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Gary Christenson, Mayor

Tuesday, September 8, 2020

Honorable Malden City Council
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Dear Members of the City Council:

As you know, we submitted a budget in May that utilized the Governor's budget proposal as the baseline. With the House and Senate unable to engage in the typical budget process given COVID-19, we were left to make a judgment call in anticipating just how much would be cut from the Governor's proposal. As a result, we made an allowance for that number to be \$4.17 million.

Recently, we received word from the State House that in order to allow cities and towns to move forward with the FY2021 budget, they were committing to local aid funding (Chapter 70 and Unrestricted Local Aid) equal to that of FY2020. As it relates to the Governor's initial proposed budget for FY2021, this represents a cut of \$2.6 million. The Governor and Legislature will engage in continued budget talks later this year on items such as charter school reimbursement and circuit breaker reimbursement as they still remain up in the air.

It's likely that the state is waiting to see what plays out at the federal level regarding stimulus aid to Cities and States which will ultimately help guide them toward their final budget. Until then, we will continue to operate under the approved budget and credit our finance team for the early planning that prevents us from having to readjust with cuts to the Governor's initial budget.

You may also recall that back in February, we had submitted a proposed ordinance change related to our solid waste program. The Ordinance Committee began holding meetings to discuss the proposal. To recap, the proposal called for the following:

- Each qualifying resident will be provided two 35-Gallon "Official City" barrels, one for recycling and one for trash;

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- A move to a single stream recycling system; and
- The implementation of an optional 'trash tag' system, which would allow residents an alternative to the purchasing of blue bags.

While of course much uncertainty remains around the financial impact of COVID-19, this initiative is one that impacts the quality of life of many of our residents. As such, while the paper in ordinance remains an active paper, I am sending down an appropriation request to enable us to move forward with the ordering of the barrels. There is of course a lead time associated with the production of 32,000 barrels, and the need to negotiate the necessary changes to the JRM contract. But, an agreement on appropriating funding for the barrels will provide evidence of the consensus needed to move forward with those steps while the ordinance itself is vetted in committee.

Like you, I look forward to a COVID-19 free future. In the meantime, I'm hopeful that we can move forward on this important initiative despite the continued uncertainty.

Sincerely,



GARY CHRISTENSON

Mayor of Malden