

**2023 City Budget Workshop Minutes
November 15, 2022
6:00 P.M. Mechanicville Senior Citizen Building**

Mayor Butler opened the meeting at 6:02 and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Johnson stated he would be going through the major changes in the budget then would open the meeting up for public comment. He stated the good news is the tax rate would be going down a little under \$1.50. Commissioner Johnson noted the following changes in the budget

Revenue for General Fund:

Sales tax is increasing by \$95,000, which he stated is a number given to them by the County

A line was added for recycling as the City receives a check each month from Twin Bridges for recycling

Court Facility which is the City's contract with the State for Court

C.H.I.P.S is also a number given to the City and is up \$24,000

Federal Aid revenue is the City is taking \$20,000 from ARPA (COVID) money to help pay for repairs for the HVAC system at the Community Center

General Fund Expenditures

Commissioner Johnson made a note that phones went down in every department due to the new phone system.

Civil Service Commission, additional services went up, increased the budget to adjust to the pay for monitoring exams was increased

Engineering Services, contracted services went up \$10,000 based on prior year history

Public works, in the past nothing was budgeted for the building repairs and maintenance so if there was ever a repair there it put the City over budget so they added \$5000 this year. He added it is not for the garage part of the building, it is the office part of the building.

Operations & Maintenance of Public Buildings, under contracted services a contract was signed with Mike Rioux to service the heating and HVAC systems yearly

Police Department, decrease for \$16,000 under OIC because they gave up the OIC pay in the contract to give increases in other areas. There is a \$10,000 increase in fuel due to the fact that fuel prices keep increasing

Fire Department, equipment went up \$10,000 and contracted services went down \$10,000 which was a recommendation from the Chiefs when they met.

Animal Control, personnel service decreased because they will be paying on a per call basis as opposed to getting paid every other week

Safety Inspection, there is a \$6500 increase in software and licensing which is for a software program the new Building Inspector is getting

Highway Administration, equipment was increased \$25,000 to keep the DPW fleet up to what they need to get the jobs done

Garbage Collection is increased by \$40,000 to accommodate the \$80 a ton that is being charged which is still roughly \$23,000 less than budgeted in 2020

Community Beautification increased \$31,000 is due to the fact the City gets money every year from the landfill from the County which has never been budgeted for and amendments needed to be done

Home and Community, contribution to the Community Center is an increase of \$20,000 for the HVAC system

Water Fund Revenues

Water Fund Revenues increased \$40,000 to keep the water rates the same

Source Supply & Pump, increase of \$50,000 under Saratoga County Water per contract

Sewer Expenditures

Repairs & Maintenance, \$12,000 increase based off previous history

Commissioner Johnson asked if any of the Commissioners had questions, none of the Commissioners had any questions. Commissioner Johnson opened the floor for questions.

Kim Dunn asked if the ACO would need to be handing in a log to be paid.

Commissioner Johnson stated they would have to hand in a log of their calls and will be paid when they hand them in.

Kim Dunn asked if they would be paid as a contractor or an employee?

Commissioner Johnson stated they will be getting a 1099 at the end of the year.

Kim Dunn asked what the justification was for an employee in the Accounts Office getting a 12% raise when everyone else was getting a 2.25% raise.

Commissioner Seber stated the position warrants a raise and he doesn't think it is enough.

Kim Dunn asked Commissioner Johnson if someone needs to justify a raise like that or does, he just gives it.

Commissioner Seber stated he had many conversations with Commissioner Johnson about it.

Kim Dunn asked if there was a request process to get above the 2.25% raise.

Commissioner Johnson stated they had many conversations in reference to it.

Commissioner Seber stated he requested more and it was a negotiation.

Commissioner Johnson stated it is similar to when he meets with any of the Commissioners when they come to him looking for increases, there is not written justifications for any of them.

Kim Dunn stated she is appalled that Commissioner Seber is not embarrassed that he wants more.

Commissioner Seber stated not only does he think the employee does a great job and the information that needs to be known in that position is much more than other places.

Kim Dunn stated she thinks there needs to be a process.

Commissioner Seber stated there was a process, he thought a position in his office should get more than a 2.25% raise, he went to the Finance Commissioner, they had several conversations, he mentioned it to the Mayor and they had a few conversations, and they came up with a number.

Mayor Butler stated he can ask for a 20% raise but the Council would need to vote on it.

Kim Dunn stated they setting up a situation that started last year and continue it.

Commissioner Seber stated this is more transparent than last year.

Kim Dunn disagreed and stated they only have a public budget workshop because they have to, they roll everything out last minute, questions are asked and they don't really care what is being asked or how the public feels, they will have a public hearing the day the budget is being adopted, and it won't matter. She suggested they at least try and act like they care. She told Commissioner Johnson he is the gatekeeper and the buck stops with him.

Commissioner Johnson stated he thinks he is doing a decent job.

Mayor Butler stated he does not know who warrants the 13% decrease but seeing your taxes going down 13% is a good thing.

Kim Dunn stated he is comparing apples and oranges and everyone knows the City received a lot more sales tax revenue from the County than anticipated.

Mayor Butler stated they could have kept the tax rate the same and built a surplus but Commissioner Johnson chose to use it to lower the budget.

Tom Mahoney stated that since the asset value in the City increased from \$250 million to \$300 million there will still be an increase in the amount of taxes people would be paying.

Commissioner Seber stated that some will and some won't.

Tom Mahoney stated the assessments have grown and asked why the tax levy is going up.

Commissioner Seber stated with the update on the assessment some people will increase and other decrease.

Tom Mahoney stated the general assessment for the City has increased 20%.

Commissioner Seber stated the tax levy went up \$96,000 based on \$2.8 million

Tom Mahoney stated the point is they are raising taxes, the tax levy is increasing and asked that is there is a \$3 million dollar surplus why increase it at all.

Commissioner Seber stated the fund balance was increased which comes out of the unappropriated fund balance by \$112,000 to keep the taxes down.

Commissioner Johnson stated that if the budget holds true, they will be using \$500,000 from that and you don't want to use the entire surplus in one year.

Commissioner Seber stated he was on the Council about ten (10) years ago when they ran out of fund balance and taxes needed to be raised 18% and added you need to be careful with fund balance and also need to keep a rainy-day balance in case something catastrophic occurs.

Tom Mahoney asked what the fund balance is for.

Commissioner Seber stated to keep taxes down on an annual basis.

Tom Mahoney asked how it keeps taxes down.

Commissioner Seber stated that if we didn't have the \$500,000 appropriated in the fund balance your taxes would go up.

Tom Mahoney stated that homeowners will be paying more in taxes than they did last, which brings him back to his question of why not use the fund balance to off-set this.

Barb McGuire asked if the clerk in the Accounts Office would be taking on any more jobs warranting the \$6000 or 12% raise.

Commissioner Seber stated she was not.

Barb McGuire stated the clerk is not even a notary so she doesn't understand why he considers her to be superior to warrant this kind of raise.

Commissioner Seber stated he considers the position and how it relates to other positions in the City, he feels that position deserves more money.

Barb McGuire asked if his clerk worked six (6) hours a day.

Commissioner Seber stated she works seven and a half (7 ½) hours a day, she works 8:30am – 4:00pm with a half (½) hour for lunch.

Barb McGuire asked why she is working when no one else is.

Commissioner Seber stated she opens the office and people come in.

Barb McGuire stated she thought City Hall was open 9am-4pm.

Commissioner Seber stated that is what is mandated but they open at 8:30am.

Barb McGuire asked why the previous clerk didn't work those hours.

Commissioner Seber stated the previous clerk was on salary. He added they have made some changes in different salary structures within in the City and he supported every one of them, and he felt in relation to what others are making and the knowledge that position requires it warrants more money.

Barb McGuire stated the Building Inspector is not working any more hours than the previous one, and is not on call, doesn't supervise anyone yet makes more than the DPW Commissioner who is on call twenty-four (24) hours a day and supervises a crew.

Mayor Butler stated he is on call if needed and knows of two (2) times the previous Officer was called in on water breaks. He added that he needs to attend Zoning/planning meetings.

Barb McGuire stated the DPW Commissioner needs to attend Council meetings.

Commissioner Seber stated he feels he is under paid also.

Mayor Butler stated as he is sitting in the DPW Commissioner role it is under paid.

Barb McGuire stated they should take into consideration to raise the DPW Commissioner pay.

Mayor Butler stated that with the Charter Review Committee no one knows where we are going to be in a year. He added he thinks as a City Government, with a small population with a lot of needs they are all doing the best they can.

Barb McGuire stated she is not saying that they are not.

Mayor Butler stated it was the inferences.

Commissioner Johnson added it is not a \$6000 raise, although the number look that why, in the past there was always a dollar value with part-time positions is adding on 2.25% to the dollar amount, but the position is allowed twenty-four (24) hours a week this year he took the twenty-four hours and multiplied it by the new rate. It was just him fixing formulas.

Commissioner Hosley stated he may have contributed to this as he hired two (2) people last year, one of the clerks was under minimum wage and he brought the two (2) new hires to something comparable as you get \$17 an hour to work at McDonald's or \$18 an hour to work at Subway and we were hiring someone to work for the City at \$12. He added you will never get anybody to work here. He added he gave them what he thought was a fair starting point and now you come to the Accounts clerk who has been there a few years and she should probably be paid more than the people he hired.

Barb McGuire questioned 12%.

Commissioner Hosley stated you could say it was lacking in previous years, and probably should of received more last year.

Mayor Butler adjourned the meeting at 6:38.

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

