BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
MARCH 30, 2017

Mayor Casavant called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Michael Swanton, John McCurry, Jr., Stephen St. Cyr, Norman Belanger, Michael Ready, Laura Seaver and Marc Lessard

Committee Members Not Present: Robert Quattrone, Jr., Bob Mills

The Budget Committee, and all who were present, recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

City Manager, Jim Bennett went over the handouts that were provided prior to the start of this meeting: updated budget book pages; a comparison of the tax rate; a spreadsheet of all City employees with wages, the most recent wage adjustments, and the FY18 wages. Also, Fire Chief Scott Gagne provided a written explanation on overtime expenses and a flow chart of ambulance fee revenues was handed out.

Presentation of City Department Budgets:

Economic Development & Planning

Presented by Economic Development Director, Daniel Stevenson

Daniel noted that the only major change is in the wages due to the retirement of John Bubier; and putting the Economic Development Coordinator and Grant Writer positions partly funded in this budget. Also, Daniel's position is now fully funded in this budget (4% of the Economic Development Director's wages used to be funded out of the Industrial Park Fund). Jim explained that $70,000 is budgeted in the TIF Fund to cover half the wage costs for the Economic Development Coordinator and the Grant Writer.

Daniel also noted that there is an increase in the training and travel lines so that staff can get more economic development training.

Committee member McCurry asked about the Admin position being a 40hr/week position, but filled by two different people. Daniel explained that one staff member works 32 hours a week and one works 8 hours (Fridays); and that this was at the request of the employee in that position.

Committee member McCurry also asked if Daniel has set goals on bringing in new businesses to the City. Daniel explained that staff member Brad Favreau has been working on absorption rates and that report will be provided to the Budget Committee once completed. He also noted that his office is diligently working on many items that are included on the Council's Work Plan for 2017.

Personnel/Human Resources

Presented by Human Resource Director, Marcella Faucher

Marcy noted that the increase in wages is due to the recent wage adjustment approved by the Council. Also, the Employee Costs line was increased by $750 to cover costs for the Employee & Volunteer Banquet.

Computer Services; GIS Division; Community Television

Presented by Chief Operating Officer, Brian Phinney

Computer Services: Brian explained that except for the wage adjustment for the IT Director, the budget has been brought in relatively flat.

GIS Division: Brian noted that this covers one position which manages the City's GIS program, as well as maintenance of the City's website. Recently, this position has also worked with and supported the GIS program for Saco, for which Saco is billed.

Overall, this budget has been brought in relatively flat.

Community Television: was not presented

Assessing

Presented by City Assessor, Frank Yattaw

Frank noted that besides the change in Dept Head wages, due to the collaboration with Saco, the rest of the budget is pretty much the same.

Committee member McCurry asked how much of the Overlay has been used in the current fiscal year. Frank said that about $35,000 has been used. Committee member McCurry suggested that funds still left in the Overlay line could be used to cover those parts of the current year budget that will go over budget. Jim cautioned that the Overlay is used to cover the taxes that are not collected. Jim explained that the City budgets for a 100% of tax collection and uses the Overlay account to cover what is not collected in current year taxes, after back taxes and lien costs have been factored in.

Mayor Casavant asked Frank how the collaboration with Saco is working out. Frank explained that things are working well and he is fortunate to be working with knowledgeable staff in both Biddeford and Saco.

Committee member McCurry asked when Frank plans to do the tax commitment for the next fiscal year. Frank said that he will commit taxes sometime after June.

Recreation

Presented by Recreation Director, Carl Walsh

Carl explained that there are minimal changes to the budget. The only notable increase is in the Temp employee wages, and this is due to the increase in minimum wage. There is also a bit of an increase in the Repair & Maintenance of Facilities line to take care of a few of the City's recreation facilities, fields and parks.

Public Works Admin/Fleet Maintenance; Public Works Road Maintenance; Solid Waste Management; Parks Maintenance; Cemetery; Engineering

Presented by Public Works Director, Guy Casavant

Public Works Admin/Fleet Maintenance: Guy noted that there is a 0.8% increase in this budget from the prior year. There has been a bit of a reduction in the Trainings/Conferences line.

Guy explained that there are a couple items in the CIP budget for this division: the expansion on the salt shed and repointing of the Public Works building.

Committee member Swanton got clarification that there is no proposed increase in personnel in this budget.

Public Works Road Maintenance: Guy noted that there is a 0.8% increase in this budget from the prior year.

Guy brought up two areas where the City Manager cut the departmental budget request:

1) The road painting line was reduced from the departmental request, which could potentially reduce some of the crosswalks getting painted.
2) The road improvement line was reduced from the departmental request, which could potentially limit the number of spot repairs that can be done throughout the City.

Guy explained that the CIP budget includes $500,000 in the paving line; although, the departmental request was $1.5 million which goes along with the paving plan to pave 7 miles of road a year. He went on to explain that even with this proposed cut, a lot of road paving will still be done in the next fiscal year with funds that have already been allocated from bonds and prior year budgets that have not yet been expended.

Committee member McCurry asked if the Public Works department has considered a different procedure/process for snow removal and plowing. He wonders if snow removal was done during the day if that would cut back on overtime costs. Guy explained that his department has tried this in the past with disastrous results. There ended up being too many issues and complaints from business owners and citizens alike. He went on to explain that when the Public Works crew works at night, they can get more done in an 8-hour period due to less traffic on the roads and there is no tying up of the roads/streets; and it really is more cost-effective to remove snow during the nighttime hours.

Committee member Swanton asked about road work on Mile Stretch Road. Guy answered that the Council will be considering and approving an Order to approve drainage construction work on Mile Stretch Road. Guy also said that he will get an updated list of road conditions to the Capital Projects Committee.

Committee member St. Cyr asked how much of the road bond has been spent and how much is expected to be spent in the FY18 budget. Guy will get the information, as well as when paving projects are expected to be completed. Guy reminded the Committee that the City coordinates road projects with MDOT so that roads are not being torn up more than once in a relatively short span of time. This project coordination takes time to tie together.

Committee member St. Cyr asked about the employee wage increases and the insurance buy back budget line. Guy explained that the employee wage line reflects a 2% increase for the Union personnel (which is part of their contract); and the Union contract allows for a $2,000 insurance buy back (whereas the non-union personnel are offered $1,500 insurance buy back).

Solid Waste Management: Guy noted that there is a 1.1% increase in this budget from the prior year; and that there are no significant changes to this budget.

Guy explained that a High Density Compactor has been included in the CIP budget since the one currently at Public Works has been broken down for a couple months now. Since submitting this CIP request, Public Works personnel have looked into the cost-effectiveness of not replacing the High Density Compactor and instead, purchasing large dumpster containers and hauling the large items to BBI in Old Orchard Beach ourselves. With all the calculations, it was determined that it would be a bit cheaper to not purchase the High Density Compactor and institute a process where Public Works collects and hauls all large items using dumpster containers.

Parks Maintenance: Guy noted that there is an 18.6% increase in this budget from the prior year. The significant changes are in the temp employees line for the downtown area and parks; costs for plantings in and outside of the downtown area; a sidewalk tractor which would be designated for the downtown area – and would ultimately allow for the potential expansion of the sidewalk work that can be done outside of the downtown area.

Jim mentioned that he and Mayor Casavant are scheduled to meet with many of the downtown business owners to talk about downtown improvements and the funding of those improvements and maintenance of the downtown. The idea is to get the downtown businesses onboard with contributing toward the beautification of the downtown.

Cemetery: Guy noted that there is a 2.14% increase in this budget from the prior year; and that this is due to additional paving to be done within the cemetery.

It was noted by Committee member McCurry that Woodlawn Cemetery has been very well maintained over the past few years and looks good. Guy agreed and said that he has a great crew working there.

Engineering: Guy noted that there is a 0.1% increase in this budget from the prior year. The only concern Guy has is that the Training/Conference line was reduced in the City Manager proposal; however, it was kept at the current fiscal year's amount.

Motion by Councilor McCurry, seconded by Councilor Lessard to adjourn.
Vote: Unanimous. Time: 7:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,
Carmen J. Morris, City Clerk