

SHARON CITY COUNCIL

Purpose: Public Hearing
Date: Monday, November 23, 2009
Time: 6:00 P.M.
Location: Sharon Municipal Building Council Chambers

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
ROLL CALL – Present:

TIME: 6:00 P.M.

Council:

President Donato
Mr. Flower
Mr. Connelly

Mr. Heutsche
Mr. Messina

News Media:

Attorney Madden - City Solicitor
Sharronda Faber – City Clerk

Courtney Anderson - The Herald

*Note: Mayor Lucas was delayed and arrived late.

Dept. Heads:

Terry Whalen - Fire Chief
Michael J. Menster - Chief of Police
Diane Thut - Treasurer
Joseph Fragle - Community Development
John Cave - Street Dept.

Also Present:

Delores Jisko
Ray Dunham
Carol Dunham
Ed Palanski

Ron Maurice
Lt. Gerald Smith
John Evans
Robert Wilson

CITY OF SHARON 2010 BUDGET SUMMARY AND NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

REVENUES:

Real Estate Taxes	\$2,957,957
511 Taxes	\$3,180,600
Licenses	\$ 199,000
Fines	\$ 100,000
Refunds	\$ 5,000
Interest/Rents	\$ 22,000
Grants	\$ 542,955
Department Earnings	\$ 139,500
Property Sales	\$ 281,600
Refunds & Miscell	\$ 398,930
Highway Aid	\$ 100,000
Total Revenue	\$7,927,542

EXPENDITURES:

Administration & Tax Collection	\$ 537,468
Buildings & Grounds	\$ 125,900
Protection Persons & Property	\$3,137,762
Health	\$ 54,415
Highways	\$ 564,874
Library	\$ 102,716
Parks	\$ 15,000
Special Services	\$ 33,537
Payroll Taxes & Employee Benefits	\$2,103,568
Insurance	\$ 356,500
Miscell	\$ 52,348
Transfers & Borrowings	\$ 843,454
Total Expenditures	\$7,927,542

BUDGET HEARING:

GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES:

TAX COLLECTION

BUREAU OF CITY TREASURER

Mr. Flower inquired about if the budget proposed reflects 100% of the expenses in the tax office. Mrs. Thut advised that the budget reflects 100% of the costs but does reflect the fact that everything is billed in thirds to reimburse the City for the costs (1/3 to the school district and 1/3 to the County). She stated that the whole figures are listed in the budget, even though the City realistically only pays 1/3. She advised that the Mayor proposed to cut her staff, but she opposes it. She explained that her staffing level is currently at one Deputy Treasurer and a full-time tax clerk, plus the Chief Clerk's position was cut to 1/2 time, with the other 1/2 time being moved to the tax office, giving her another 1/2 time tax clerk. The Chief Clerk is currently on maternity leave, so her duties were to be moved to the bookkeeper's office, but the bookkeeper (Mrs. Lininger) was not able to take on additional responsibilities due to additional work being done for the Sharon Sanitary Authority, so the Chief Clerk's job duties were placed on Mrs. Thut. Mrs. Thut argued that if the Chief Clerk's position were cut, and the other tax clerk's position were cut, she would not be able to function effectively with such low staffing levels. She advised that her office does work for other other entities. She recommended to City Council that they not make the cuts in her office. She also explained that she serves on the committee for the move to the wage tax offices going county-wide (mandated by the state) and she stated that there is also a move by the state to mandate real estate tax offices to do the same down the road. Therefore, there may need to be a reduction down the road eventually, once the work load is decreased. Mr. Heutsche clarified the proposed changes. He also inquired what work is being done for the Sanitary Authority by the City. Mrs. Thut advised that the City Bookkeeper is doing the payables. Mr. Connelly explained the administrative fee paid by the Sanitary Authority. Mr. Donato inquired about the actual cost to the City if the personnel cuts are not made in Mrs. Thut's office. She advised approximately \$10,000 (due to costs being split with the school district and County). Mrs. Thut also emphasized that it would be very difficult to serve the City, County and school district with the proposed staffing cuts. Mr. Connelly inquired about the use of overtime in the tax office. Mrs. Thut advised that the money for overtime was removed from the budget since they do not work it. Mr. Connelly also inquired about the arrangement with the school district for the percentage they pay. Mrs. Thut advised that she thought 1/3 was fair for the amount of work they do for the school district. Mr. Heutsche inquired about the software being used in the tax office. Mrs. Thut advised that the City purchased new software for the tax office, but that she is not happy with it. It is not the software she had requested; she had researched what other municipalities were using and wanted to use the same. She advised that the cost for the software she wanted would be \$200 annually. She advised that the current software system is cumbersome and requires more steps. Mr. Heutsche asked if there were any other areas of the budget that could be cut in Mrs. Thut's office. She advised they could remove the "extra time" if the staffing levels remain the same. She said there are no "frills" in her budget and that there are a lot of work that is done "behind the scenes" that no one sees in order to keep records updated and for the tax certifications.

PROTECTION TO PERSONS AND PROPERTY

BUREAU OF POLICE

Mr. Messina inquired about the Clothing Allowance line item. Chief Menster explained the expenses paid out of the line item, which includes the contractual amount paid out bi-annually to officers to purchase new uniforms and equipment, uniform and equipment items that are damaged on duty, and

uniform purchases for new officers. Mr. Flower inquired about the police clerk extra time. Chief Menster explained that it is related to the cuts in the tax office; if the Chief Clerk position is eliminated, then she has union seniority and will likely bump a police clerk position. Since the Chief Clerk is currently on maternity leave and would need to be trained when she returns. He advised that if that position is not cut, then the extra police clerk time can be eliminated. Mr. Heutsche inquired about the jump in police wages. Chief Menster advised that wages are contractual, and also that there will be an additional officer hired under the COPS grant – of which his wages and benefits are fully reimbursed by the grant for three years. Mr. Heutsche inquired about the overtime costs for 2009. Chief Menster explained that it was due to having a decreased complement which created shift shortages, as well as an officer being injured and on workmen's compensation for over a year. Mr. Heutsche inquired if the complement were filled could the overtime budget be reduced. Chief Menster advised that it is hard to predict when major incidents will occur, but with a full complement the short shifts would be reduced. Mr. Donato inquired about the increase in lock up fees. Chief Menster explained that COG is increasing them by \$2750. Mr. Flower inquired about auxiliary police. Chief Menster advised that the program was never implemented. Mr. Connelly inquired about the uniform allowance. Chief Menster explained that it is contractual. Mr. Connelly suggested changing it to a voucher system. He also cautioned the Chief to be responsible with his overtime, and to try to stay within the budget. Mr. Heutsche inquired about the increase in vehicle maintenance costs. Lt. Smith explained the expenses for tires and the expiration of some warranties. Mr. Flower inquired about the lease, to which Lt. Smith advised is in its third year. He stated that the final payment will be made in 2010. Discussion also held about increases in shoot time, shift differential and communications. Chief Menster explained the various expenses, including wanting to include more low light shoots for the officers to help with liability and training issues. Mr. Donato inquired about the grant for laptop computers for the cruisers. Chief Menster advised that it is for five laptops, a Citrix server, and maintenance agreement. Lt. Smith explained about the laptops, brackets and air cards. Mr. Palanski inquired about the COPS grant. Chief Menster explained that the COPS grant had not started yet, that there is one vacancy in the police department and then the COPS officer (still vacant). He advised that the grant covers salary and fringe benefits for three years, but that after the grant the City has to maintain that position for 12 months.

BUREAU OF FIRE

Mr. Connelly inquired about the overtime figure of \$12,000. Chief Whalen advised that he had requested \$25,000 - \$30,000 but the Mayor reduced it due to the part-time firefighters. He explained the use of the part-timers and the anticipation of some firefighters using sick time for non-service related surgeries next year (therefore having time off). Mr. Messina inquired how scheduling is done for vacation time. Chief Whalen explained that it is done by February. Mr. Messina inquired if the shifts could be filled during vacation with per diem firefighters to reduce overtime. Chief Whalen advised that it could be done that way. Mr. Messina inquired why the per diem firefighter line item went from \$30,000 to \$104,832. Chief Whalen advised that he received a SAFER grant for the per diem firefighters, but that he also had to maintain the complement which he filled with part timers. He advised that the cost is approximately \$65,000 for per diem firefighters (minus the grant). Mr. Messina inquired why the SAFER grant is now costing the City about \$38,000; City Council was under the impression that it would only cost \$9,000. Chief Whalen advised that it is due to having to increase the complement by two. Mr. Connelly stated that he had requested that the part time firefighters be reflected in the complement; he wants to see it on paper since they are employees of the City of Sharon and should be reflected in the budget. Mr. Connelly inquired why the firefighters are working twenty-four hour shifts. Chief Whalen stated that stats show it works better. He said it is a good fit working 42 hour work weeks. Mr. Donato advised that they would have to change the complement in order to change the scheduling. He also stated that the fire department was awarded the 42 hour work week in

arbitration. Mr. Messina inquired about why they can't schedule in 8 hour shifts. Mr. Connelly suggested that \$12,500 is not realistic for overtime. Mr. Messina inquired if the agreement with Farrell has saved money. Chief Whalen advised that it has and it has given them more people for the initial response, plus it helps with safety and insurance ratings.

HIGHWAYS

BUREAU OF PUBLIC WORKS

Mr. Messina inquired about the number of fire hydrants in the City and the charge for each one. Chief Whalen advised that there are approximately 400 hydrants and that Aqua charges about \$19 per hydrant. He advised that they are working to eliminate some hydrants. Aqua is also talking about a rate hike. Mr. Messina suggested working with Aqua to negotiate rates.

BUREAU OF VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

Mr. Flower inquired if the budget includes tires needed for street department trucks. Mr. Maurice confirmed that it does. Mr. Donato inquired about the substantial decrease in the line item for Vehicle Repairs/Maintenance, which went from \$15,000 to \$5,000. Mr. Maurice advised that he does not agree with the request; he asked for \$15,000 but the Mayor decreased it to \$5,000 in the proposed budget presented to Council. Mr. Donato inquired about laundry.

BUREAU OF STREET

Mr. Connelly inquired to Mr. Cave why sewer employees were not contacted to help plow streets. Mr. Cave advised that there are only two qualified to plow, and one of them did. Mr. Connelly inquired if the sewer plant had trucks with plows on them, would they be able to plow streets. Mr. Cave replied affirmatively. Mr. Cave advised that the agreement requires street dept. employees to be called out first. Mr. Connelly inquired about the condition of the trucks in the street dept. Mr. Cave and Mr. Maurice discussed the fleet. Discussion also held on two trucks that were leased; one has a plow and spreader and one does not. The aging condition of many of the vehicles was recognized. Mr. Maurice expressed concern over scheduling issues – he advised that he does not believe that eight employees should be scheduled for five different shifts. Mr. Heutsche inquired about the notice required by AFSCME to change an employees' schedule. Mr. Cave discussed reasons for the different shifts. Mr. Connelly clarified the agreement with the Sanitary Authority for storm and sanitary repairs. Mr. Flower inquired about requirements to operate a snow plow and clarified the number of qualified operators. Mr. Palanski inquired about the current complement in the street department. Mr. Cave advised that there are 8 total, including Mr. Cave and Mr. Maurice. Mr. Palanski inquired about how much of the overtime money used was spent for snow removal. Mr. Cave was not sure of the figure. Mr. Heutsche clarified that the callout notice requirement for AFSCME was changed to 3 days, from 1 week. Mr. Donato inquired about the status of the street sweeper. Mr. Maurice advised that it is working well and being used daily.

MISCELLANEOUS

INSURANCE

Mr. Heutsche inquired about the increase in life insurance premiums. Mayor Lucas explained that the figure includes life & health insurance premiums. Mr. Heutsche also inquired about the City joining a consortium for health care. Mayor Lucas advised that he is still in the process of getting rates, but that they contacted several carriers. Mr. Lavorini stated that he has been involved in consortiums through his previous employer, but that rates are usually sought mid-year. Mayor Lucas advised that part of the reason health care premiums are so high is due to the City having 6 shock claims and also providing health care to retirees. Mr. Heutsche inquired about the premium paid to Gilbert's. Mayor Lucas

advised that the City pays Gilbert's 2% and also stated that Wallace & Assoc. is supposed to present a bid. Mr. Messina inquired to Mr. Lavorini about joining with other municipalities to purchase health care. Mr. Lavorini advised that there are pools out there to get involved with, but all are January 1st renewals, and the process should start in June. Mr. Heutsche inquired about the increase in fire insurance. Mayor Lucas advised that last year the City received a rebate that they won't get this year. Mr. Messina inquired about the number of employees on the health insurance plan. Mayor Lucas advised that there are approximately 87 employees including retirees. Mr. Wilson inquired about the number of years the City has been insured by BC/BS. Mayor Lucas advised approximately 5 years. Mr. Wilson stated that in his business, there are significant savings realized when a switch is made to a different provider, and that it helps to switch periodically. Mayor Lucas discussed health care costs since 2004. Mr. Heutsche inquired about Inservco and worker's compensation claims. Mr. Wilson inquired about the number of claims by the City. Mayor Lucas advised that there have been a few claims. Mr. Wilson suggested that the City look into Synergy. Mr. Heutsche agreed that the City should shop around for better rates. Mayor Lucas advised that having an active safety committee over the past 3 years has helped with rates. Mr. Heutsche suggested that some of the budget problems are related to the increases in insurance premiums.

OTHER MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Messina inquired about the \$25,000 budgeted for sick leave buyout. Mayor Lucas advised that there may be no retirements. Mr. Heutsche inquired to Chief Menster about money being paid to Weed & Seed. Chief Menster advised that the money is for participating in Weed & Seed as a community and is not law enforcement related. Chief Menster mentioned that there is a possibility of receiving a split with Farrell to do saturation patrols, and that he should find out at a meeting the next night. Mr. Heutsche stated that he wants to make sure that the \$22,000 is a wise investment for the City – does it receive enough of a benefit to continue participating. Chief Menster discussed the history of Weed & Seed and benefits the City has received in the past. Mayor Lucas discussed a recent Weed & Seed Meeting he attended for the Seed portion of the program. He also advised that the Elm Street Program is part of Weed & Seed. Chief Menster added that they are also looking at a "Citizens Police Academy" with Southwest Police Dept. Mr. Flower inquired about the increase in the Animal Shelter budget. Mayor Lucas advised that the increase was actually for 2009, but since the City was notified late, they are tacking it on for 2010. Mr. Donato inquired about "Special Projects." Mayor Lucas advised that its for certain problems not otherwise budgeted for.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BUDGET

Mr. Flower inquired about the Risk Assessor Position in the budget. Mayor Lucas advised that it's Frank Smeraglia's position, but also stated that the Community Development budget will be changing.

GENERAL FUND REVENUES

Mr. Wilson inquired how confident the Mayor is in the numbers for revenue for Real Estate and Wage Tax Revenues. Mayor Lucas advised that the City needs to sit down with the school district. He advised that the School District is ahead in their collections, and the City is down, so he wants to look into if there's something wrong with Centax. He advised that he plans to call Mr. Vilella to set up a meeting, but that he wants to set up a meeting with the school district first. He also advised that there is a meeting with Mr. Nagy from Black, Bashor & Porsch and Mr. Lavorini, and then there will be a meeting set up with the school district.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 P.M.

Motion: Mr. Heutsche

Second: Mr. Flower

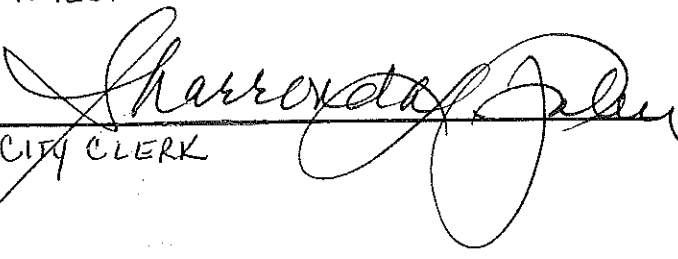
**Vote: Yes - Mr. Flower
Yes - Mr. Connelly
Yes - Mr. Messina**

**Yes - Mr. Heutsche
Yes - Mr. Donato**



COUNCIL PRESIDENT

ATTEST:



CITY CLERK