

**BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
MARCH 26, 2018**

Council President, John McCurry, Jr. called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.
(Mayor Casavant was not present)

Committee Members present: Michael Swanton, John McCurry, Jr., Stephen St. Cyr,
Robert Quattrone, Jr., Victoria Foley, Norman Belanger, Michael Ready
Marc Lessard arrived at 5:49 p.m.

Laura Seaver was excused.

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

City Government Budget – Part I

City Manager, James Bennett began by providing the Committee with answers and updated information to some of the questions brought forward by the Committee at their last meeting.

The Parks Maintenance budget (Account 21165) currently has a City Manager recommendation for \$14,000 for Part-Time Employee wages. The Committee is being asked to consider increasing the budgeted amount to \$17,500 to \$20,000, which would cover the cost of employee part-time help to maintain all the City's parks during the summer.

The proposed budget, as it has been presented, reflects \$553,602 net of new money to be raised by taxation; which equates to a \$22.12 mil rate. These figures do not take new valuation into account. At this rate, \$252,552 would need to be cut from the proposed budget to bring the budget in at a zero increase; which does not include the \$17,000 requested in the School Department budget, or what the County Taxes will end up coming in at.

Jim noted that the Part I City Government budget includes the elimination of one Public Works Laborer, starting in January 2019. This is being proposed due to the fact that the City is looking to purchase an automated waste packer, with the hope of having it in the fleet and operational by January 2019. A couple of Committee members expressed that they would like to keep the Laborer position funded for the full year, which would equate to a \$36,000 increase.

Committee member St. Cyr asked about positions that are being proposed to be eliminated and added in the FY Budget:

- (2) full-time positions to be eliminated in the Public Works budget
- Elimination of the Outreach position at the Police Department (which is a shared position with the City of Saco).
- Added a part-time position at the Police Department for polygraphing

- Also for consideration is the addition of (1) full-time position in the HR Department, which has been proposed in Part II of the proposed budget; and 8 full-time firefighters.

Committee member St. Cyr struggles with the contributions that the City is required to make towards employees' retirement benefits; namely, the rates that MPERS charges. A couple of the Committee members are interested in taking a look at what other options may be available to the City in regards to employee retirement plans, and if the City could possibly get into a cheaper plan.

Jim noted that the proposed Parks Maintenance budget (Account 21165) includes funds for the downtown plantings and two part-time employees to maintain the plantings. It does NOT include funds for the downtown clean team or for the marketing and events in the downtown.

Committee member Lessard stated that he will be looking to add \$5,000 for the improvement of the small traffic island at the intersection of Main, Water and Hill Streets. Committee member McCurry cautioned about spending a lot of money on this traffic island since the reconstruction of that intersection is scheduled within the next couple of years. It was suggested that in the meantime, some annuals/perennials may be planted there in an effort to temporarily clean up that traffic island.

Committee member Foley has concerns for the lack of funding for the marketing piece of downtown events and which would be used in support of the Heart of Biddeford. She plans to strongly advocate to fund any marketing that will get the word out about what's going on in Biddeford.

Committee member Swanton made the following comments:

- ❖ The City really needs to step up the funding of the maintenance of the J. Richard Martin Community Center and work toward saving that building. He would like to see the City spend up to \$50,000 more each year just for upgrades and maintenance.
- ❖ There are trees on both sides of Yates Street and L.B. Orcutt Blvd that are dying and he would like to know whose responsibility it is to take them down.
- ❖ He will support increasing the Social Service budget from \$57,000 to \$60,000.
- ❖ He would like to see UNE contribute more in the PILOT program.

Committee member McCurry will be looking to eliminate the Social Service budget.

Committee member Lessard would like to discuss the funding of replacement windows at City Hall and the renovation of the City Hall clock tower. He understands that these will both need to be policy decisions.

Committee member Lessard will be asking for funding for new bleachers at St. Louis Field, which will include a roof and netting system to keep fly balls from leaving the field and causing damage to neighboring properties.

In summary, the following issues/concerns/questions were expressed and Staff will work to provide answers by the next Budget Committee meeting:

1. Provide council with MPERS plan details and explain future options
2. Provide info on whether we are providing the "best" plans
3. Provide vesting schedules for the various benefit packages

4. Provide update on intersection reconstruction schedule for Water/Main/Hill Streets for consideration as council evaluates replacing roses with perennial flowers
5. Provide additional detail/clarification on downtown and parks budgets
6. Provide breakdown on planned DPW CIP and bond expenses/projects
7. Provide summary of reserves and CIP for St Louis Field
8. Consider including benefits “values” in all job advertising to help with attracting new employees
9. Information about the costs, etc. for a communications staff member
10. When we switched to the current MPERS plans
11. TIF details as of current
12. The UNE PILOT information
13. Question about the responsibility of the brushes/trees on Lester B Orcutt Blvd and Yates Street

The meeting was adjourned at 6:51 p.m.