

SHARON CITY COUNCIL

Purpose: 2nd Public Budget Hearing
Date: Monday, December 8, 2008
Time: 4:30 P.M.
Location: Sharon Municipal Building Council Chambers

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
ROLL CALL - PRESENT:

TIME: 4:30 P.M.

Council:

President Heutsche
Mr. Flower
Mr. Connelly

Not present:

Mr. Donato - Out of town
Mr. Messina - On speakerphone

News Media:

Mayor Robert J. Lucas
Sharronda Faber – City Clerk

Jean Starmack - The Vindicator

Dept. Heads:

Terry Whalen - Fire Chief
Michael J. Menster - Chief of Police

Also Present:

Dan Gracenin - MCRPC
Carol Rombold
Carol Swartz
Adrienne Gordon

David Kepics
Sam Messina
Ron Maurice

CITY OF SHARON 2009 BUDGET SUMMARY AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

REVENUES:

Real Estate Taxes	\$4,412,993
511 Taxes	\$1,878,600
Licenses	\$ 190,475
Fines	\$ 101,000
Refund	\$ 5,000
Interest/Rent	\$ 48,600
Grants	\$ 475,950
Department Earnings	\$ 41,000
Property Sales	\$ 3,000
Refunds & Miscell	\$ 393,990
Highway Aid	\$ 100,000
Total Revenue	\$7,650,608

EXPENDITURES:

Administration & Tax Collection	\$ 520,090
Buildings & Grounds	\$ 156,275
Protection Persons & Property	\$2,991,232
Health	\$ 80,898
Highways	\$ 554,452
Library	\$ 102,716
Parks	\$ 16,500
Special Services	\$ 30,687
Payroll Taxes & Employee Benefits	\$2,071,065
Insurance	\$ 332,000
Miscell	\$ 32,348
Transfers & Borrowings	\$ 762,345
Total Expenditures	\$7,650,608

BUDGET HEARING:

Dan Gracenin - Mercer County Regional Planning Commission - Mr. Gracenin discussed the fee structure for 2009 - \$10,934 for 2009, which is the same as 2008 (there has not been an increase since 2005). He discussed the number of services provided to the City by MCRPC, with some of the main ones including the Truck Route Study, Shenango Valley Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan, STAG Grant Administration, update to Zoning Ordinance in 2006, use of County subdivision Ordinance, help identify land uses for Weed & Seed, map printouts, and various other services and projects. Mr. Heutsche stated that he appreciates all the work that was done by MCRPC, but he believes that there is a problem with the funding formula and the City is looking at cutting the budget. He stated that when he has attended meetings, they all seem to do with other municipalities and not Sharon. Mr. Gracenin advised that there are a lot of things being worked on other than what's talked about at the meetings. He also explained that member fees are based on per capita, and the only way to change it is through the Commission and voting on it for everyone. Mr. Heutsche inquired about what would happen if the City drops out. Mr. Gracenin advised that the City would lose the ability to use the services of MCRPC, including the upcoming GIS maps. Mayor Lucas advised that the City uses the services of MCRPC frequently and was planning to use them for upcoming development along Stambaugh Ave.

GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES:

PROTECTION TO PERSONS AND PROPERTY

BUREAU OF POLICE

Mr. Heutsche advised that Council had received a letter from the Chief and Captain. Chief Menster discussed with Council how the CDBG funds for a Zone 5 officer are being budgeted - through Salaries. The Chief advised that this would impede the ability of the department to put extra patrols in Zone 5 when they are needed to help remove guns and drugs from the neighborhoods. Mr. Heutsche inquired if the patrols are for Zone 5 only. Chief Menster advised that they are. Mr. Flower inquired about paying out overtime; Chief advised it is per the FOP contract. Mayor Lucas proposed taking one officer and working them from 1700 to 0300 hours Friday & Saturday nights in Zone 5 and splitting up their shift the rest of the week. He stated that \$46,000 is ½ mill of taxes and that he believes the money could be used more efficiently. Chief Menster advised that it could only work with a higher level of manpower. Mayor Lucas stated that the problem is that the Police Dept. needs a minimum of 28 officers. Mr. Flower stated that the intent is to get the manpower back to 28 officers. Chief Menster stated that with a full complement they would still be day by day for manpower and that currently there would be no benefit. Mr. Messina inquired about the current number of officers. Chief Menster explained that there are 26 officers currently employed but that they are only working with 23; two are on sick leave and one is on light duty. The complement is set for 28 officers. Captain Martwinski discussed that the school district also wants a school resource officer back in the school. Mayor Lucas suggested that if they put the SRO back in the school, then when school is not in session that officer can be assigned to Zone 5. Mayor Lucas also discussed Hermitage's contract between the City and School District where there is a 25/75 split of the SRO's salary. Mr. Heutsche advised that Council needs to have an executive session to discuss the contract issues and to hopefully resolve it by the following week. Chief Menster stated that the Police Dept. needs the impact patrols when the shifts are at a minimum staffing level to provide police presence in those areas.

BUREAU OF FIRE

Mr. Heutsche discussed current Fire contract negotiations. Mr. Messina inquired about an additional \$7,000 for overtime. Chief Whalen advised that it is due to not replacing a firefighter who left the department. Discussion held on fire equipment budget. Chief Whalen advised that it was increased by

\$4,000 because they have not been servicing equipment for the past 2 years due to the costs, so some things need replaced, repaired and/or serviced. Mr. Connelly inquired about a change in scheduling that was previously discussed. Chief Whalen advised that studies show that the way they schedule currently is the most effective. Discussion held on new fire truck and repairs to current fire vehicles.

HIGHWAYS

BUREAU OF STREET

Discussion held on the price of fuel. Mr. Connelly inquired if the budget could be cut since the price of gasoline has dropped significantly. Inquired if the line item could be cut by \$9,000. Ron Maurice, City Mechanic, advised that oil and grease have increased in price and diesel fuel has not dropped that much. Mr. Cave stated that the majority of the line item is gas. Discussion held on the communications line item and the current status of the radios. Mr. Connelly inquired about the number of current employees. Mr. Cave advised that there are five workers, a foreman, and the City Mechanic. He stated that there are two shifts. When asked if it has helped reduce the overtime costs, Mr. Cave advised that there are no shifts scheduled over the weekends, when some of the overtime costs are incurred. Mr. Heutsche inquired about a \$12,000 increase in wages. Mayor Lucas advised that it was to replace one worker who retired, and they are needed to help plow snow. Mayor Lucas advised that they are experimenting with only salting the hills, main streets and around the schools with a big snowfall. Mr. Heutsche inquired about the use of anti-skid. Mr. Flower stated that there might be a problem with it going in storm sewers, but could be solved with using the street sweeper. Mr. Heutsche advised that PennDOT may use a 3:1 ratio of anti skid to salt to help cut costs. Ron Maurice explained that anti-skid costs money and there is not room at the City Garage to store all three: salt, beet juice, and anti-skid. Mr. Heutsche asked about getting the salt spreaders calibrated. Ron Maurice discussed the aging trucks and that it will cost about \$3,500 each to calibrate the newer ones. Mayor Lucas inquired if doing the calibration would save on the use of salt, and if so then it may be worth it to do. Ron Maurice stated that he will be surprised if the two older trucks (1992 & 1995) get through the winter, and that a lot of money is being into them for repairs. Resident Sam Messina inquired about contracting with PennDOT to do some of the roads. Mr. Heutsche advised that PennDOT is actually looking to have the City take over some of the roads that are currently contracted out and that they are not interested in doing local roads; they have also made cutbacks. Ron Maurice advised that the street department needs an extra 1-2 employees to keep up with the snow plowing and grass cutting. Mr. Connelly inquired about grass cutting of city lots. Ron Maurice stated that they have a list of what's asked to be cut (approx. 250 lots) and only about 100 of them are the City's; the rest are vacant. Mr. Connelly inquired about how often the lots are cut. Mr. Cave advised that it depends on the complaints they get. Mr. Connelly asked what cutting a lot is worth; Mr. Cave advised that they charge for a minimum of one hour. Mr. Connelly suggested they put a dollar amount on them, then offer the money to a neighbor to maintain the lot. Mayor Lucas advised that the City was using Keystone workers to cut lots to help save the City money and keep the grass cut. It has been an ongoing problem. Mr. Cave requested that more be done to landlords who do not maintain their properties.

Mr. Heutsche announced that the other line items were discussed at a previous budget hearing. The floor was open to questions/comments by members of the public.

Carol Swartz - Inquired to Dan Gracenin on the Census. He advised that the member costs are calculated on the last census (2000). She inquired to the Mayor about what the census was and what he estimates current figures as. Mayor Lucas advised that per the last census in 2000 showed the City's population at 16,328, when in reality it is now currently at about 15,400 residents. Mrs. Swartz inquired about hospitalization for City employees, and the number that receive benefits. Mayor Lucas

advised that all but 8 City employees take it, some on Council. She inquired how much they pay towards their plan. Mayor Lucas advised that Police Officers pay \$25/pay and in 2009 will contribute \$32.50/pay, as well as non-union employees. Negotiations are ongoing with the other unions. Mrs. Swartz discussed her belief that not enough is being contributed by employees.

Dave Kepics - Inquired about the complement for the Fire Dept. Mayor Lucas advised that in 2007 a position was cut and in 2008 that position remained cut plus one firefighter resigned. In the 2009 budget the Mayor requested that only the firefighter that left in 2008 be replaced.

Sam Messina - Inquired about payments for fire hydrants. Questioned payments for funding pension plans. Mayor Lucas advised that it is mandated by the state.

Carol Swartz - Inquired about the percentage of residents that have paid their 2008 taxes. Mayor Lucas advised that on average the City only collects 86-87% of taxes owed for current year.

Sam Messina - Discussed options for MCRPC membership and suggested that if the City pulls out this year, perhaps they could re-join the following year. Mr. Heutsche discussed it, as well as payments to the Shenango Valley Animal Shelter. He stated that the fee-based arrangements were made in the early 1970s and that now the City is experiencing budget problems. Mr. Heutsche stated that the City can't continue to pay for everything - something has to be cut. He advised that taxes have not been raised for several years and were even lowered a few years ago.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 6:04 P.M.

Motion: Mr. Flower

Second: Mr. Connelly

Vote: Yes - Mr. Flower

Yes - Mr. Connelly

Yes - Mr. Heutsche