



Conor Baldwin
Chief Financial Officer

MEMORANDUM

TO: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*
FROM: Conor Baldwin, Chief Financial Officer *[Signature]*
CC: Mary Callery, HR Director
R. Eric Slagle, Director of Development Services
Kerran Vigroux, Director of Health & Human Services
DATE: October 17, 2018

SUBJECT: MOTION RESPONSE: 4/24/2018 – C. Elliott - City Council Discuss Setting Up Syringe Disposal Response Unit and Provide Training for Additional Employees.

Over the course of this past summer, department heads from health and human services, development services, finance, police, and HR have worked with the city's emergency service provider, Trinity EMS, to develop a protocol for addressing the proliferation of syringes disposed of in city parks and other areas within public space. Previous initiatives either contemplated by the city or implemented in part have proved to be either insufficient to address the ever-expanding scale of the problem or too cost prohibitive to be sustainable from within the budget. Fortunately, through continuous dialogue with the city's partners at Trinity and various state agencies, the working group has devised a long-term strategy to address the issue.

The action plan consists of a multi-tiered approach to response. First and foremost, residents and businesses in Lowell are encouraged to notify the Administration of any instances of syringes found on public property by contacting the city either via the official city website at: <http://www.lowellma.gov/forms.aspx?fid=195> or by calling the Lowell Police non-emergency phone number at 978-937-3200. These requests will be logged and assigned, appropriately. The Administration depends on our residents to "see something, say something," but to let city officials manage the problem so as not to endanger their health or well-being. Residents should not attempt to pick up the needles themselves.

For collection of sharps where the total volume is relatively minor, the city will contact Trinity EMS to conduct the pick-up activities. Trinity EMS has been an invaluable partner in working with the city as the Administration has established the capacity to address many of these issues, internally. For sites where the amount of hypodermic needles is excessive, residents are encouraged to notify the city by utilizing the same methods mentioned above (by phone or via the website), but the request will be assessed by Development Services and a determination will be made as to the proper method of clean-up.



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At the end of the last fiscal year, the City Council established an ordinance to create a revolving account for the maintenance of city property. This revolving account, whose revenues are outside of the levy and have no impact on taxes, will serve as the funding source for a competitively bid contract for clean-up services. By retaining a qualified company to provide clean-up services, the city can expedite the response to larger scale sites without burdening the current year's budget.

The aforementioned components of the plan are reactive in nature, but will address the significant number of service requests which come in to city hall. In order to be proactive, the Administration is proposing the creation of a new, full-time position to oversee the syringe collection program, within the substance abuse and prevention division of the health and human services department. The syringe collection program coordinator will be responsible for coordinating the City of Lowell's efforts to address syringe collection throughout the city, as well as engage in community education regarding safe syringe access and disposal. This staff member will be properly trained and vaccinated and will be tasked with the collection of discarded syringes throughout the city's public areas. They will also build relationships with community organizations to identify and coordinate educational activities surrounding safe syringe exchange programs.

While the city continues to face many fiscal challenges, addressing the opioid epidemic is a priority of the City Council and the Administration and the burden of funding the solution to this issue is falling increasingly on cities and towns in the Commonwealth. This position is critical in nature to protect public safety and the working group and the funding plan is revenue neutral for FY2019. Due to several vacancies in school nurse positions within the department, this part-time position can be funded within the existing budget and without any additional appropriations. The relative success of the position in addressing the issue will be evaluated when the Administration is compiling the FY2020 budget and, depending on the fiscal position of the city in the Spring, a determination will be made as to whether funding will continue into next year.

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