

JOURNAL OF SPECIAL COMMISSION WORK SESSION
July 1, 2009

City Commission Work Session

Mayor Stebbins presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 1:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: City Commissioners present: Dona Stebbins, Bill Bronson, Mary Jolley and Bill Beecher. Also present were the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, City Attorney, Directors of Planning, Public Works, Community Development, Park and Recreation and Library, the Fiscal Services Administrative Assistant, Police Captain, Fire Chief and the City Clerk.

1. FOLLOW-UP TO MANAGER'S PROPOSED BUDGET PRESENTATION

City Manager Greg Doyon stated that this informal discussion was to follow-up his prior budget presentation and to answer any additional questions. He requested the Commissioners advise him today if anyone wanted him to go back to the drawing board on any part of the budget.

Commissioner Jolley commented that additional public input would be accepted at today's meeting.

Mr. Doyon continued that in March the Commission directed him to keep the budget lean. He reviewed the Commission's directives, and discussed the areas that were trimmed. One item that affected employees City-wide was that most out-of-state travel was cut. He also discussed subsidies from the general fund that support certain services.

Assistant City Manager Cheryl Patton reported that the budgets were cut to live within the 1.112% rate of inflation. On a positive note, there were no increases for health insurance premiums, no layoffs, no elimination of services, and the commitments to the bargaining units were honored. Additionally, \$11.9 million will be invested in infrastructure. Mr. Doyon added that compared to other communities, the City of Great Falls is doing better than most in these economic times.

Commissioner Jolley inquired about the City Manager's budget proposed increase and was informed that was due to Ms. Patton's retirement buyout. Commissioner Jolley asked why there were a lot of reserves for internal service charges and was informed that included the equipment revolving schedule, central garage fund, IT and health insurance.

Commissioner Jolley inquired about the personnel cost increase at the Recreation Center and was told that was due to the minimum wage increases, a full-time custodian and the increased personnel for day camps. Day camp revenue is at \$100,000 compared to \$30,000 in the past.

She also asked if the CALEA expense was a buyout for someone and if the cost for the Police Department K-9 also included humans that work with canines and was responded to affirmatively for both questions.

Commissioner Jolley asked why there was an increase in the water park fund and was told that was also driven by the minimum wage increase.

Commissioner Beecher asked if the deficit in the sanitation budget included the recycling center and was informed it was. He asked if rate increases were forthcoming to offset the deficit. Public Works Director Jim Rearden explained that the more the rates are raised, the less competitive the City would be. He added that he is trying to rectify recycling and would provide more information at the next work session. Commissioner Bronson asked how much the \$1.50 fee for recycling would produce. Mr. Rearden responded that it would add \$350,000. He concluded that he would also discuss what the money would be used for at the next work session. Mr. Doyon stated that if the Commission wanted him to pursue privatizing sanitation to let him know. There was no indication from the Commission to pursue that option.

Mayor Stebbins asked if the municipal band would be funded and was informed yes.

Commissioner Beecher inquired about the fitness equipment purchased for the Recreation Center. Park and Recreation Director Marty Basta advised that there has been an increase of use in the fitness area, and now that the equipment has been purchased there isn't an expense for operation.

Commissioner Bronson inquired about the deficit in the golf fund. There will be a general fund payment for debt service this year. Mr. Basta explained that was to bring the golf deficit down. He is working on a payment plan to pay the deficit and increase rates the next budget year. Commissioner Bronson asked what the trend was after the last rate increase. Mr. Basta reported that golfers purchased less season passes and more cyber cards.

Commissioner Bronson inquired about the library fund revenues and expenses. Library Director Jim Heckel explained that there would be a transition period before a new director is hired and there was an infusion of money from the Library Foundation. He further explained that the Library would lose about \$50,000 the next three years from the Foundation to buy books, and the Library will hold fund raising events.

Commissioner Jolley asked about the Commission's travel budget and was informed one of the reasons for the \$2,000 decrease was because the Montana League of Cities and Towns Conference will be held in Great Falls this year.

Commissioner Bronson asked if a comprehensive planner is hired in the Planning Department if that position would be long-term and was responded to affirmatively.

Commissioner Jolley inquired why the Natatorium was only up \$3,000 and was told that there were not as many minimum wage employees there.

The parties discussed undesignated fund balances and reserves. Mr. Doyon reported that his goal is to get back up to 17% for general fund reserves.

Commissioner Bronson inquired if health and benefit packages were included in the animal shelter personnel services and was responded to affirmatively.

Mayor Stebbins noted the loss of revenue from grants for the Great Falls Police Department. Captain Bowen explained that a large grant is due to expire in October. The Department is applying but no other grants are secured yet.

Commissioner Jolley asked what fund the energy and water consultants would be paid from. Mr. Doyon responded the energy consultant would be paid from the manager's contingency and the water consultant will come out of the water budget.

The proposed budget shows election costs were increased. However, if a primary is required, the City may have to dip into general fund reserves if the City Manager's contingency is not sufficient.

Community Development Director Mike Rattray explained the parking meter and off street parking revenue projections. Citation revenue has gone down since the fine increase.

Mayor Stebbins discussed the large number of outstanding warrants. Captain Bowen responded that a "warrant round-up" would clear up warrants and generate revenue.

After discussion regarding the Ag-Tech Park, Mr. Doyon stated that he would follow up with the Commission regarding what the expenses in the Industrial Tax Increment District are for.

It was noted that Electric City Power is projected to be in the 'black' FY09/10.

With regard to Neighborhood Councils' budget, Commissioner Bronson asked if that only included Patty Cadwell and did not include expenses for "weed and seed" and was informed yes.

Fire Chief Randy McCamley discussed reduction in services, confined space training, due to budget cuts and no out of state travel for training. After discussion, Chief McCamley stated that he would provide additional information regarding the permit process for confined spaces, as well as what people are putting who their provider is on the OSHA forms.

Tribune reporter Rich Ecke asked if there were cuts in this budget similar to last year's fireworks, RiverFest and police programs and was informed no, there would be no elimination of services this FY.

Mr. Ecke also inquired about built in fee increases similar to last year and was told that the recycling fees were not included in the budget at this time, but that the proposed budget included 5% increases in the water, sewer and street fees.

Citizen, Ron Gessaman, inquired about and was informed how the internal service fees were figured by departments. He asked about the increase in the City Attorney's budget for personal services and was informed that was due to Dave Gliko's retirement buyout. Mr. Gessaman also commented that ECP's fund balance deficit wasn't discussed like the golf fund was. Mr. Doyon

responded that after the consultant's comprehensive review, he would provide a long-range plan.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Stebbins adjourned the special work session of July 1, 2009, at 3:00 p.m.