

MINUTES
CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL BUDGET SESSION MEETING
CITY HALL – VIEWPOINT ROOM
May 2, 2016 – 6:00PM

The Study Session meeting of the Farmington Hills City Council was called to order by Mayor Massey at 6:00pm.

Council Members Present: Bruce, Lerner, Massey, Rich and Steckloff

Council Members Absent: Bridges and Knol

Others Present: City Manager Boyer, City Clerk Smith, Assistant City Manager Mekjian and Director Gajda

Mayor Massey stated that he appreciates the work of all of the staff to provide Council with a balanced budget to review.

City Manager Boyer explained the budget process that starts in early January and includes several meetings between Finance Director Gajda and department heads and himself prior to submitting a proposed budget to City Council for consideration.

Mayor Massey reviewed the layout of the budget documents and stated that he would like to go through each department first taking any questions on the department overviews, goals and organization chart, the performance objectives and the proposed budget figures.

Budgets were reviewed this evening for the following departments and below are the highlights from each department:

Human Resources

Director Randle noted that the budget estimate for the current fiscal year 16/17 is higher than anticipated due to the hiring process for the new City Manager and Fire Chief positions. He added that safety training for all city employees will be a priority going forward. The increase was also due to the necessary supplies and processing of paperwork for employees in accordance with the Affordable Care Act.

Discussion was held on the work force reflecting the community and Human Resources efforts to attract a diversified candidate pool when recruiting as well as expected employee turn-over.

Director Randle responded that they have quite a few employees that are or will soon be eligible for retirement and additional funding has been included to his proposed budget for recruiting in anticipation of some of these retirements.

Councilmember Lerner inquired what the EAP was and where the funding was being spent. Director Randle stated that this is an Emergency Action Plan for the entire City and safety trainings are being provided to all employees. Much of this is being done in-house; but several employees have been attending outside train-the-trainer courses in order to train employees on site.

Councilmember Bruce commented that insurance benefit costs are increasing yet that line item shows a decrease. Mr. Randle stated that some employees opt-out of the benefit package.

Special Services Department

Director of Special Services Schnackel commented that they recently provided the City Council with a department update on their spring and summer programs and events. She stated that 50 percent of their revenue is derived from program fees. She noted that there was a recent upgrade to their recreation scheduling program, which seems to be improved; and noted that staff's current focus has been on facility improvements and training.

There were questions on funding for department equipment and an increase in the maintenance and repairs line item for this current fiscal year.

Director Schnackel stated that most of the equipment needs are included in the Capital Improvement Plan. She stated that the increase in maintenance and repairs is due to an equipment failure at the Costick Center.

Councilmember Lerner suggested "right-sizing" the after school programs to match the current needs of the community in light of the declined school enrollment and planned school closures.

Councilmember Steckloff inquired about the use of pivotal fitness bands. Director Schnackel explained that those were purchased through a \$10,000 donation to try the program and equipment, has worked out well for the health and fitness program.

Councilmember Rich commented that when her kids were participating in the youth programs, she was never asked for more than a \$5 donation and while she understands the department does a great job obtaining grants and sponsors, it may not hurt to ask. She would have been willing to give more as a parent if asked.

In going through the budget figures, the following was noted by Councilmembers:

Senior Division

A significant increase in workers compensation in the senior division. Director Boyer stated that Council will see an increase across departments for health care insurance and workers compensation, but it will depend on the positions within each department as to the percentage of increase.

Parks Division

Overtime is under for the Parks Division. Director Schnackel stated that this is the result of our mild winter.

Golf Division

Director Schnackel mentioned that golf rounds were already up by 1,000 rounds over last season.

Increase in part-time wages. Director Schnackel stated that they have struggled attracting and maintaining quality, part-time help and had asked Council to raise the wages for part-time staff in order to help. Mr. Boyer added that attracting and maintaining part-time staff has been a challenge for many departments.

Recreation Division

Use of the skate park. Deputy Director Farmer responded that use of the park is consistent and there have been very few issues and many positive comments.

What the funding for Nature Study included. Mr. Farmer explained that this line item is for STEM Programming that was recently implemented through a grant received by Bosch. When the Energy Grant Prize came about, the department decided to develop more programs that related to sustainability. He added that with this expense also comes a lot of revenue. The city has quadrupled the number of visits to the Nature Center and revenue has increased from \$10,000 to over \$60, 0000.

Scholarships. Director Schnackel indicated that the department provides for \$10,000 in scholarships and helped over 200 families last year with that money. Mr. Farmer added that the schools were also provided scholarship for the STEM Program and want to come back next year.

Parks Millage

Discussion was held on the equipment included in this fund versus the CIP.

Dog Park

Dog Park status and registration process. Director Schnackel noted that the dog park line item is included in the Parks budget and they have secured donations for that park. The program is doing well and growing and the on-line registration process has greatly improved. She added that they wanted to operate the park for a couple of years and see if they can obtain a long-term contract for the property before reviewing the option of opening it up to other communities. Mr. Farmer added that they have specific dog-related events on their list to pursue.

Nutrition Grant

Director Schnackel noted that the department served over 105,000 meals this year between the meals on wheels program and service in Conway Hall at the Costick Center. In answer to Dr. Rich, she stated that the fund balance is zero as they are required to use all of the funds each year.

Golf Course Improvement Fund

Director Schnackel stated that for every round of golf, \$0.50 is put back in the fund to reinvest back into the golf course for maintenance, etc.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Director Schnackel stated that the CIP includes funding for Costick Center Improvements, including new boiler system, new carpeting, painting and minor repairs and improvements to the driveway at gate #4 as well as improvements to the ice arena.

Mayor Massey thanked staff for their judicious use of funds and providing such great programming for the City.

Mayor Massey requested a 5 minute break at this time.

Fire Department

Fire Chief Jon Unruh explained that the Fire Department is proposing within the proposed budget to open up another Fire Station (Fire Station #2) as a full-time station. Currently the run volume is not being supported in that are by the Paid On Call (POC) system. The proposal is not to add personnel, but to move employees from their 4-10 hour shifts to the shift work schedule and supplement that with POC.

He made the following remarks with regard to the budget:

- The proposed budget includes a \$100,000 increase for the replacement of staff vehicles. Staff is currently utilizing old repurposed Police vehicles that need to be replaced.

- Two (2) medical duty EMS units and one (1) Engine have been included as part of the CIP
- Building improvements are needed to address aesthetics and HVAC upgrades

Chief Unruh stated that he believes he is meeting the City Council's goal of running a very lean department, but also a professional Fire Department.

Discussion was held on the POC system and if the current combined system will support run volumes if they continue to increase.

Chief Unruh pointed out that run volumes are up 32% since 2009. He stated that the POC Retention Committee has met and is reviewing ways to attract and retain POC personnel. He stated that if things change significantly they will need to review the current combined system.

Councilmember Lerner inquired if there is a plan for funding the 4 new firefighters hired through the SAFER grant once the grant runs out.

City Manager Boyer stated that both the CIP and Public Safety Millage are options.

Mr. Lerner inquired about the increased overtime costs.

Deputy Chief Lee Panoushek responded that they have not replaced one firefighter that retired and one employee has been on long-term medical leave.

City Manager Boyer stated that overtime is something staff that has reviewed for both the Fire and Police Departments and as staff is lost to injuries, etc., to backfill those positions creates overtime. He stated that the administration is reviewing the option of hiring more staff to cut down on overtime costs.

Councilmember Rich inquired building requirements to make Fire Station #2 a full-time station. Chief Unruh responded that an area would have to be segregated off for use as a dorm area.

Further discussion was held on the POC system and making Fire Station #2 a full-time station. Chief Unruh explained that POC can't transport patients and the Department only has 2 ALS trained POC so it makes sense to add a third. He added that they are doing the most with what they have, but it is difficult to retain ALS trained POC as they typically leave for full-time employment.

Chief Unruh thanked City Council for their continued support of the Fire Department ensuring that it is the best and most professional Fire Department in the region.

Police Department

Police Chief Nebus provided a brief overview on the following with Council:

- Safety and the low record of crime in the City
- Department accomplishments
- Hiring of 4 new Police Officers
- Purchase of new Tasers through grant funding
- Use of Narcan to save 19 lives
- New equipment and phase 3 (final phase) of construction at the Police Department building
- Reorganization of staff last summer with various retirements that resulted in 2 Bureaus with an Assistant Chief in charge of each Bureau which has been more efficient and no new personnel was added

- Dispatch area changes – Farmington Hills is the only Police Department that has part-time dispatchers and a few dispatchers are eligible for retirement which is a big concern
- Teen Center outreach programs – mini
- Challenges of attracting and retaining qualified employees. The Department is currently down 2 Police Officers.

Chief Nebus introduced and thanked his staff who prepared the budget and thanked Council for their continued support.

Councilmember Lerner inquired about the mini police academies at the teen centers. Chief Nebus explained that the thinking behind that was to do mini segments/classes to establish a dialogue with the teens at the centers.

Mr. Lerner asked if Police was asking for more full-time dispatchers. Chief Nebus responded not at this time and that he was only acknowledging the challenge they are facing. He stated that if they are fully staffed, they are okay; but if they lose part-time staff and 4 dispatchers who are eligible for retirement, they could be facing some challenges in filling those positions and may be asking for more full-time staff in the future. He added that there are more educational requirements for dispatchers than in the past and part-time personnel has to work full-time the first few months just to obtain the required training.

Councilmember Steckloff inquired about the proposed security upgrades and possibility of a gate at the Police Department. Chief Nebus responded that they are reviewing a possible no-trespassing ordinance for the Police Department with the City Attorney that could potentially carry over to City Hall. They are also reviewing some further signage and possibly raised arm gates.

Councilmember Rich inquired about overtime hours for Police Officers based on a letter all of Council received and commented that mental health issues were discussed in the Police Department mission statement but nothing was included in the goals.

Chief Nebus commented that the hours are dictated by contract; but Officers may also trade shifts per contract. He stated that overtime costs are due to family medical intermittent leaves.

With regard to mental health issues, Chief Nebus stated that he feels the city is doing more and is very sensitive to these issues but perhaps that is not being portrayed to the community as well as they could.

Mayor Massey felt that this issue was being well publicized. Councilmember Lerner agreed mentioning that they are one of the few communities tracking mental health incidents and monies have been included in the CDBG budget to support Haven, Common Ground, etc. where people suffering from mental health issues are sent for help.

Councilmember Lerner commented on the number of automobile wheels that have been stolen from dealership and suggested that the dealerships invest in wheel locks to address this problem.

Councilmember Bruce inquired if the Chief feels there has been an increase in incidents with the number of pistol permits issued increasing. Chief Nebus responded that there are more guns on the streets and he does feel that there has been an increase in incidents.

Councilmember Lerner questioned the overtime increase and if the Chief was budgeting for potential dispatch changes.

Chief Nebus reiterated that most of the overtime is due to family medical leave and in order to put one more officer on a shift it would require the hiring of 5 more Police Officers. He stated that they are currently accomplishing their goal right now with the number of dispatchers they want on duty.

Public Safety Millage

Chief Nebus noted that 43 employees, 5 vehicles and 911 changes are included in the public safety millage budget. He explained that they need to replace the recording system and 911 call processing equipment.

Councilmember Rich inquired about body cams. Chief Nebus stated that this was originally in the CIP but has been moved out to next year's budget as they are still trying to find an integrated system for both body and car cameras and it is better technology for the body cams is anticipated down the road.

Mayor Massey pointed out that City Council also needs to have some policies in place for the use of body cams.

Councilmember Bruce expressed concern regarding the expense and time involved for setting policies and training on this new technology.

Chief Nebus stated they are following the technology and are reviewing those issues. He added that they are about a year away from critical redacting software that would assist the Department with the over 230 FOIA requests a year for in-car camera video footage.

Chief Nebus reviewed items being funded through either the Federal or State forfeiture funds. He noted that one item included in the State forfeiture fund is an interactive range training that includes a computer based system with different scenarios.

City Clerk's Office:

City Clerk Smith pointed out that the majority of her budget is administration costs or Election related costs. The Election costs fluctuate based on the size of the Elections in that fiscal year and often supplies associated with an Election need to be purchased from the previous fiscal year's budget. She noted that the only other slight increase in a budget line item is for continued training opportunities for the Deputy City Clerk who is attending classes to further her education.

Councilmember Bruce inquired about no-reason absentee voting. Clerk Smith stated that the clerks were hopeful to get something passed through the legislature on no-reason absentee voting or early, in-person absentee voting but nothing has been passed to date. Especially with the elimination of the straight party ticket from the November ballot, she feels some of these other tools could help Michigan Clerks process ballots more efficiently.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were no public comments.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Massey adjourned the study session meeting at 8:50pm

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Smith', with a large, stylized initial 'P'.

Pamela B. Smith, City Clerk