

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
MARCH 25, 2019

Mayor Casavant called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

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

Amy Clearwater was excused.

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

Mayor Casavant began by explaining that tonight's budget meeting will be focused on setting the process for moving forward with the review of the budget. He explained that he would like to see the Budget Committee use their upcoming meetings to make the foundation and structure of the budget, including making any adjustments, prior to sending the budget to the Council for the first and second readings.

City Manager, Jim Bennett noted that the budget as proposed reflects a \$.74 increase on the mil rate, which means there would need to be about \$1.7 million cut to bring the budget in at a zero increase. He went on to outline the following policy decisions that the Committee will be asked to discuss during the budget process:

- Social and Municipal Service Agencies FY20 budget requests
- Solid Waste Management issues
- Wastewater Treatment Plant – what to do about the large receivable
- Head count/Staffing – including Fire Department request for additional personnel
- Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) funding – should ideally be in the \$2.5 million range
- School Department proposed budget, which will include an increase for FY20

Jim suggested that assuming the Committee agrees with these policy discussions, then a meeting schedule should be put together based on the above-listed items.

Mayor Casavant asked what the wishes of the Committee are in regards to the Social and Municipal Service Agencies' budget requests. While Councilor McCurry did not feel there is a need to bring in the agencies for budget presentations; most of the other Councilors did express interest in having the agencies come before the Committee to discuss their budget requests. Specifically, Councilor St. Cyr would like to get clarification from the McArthur Library on the increase in their budget request.

Councilor Swanton asked about the combining of some of the groups/agencies who seem to have the same purpose or mission. Mayor Casavant said that Planning and Development Director, Mat Eddy is currently working with a few of the agencies/groups to possibly combine some of them. Mayor Casavant thinks it would be the courteous thing to do to allow the Social and Municipal Agencies to come and present their budgets to the Budget Committee.

Councilor Lessard suggested having all the Agencies scheduled to come at one of the Budget Committee meetings.

The general consensus is to schedule the Social and Municipal Agencies for this coming Thursday's Budget Committee meeting – March 28th.

Councilor Swanton would like to see the CIP Budget before the Budget Committee is scheduled to have any discussion on it.

Councilor Lessard would like to see funds budgeted for the engineering of new bleachers and netting at St. Louis Field. He feels strongly about this because according to a Field Report that was done a few years ago, St. Louis Field is the heaviest used field in the City, and it makes sense to invest money in that field. Jim suggested that funds for this be included in the CIP Budget, which he said will be available to the Council by the end of this week.

Jim suggested having the Wastewater Treatment Plant discussion on April 8th; and he assured the Committee that the information that Councilor McCurry requested will be provided prior to that meeting. Councilor Lessard suggested that the CIP Budget also be discussed at the April 8th meeting. Councilor Ready asked to get a copy of the Field Report that Councilor Lessard referenced, preferably prior to the April 8th meeting.

Councilor Lessard asked for an up-to-date TIF schedule which demonstrates the projects that are being funded with TIF money, as well as when those projects will be coming out of the TIF. Along with this TIF schedule, Jim will also put together a simple explanation of how TIFs work along with tax sheltering.

Councilor McCurry suggested that head count and staffing levels be discussed at the April 18th Budget Committee meeting. This discussion will include discussion of the Fire Department's request for additional personnel. Councilor McCurry would also like to discuss the adequacy of staffing in the Code Enforcement Office, and possibly look at adding a part-time position in that department.

Jim asked that the Solid Waste Management issues also be discussed at the April 18th Budget Committee meeting.

Councilor St. Cyr would like to see a more realistic and solid outlook for projected revenues; however, he's not sure when is a good time to have that discussion. Jim explained that when putting together the budget, Staff uses reasonable estimates and tries to give the benefit to the taxpayer. Further, the City has four to five large projects that have the potential to bring a lot of revenue to the building permit fees line item. He would feel comfortable with increasing that particular revenue line. He went on to suggest that the additional potential revenue in building permit fees could be put into a couple different places, i.e. the CIP budget and the fund balance. Councilor St. Cyr agrees with building up the fund balance, and in that vein, if the City sees an increase in State Revenue Sharing, he'd certainly like to put some of that towards the fund balance.

Looking at the overall budget, Councilor McCurry pointed out that personnel costs alone attribute to a \$.35 increase in the budget; which does not include the new positions that are being proposed in the FY20 budget.

The School Department FY20 proposed budget will be discussed at the April 25th Budget Committee meeting.

Mayor Casavant asked the Committee if they have any other points or discussions they'd like to have during the budget process.

Councilor Lessard asked for a benchmark on where the City is in comparison with other municipalities in York County, as well as those municipalities that are most comparable to Biddeford. He would like to see median house values, mil rate, etc.

Councilor Belanger asked that when the TIF spreadsheet is put together, that it specify any money that is being kept, and what funds are being given as tax credit enhancements.

Councilor Lessard thanked the Committee for tonight's discussion and hopes that the information that has been requested from Staff will lead to a forward moving budget process.

Motion by Councilor McCurry, seconded by Councilor Lessard to adjourn.

Vote: Unanimous.

Time: 6:20 p.m.