

**MINUTES
ST. CLAIR SHORES CITY COUNCIL BUDGET HEARING
MONDAY, APRIL 29, 2019**

City Council Budget Hearing, held in the Council Chambers, located at 27600 Jefferson Avenue, St. Clair Shores, Michigan.

Present: Mayor Kip Walby, Council Members Peter Accica, John Caron, Ronald Frederick, Peter Rubino, Chris Vitale and Candice Rusie (arrived at 6:20 pm)

Also Present: City Manager Michael Smith, Assistant City Manager Bill Gambill, City Clerk Mary Kotowski, Directors Henry Bowman, Doug Haag, Mary Jane D'Herde, Greg Corless and Chris Rayes, Controller Laura Stowell, Chief Judge Mark Fratarcangeli, Court Administrator Andrea Strassburg, Fire Chief James Piper, Police Chief Todd Woodcox, Deputy Police Chief Tony Pietrzak, Parks and Athletics Manager Tom Mehl, Aquatics Supervisor Nick Damm, Senior Activities Center Coordinator Carly Podzikowski, Golf Course Manager Robert Spinazzola, Golf Superintendent Sal Sulolli and City Attorney Robert Ihrie

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Walby called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

GENERAL FUND REVENUES

Mr. Smith gave a brief overview of the budget and said that there are no general employee wage increases reflected in this budget, as all contracts expire this year. Police and Fire wages are included in their own budgets.

Mr. Haag discussed a .02% decrease in the city's overall millage rates and how it would affect average homeowners in the city.

Mr. Caron asked if permit revenues had returned to where they were three years ago before the increase from the independent living facility and skilled nursing facility. Mr. Smith said that they had returned to where they used to be, but the city is hoping to get a slight permit revenue increase from the new Kroger development, however, they did not put a figure in the budget because the city has not seen plans for the Kroger yet.

Mr. Haag explained that the Community Development Block Grant budget has been restored and they are going to use those funds to make the Senior Center renovation loan payments.

Mr. Caron questioned the issue of ambulance revenues lagging behind from the Fire department. Mr. Haag said there is always a lag in those revenues and that they will go over the third quarter budget numbers to make sure they are on track.

COURT

Andrea Strassburg, Court Administrator, said that the court is getting close to converting to e-filing, which would give defendants the opportunity to file court documents online. The court is also preparing to do a large retention project to keep in compliance with record retention schedules set by the State.

Councilwoman Candice Rusie arrived at 6:20 pm

Mr. Smith spoke about the Michigan Indigent Defense Commission (MIDC) legislation and thanked everyone involved in implementing the legislation at the 40th District Court. He stated that there is more coming to council in the future that they will need to act on in regards to the MIDC.

Chief Judge Mark Fratarcangeli stated that transitioning how the Michigan Indigent Defense Commission is funded and implemented in local jurisdictions will be a lot of work and high costs up front, but would benefit the city in the long run.

Mr. Caron asked about the price of the court's computer server and wanted to know if it qualified to be from the building fund instead of the general fund. Mr. Smith said they would take a look at the rules for determining which fund the server costs belong in and get back to council.

Ms. Rusie complimented the court staff for their high ratings and positive feedback received from court surveys distributed to patrons at the court.

FIRE

Mr. Smith explained that there was an error in calculating the budget for Fire Inspector wages. The wage and fringes were calculated based on a 54-hour work week instead of a 40-hour work week. The total corrected budget for wages and fringes was \$57,393 less than the original proposed budget posted to the web.

FIRE (cont'd)

James Piper, Fire Chief, said that the Fire Department is asking in this budget to make the Fire Inspector position permanent going forward. The Fire Inspector position could reduce the overtime budget in the long run because scene investigation would become more efficient.

Mr. Rubino would like to see an itemized breakdown of the actual cost of the permanent position for the Fire Inspector, including overtime. Mr. Smith said they would get those numbers before the budget is brought to council for approval in June.

Mr. Rubino wanted clarification on how fire incident numbers are determined. Chief Piper clarified that every call for service, no matter the number of patients involved, is considered one incident.

Mr. Rubino inquired whether or not the Fire Department would apply for Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response Grant (SAFER) money to increase staffing in the department. Chief Piper responded that they are preparing themselves to be able to apply to those grants once they are posted and available for application.

Mayor Walby wanted to know how the Fire Inspector would be chosen if council approves the budget for the permanent position. Chief Piper stated that it is a tested position within the current Fire Department personnel and that use the tested score added to points earned from a points system based on experience and seniority to determine the final score for eligibility rankings.

Ms. Rusie stated she would like more information on the justification of the Fire Inspector position becoming full-time before she feels comfortable approving a budget with that position's wage included in it. Mr. Smith said they would be happy to provide council with the information they need to make a more informed decision.

Mr. Caron wanted to know why the department needs to budget overtime for current firefighters instead of hiring additional firefighters to help carry the work load. Chief Piper stated that he would gladly accept new firefighters if council approves the personnel budget in the future because there is enough work for them all.

Mayor Walby recommended a budget study session for future Fire Department positions.

Mr. Frederick asked how many inspections are being done by the current temporary Fire Inspector. Chief Piper said the inspector is performing an extra 400-500 inspections per year than were previously able to be done.

Mr. Frederick asked based on national staffing standards if the city is up to standards on staffing. Chief Piper said they are below every metric for staffing requirements based on the population of our city.

POLICE & DLEF

Todd Woodcox, Chief of Police, said that the newest item in the budget is the in-car camera systems. The system costs around \$160,000 to replace, including replacing the main server. He said that the department is currently over-budget for overtime because they are currently understaffed, but would be swearing-in two new officers next week.

Mr. Caron asked if the new in-car camera systems would be an upgrade in technology. Chief Woodcox said they would be an upgrade and he provided a brief overview of the technological upgrades the new system would offer, including higher resolution and wider camera angles.

Mr. Caron asked if the number in the IT budget included the in-car printers for police vehicles. Mr. Smith stated there is not a need for the printers until fiscal year 2020-2021 and the number was included as a more proactive measure by Chief Woodcox.

Mr. Frederick commented that he knows car companies are now pre-installing car cameras that take video of the exterior of vehicles and would like to see if there would be an option to purchase police vehicles with that included in the future. Chief Woodcox said his only apprehension with that technology is that it is more of a computer-generated image rather than real-time images from the current systems, which are better to use as evidence in court proceedings.

Mr. Frederick asked why the County of Macomb Enforcement Team (COMET) grant is not included in the Police budget. Chief Woodcox stated that they had pulled their officer from the program because they were needed on the road and that COMET was not producing the work that they would want the unit to be producing with one of their officers there instead of in the city. Chief Woodcox added that COMET was also no longer reimbursing cities for participating in the program.

Mr. Rubino stated that residents have inquired about online interactive crime maps being created in the city. Chief Woodcox said he would like to discuss that more with the City Manager or small groups of council before responding.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Chris Rayes, Community Development Director, stated that the budget is about the same as last year's budget except for the sidewalk program being omitted in this budget. The department has been busy with home renovations and resident projects. They will be presenting the budget for streets at the next council meeting.

Ms. Rusie asked if the department is back to Saturday Code Enforcement because of many resident complaints on the weekends when inspectors are not out patrolling on the roads. Mr. Rayes said that they have not done that yet, but if council sees the need for it, the department is willing to modify their shift hours to include Saturdays.

Mr. Vitale mentioned that someone put signs on telephone poles on a large stretch of Greater Mack and wanted to what the City's realm of capability is as far as making the poster of the signs take them down or write tickets to the poster. Mr. Rayes said that has done both of those things in the past and could find out the most cost-effective way to remove signs or penalize the poster instead of making city inspectors take down the signs.

Mr. Vitale asked about hiring a rental inspector for the city and also increasing penalties for landlords who are renting out unlicensed rental properties. Mr. Smith said they would get data on that and get back to him.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Mr. Caron wanted to know why that the capital outlay line in this budget was different that on page 75. Mr. Smith requested a new spreadsheet showing all calculations from Mr. Haag to be given to Council to explain the budget and how the numbers were calculated.

Ms. Rusie asked about the city website being updated to include the option to purchase items like garbage carts through the web. Mr. Corless said they've been working on it and it's a goal for the department, but it's delayed as the logistics of the transaction are a large undertaking to coordinate the transaction with processing, the transfer of information to DPW and the delivery of the carts to the residents.

CITY CLERK/ELECTIONS

Mary Kotowski, City Clerk, discussed the large record retention project that was undertaken recently, including scanning historical permanent records into the city's Laserfiche server and a citywide shred where over 400 boxes of records that had exceeded retention were shredded. The Clerk's Office is in a 5-election cycle as of Monday, with City Elections this year straight through November 2020.

Ms. Rusie asked if historic record retention items, such as minutes, could become searchable in an online archive and be available to the public. Ms. Kotowski explained that doing something like that would be a large labor-intensive project and it would slow the city server down immensely having that many records available online.

Mr. Smith noted that minutes on the city website are not removed and that the archive is continuing to grow.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mary Jane D'Herde, Communications Director, overviewed the Digital Marketing budget that covers ads in print and on social media. The Communications Department has three main goals: to educate residents about events in the city, encourage residents to attend those events and to attract young families to move into the city. This new budget category is going to fund those three goals to hopefully generate additional revenue to the city.

Mr. Frederick thanked the Communication Commission, city staff and Ms. D'Herde for all of their hard work on this new marketing initiative and the excellent job on the City Calendar.

Mr. Vitale commended Ms. D'Herde for taking the initiative for running a digital marketing campaign outside of the city.

Mr. Caron asked if the digital marketing campaign will go out to bid with a list of requirements for ads. Ms. D'Herde stated that she, the Mayor and Becky Spada are going to a seminar focused on government marketing strategy and she will have more information after attending that seminar.

PARKS & RECREATION ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Caron wanted clarification of the largest need included in this budget. Henry Bowman, Parks and Recreation Director, replied that updating the office aesthetics and functionality, like installing new carpeting and cubicles, raises morale and productivity in the department.

Mr. Accica remarked that the asphalt on north side track in Memorial Park is falling apart and he would like to see it fixed.

PARKS & RECREATION ADMINISTRATION (cont'd)

Ms. Rusie asked how using social media has helped increase attendance for Parks and Recreation events. Mr. Bowman explained that the department has been and will be utilizing digital marketing in order to generate attendance in events. The department is planning on starting a Twitter and Instagram and utilizing Facebook more regularly. He highlighted a great success with generating around 1200 views on a Fire Department video on Facebook that advertised the Easter Egg Hunt.

Ms. Rusie stressed the importance of keeping these new social media pages up to date with new content regularly in order to keep residents informed, interested and active in city events. Mr. Bowman said that Rob Spinazzola does a great job keeping the golf pages updated and Carly Podzikowski does a great job keeping the Senior Center pages updated.

Ms. Rusie would like to have an update for how funds that were allocated in 2017 for the St. Gertrude ball fields had been used.

Mr. Frederick asked when the Recreation 360 TV show and other marketing strategies would begin. Mr. Bowman said it on the same timeline with the launch of Instagram, YouTube and Twitter pages.

RECREATION

Ms. Rusie would like to see focus on holding non-athletic events like chess tournaments, etc. at the parks and recreation department to appeal to families with young children who enjoy doing those types of indoor activities.

ARENA

Henry Bowman, Parks and Recreation Director, said that the budget includes funds to hire a new Arena Manager to supervise during the evening hours and to help run the Farmer's Market. He also said that upgrades to restrooms in the building will be done one at a time, beginning with a ladies' restroom.

Mr. Frederick noted that the ice rental hours are down. Mr. Bowman said there are plans to expand the arena's hours to include special events like, birthday parties, etc. and to start holding open skating hours to increase attendance and revenue.

Mr. Smith commended Marie and Brandon from the arena staff and all seasonal employees for a phenomenal job and said that they are integral to the success of all of the city's departments.

PARKS & KYTE MONROE

Henry Bowman, Parks and Recreation Director, highlighted the irrigation system project for Kyte Monroe that will make the park even more beautiful, as the main budgetary item this year.

Mr. Caron asked what the \$60,000 carryover for the playground category would be used for. Mr. Bowman stated that the carryover budget would be used for play structures for Gaffke Park and Kyte Monroe. Mr. Bowman wants to see all of the city parks updated, specifically Frederick and Walsh park, and there may be a good chance for the county to contribute funds to update those parks in the future.

Mr. Caron asked for clarification on the budget allocation for the purchase a large area rotary mower with 25% of the cost coming from Parks and Recreation and 75% from the Golf Course. Mr. Mehl said that they are planning on using the \$10,500 carryover from last year's budget to purchase it along with the new budgeted allocations from Parks and Recreation and the Golf Course.

Mr. Caron asked how the Brys Park walking track would be fixed. Mr. Bowman stated that it would be replaced section by section over the next five years or so.

Mr. Accica asked if they are planning on improving the Kyte Monroe Batting Cages. Mr. Bowman responded that the project is currently out for bid.

Mr. Rubino noted that there are still issues in the ground and fence maintenance around the Kyte Monroe baseball fields and he would like the issues to be addressed before approving this budget.

Mr. Caron would like the overtime numbers for Kyte Monroe and Parks to be corrected because they are the same amount for different number of employees. Mr. Caron would also like to see a 5-year plan to get Kyte Monroe and Parks and Recreation to be closer to breakeven instead of operating in a deficit.

Mr. Caron wants to see if the \$74,100 in HUD money could be allocated for the Kyte Monroe irrigation project in this current fiscal year.

Mr. Smith would like to move the Kyte Monroe irrigation project to the May 20th meeting instead of the May 6th meeting.

PARKS & KYTE MONROE (cont'd)

Mr. Frederick stated that he doesn't believe that there is a facility in southeastern Michigan that makes a lot of profit because he believes the purpose of Parks and Recreation departments are to attract families to cities. He said if the city wants to treat our facilities like a business, then he would like to see a larger concession stand with better products at Kyte Monroe in order to generate more revenue and even possibly build a second stand nearer to the other fields.

Mr. Mehl said that there are going to be baseline fences replaced on three fields at Kyte Monroe with the over \$10,000 raised from a fundraising tournament and they are replacing fences in other problem areas on the fields as the funds become available.

Ms. Rusie asked if the \$55,000 revenues for concessions and batting cages could be broken down into specific categories of revenue.

Mr. Caron wants data on what other cities are charging associations to rent out venue space similar to Kyte Monroe and Civic Arena in order to price our rentals at a similar level with other municipalities.

SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER

Carly Podzikowski, Senior Activities Center Coordinator, stated that there are over 2,000 active members at the Senior Center and that the fitness center has been very busy.

Ms. Podzikowski said there is a project in development to install a patio between the bocce ball courts and the building. The dimensions would be 45 feet long by the width of the existing building.

Mr. Bowman wanted to commend Brandon Abel for his hard work on the patio project at the Senior Center.

Ms. Rusie wanted to know if there are going to be membership fee increases and if membership revenues had actually decreased as stated in the budget or if this was conservative estimate. Ms. Podzikowski said there are no current plans to increase membership fees and that the revenues listed in the budget are a conservative estimate.

Mr. Caron would like to know why the membership revenue estimate did not include at least the estimated revenue if the current 2,000 members renew their memberships. Mr. Smith said that they are trying to keep the budget conservative to meet HUD requirements for funding.

BOATING

Henry Bowman, Parks and Recreation Director, stated that Blossom Heath is at 82% occupied in the marina and Lac Ste Claire marina is at almost 70% rented capacity. He also stated that the Police boat is ready to go out once they get a good first weather day.

Mr. Vitale said a friend uses our cities marinas and has nothing but positive things to say about our marinas. He noticed that there are debris in boating lanes near the fishing pier and wanted to know if there is a plan to remove them. Mr. Smith said that that is all included in part of a DNR permit application process.

Mr. Caron noted that Blossom Heath water levels are very high and near the bottom of docks they just put in and would like to know if the city can raise the docks to prevent them from submerging. Mr. Smith said there are adjustable holes in the posts on certain docks and they can be raised, and are being raised, but not all of the docks can be raised at once because it's a time-consuming project.

Mr. Accica expressed thanks to the Blossom Heath Marina staff on behalf of residents for making phone calls to slip owners when issues arose so boat owners could take care of issues as they occurred.

Mr. Smith thanked Nicholas Damm, Aquatics Supervisor, for working so hard to sell slips in the marina and get the capacity as high as it currently is.

POOL

Henry Bowman, Parks and Recreation Director, explained the \$26,280 deficit in the membership revenue estimate is due to complimentary family memberships issued to slip owners as a bonus for owning a slip in city harbors and complimentary passes issued to the Special Needs and Playground programs. Part of marina revenue will be allocated to pool revenues to reflect this revenue.

Mr. Vitale wanted to know more about the water slide rehab and AquaSol modules mentioned in the budget. Mr. Damm explained that the AquaSol is a chlorine feeder and pump that can alert those with the app on their phone when chlorine levels in the pool are off in real-time to fix those issues.

POOL (cont'd)

Mr. Vitale wanted to know why water slide replacements are in this budget when last year they approved funds to replace the water slide supports.

Mr. Smith said that the funds they put into the supports last year was a short-term fix because the structure was good, but HRC said they found other structural issues with the tower that need to be addressed in the future.

GOLF

Mayor Walby asked about rounds sales, staffing and membership levels. Mr. Spinazzola stated that rounds were down about 1,000 overall due to a wet spring season, but said that memberships are slightly up overall and their staffing is at a great level.

Mr. Frederick noted that capital outlay, building, roof, exterior and maintenance are not included in the budget. He was surprised by this because he sees a need for renovations at the golf course. Mr. Smith said they did not have a number and did not want to put a placeholder number in there because HRC still needs to identify issues that need to be addressed.

Mr. Rubino pointed out that under Repairs and Maintenance, the water tower removal is budgeted at \$40,000. He thought that number was too low considering the budgeted number in the past to just paint the tower. Mr. Smith said that number was an estimate based on actual quotes received from contractors and it needs to be included in the budget to be bid out for painting or removal in the next fiscal year.

Ms. Rusie stated that she is glad that the water tower is included in this budget and that she would be in favor of removal versus painting the tower.

Mr. Vitale asked if the company painting the water tank at 10 Mile and Harper could be asked for a quote for painting the golf course water tower instead of removal. Mr. Smith said that the city will bid out both the removal and painting for the tower and get back to council.

Mr. Caron asked about the numbers behind the budget for the purchase of the large rotary mower. Mr. Sulolli stated that the company used previously for equipment, Jacobsen, no longer has representations in Michigan, so they would use carryover funds from last year when they did not purchase a mower, in addition with new budgeted funds to purchase a new, smaller mower, either from Toro or John Deere companies.

Mr. Smith said the new mower would be put out to bid or consortium bids before bringing the purchase to council.

Ms. Rusie stated that looking at a previous meeting's minutes in August 2013, the amount to remove the water tower was \$28,000 and around \$80,000 to paint it.

COUNCIL

Mr. Caron noted that if the county goes forward with the 911 surcharge on cell phone bills, there would be a benefit back to SERESA. He asked if there would be a discussion within SERESA on how those funds would be spent and if there would be reductions to everyone's contributions. Mr. Smith said that as Chairman of SERESA that if the surcharge goes through at the county level, there will be a reduction to all participating communities.

Mayor Walby proposed a study session for the Fire Inspector position's budget to be held at a later date.

2. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION - None

3. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Council Member Frederick, seconded by Council Member Caron to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

Ayes: All - 7

KIP C. WALBY
Mayor

MARY A. KOTOWSKI
City Clerk

(THE PRECEDING MINUTES ARE A SYNOPSIS OF A CITY COUNCIL MEETING AND DO NOT REPRESENT A VERBATIM RECORD.)