



CITY OF WAUWATOSA

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BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday September 14, 2011
Committee Room #1

PRESENT: Alds. Berdan, Causier, Donegan, Ewerdt, Hanson, McBride, Walsh, Wilson – 8

ALSO PRESENT: Mayor J. Didier; Alds. J. Roznowski, J. Wilke; J. Archambo, City Admin.; J. Ruggini, Finance Dir.; W. Porter, Pub. Works Dir.; Police Chief B. Weber; Police Capt. D. Weiss; Police Capt. J. Sutter; Fire Chief R. Ugaste; Dep. Chief S. Erke; Dep. Chief J. Case; Dep. Chief B. Lee; P. Enders, Econ. Devel. Dir.; A. Brown, Admin. Intern

Ald. Walsh as Chair called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Budget Overview

Mr. Archambo noted that the budget is unique this year because of decisions by the state and the economy. He stressed that the budget is the most important thing city leadership does. The budget has a \$2.6 million gap. During the executive budget meetings they tried to create a climate of teamwork. They are monitoring what is happening at the state and federal level. The assessed value is estimated because they won't know the true numbers until the October accounting.

Mr. Archambo pointed to the economy saying that it is in a very slow recovery, there may possibly be a double-dip recession. He was happy to say that the city is weathering the recession fairly well although inflation was up for the first half of the year.

Mr. Ruggini agreed saying that the budget they are presenting assumes a slow recovery. If that should change, the revenue numbers will reflect that.

Mr. Archambo commented that the state says that the tax levy may not change at all. The only way to grow it is by the level of net new construction. He mentioned that it is well known that there have been significant changes in collective bargaining. With regard to benefits, the HRA health plan has been a help. The two-tier pay system will help down the road. He stressed that there are no short term fixes; however they have tried to create sustainable changes. They put a lot of controls in this budget to help down the road.

Mr. Archambo went on to talk about the rest of the PowerPoint presentation a copy of which is attached. Some of the comments he added were that the average homeowner will see a 1.1% increase. The city property tax rate is estimated to increase 1.13%. That translates to \$141 per month for the average homeowner. If that is broken down further the average homeowner is paying \$43 per month for police and fire protection.

Mayor Didier expressed her gratitude for the addition of Mr. Ruggini as Finance Director. She noted that his input was a big help to her and to Mr. Archambo. She wanted to thank both the Finance Director and the City Administrator as well as the department heads for all their hard work. She also thanked Mr. Miner, the City Assessor and the City Clerk's Office for completing the Board of Review process for this year.

Ald. Donegan asked about the surprising increase in healthcare costs especially after the increase in employee contributions. Mr. Ruggini agreed there was a \$1.7 million increase in healthcare costs and also a one-time expenditure for garbage carts.

The committee recessed at 7:35 p.m. and reconvened at 7:45 p.m.

Police Department

Chief Weber agreed with Mr. Archambo that it has been a difficult budget. They needed to cut \$300,000. That affected one patrol position and one parking officer position. He stressed that for 2012 he was confident that his department will be able to provide effective police services.

Capt. Weiss noted that they were using a new company for ticket collections and they will help bring in more revenue.

Ald. Wilson commended the chief and the department for their efforts, but was concerned whether the police department could provide the same services with less. Chief Weber responded that the budget submitted is pretty conservative. He has concerns because the state Budget Repair Bill has helped the state budget, but not his police department budget. He stressed that in the next few years they will have to reduce their staff. As the staff downsizes, the services will downsize too. He was also concerned with public perception of government workers and how that perception affects the behavior of the public in a negative way toward municipal employees.

Ald. Donegan observed that there was a big reduction in overtime of \$25,000. Chief Weber added that overtime is driven by how many officers are out, shift changes, calls, court time, training, and report writing. Capt. Sutter that when they fall below minimum staffing levels that generates huge amounts of overtime. He noted that the brunt of overtime is for training.

Chief Weber stressed that government's first duty is to provide for the safety and security of its citizens. He stressed the need for trust between the staff and the elected officials. Ald. Walsh noted that on the east side of the city there are perceptions, because of certain incidents, that the crime rate is high. He asked from a budgetary or operational perspective what can be done. Chief Weber responded that they are looking into the data and have added extra officers. They are addressing the problems. It was noted by the committee that Officer Leist has done a good job in that area.

Moved by Ald. Ewerdt, seconded by Ald. Berdan to recommend approval of the police department budget as presented – 8

Moved by Ald. Donegan, seconded by Ald. Ewerdt to recommend approval of the police reserve budget – 8

The committee recessed at 8:21 p.m. and reconvened at 8:25 p.m.

Fire Department

Chief Ugaste commented that they have put a lot of time and effort into the budget and they are trying to be good partners with other departments. They have reduced one Deputy Chief position in anticipation of the retirement of Deputy Chief Carberry. He added that ambulance #2 is not staffed on a regular basis. In the last two years they will have reduced staffing of the Quint. They had 16 fire calls to date. He point out that staff will use their own vehicles for emergency response. The County Executive has talked about a \$200,000 reduction for their budget.

Ald. Donegan asked if the fire department can live with the budget if the \$200,000 doesn't come back. Chief Ugaste responded that he worked with Mr. Ruggini and Mr. Archambo and decided that they can operate with the budget as is. He added that if funding is going away, they are trying to find new ways for cooperative service.

Deputy Chief Erke commented that they have asked for approval of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would combine vacations together and try to reduce carryovers. He added that they are getting cooperation from the union.

With regard to ambulance transport revenue, Mr. Ruggini noted that the federal government says the city cannot collect for Medicare or Medicaid. Deputy Chief Case added that money is coming in from increased transport calls. Deputy Chief Erke commented that some of that transport revenue has been through good customer relations and advertising and marketing directed at larger medical facilities.

With regard to emergency response, Deputy Chief Erke noted that the chiefs have vehicles that they take home. When they are in the support capacity they have to stay home on call. They have additional vehicles for their civilian inspector. Chief Ugaste explained that the vehicle allowance replaces the duty vehicle.

Mayor Didier commented that Chief Ugaste has been remarkable in his relationships with his peers. The lines of communication have been open with the new chiefs. The asked for a chance and given that they have come up with an amazing budget and community outreach. Ald. Berdan added that because the chief delegates his authority and ownership, his deputy chiefs are flourishing. She commended all of them for that.

Deputy Chief Erke observed that Chief Ugaste has done a great job and their union has been a great partnership. The chief gave them a chance to come up with new ideas. Ald. Wilson agreed that the fire department took the initiative to address budget problems.

Ald. McBride commented about a newspaper article that described how different firefighting has become by emphasizing educating the public about fire safety. He asked if there has been a decrease in fire calls and an increase in EMT calls. Chief Ugaste agreed that most of the calls are EMT right now. All the personnel are EMTs. The Chief was an EMT, but that was dropped. Deputy Chief Erke noted that he didn't think that the number of fires will ever decrease because of the age of the structures in the city, but fatalities have decreased.

Deputy Chief Case noted the penalties and fines for false alarms; however, they are working on education to reduce the number of those calls.

Deputy Chief Erke commented that with mutual aid the city was called upon 64 times last year. Chief Ugaste noted that he is part of a team set up for responding to disasters.

Moved by Ald. Ewerdt, seconded by Ald. Hanson to recommend approval of the fire department budget as submitted – 8

Fire Equipment Reserve

Deputy Chief Case explained that the fire equipment reserve is unfunded. When they sell used vehicles they put the proceeds in this fund and use the money for other equipment purchases.

Deputy Chief Erke noted that they have planned for the replacement of an ambulance, and a Quint. If they have to they could purchase a less expensive engine instead of the Quint right now.

Chief Ugaste stressed that they would like to have a Quint, but they were told that they couldn't purchase it at this time so they can make do with an engine. He added that they would like to get another Quint in the future. Mr. Archambo acknowledged that the fire department has some big ticket needs. The Quint costs about \$1 million, the engine about \$650,000, and an ambulance about \$250,000.

Mr. Ruggini noted that all of the fire department requests were completely justified so they are trying to spread the purchases out over five years. He added that all of the stations are modified to accommodate the Quints. He also added that the other stations may need to be modified or rebuilt because of the age or condition of the facility.

Chief Ugaste praised the fire department saying that this is a great organization and the Committee's words of support mean a lot.

Moved by Ald. Donegan, seconded by Ald. McBride to recommend approval of the fire equipment reserve account – 8

The meeting adjourned at 9:47 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk
City of Wauwatosa

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