city. So I see a little bit the things are different. And I was behind the project with Captain Willey. And there's two things I want to precise that this is very custom specialized for this project. So it can grow 20 or 40 years, probably. And our company is a little bit different than other company we do usually big work and trying to give back to the city. I don't know if you guys see the trailer behind here and we give some for the mural that we did here. So in this way we can, you know, give something to the city and give give long term tenants for us. And they're not you know. But for \$600 for \$600,000 It's impossible do a project that size, the rest of the money it's will be our pocket we're estimating will be around a \$850,000 project because we want to save and secure for the police. But we want to do pretty too, because the City is worth it. the police doesn't, don't need to look pretty, but we want it you know, since it's our building, we want to breed so we were trying to put some a little bit more effort and try to put a little bit more spending or money our pocket. Since we have a long term plan and we can afford it dynamically. So we're trying to raise a little bit those outside to give it not a 70-80 styles. However modern since the next door, there's the new shop that looks very pretty next to this one. And there's the new technology with brand we're putting a little bit more effort in just not just because we want a long term tenant but because the city is growing and we live here and you know, the fire department is gotta be you gotta protect this so they gotta work. Good. That's it.

Dale Hamilton

So anyone else want to speak?

Jon Stein

Hey, John, Stein, resident, downtown Ellsworth here, also running for city council. Just want to remind everybody the comprehensive plan still well out of date and be great to get a lot of things on the books have this sort of long term discussion, like our city manager was saying, there's a lot of projects that need doing and it'd be great to not be sort of blindsided, even though it's been a few weeks now in the book, be great to have the discussion about what does our next 20 years look like in terms of all of the Public Works that need modification, all the buildings that need remediation, and all that comprehensive plan? Thanks. All right.

Casey Hanson

I have a couple questions. Some of them have sub parts. I guess my biggest probably my biggest question or concern is we've been exploring this project since last May but and I think this question is kind of gotten asked about what else we've looked at in the last six months to compare it to have we gone out with a realtor do we know what other if we have to put a million dollars into getting this thing up to par, are there other buildings that we could buy in or lease to compare it to? And if we're going to lease a building like this have we can have we made any kind of comparable comparisons to make sure that what we're paying is the right amount. That is my question number one. So

Shawn Willey

I'll touch base on on buildings, there's been different times where other buildings have been available that may have suited us better or worse. But right now, they came to us, we've looked into it, we've explored it, we've also went, I went to 190 Bangor Road, I've pulled the paperwork on that from the realtor we've we've looked at all over, it's just not a feasible site, because of the size of it, and what

what it would need would be way more than what this would cost. And in, we have people driving around all the time. So if they see something that they think, hey, the police department could be there, in our ear, telling us about it. And there's just nothing else available.

Glenn Moshier

I would also just like to add that what makes this somewhat unique is that the property owner is prepared with his crew, they have experience in police departments, construction and police departments, they have an understanding of the need the specialty needs, that the police departments have. And he's prepared to put his crew in this building for us to occupy July one. And I don't think that we would be able to find that level of commitment elsewhere in the community. If we did find another space, we'd then have to pursue this contractor, and certainly wouldn't lend itself to any type of timeframe like we have here with this proposal, I

Casey Hanson

guess I would just feel more comfortable if we were comparing it to something. And obviously, the need is there and has been there for a long time. But I wouldn't want to make a bad decision just because it was the quickest decision. But that's not a question. That's it's just a thought. And then I just had some questions about the undesignated fund balance. So how much is in the fund balance? 6.9 million? Yeah, that was what from that 2021? Audit you said? And how much of that do we normally use in a year? And what do we what have we used it for in the past?

Glenn Moshier

That will typically don't use any of it unless it's designated. So yeah, for emergency purposes. So it's something that the council has to authorize use in mind. Since I've been city manager, we have not used fund balance for any expenses. City expenses,

Casey Hanson

So it would be unusual to use this. It would be unusual circumstance to use this money.

Glenn Moshier

Well, we have a so our fund balance has grown, which is what we what we learned from the auditors. And part of that was a result of COVID and grant funding and other other monies that we hadn't had access to. So it's unusual in the sense that in the last couple of years since I've been the city manager, we haven't used fund balance for any specific purpose. But it's not unusual to use on balance for needs. It's the city has if it makes if you have adequate reserves to be able to deplete those.

Casey Hanson

If you're not depleting it too low, correct? What would be depleting it too low? Or what's like a base of how much should we have that's responsible?

Glenn Moshier

She said she's had recent conversation.

Toni Dyer

So most municipal auditors will say you should have four to six months in your undesignated fund balance to run your municipality, should there be a major catastrophe and tax revenue is not coming in. We're well above that six month mark. So we are more than solid to continue operations of the city. And there is an anticipation in the FY 22 audit that there may be some unspent money because of lack of expenses during COVID to even increase the undesignated fund balance just based on what they saw for FY 21. So it may increase from 6.9 to maybe 7.5. I don't want to over speak please don't get your hopes up. So there is that and it's not unusual to spend money like this to alleviate a tax burden in the budget cycle to build a \$10 million structure. I mean if you we took out a bond to build a police department for \$10 million The burden on your taxpayers to pay that bond note every year would be far more substantial than \$150,000 a year.

Dale Hamilton

Can I jump into this firsthand on this fund balance? Yeah, thank you. So just to be clear, this \$6 million fund balance, that's cash sitting somewhere, is that in just in our operating account? Or have is that sitting in another account? So when we look at the cash balance, what we have on hand? Is that \$6 million reflective of that, or is that somewhere else in terms of our current operating cash?

Glenn Moshier

So it's, so it's undesignated fund balance. So when, on a weekly basis, you see your you see your cash, which is does not reflect the 6.9.

Dale Hamilton

So that cash is sitting somewhere else? Correct. Okay. That's Thank you, thank you

Casey Hanson

is the fund balance, some of it designated in some of it undesignated

Glenn Moshier

is the 6.9 is all on this is all on designated

Casey Hanson

because all the designated stuff has been designated. So if, in our under in our general fund balance, we're supposed to keep six months of keeping the city running, how much is that? Ish?

Toni Dyer

I don't know. But we have well over six months of that, I can find out

Casey Hanson

okay, I'm just I'm just trying to make it make sense in my head. So if we approve this proposal, we would be approving either the \$867,000, or with the extras, a million dollars to get it ready to go out of the undesignated fund balance that money is in our savings account. And we would take that and we would do that. And we'd be done by July and then the \$113 a year, which then increases that would have to go into next year's budget and be reconciled through next year's budget

Glenn Moshier

correct and would be a budgeted expense going forward for the police department. And just what just a couple of things to add to that. So there was talk at one of the sessions we had, you know that there is potential for ARPA funding, if you wanted to use ARPA funding for possible portions of this. But the key and the reason why I brought for the recommendation of utilizing the designated fund balance is twofold. One is because the auditor brought it to our attention that our fund balance has grown. So it seemed like an opportune time to utilize some of those funds. But secondly, and one of the one of the citizens spoke to it earlier, if you're going to be leasing a space, and we're going to be putting money, we're going to be putting city money into the renovations of said space, it doesn't make a lot of sense to me to add interest onto that money. So if we, if we don't use the fund balance then we're going to finance, if we agreed to do it, then we'd be financing this \$826,000. And then if you finance it, you're adding on top of that a finance charge. So it's compound. So instead of being 826,000, now you're talking 1.5 million by the time you pay that, you know, pay that expense off. So where we're leasing a space, and these renovations are going to provide for the city's use for the next 20 years. At the end of the day, we don't own it. So having it be paid out of fund balance so that we're not compounding it with interest as well. Just makes more sense to me. None of those circumstances

Casey Hanson

did you say that this building the city has looked at in the past or looked at to buy in the past? And if so, what happened with at that time?

Shawn Willey

Yeah, that was all back under. manager David Cole. It was brought to his attention and and nothing was done. At the time. I don't I don't have an answer why but I think those

Casey Hanson

are all my questions. I actually hope we just keep talking about it for a while longer because I feel I feel torn about I feel torn about it. On the one hand. Like John said, I wish we were thinking about this in the bigger context of what are the major problems we need to solve and in what order are we To tackle them, and with what money, I wish I could see that big picture, I would feel more comfortable with that. And I would feel more comfortable if I knew, like, here are the five buildings we looked at and or here, this is what it would take to get them up to snuff. And this is how long it would take and how much it would cost. So that's, that's on the one hand and on the other hand, right, you guys have been looking at this for a long time. And I don't want to give up a good opportunity and just drag our feet any longer. So I've just been torn and mulling. And I'm still torn and mulling. So I hope everyone just keeps talking for a while. So I can

Michelle Kaplan

Well, when you had mentioned the Moore school, this reasons why the Moore school would not be appropriate because of the number of large windows. Right. And this particular building allows for a specialized envelope that provides additional security to our police officers that several other buildings don't have to make them bullet resistant, for example. That's why you couldn't just put it up at the Mill Mall. Because you don't, it's all windows. And just speaking at the Moore school, I know that there's a lot of low income residents that utilize the Moore school for their daycare, their summer daycare

programs, through the Y camp. And anywhere else can you get a week's worth of daycare for \$150? I don't know any place. So it is a great asset. As far as the service it provides to many, many of our citizens that have small children. So that's important. The only concern I have is the 3% per year increase. Have we got the math right on this? Yes. So the total cost, at the end of the 20 years would be 3 million? Or do we calculate in the new rate each year?

Shawn Willey

That's the new rate each year. That's the total cost of what we would the city would pay over the 20 years.

Glenn Moshier

I would just add that at the 10 year mark, there is a review option for either the city or the property owner so we can assess because the three years it it's an estimate of what that CPI is likely to do over the next 20 years. So the 3% is an effort to keep up with that. And if we find at that 10 year review, that it hasn't grown at that level, then there's an option for us to negotiate a smaller increase going forward. Or conversely if you know things go with the way they're currently going. And things get astronomically more expensive, then there would be an opportunity for the property owner to to make an argument for increase.

Dale Hamilton

Just in Councilor Hanson and some your your question, I think it's a good question in terms of comparison, and being able to do that the the place that I go for that, that I think is helpful is what is the least per square foot. Because that is kind of a known issue. And so that \$13.50 per square foot in terms of that kind of space is a good number to compare it to what what other like spaces go for? And so I think it's a good number. But that would be the question if somebody else has more knowledge around what commercial space is going for it we saw some of that tonight in terms of what the the main Coast mall is, is leasing their space for that. For me, that helps a little bit. So I just share that as a one way to be able to compare costs.

Michelle Kaplan

And looking at just comparing if the 3,074,000. That works out to over a 20 year period \$16.33 per person per year for the residents of Ellsworth as opposed to building a \$10 million facility, which would be \$55 per person per year.

Glenn Moshier

think yes, just to your point now, I mean, I think we don't I don't have other figures to be able to present of other commercials base leasing rates. Certainly the property owner, Matt may have some, some information to be able to add to that. But I think your point to, you know, we're releasing space approved earlier tonight at the Maine Coast mall, which is just one big open room for \$11.50 a square foot. And this is a space that's going to be specifically designed to meet the needs of the police department. So just by my simple way of thinking \$13.50 square foot seems like a reasonable reasonable costs when you compare those two, you know, one big room inside a mall or a designated structure that's specifically designed to meet our needs. This is a pretty significant difference for a \$2 increase in rent per square foot.

Marc Blanchette

Captain Willey spoke earlier. On he said, it's hard to find a police officer these days, a lot of people for whatever reason, are not going into it. And I would guess, though, though, the chief or the Captain have never mentioned it to me that when they are looking at hiring the person, applicants look at the facilities that they would be working in. They also talk with other applicants, and or employees, current employees. And if a young person going into law enforcement as an opportunity to join, Ellsworth PD, and they see the facility behind this wall, versus a professional facility that's up to date on everything with the room for growth up on the hill, then, in my estimation, that would add to their desire to come to Ellsworth and make it maybe a little bit easier to fill open positions.

Robert Miller

Well, I'd like to know what we're gonna do. If we don't do it, we're gonna kick the can down the road, what do you what's the what's the plan, you're gonna go looking for more buildings, get 8 buildings, compare them all together, they're, they're not going to be they're going to be more expensive. These people are already putting money into this building, they're willing to work with us, they're gonna put more money into the building. And we can we can move in there in July. These police officers are not working in a safe environment that anybody would be expected to work in.

Casey Hanson

I guess I would just feel more comfortable if a realtor was telling me that. And it seems like you could get that in a month. I mean, no question. These guys need some I don't, we're not wondering whether they need a new place.

Steven O'Halloran

Counselor Hanson, he was hoping we were going to talk more about this. And I'm pretty good at talking. I just want to point out one thing, probably several things. But in a project this magnitude, rather you do the Cadillac or rather you do the Chevrolet version you're talking to under than \$234,000 difference. And where I'm getting that number is the 867,000 versus the 1,000,092. That's where I'm coming up with that. And I'll be the first to tell you that if this project was going to go forward, let's do it the right way the first time, as opposed to keep adding on over time when you need bulletproof glass. Now, having said that, if this this project was to go, I would just encourage that we go all the way and not not if you're spending \$4 million dollars, and where I'm coming up with 4 million is the \$3 million in lease and 1,092,000 in renovations that comes to 4.1 million over 20 years. That's \$17,000 a month. That's what that comes to. And that \$234,000 difference isn't going to amount to a hill of beans if this project goes forward. However I still get back to you We spent 4.7 million renovating a building and we lease it for \$1. I'm not against the why. But I question that whole mindset where were we renovate a billion million, a building 4.7 million and lease it for \$1. And then we're out in the market ourselves looking for lease space. I struggle with that if we have extra space, to give to the Y great, but to give to the Y, and then turn around and lease this space, I struggle with that when their their lease comes up in two years. I'm not saying the Moore schools the right place, I'm just saying that I struggle with that methodology that we've got an asset that's coming off lease, that might be considered or maybe taken a little more money from that, to offset some of this, something's got to happen. We can't just pay a \$26,000 a month payment on a building and collect \$1 a year. Something's got to give there. It can't. It can't go on that way. In other 10 years, this lease ends up with a Y in August of 24. I think everyone in

this building agrees the police need something the fire needs something the let's face it, we've got antiquated assets. And we got to start someplace. I just would like to point out that if this project was to go forward, I would hope that we could do it right the first time and not have to revisit glass bulletproof glass in three years because there's been more crime in the area or something

Marc Blanchette

is my last meeting. And Steven and I agree.

Dale Hamilton

So just a couple of comments, I this this obviously, this is one of those areas that that is I think is difficult because there's a cost, and it is a big cost. And we sit around talking about expenses. I'm not removing myself from this reality, we've been trying to I proposed having a capital budget so that we would look at capital planning. And that just fell apart. Part of it was COVID, part of it was just lack of interest. We collectively all of the council's get in that situation of trying to look at issues, and they get away from us. And that's the reality, then we know in this city, we have a lot of needs. And that's not from neglect. That's just from reality the city has grown. And the reality is, is that we're going to continue to have expenses if we could list a whole bunch of other needs that we have. The city residents know what those are. Our issue as a city, from my perspective, is that we we haven't talked about prioritization, we haven't talked about planning and stuck with it. Those will change every year, they should be reviewed to see if it's still the priority. But that's that's a reality. And the other thing is, is that as far as expenses go, we we need to have activity in the city to less than that. But that doesn't take away from the fact that some of our basic needs have to be met. And so when I look at this I look at is it economical? Does it make sense from that perspective, when looking at everything, the fund balance, unfortunately, the school board does a nice job in terms of part of its built in in terms of they are supposed to have a fund balance and reserves in place and this statute around how much they can have. I would like to sit here and say that as long as I've been on the city, we've been planning that and that fund balance is reflective of the desire by the council to have reserves in place. But that would not be an accurate statement. That's by happenstance that that reserves sit there now it isn't because of planning. We need to we need to be able to do that. But the reality is it does sit there and it's a significant amount and we can lessen the cost for for this particular expense and When I when I think about 20 years to be able to get the police and the fire department addressed without a \$20 million building without a \$10 million building, without waiting three or four years to make that happen, I think it makes sense for us to move on that because quite honestly, if we don't, this is not going to be at \$13.50 per square foot issue next year, or two years from now, it just isn't I think the Moore school I couldn't agree more in terms of looking at it, trying to maximize that I think that as a city, we can utilize that space better. I do think that one of the things we have to look at is that went out to bond that went out to the for vote, I believe, by the citizens for to do that. And I think that the bond was tied to it being a community center. So there's some expectation of what it to be used for. But I think we have to maximize that. And I think we have to look at that going forward to make sure that we get the most out of that space that we set as a community we want to use in a certain way. I don't think looking around that there are there are other opportunities to unities. I do appreciate the idea in terms of other, you know, putting it out to bid and all of that. The reality is, is that I haven't heard any other individual company in this city approached the city to say, look, we'd like to build a space for you. It's it's a known issue for us, except for these gentlemen who have come forward and said, Look, this is what we'd like

to do. So on the one hand, yes, it makes sense to maybe put things out to bid. But the reality is, is that given where we're at, I don't think we're going to get anywhere near this kind of opportunity anytime soon. And, you know, yes, it's going to cost. But I also would say that \$113,000 To begin with, is not a big number, when you look at our total budget that we spend as a city, and if the will of the Council is to look at total expenditures, look at maybe selling property, look at other areas to make that up, that 113,000 could be made up very easily in other ways, and solve some significant issues that are not going to become less expensive, they're going to become more expensive. I just think it'd be short sighted. As much as this appears to be expensive. I think it would be short sighted not to take advantage of this opportunity. I think it's cost effective. And it actually will cost the city less over the long term. If we take action this evening.

Casey Hanson

I'm sorry. So the last thing you said was basically go for the extras. Is that what you meant? Oh,

Dale Hamilton

I just I meant in terms of with the the \$113,000 a year in terms of the lease, that that's something that that 113,000 could be that's not very much in the in the grand scheme of the total city budget. And I think there are ways to lessen that. If if we felt like that was something that needed to happen in the future city council can can talk about that. So I don't think when you look at it from that breakdown, that it's a really that big of an expense. As far as the total. I I agree with Councillor O'Halloran. And I think that we do it right the first time, we know what happens when you don't do it right the first time, it doesn't get less expensive, it gets more expensive. And then when you try to retrofit something, after the fact that that's a mistake. So, so that total number I I would agree with that. And personally, I think the fund balance taking that is not that from the size of it right now. If that holds in terms of we want to wait to see the audit, but that would certainly be my recommendation to use that funding so that we don't increase the tax base. That money is that's already been paid for by by the taxpayers. And we should use that and not burden for this going forward.

Casey Hanson

But we will burden them with 113

Dale Hamilton

with 113. Yeah, and that's where I say, I think that if the council has the will 113 in the grand scheme of the budget could be reduced quite quite significantly. And I believe that that number will become much higher in a year of two years. If we don't take action. That's just my opinion.

Steven O'Halloran

Too, To your point, I would just like to point out that this year, our payment on the more school is 26,000 a month. Okay. It's 26,000 a month we're paying for it the Moore School just to upkeep the payment

Casey Hanson

that we're paying off. Right? Right.

Steven O'Halloran

So it's 314,000 annual but if you divide that it's 26,000 a month. If you take this proposal income parison if you if you average, if you do the high end renovation, the \$3 million, that's 4.1 million over 20 years, 12 months, that payment per month is 17,000. So what is the city getting more value out of we're begging the payment on the more school are \$26,000 a month? And if you take their total numbers get 17,000 a month. So again, I I, I'm not sure I'm helping my case. But but in reality, you know, we're paying \$26,000 A month right now. And for \$17,000 a month, you're getting a facility with a fixed costs for 20 years.

Dale Hamilton

Yeah, it would, actually, if, depending on how we funded if that million dollars is funded under fund balance, that 17,000 is actually less than that, because we're using monies that we've already the taxpayers have already paid. So it brings it back

Steven O'Halloran

in comparison, I just think it's pretty interesting to compare that you're looking at a \$9,000 and less payment on this leased building, you're buying the time, not the property. Absolutely.

Gene Lyons

So my brain doesn't work like everybody else's. But I've always had this issue where that June when we go over budgets, and then they borrow a million dollars from the bank to get them through until September. So this year, we borrow a million dollars from the fund budget, then we pay back the interest. And that just that's half of what the yearly amount is right? 50,000 bucks and interest. They put that user own money and make 50 grand out of it. Right. Well, that was that was one of the yearly

Glenn Moshier

talks about Josh and actually the Finance Committee was, was getting to a point where we didn't have to rely on the tan, the tax anticipation note to make sure that we were able to get through. Right. And I think that's, I think that that's something that we can continue to strive for, for sure, I

Gene Lyons

would save 50,000. There. So that's half the amount almost. just my brain thinks very,

Dale Hamilton

I think it's a good point in terms of if we have fun balance sitting there. There's no need to borrow, we might like this year, have it available. But if you don't use it, you don't pay interest in rather than bringing it all into the account and then paying interest, having it available for its purpose that if something happens. It's a very good point.

Toni Dyer

We've drafted just one motion, but it depends on what you choose to do.

Casey Hanson

If there was, if there was a commercial, if there was someone with commercial Realty in Ellsworth expertise, standing here and telling me this is a good deal, I would have no problem voting for this. I just don't know how to tell if it's a good deal or not a good deal in comparison to other things, I have no way of being able to tell that. That's what bothers me the most will will pay me to not vote for it will pay me to make this thing not happen. Or probably will probably will happen anyways. But I don't have any way of knowing whether this is a good deal or not.

Michelle Kaplan

This is the deal. We do have before us that we're supposed to either vote for or not tonight.

Gene Lyons

is that what it is vote for? One way or the other tonight? I mean, I have I truly believe if we had a realtor standing here in front of us, they would say it's a good deal. I mean, that truly do. And if it really, if it really would take that. I don't know anybody that I can call right now and having them tell you that that would be a good deal. That's all mean it can't wait and vote on and remember the day. We got to do it tonight. We gotta do it. I mean,

Casey Hanson

I guess that's a question. Do we have to do it tonight? Or can we get that question answered and do it next month and be done with it then?

Michelle Kaplan

I don't see why we would wait. I mean, we have it's, You buy a house it's hundreds of dollars per square foot.

Casey Hanson

I would never buy a house without looking at other houses ever. But

Michelle Kaplan

it's 100 dollars per square foot, you're talking about a base \$13.50 per square foot.

Casey Hanson

But I also think it's gonna pass even if I don't vote for it. So I also think it's okay to vote for it tonight. If it does pass tonight, I also agree that we should I also agree with the idea of do all the things I feel sad, I'd want that last piece of information. I don't think I can vote for it without that last piece of information. But I think that's okay. Because I think

Dale Hamilton

Well, no, and, and I say this, just in terms of I know what what I'm about to suggest is a really big conflict. But the the developer here, who would have some information, if you would trust that? They would?

Casey Hanson

I would, I mean, I have no reason to feel badly about the developer, but he has an interest. I know, I just thought for what permission wouldn't help. It doesn't help. I mean, I think everyone's you know, there's like a bunch of guys in this room are all think it's a pretty good deal. But I just need an expert telling me that thing.

Toni Dyer

Can I address just, I'm not a professional, but can I respond. So I'm not a realtor, not going to tell you, I'm a realtor. But you're talking commercial leases. They're all under that same umbrella of a commercial lease. And we did approve a water department lease tonight, I don't want to keep beating a dead horse. But the amount of square footage that the public works department just got for the water department that is literally one giant open room, no offices, no customizable. For them, they have to do what they can with that space, as is. When you compare that to the amount of square footage of this location. It's already at a location where there's other law enforcement activity in the building to the front. So it's very well designed for that, when you compare that the fact that it's customizable to this department is going to last, it's going to outlast probably every officer on the force currently, I think you have to really, I think that is your comparison, counselor Hanson, I think \$13 a square foot versus 11 For four times the square footage. And it's customized to what we know we're going to need, based on many officers that have spent many years here they've seen the growth over 20-30-40 years, they can tell you what that looks like on the average. I think that's a pretty fair comparison. But I'm not a realtor. So I'm not a professional. But I do think it's a fair thing. And to kind of address some previous comments from the HR perspective as I used to be your HR director. In three years here, I think we've had a rolling vacancy in police the entire time retaining people, they often go places where there are better facilities, better infrastructure for their needs, better patrol, better cars, better everything. And it's the same with our fire department. And so I think from an employee perspective, you've got two departments that have had the can kicked down the curve for a long time. And this is a long term solution, I think, for the police department, as well as a short term for the potential EMS and fire growth that we're going to have in the next five years. That's just my two cents.

Steven O'Halloran

Again, I fight with this whole thing, but I would like to just say that, I think leasing. Aside from the Moore school aside from this project, I think leasing is a very popular option. It removes the debt from the balance sheet, it has a fixed cost to it. And you can take it in steps and and I do think that that's viable option for the taxpayer to know what their costs are, know that you're not going to have many surprises that could be a surprise and anything but I think leasing is probably the reason that big retail always leases buildings. And they don't build brick and mortar they lease because they have fixed costs. So I'm not opposed to leasing I struggle. Back to my Moore school thing. I struggle with that. But the lease, I just I believe that you can take steps and I think you're paying for time and you're paying for space. And you know what your costs are?

Dale Hamilton

Is this a new strategy to argue all the reasons to do the other thing and then voted? Well, because if I know that I'm gonna use that

Marc Blanchette

Mr. Chairman I move to accept the letter of intent from Gurney investment properties for 20 year lease for 416 High Street for occupancy of the Ellsworth police department and to authorize the city manager to execute the letter of intent, unnecessary lease documents, lease expenses to be budgeted for the FY 24 budget from the police department accounts, expenses for renovations, furnishings and IT infrastructure to be expended from the undesignated fund balance 10- 30300 for an amount of \$1,092,270

Michelle Kaplan

second

Dale Hamilton

motion a second further discussion.

Robert Miller

Is that include or the bulletproof glass?

Dale Hamilton

another discussion. Seeing no more discussion, all in favor. All opposed, 5-2 motion passes. Item 15 Counselor comments. It's an opportunity for counselors to make a comment on anything you'd like. Roughly three minutes. Somebody want to make a comment. Again, I would say thank you, Councillor Kaplan Councillor Blanchette.

Michelle Kaplan

I think Councillor Blanchette should have the honor and the journey.

Dale Hamilton

But before that, before he does, I just want to remind everybody, including Councillor Kaplan and councilor Blanchette that there is a meeting that it Do you have the date that, that we will, well, we'll be scheduling we November 10, we have to have a meeting to authorize the results of the election. And we have to have a certain number of counselors present in order for that to be an official vote. So do not try to sneak away. Please show up for that. That will be your official last meeting.

Marc Blanchette

So if the vote isn't accepted at that meeting,

Dale Hamilton

will throw you out.

Steven O'Halloran

I gotta buy him another cake.

Marc Blanchette

Motion to adjourn.

Michelle Kaplan
Second.

Dale Hamilton
We're adjourned.