

JOURNAL OF COMMISSION WORK SESSION
February 17, 2009

City Commission Work Session

Mayor Stebbins presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 5:30 p.m.

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

1. PUBLIC SAFETY MILL LEVY DISCUSSION

City Manager Greg Doyon reported that the purpose of this discussion was to provide information regarding the SAFER grant that the Commission accepted, what the grant obligates the City to, financial issues and an overview of other public safety needs. The reality is this grant will not be sustainable without a public safety levy, or if serious adjustments were not made to priorities community-wide.

Fire Chief Randy McCamley provided an overview of what has transpired regarding the SAFER grant. The Fire Department was notified in January that it qualified to receive the SAFER grant in the amount of \$1.8 million dollars. The grant is a five year commitment by the City to hire 16 firefighters. Chief McCamley explained a handout of what the financial impact will be to the City. The City's share over the five years will be \$3.4 million. In addition to salaries and benefits, there will be a cost for personal protection equipment in the amount of \$64,576 the first year. There is another grant the Fire Department can apply for to offset the cost of the personal protection equipment. If awarded, it would reduce the City's amount to approximately \$12,000.

Fiscal Services Director Coleen Balzarini provided an overview of the overall general fund financial condition. With the SAFER grant and without public safety mills, she explained that the FY 2010 projected general fund revenues were less than the general fund expenditures. The projection included the 16 new firefighters, increases in salaries and health insurance. Ms. Balzarini also discussed several expenditure items that were not included in the projection.

City Manager Doyon added that there is no way of knowing what the stimulus funds would cover and, if anything, would be short term. The Commission is making a long term decision that will make an impact on the operating budget for years to come.

Commissioner Beecher discussed the timing of the grant, the City's budget process and the need for a public safety levy for the safety aspects of the community. Commissioner Rosenbaum concurred with Commissioner Beecher that safety is paramount in the community, and added that it is time to ask for a public safety mil levy. If it doesn't come to fruition, a determination could be made during the budget session whether to accept or decline the first grant dollars before offering employment to the 16 firefighters.

The parties further discussed taxable values, mills and ballot language.

Chief McCamley explained timing issues. The hiring deadline is September 30, 2009. The hiring process wouldn't even start until after the consortium in June and the new budget cycle begins.

Police Chief Corky Grove explained what he considers to be an adequate police department. The community has expressed to him that they expect a police department to be community oriented, patrolling the streets as much as possible and completing investigations. He reported that the property in Great Falls is worth \$2.9 billion dollars. This equates to 81 officers protecting \$35 million each in goods and property every day. To provide the best service to the community, Chief Grove requested three full-time patrol officers, three full-time equivalents in investigative positions (school resource officer, drug investigation, and sex crimes). The GFPD has also been asked to join a task force working computerized sex crimes in the community. Additionally, he explained the need for three full-time support services employees for drug awareness and resistance education (DARE), law related education (LRE), and special projects.

Chief Grove explained the need for additional civilian staff as well. There is a need for a community service officer in patrol to investigate accidents (accident reconstructionist), one investigations officer as a crime analyst because society and crimes are changing, and two full-time support services staff members for warrants, temporary protection orders and to assist with jury selection. He reported the cost to train one hired officer is \$9,073.88. The approximate cost of adding the requested staff is \$1.4 million. He further discussed the need for civilian staff in support services, dispatch and administrative services.

Chief Grove stated, due to the workload, late monthly reports to the Montana Board of Crime Control are jeopardizing future grants. The GFPD operates on a lot of grants.

Chief Grove explained the growth of the City from 1986 to 2008 affects response times. He discussed several facts regarding investigations, case loads, arrests and warrants. Sixty-nine percent of the warrants this year remain unserved resulting in uncollected revenues of approximately \$1.3 million. He further discussed current training hours and costs versus POST mandated hours and costs.

Chief Grove stated that he hoped there would be another opportunity for a public housing grant to help with the costs of the number of public housing calls.

In addition, other positions that need consideration are public housing, emergency medical dispatching, pawnshop monitoring, radio coordinator, traffic enforcement planner and a full-time warrant officer.

The parties discussed the amount of additional mills. Mr. Doyon inquired if the Commission wanted to give consideration to pursuing the mil levy – one for police and one for fire, based on the information that the Commission has been hearing over the past year and a half, as well as the current opportunity with the SAFER grant specifically with the Fire Department. Staff recommends that, if the Commission wants to pursue both, it be done as a split question to the

voters. Commissioner Rosenbaum suggested the option of a graduated mil for the Fire Department.

Due to limited time, this discussion will be continued to the next work session.

2. ANIMAL SHELTER MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

City Manager Greg Doyon provided a draft Memorandum of Understanding to the Commissioners to bring them up to speed between this public/private partnership with the Animal Foundation. A substantial amount of thought and time has gone into drafting the MOU and it is a good starting point. The MOU sets forth the rules and responsibilities of both entities. He explained that this draft will probably be changed before it is finalized and there will be many addendums thereafter. Mr. James stated that the Animal Foundation's goal is to try to create a business model between a private and public partnership to maximize chances to succeed and provide adequate and reasonable animal control and adoption services for the community and for the animals.

Mr. Doyon added that the other component to this is the City wants to focus on the things it believes it has the expertise in, that is animal enforcement, and the Animal Foundation will focus on what they do best, which is education and fund raising.

Mr. Doyon asked the Commission to be mindful of the issue of funding for the Animal Shelter. That operation has had a significant impact on the Police Department services this past year.

Mr. Doyon quickly explained the terms, rules and responsibilities set forth in the document, as well as the land transfer, cap on funds and dispute resolution board.

Again, due to limited time, this matter will be continued to the next work session.

ADJOURN

There being no further discussion, Mayor Stebbins adjourned the work session of February 17, 2009, at 6:52 p.m.