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City to spend \$104K on consultants to bring in business

Additional help will aid Pillsbury

By Peter Francis pfrancis@eagletribune.com May 25, 2016

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HAVERHILL — At long last, Economic Development and Planning Director William Pillsbury will be getting some help in his quest to attract more business to the city and help its current crop of businesses expand.

The cavalry will be arriving in the form of a full-time economic development and part-time marketing consultant for 22 months to be brought to Haverhill through a collaboration between the city, the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative and the Greater Haverhill Foundation.

At a total cost of \$235,000 — \$104,000 of which will be paid by the city over the next two years — the city will be giving Pillsbury, who has effectively been a one-man show over the past few years, additional help to expand the business base, particularly companies that can complement the arrival of Harbor Place and UMass-Lowell later this year.

"It feels like Christmas to me," Pillsbury told the City Council on Tuesday night. "I'm very appreciative of the opportunity to have some more support and help."

He said for these two consultants to become a reality, the councilors must all support their inclusion in the budget for the 2017 fiscal year.

Council President John Michitson said while both he and Sally O'Rorke of the Greater Haverhill Foundation have run against Mayor James Fiorentini in the past, all three were on board with adding muscle to the economic development office.

"This is the way partnerships are supposed to work," Michitson said, adding that economic development brings jobs and reduces both poverty and property taxes.

O'Rorke said the foundation is accepting resumes and interviewing consultants to bring on board for 22 months. She added that she hopes to have two or three candidates ready for Fiorentini to interview by June.

Councilor Joseph Bevilacqua, who served as economic development director before then-Planning Director Pillsbury took over both duties, said economic development is a "savior of the city."

"Public-private partnerships like this are a model not just for the city, but for the state and beyond," Bevilacqua said. "It's a bargain we can't afford to pass up."

One after another, councilors spoke of the potential for Harbor Place to be an economic driver for the city in the near future, but it was Council Vice President Melinda Barrett who said the city needs to continue looking for more.

"Harbor Place is great, but we have to have that next thing on the burner," she said, before thanking Michitson for his "dogged determination" in getting Pillsbury more help.

While the council still has to formally include the two consultants in the next budget meeting Wednesday night, Pillsbury is hopeful it will and that his dream of additional help will become a reality.

"Our bench is getting deeper ... and we'll get to the World Series," he said with a smile.

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