



CITY OF WAUWATOSA

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BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, October 20, 2009

Committee Room #2

PRESENT: Alds. Ewerdt, Walsh, Krol, Jay, Organ, Berdan, Wilke, Donegan – 8

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor Didier; J. Archambo, City Admin.; R. Braier, Finance Dir.;
B. Aldana, Asst. City Atty./HR Dir.; W. Kappel, Public Works Dir.;
W. Wehrley, City Engineer; Chief D. Redman, Fire Dept.;
M. Loy, Health & Productivity Coor.; Cpt. D. Weiss, Police Dept.

Ald. Ewerdt as Chair called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Amendment to the proposed 2010 Budget to include an increase in the Fire Department overtime

Mr. Archambo reported to the committee that there is no correct answer to this request made by Ald. Wilke. The City Administrator noted that in the 2010 budget there are 12 rolling vacancy positions. This would consist of three vacancies each in the police and fire departments, city hall and public works. The effect on the fire department as Chief Redman has described is that this would necessitate a change in fire company configuration by reducing one ambulance company at fire station #2.

Mr. Archambo explained simply that the lack of hours related to the rolling vacancies causes the Quint apparatus to be used as backup to the paramedic unit, which would leave station #2 vacant when this happens. To rectify this, the Chief has suggested supplemental funds in the amount of \$64,450 to cover overtime costs.

Mr. Archambo said the issue is whether to increase the overtime sufficient for staffing at 2009 levels or not. Mr. Archambo said there is a difference of opinions. The Chief described that he would be willing to wait until the end of the first quarter of 2010 to see how the staff shortage works out before implanting any changes. Mr. Archambo said he didn't feel the city needs to add in the extra overtime. He felt that there are other ways the Chief could make this work.

The City Administrator reported on the incentive program encouraging employees to use their sick time only when necessary. He said that since this was implemented the police department for example, has seen a measure of success in reduced sick time. He noted that the fire department just recently settled their union contract so it would be hard to determine what their numbers might be. He used this as an example to point out different ways to handle staffing before ultimately shutting down an ambulance. A study will be underway in the fire department to see if there are any opportunities to maximize efficiencies.

Chief Redman advised the committee that he had received notice today of a retirement in his department which leaves him short a third person. These three open vacancies cover the departments rolling vacancy requirement. The Chief said as long as the committee is open to readdressing funding in the spring he is willing to wait until then to see how things go before making any changes. He noted his preferred method would be to work with the overtime funds in place.

Ald. Krol noted that he favors waiting until after the first quarter next year and felt the committee is open to providing additional funds in an emergency. He noted with the pandemic talks and spreading of flu it could affect staffing for critical services. He noted a letter received from the police and fire commissioner who had talked to many residents and none were in favor of cutting police and fire staff and they said to raise taxes if necessary instead.

Ald. Wilke reiterated that his intention for putting \$64,450 in overtime funds back into the budget is to maintain city services until the consultant's study can be completed. Ald. Wilke was concerned about how the lack of coverage would impact parts of the city and felt that \$64,450 was a small price to pay for this.

The committee discussed at length the staffing history of the fire department and the Chief answered questions regarding current staffing numbers per day. Ald. Donegan asked the Chief to find a way to keep sick time use minimal per the city incentive in their contract.

Moved by Ald. Wilke, seconded by Ald. Jay to increase the overtime budget by \$64,450 in order to maintain the same level of emergency services as in 2009, with available funding coming from the expenditure restraint fund -

Ayes: 1 Noes: 7 (Ewerdt, Walsh, Donegan, Krol, Jay, Organ, Berdan)

Discussion of request for concessions from city's collective bargaining units to reduce overall personnel costs

Mr. Archambo reported that there was a request for the city to look for concessions from the bargaining units regarding insurance premiums sufficient to offset the \$300,000 increase in levy. He noted that this is a discussion point, not a directive.

Ald. Jay said that the Tosa Taxpayer Alliance group reported that the average resident pays about 25% of their insurance cost and the employer pays the remainder. Ms. Aldana provided information that the average city employee pays about 2.8% of the cost and the city pays the remainder. She noted that through the city's Wellness Program there is incentive for employees to reduce their premium payments. Ald. Jay said she didn't think it would be asking too much for city employees to pay more for their insurance. She said a five percent increase would amount to \$318,000.

Ms. Aldana explained that the city in 2010 is in the third of final year of the union contracts. She said in September 2010 they will begin negotiations for the next contract. She said that there are five bargaining units that would have to be met with and asked for concessions to make a change. An ordinance change would have to be done for the non represented employees which could be done unilaterally.

Ald. Donegan agrees with the proposal. He thinks the benefit levels are embarrassing and regrets the contracts that were negotiated into. He didn't think we could budget for union concessions in such a short period of time. He thought that the city should seek more than an additional five percent increase in the next contract.

Mayor Didier said that there is a right time and place for negotiations. In lieu of the fact that the city just finished negotiating the fire contract and concessions were made to move in the right direction she felt a lot was accomplished. She suggested that council members get creative and forward any ideas they have as we enter into negotiations in 2010. The Mayor said great strides have been made and they are seeing benefits with the sick pay incentive and the wellness program. The city is realizing that with healthier employees claims are decreasing and that there has been early detection of illnesses which will save in the long run. She is not in favor of going to the unions for concessions.

Ald. Berdan said that the unions need to feel that the city bargained in good faith and to ask for concessions when the city is not in dire straits is not setting a good precedent.

Cpt. Weiss, Police Department felt that the city has been successful in the union concessions made regarding their health insurance benefits.

The committee discussed the matter further and concluded it is not the appropriate time to ask for concessions with bargaining discussions to start next fall. Ald. Jay questioned whether a resolution could be made at this time suggesting the city ask for a certain percentage from the union for health insurance premiums. Ms. Aldana said that this could be done but typically these discussions would start with Employee Relations committee in the spring.

Ald. Jay inquired whether funds could be taken out of the reserve to make a zero tax levy. Mr. Braier said it is possible, but it could affect the city's bond rating down the road. The rule of thumb is to keep ten percent of the operating budget in the surplus account. Mr. Braier noted that if all of the rolling vacancies don't occur those funds would fall back into this account.

Capital Improvements budget

The City Administrator gave a brief overview of the revisions made to the capital budget and decided to hold the item until the next Budget and Finance committee meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk
City of Wauwatosa

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