

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

CITY OF LOWELL

VOTE

IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER,

A Supplemental Appropriation to raise from the tax levy and local receipts and appropriate to the Lowell Fire Department's Salary & Wages Accounts.

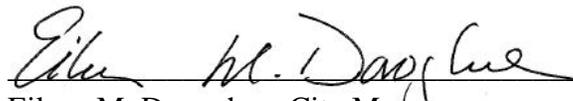
ORDERED,

By the City Council of the City of Lowell, as follows:

That the amount of Eight Hundred Thousand and 00/100 (\$800,000) Dollars be hereby further appropriated by raising from the FY2020 tax levy and additional local receipts and appropriating to the Lowell Fire Department Salary and Wages Permanent Account:

- LFD S&W Perm - Account – 02204151-511000

ORDER RECOMMENDED AND INTRODUCED BY:



Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager



Conor Baldwin
Chief Financial Officer

Allison Chambers
Deputy CFO

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager
FROM: Conor Baldwin, Chief Financial Officer 
CC: Jeff Winward, Fire Chief
DATE: November 21, 2019
SUBJECT: Supplemental Appropriation – Lowell Fire Department

The finance department has worked with the Fire Chief and his staff to come up with a plan to immediately hire seven new firefighters into the academy in January and maintain the fire department (“LFD”) staffing level at 213 through the end of the fiscal year (FY2020) without adding any additional burden onto the FY2020 tax levy. The amount of the appropriation is \$800,000.

As you may recall, the LFD has absorbed the retro pay associated with the settlement of the collective bargaining agreement with the IAFF, Local 853 this year. Additionally, a number of fire personnel whose salaries were previously funded through a federal grant award received in FY2017, have had their funding transferred entirely to the city’s General Fund, pursuant to the terms of the grant. Upon further investigation, it appears that the city may not have received the full benefit of the grant award due to the timing of the new hires at the commencement of the grant. The Fire Chief has since enlisted the assistance of our Congressional delegation to seek out any possible relief from this financial burden. These issues could have resulted in the delayed hiring of the seven firefighters until later in the year. However, thanks in large part to the fiscal restraint exercised by management, city-wide, as well as the positive growth in the tax levy this year; there exists an opportunity to hire these firefighters immediately contingent upon a supplemental appropriation by the City Council.

The Board of Assessors has recently had the FY2020 new growth certified by the Department of Revenue at approximately \$2.53 million. This number is approximately \$1.03 million higher than the amount estimated in this year’s budget. Likewise, the local receipts collected to this point in FY2020 have surpassed their benchmarks in many areas. One notable example of this is in building permits, where nearly 60% of the budgeted revenue for the year has been collected through only five fiscal periods. These results will allow us to still come in at the budgeted tax levy for this fiscal year even after an additional appropriation for the LFD. However, logistically, the vote must take place prior to the setting of the tax rate and is an immediate priority for legislative action.

Please do not let me know if you have any questions.



Eileen M. Donoghue
City Manager

November 20, 2019

Mayor William J. Samaras
And
Members of the Lowell City Council

Dear Mayor Samaras and Members of the Lowell City Council,

I am hereby requesting that the City Council approve a supplemental appropriation for the Lowell Fire Department in the amount of \$800,000. The purpose of this additional funding is to provide for the immediate hiring of seven new fire recruits to bring the fire personnel staffing number back up to 213.

Public safety is one of the key priority areas for both the City Council and my Administration and fire protection serves as an integral component of the strategy to ensure the safety of Lowell's residents. It is critical to keep our staffing number at 213 in order to maintain a policy of closing one company on some shifts, and no companies on other shifts, as well as closing one command car on some shifts, and closing none on other shifts. This vote by the Council will provide for the adequate budgetary flexibility for the Fire Department to continue the best practice of closing no more than one company on any shift.

Furthermore, my finance department has worked closely with the Fire Chief to execute a plan to continue this practice of minimum company closings while maintaining the tax levy included in the FY2020 budget, approved by the City Council. I am pleased to report that this appropriation will accomplish that objective and place no additional burden on the FY2020 tax levy. A memorandum from the Chief Financial Officer is enclosed which provides additional details.

Please do not hesitate to let me know if there are any questions.

Sincerely,

Eileen M. Donoghue
City Manager

Cc: Conor Baldwin, Chief Financial Officer
Jeff Winward, Fire Chief