BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
MARCH 27, 2017

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

Committee Members Present: Michael Swanton, John McCurry, Jr., Stephen St. Cyr, Robert Quattrone, Jr. Michael Ready and Marc Lessard

Committee Members Not Present: Laura Seaver, Bob Mills and Norman Belanger

The proposed City Government Budget was distributed to the City Council on March 21st and an in depth overview of the proposed budget was given by City Manager, Jim Bennett on March 22nd. Prior to tonight's meeting, Jim handed out a recap/overview of the March 22nd budget workshop; a tax impact chart; a downtown district funding chart; a revised TIF Fund Analysis (which includes assumptions of parking garage and RiverWalk payments); and a printed copy of the School Budget presentation which is scheduled for March 28th.

<u>Presentation of City Department Budgets:</u>

Code Enforcement; Emergency Management

Presented by Code Enforcement Officer, Roby Fecteau

Roby noted that the FY18 budget came in less than the current fiscal year budget; and the primary reason for this is the retirement of two part-time employees, which has now been replaced with one full-time employee. With the hiring of a new Life Safety Inspector who is already fully certified and also a certified electrical inspector, the Codes Office has seen more efficiency in the way work is getting done. As an added efficiency, the Codes vehicles now all have equipment installed that allows Staff to print out reports and permits out in the field.

Roby went on to update the Committee members on the relatively new inspection program. The Codes Staff have been working through inspections of the City's apartment buildings. Currently, they have done 274 apartment building inspections out of 650 that need to be done.

New in the FY18 budget, Roby has requested a clothing allowance. With the Codes Staff often working in the field, they sometimes come into contact with certain infestations, which require a change of clothing upon their return to the office. By requiring and providing certain clothing for field inspections, the Staff could preserve their own personal clothing.

Roby pointed out that the issuance of building, electrical and plumbing permits is up from where they were last year at this point in the budget.

The Committee members asked a few questions and were able to gain clarification on some of the budget items. Jim does need to look into the Electrical Inspector wage as there are a couple of different figures in the budget book.

City Clerk; Elections/Voter Registration; Health & Welfare

Presented by City Clerk, Carmen Morris

City Clerk budget: Carmen explained that the reason for the increase in the City Clerk budget is due to a shift in the Office Manager position from the Finance/Tax budget to the City Clerk budget. Since the Office Manager works under the supervision of the City Clerk, it makes sense that the position be budgeted in the City Clerk budget. Carmen stressed that no staff was added – there was just a shift in funding.

Elections/Voter Registration budget: two elections have been budgeted for in FY18 – a Municipal General Election in November 2017 and a State Primary and School Budget Validation Election in June 2018. Both elections will require ballot printing and voting machine coding.

Additional funds have been budgeted for more election staff to assist with early processing of absentee ballots for the November 2017 election. Carmen explained that State Law allows municipalities to process absentee ballots on the Saturday or Monday prior to Election Day. At the urging of the City Manager, Carmen is going to do the Early Processing of Ballots for the November 2017 Election. The idea is to get comfortable with the process and utilize it during the bigger elections – especially for Presidential Elections.

Health and Welfare budget: Carmen explained the reasoning behind the increases in a few of the budget lines. The General Assistance Office is seeing more clients than ever and more housing and food costs are needed. In that same vein, the families that are being helped are bigger which means more assistance is needed. Mr. Bennett explained that these costs are reimbursed by the State at 70%.

Carmen went on to explain that there has been an inexplicable increase in requests for assistance with burials costs; which is why that line item request has increased. There has also been an increase in the need for interpreter services, which is reflected in the increased request in the Miscellaneous line. The General Assistance Office is seeing more and more folks relocating here from other countries – currently mostly from Arab countries, Swahili and the Congo.

City Hall Building; Community Center; Facilities Management; Airport

Presented by Facilities Manager, Phil Radding

City Hall Building: there are no major proposed changes in this budget.

Community Center budget: there are no major proposed changes in this budget.
Committee member McCurry asked if a cost comparison has been done to see if it would be more cost effective to contract with an outside cleaning service and get rid of the current custodial staff at the Community Center. Phil answered that he had done that comparison last year and will get the numbers to the Committee members.

Committee member McCurry asked who the current tenants in the Community Center are; if they pay any kind of space rental; and if not, why?

Facilities Management budget: there are no major proposed changes in this budget; however, Phil did point out that the School Department pays 50% of this budget.

Airport budget: there were no major changes to this budget.

Fire Department; Biddeford Pool Fire Dept; Hills Beach Fire Dept; Hydrant Rental

Presented by Fire Chief, Scott Gagne

Fire Department: Scott had five areas of concern:

(1) *Full-time Employee Wages* – the departmental request had included four additional personnel; however, the City Manager proposal does NOT include those four additional personnel. Scott explained that the request for additional personnel is due to the increase in call volume and the need to maintain quality service levels – which includes calls to our coastal community. With additional personnel, the Fire Dept. would be able to change the shift schedule to 12-hour shifts, four days on and four days off, making for a 48-hour work week. With additional staff and a change in scheduling, the Fire Dept would be able to have a minimum of 10 staff members on a shift during peak hours.

Committee member McCurry asked about possibly out-sourcing the ambulance services so that the Fire Dept can focus on fire suppression calls only. Scott answered that it his strong belief that municipal ambulance services are superior to privatized ambulance services and being able to provide municipal ambulance services is what's best for our citizens.

Committee member Ready stated that he could support the additional four personnel, but only as long as the Fire Dept changed their shift and staffing policies in such a way that overtime costs would be drastically decreased.

Jim suggested that Staff provide the Budget Committee with information on staffing levels if the City were to take away the ambulance service calls; as well as look at the impacts such a decision would have, which would include the loss of ambulance fees that are now collected. Jim said the numbers can be calculated, but he cautioned that the quality of care provided by a private ambulance service will not be at the same level that our citizens get now with municipal ambulance service.

Committee member St. Cyr asked if the ambulance call volume has increased, why the ambulance revenues have not increased. Jim explained that the way the auditors account for ambulance revenues somewhat askew the numbers so that a true accounting is not represented.

In this budget line, Scott had requested stipends for EMS leadership field positions.

(2) *Overtime* – the departmental request was cut in the City Manager proposed budget. Scott's primary concern with this cut is the potential inability to conduct the necessary trainings for Fire Dept Staff. The Fire Dept. depends on the overtime budget to cover costs of bringing in personnel for safety trainings. Jim explained that since some expenses have been miscoded and funds were used from this account that probably should not have been, there is a misrepresentation of true figures. Had he known this, he

may not have suggested the budget cut that his did for this line. Jim will work on obtaining the real numbers for this line and what the true overtime expenses are.

(3) *Clothing* - The Fire Dept started a gear replacement plan in the last fiscal year. At the direction of the City Council, expenses for gear replacement are now being budgeted in the Fire Dept budget and not in the CIP budget. There is a $16,500 cut from the departmental request to the City Manager recommendation. Scott stated that the Fire Dept will not be able to keep up with the gear replacement plan without the originally requested funds.

(4) *Ambulance Supplies* – as of July 1st of this year, Southern Maine Health Care will no longer provide medications for the ambulances, so those costs will need to be absorbed by the City.

(5) *CIP request* – The Fire Dept requested a fire gear washer in the CIP budget, which has not been included in the City Manager's CIP proposal. Scott feels this piece of equipment is critical to protect the gear properly and keep it in good condition as long as possible. A lot of money is spent on gear each year, so it stands to reason that it must be taken care of properly.

Biddeford Pool Fire Dept: Scott pointed out that the only change in this budget is an increase in the gear expenses.

Hills Beach Fire Dept: Currently, this budget is being proposed at $0; however, Scott noted that the Fire Dept does store equipment at this garage, and it would be ideal to heat it, even at the lowest setting on the furnace.

Police Department; Police Investigations; Communications; Animal Control Officer

Presented by Police Chief, Roger Beaupre

Police Department: Roger pointed out that the increase in employee wages is due to the addition of the Police Planner and the SBOOI (Saco Biddeford Opiate Outreach Initiative) position, which is a grant-funded position. Other than wages, there is no significant changes in this budget.

Committee member Swanton asked if the River Patrol Boat would be staffed this year, and Roger explained that he will have available officers to do the River patrol this summer.

Police Investigations: there were no major changes in this budget.

Communications: there were no major changes in this budget. Roger did note that upgrades to the dispatch equipment/radios has been budgeted for in the CIP budget.

Animal Control Officer: there were no major changes in this budget.

Committee member McCurry asked about the possibility of privatizing the Animal Control service; as well as possibly sharing this service and expense with Saco and Old Orchard Beach.

As the Committee wrapped up for the evening, Jim asked them if there was a general consensus to allow the McArthur Library to do their budget presentation at Thursday evening's Budget Committee meeting. There was agreement to allow this, but with a time limit of 15 minutes.

The Chair closed the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,
Carmen J. Morris, City Clerk