

REGULAR MEETING PUBLIC SERVICE COMMITTEE of June 8, 2022

Meeting of the Public Service Committee was held in the office of the DPW, 50 Manca Drive at 3:00 PM on June 8, 2022.

Members Present: Councilor James M. Walsh, Chairman; Councilor Alek Dernalowicz
Councilor George C. Tyros attended via conference call

Attendees: Mayor Michael J. Nicholson; Dane E. Arnold, DPW Director; Rob Oliva, City Engineer; Trevor Beauregard, Community Development & Planning Director; Daniel Forte, Athletic/Recreation Director.

CALL TO ORDER

Councilor James M. Walsh called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm. Indicates Councilor George C. Tyros will be attending meeting via conference call.

OPEN MEETING RECORDING

ANNOUNCEMENT – any person may make a video or audio recording of an open session of a meeting, or may transmit the meeting through any medium, subject to reasonable requirements of the chair as to the number, placement and operation of equipment used so as not to interfere with the conduct of the meeting. Any person intending to make such recording shall notify the chair forthwith. All documents referenced or used during the meeting must be submitted in duplicate to Secretary of the Committee, pursuant to the Open Meeting and Public Records Law. All documents shall become part of the official record of the meeting.

REVIEW OF BUDGET WITH DEPARTMENT HEADS

Review of Conservation budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Indicates proposed 2% cost of living increase adjustment for non-union employees (salaries are split ½ planning board, ½ conservation commission), notes department budget remains flat lined from previous year budget.

Trevor Beauregard, Conservation & Planning Director joins meeting, notes budget is level funded other than adjustment to salaries.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended, no questions.

Review of Survey budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Indicates survey budget is within the City Engineer Department. Budget includes 2% cost of living increase for non-union employees (dept. has no union employees). Two employees, salaries are split, survey/water/sewer. Budget is level with previous year.

Rob Oliva, City Engineer, concurs, budget is level funded.

Councilor James Walsh, raises question, requests explanations of line items 533, Information Technology, Line item 538, Professional Services and line item 542, EPA NPDES. Explanation from both Mayor Mike Nicholson and Rob provided.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Review of Public Works Budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Mayor indicates 2% cost of living increases for the non-union employees & clerical staff union. The Gardner Public Works Employee Association also receives the 2% cost of living raise. A change in their steps was also implemented, however this increase will be covered by a hiring freeze agreed to by the union requiring no additional appropriation from the budget. Dane Arnold adds the hiring freeze is for 3 of the current 6 vacancies.

Councilor Alek Dernalowicz inquires on the line item 584, New Equipment regarding the negative balance reflected in 2023 budget proposal. Explanation provided by both Mayor Michael Nicholson and Dane Arnold.

Councilor George C. Tyros inquires of line item 573, Street Lighting, regarding the (intentional?) underfunding Mayor Michael Nicholson responds, noting currently working on reallocation of solar credits.

Dane Arnold, comments on items 564, Traffic Maintenance & 565, Parking Meter Maintenance. Indicating they are of the same bid. These line items have been level funded last 10 years at 40K & 20K. Recent “lowest” bid was at 30K, up from previous 18K to paint City streets. States costs are increasing, just as fuel costs, noting a request to council in the future is likely for additional funding. Councilor Alek Dernalowicz notes likely same for line item 573, Street Lighting.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of line item 564 Traffic Maintenance & 565 Parking Meter Maintenance. Dane Arnold, explains line items cover different parts of City. Question is also raised on funding spent in previous years & amount budgeted within line items. Explanation from Dane includes lack of paving due to construction projects & increases in paint costs.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of line item 568, Unaccepted Road Maintenance. Per City Solicitor, line item must be carried. At request of Councilor George C. Tyros, Dane Arnold provides examples of streets included. Councilor James Walsh proposes to cut line item by 4K.

Motion made by Councilor James Walsh, second by Councilor Alek Dernalowicz to propose 4K cut to line item 568, Unaccepted Road Maintenance. Unanimous roll call.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of line item 572, Tree Planting & line item 594, Encumbered Tree Planting. Dane Arnold explains lack of planting in past due to drought two years ago. Has not spent any of current budget. Could agree to cut of current 10K.

Motion made by Councilor James Walsh, second by Councilor Alek Dernalowicz to propose 10K cut to line item 578, Tree Planting. Unanimous roll call.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of line item 585, Building Rehab. Dane Arnold explains old Gardner Municipal Garage, 416 West Broadway is need of much repair. New roof, siding, electrical, etc.

Review of Airport Budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Mayor notes, due to change in management Position, 2% increase for cost of living not necessary. States line items are level funded, excluding increase in line item 615 Vehicle Supplies, increase due to need of new lawn mower.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of line item 608, Repairs & Maintenance. Mayor indicates increase due to repairs needed at Administrative Building on site. Indicates cutting of line item 608 by 6K would be acceptable and manageable.

Motion made by Councilor Alek Dernalowicz, second by Councilor George C. Tyros to propose 6K cut to line item 608, Repairs & Maintenance. Unanimous roll call.

Review of Youth Commission Budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Flatlined from previous, not active in previous four years but would like to start up again. Movies in the Park, etc.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Review of Recreation Budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Overseen by the Department of Public Works, playgrounds, Lighting around City for holiday season, celebrations, police details at food truck festivals, etc. Dane Arnold, also trying to encumber as much as possible to purchase/replace much needed equipment.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Review of Municipal Recreation Budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Department is overseen by Director Daniel Forte. Budget is flatlined from previous, outside of salary increases for July 2022. Most is coverage in the event of no volunteers. Expenses are increasing, example is camp enrollment, up to 274. Budget will be right to the dollar or seeking funds from City Council.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Review of Sewer Budget with Mayor Michael Nicholson. Mayor indicates 2% cost of living increases for the non-union employees & clerical staff union. The Gardner Public Works Employee Association also receives the 2% cost of living raise. A change in their steps was also implemented however as noted by Dane Arnold, no positions were cut as in DPW, far less staff in the Department. Addition of Business Manager position, split between water/sewer.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of line item 832, questions if overbudgeted? Explanation provided by Dane Arnold indicating sewer breaks, etc. can occur at any time. Councilor recommends cut of 5K from line item.

Motion made by Councilor Alek Dernalowicz, second by Councilor James Walsh to propose 5K cut to line item 832, Sewer Overtime. Unanimous roll call.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of line item 835, Working Out Of Grade. Questions if line item is over-budgeted? Explanation provided by Dane Arnold indicating line item is new to department. Department has the need for the funds, employees are entitled per Contract. Councilor Alek Dernalowicz recommends cut of 3K from line item.

Motion made by Councilor Alek Dernalowicz, second by Councilor George C. Tyros to propose 3K cut to line item 835, Sewer Working Out Of Grade. Unanimous roll call.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of line item 839, Repairs to Mains, questions need, upcoming expenses? Explanation provided by Dane Arnold indicating line item is needed, purchasing water meters, replace hydrants, leak detection, etc. Mayor reiterates per conversation with Business Manager, department is conducting a City-wide meter replacement. Dane Arnold, department has the need for the fund, deferred maintenance since start of Water Main Project.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of line item 845, Professional Travel, over-budgeted. Councilor Alek Dernalowicz recommends cut of 5K from line item.

Motion made by Councilor Alek Dernalowicz, second by Councilor James Walsh to propose 5K cut to line item 845, Professional Travel. Unanimous roll call.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of line item 846, Professional Services, over-budgeted. Dane Arnold, funds are needed for any requirements set forth by the State.

Public Service Committee, no changes recommended at this time.

Dane Arnold, comments on items 848, Chemicals, & line item 849, Vehicle Supplies, for Water & Sewer Dept., costs on the rise. Line Item 850, Contract Operations (water & sewer), contract with Veolia is 10 year, at year 4-5 now. Estimated increase for operations to be about 4% increase, look more like 8-8.5%. May need more funds.

Mayor notes, Line item 851, Indirect Costs Reimbursement, budgeted as coverage for Indirect costs of Health Insurance, other related benefits allocated to employees of sewer employees, as expended, it is then transferred to General Fund, Line Item 882, Sewer Transfer to general fund. Dane Arnold, also covers insurance costs for City Buildings and a portion City Financial Positions and a portion of the City Solicitor Salary. Also, vehicle insurance.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of line item 854, Facility Maintenance. Dane Arnold, provides explanation, funds for Capital Improvements provided by Veolia yearly. Lists of items in need of repair, replacement at the facilities. List is given, amount is budgeted. Also, any mandates set forth by the State. Councilor James Walsh requests copy of Capital Item list.

Review of Water Budget, Dane Arnold states mirror of the Sewer Department, same approach on salaries.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of Line Item 901, Working Out Of Grade, recommends cut of 3k as in sewer.

Motion made by Councilor Alek Dernalowicz, second by Councilor George C. Tyros to propose 3K cut to line item 901, Water Working Out Of Grade. Unanimous roll call.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of Line Item 907, New Equipment. Used to replace one vehicle a year, costs are high, example: Sweeper once costs 95K is now 300K.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of Line Item 909, Communications increased? Recommends cut of 5K.

Motion made by Councilor Alek Dernalowicz, second by Councilor George C. Tyros to propose 5K cut to line item 909, Communications. Unanimous roll call.

Councilor James Walsh, inquiry of Line Item 910, Telecommunications. Recommends cut of 7.5K.

Motion made by Councilor Alek Dernalowicz, second by Councilor George C. Tyros to propose 7.5K cut to line item 910, Telecommunications. Unanimous roll call.

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Motion to adjourn, Motion made by Councilor Alek Dernalowicz, second by Councilor George Tyros to adjourn the meeting at 4:35 PM. Roll Call vote: Councilor Alek Dernalowicz yes, Councilor George C. Tyros yes, Councilor James Walsh yes. Motion Passes.

Next meeting scheduled as needed.

All documents submitted at this meeting are stored in the office of the DPW, 50 Manca Drive, for any review.

Respectfully submitted:

Christine M. Harty, Administrative Assistant