

JUNE 29, 2015 MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEES

4 p.m., Council Chamber, Finance members present: Brown, M. Hraban, Platteter. Personnel members present: Morgan, Pearson, Stoneberg. Others present: A. Christianson, K. Gorseger, K. Julien, L. Klink, C. Schultz, T. Verdegan.

Call to Order:

Mr. Brown called the meeting to order and served as Chair.

Police Officer Discussion:

The LPD is asking to create and fill a part time officer position at this time. It is understood that, by the time the position is filled, two officers off on work comp injuries are expected to be back. Although LPD costs have been in line with projections recent events are causing overtime to peak. Although Officer Jacob Schmit was just hired to replace departed officer Matt Bach, Dean Lihrman is off on work comp for 2-3 weeks following injuries incurred in a scuffle. Prior to that Officer Smuda was injured in a scuffle. He is facing at least 4 more weeks off.

Hiring a full time officer is not being advocated at this time as doing so would make the LPD ineligible to receive a COPS grant it has applied for. If that grant is awarded, which LPD should learn in September, it would presumably pay the following percentages of the cost of the position for three years:

Year One- 80%

Year Two- 55%

Year Three-20%

Comptroller Verdegan explained that because \$50,000 of 2015 budget for the LPD and \$25,000 of the 2015 budget for the PWD was taken from fund balance, the 2016 budget will not have those funds so will start with \$75,000 less revenue. To put the \$50,000 into the 2016 LPD budget would require eliminating a like amount elsewhere in the budget.

Mrs. Stoneberg stated that Officer safety is a high priority for her. Others concurred.

Comptroller Verdegan noted, in response to a question, that the only way to significantly increase budget revenues would be to raise taxes for the purpose of serving general purpose debt and apply monies currently budgeted for that purpose to other items. The 2015 general debt service amount is \$352,400.

2016 Budget:

Adm. Christianson noted that when the recession first started he was involved in a decision to reduce the street construction budget temporarily with the expectation it would be reinstated a couple years later. When the recession dragged on the same thing was done a couple more times until that line item, believed to have been the largest in the budget, was eliminated. Levy limits made it near impossible to reinstate such items. The one means of increasing the budget some each year that was available, increasing in accordance with the value of new construction, wasn't taken advantage of. Even though the City didn't increase its tax levy most years the public generally didn't see it that way because if the other taxing jurisdictions (school, county or VTAE district) increased people's tax bills didn't go down.

He went on to express concern over making decisions on budgetary increases at this time given some costs that might be incurred next year that have not been provided for previously, as follows:

*Possible razing of a dwelling in the 700 east block of Miner Ave., which was recently placarded as unfit

for human habitation.

*Upkeep of Pioneer Park if a service organization or volunteers aren't found to do so.

*Upkeep of a lot recently acquired near the Corbett Lake outlet.

Christianson also noted that Medford, which is about one quarter larger than Ladysmith, has an annual street work budget of near \$1.5 million. He stated that Ladysmith has about 32 miles of street and for simplicity of math we assume streets have a useful life of 32 years that suggests one mile of street be rebuilt every year. Clearly, we are not doing that at present, such that pavement failures are likely to exceed the ability to contend with them going forward.

Action:

Motion was made by Stoneberg, seconded by Pearson and carried by voice vote to recommend to the Council that the \$20,000 in the 2015 "contingency" line item be transferred to police wages and fringes to facilitate hiring a part time officer for the remainder of 2015.

Adjourn:

The meeting adjourned before 5:15 p.m.