

FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES
October 25, 2011
City Hall – Council Chambers

Chairperson Scott McMeans called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

Present: Alderpersons, Scott McMeans, Christopher T. Able, Matt Kadow, Alex Olson and Collin Braunel.

Absent: None

Also Present: Mayor Justin Nickels, Acting Finance Director/Treasurer Tony Scherer, Alderpersons Jason Sladky, James Brey, and Dave Soeldner, City Planner David Less, Fire Chief Bill Manis, City Clerk and Deputy Treasurer Jennifer Hudon, Director of Building Inspection/Facilities Manager Jim Muenzenmeyer, Director of Public Works/Parks & Recreation and City Engineer Valerie Mellon, Director of the Rahr-West Museum Greg Vadney, WWTF Superintendent Brian Helminger, DPW Business Manager Mike Huck, Recreation and Zoo Supervisor Jeremy Crees, Recreation and Senior Center Manager Denise Larson , various city employees and members of the public.

Discussion and Possible Action on 2012 City Budget

The Committee continued the process of examining the 2012 Executive Budget proposal. Alderman Scott McMeans began by stating that his objective for the meeting was to allow department heads to present their recommendations for restructuring the Mayor's 2012 proposed budget reductions.

Alderman McMeans started the conversations with Fire Chief Bill Manis. Chief Manis described a number of optional revenues in the form of Fire Pit Permit Fees, Vehicle Spill Clean-up Fees, Confined Space Entry Rescue Fees and an additional EMS mileage increase of \$.50/mile for increases to fuel costs. The Chief went on to discuss reductions to the Fire Department that he expressed concern over. Those expense areas included Employee Training, Radio Equipment, Computer Supplies, EMS Supplies, Fire Hose, Janitorial Supplies and the reduction of 3 Firefighter positions. Chief Manis had a number of concerns about how these reductions would affect the public and the Fire Department's ability to respond to emergencies. His handout also contained statutes showing the Fire Department's mandatory responsibilities and services.

Alderperson Soeldner requested that department heads adhere more closely to the guidelines set forth by the Finance Chair and provide their alternative to the Mayor's reductions while still managing their department within the limits set in the proposed budget. Chairman McMeans then re-read the instructions to the department heads for clarity.

Motion by Alderperson McMeans, second by Alderperson Braunel to forward the Fire Department Revenue Recommendations to the Public Property & Safety Committee for discussion and possible approval. Motion passed unanimously.

Director of the Rahr-West Museum Greg Vadney proposed the reduction of security guard hours to 20 hours per week in order to hire a part time (20 hours per week) curator.

Motion by Alderperson Olson, second by Alderperson Kadow to accept Director Vadney's proposal. Discussion followed regarding the museum's accreditation and the affects of one plan over the other. Motion passed 4 ayes, 1 nay with Alderperson Able casting the dissenting vote.

The next department head invited to speak was Director of Public Works/Parks & Recreation and City Engineer Valerie Mellon. Director Mellon's first issue was in regard to the Evergreen Cemetery. Ms. Mellon stated that she was proposing that the full time staff be reinstated to 40 hours per week in order to maintain plowing services in the winter and stabilize the work force throughout the year. In order to make this request budget neutral, the Cemetery would need to reduce overtime and eliminate 4 seasonal employees. Mellon stated that some service would be lost, the Cemetery lawn maintenance may be less vigorous, but there would be a stable work force. After Committee discussion, Alderperson McMeans recommended that the Cemetery budget remain as recommended in the Mayor's budget.

The second item of discussion from the Department of Public Works Director was a request to alter the capital projects budget by removing decorative street lighting from the Dewey Street project in the amount of \$50,000 and reallocate \$35,000 to the Twin Ponds Paving project. The remaining \$15,000 could then be allocated to another project or removed from the capital plan.

Motion by Alderman Olson, second by alderperson Braunel to remove the \$15,000 from the capital project plan. Discussion followed with alders conversing about what project the remaining \$35,000 was going to be used for. No decision was made at that time. Motion carried 3 ayes, 2 nays with Alderpersons Kadow and Able casting the dissenting votes.

The third DPW item related to Motor Fuel and Vehicle Repair Parts. DPW Business Manager Mike Huck explained that he felt comfortable that their department could use the more conservative fuel estimate for 2012 and transfer \$40,000 from that account to the vehicle parts line. Discussion followed concerning whether or not this money needed to be moved. The Acting Finance Director reminded those present that department heads were held accountable to their budget's bottom line and not necessarily to each and every individual line item. Also discussed was the possibility of an outright reduction to the fuel account of \$20,000. With the volatility of fuel prices, it was decided to leave the budgeted amount as recommended in the Mayor's Executive Budget. No action was taken on this matter.

City Planner David Less then presented his staffing proposal for the Planning Department. Mr. Less proposed that the GIS Technician's position be reinstated and the clerical position not be filled upon that person's retirement. In order to make the budget whole (\$8,183), the City Planner would increase revenues by charging administration costs to the housing programs within his authority.

Motion by Alderperson Able, second by Alderperson Kadow to support the changes outlined in the Planning Department proposal. Motion passed unanimously.

The WWTF Superintendant Brian Helminger was the next to present to the Committee. Mr. Helminger was questioning the \$245,988 transfer from his budget to the capital project fund. Acting Finance Director/Treasurer Tony Scherer explained that after checking the minutes the motion passed by the Finance Committee stated that only the principal would no longer be charged to the Wastewater on the borrowings and the amounts placed in the budget were the interest payments.

Discussion followed regarding the intent of the Finance Committee when the previous financing decisions were made. Alderperson Able stated that when those votes came up in the Finance Committee meetings, it was the intent to include interest since the WWTF was paying the capital project costs as they occurred. Tony Scherer clarified that \$25,222 of the total amount was for interest and principal relating to software purchases and Wisconsin Retirement System payments and that amount would need to remain in the account.

Motion by Alderperson Able, second by Alderperson Olson to remove the 2012 debt service interest payments from the WWTF budget and amend the past motion/decision to remove both principal and interest payments from the Wastewater Treatment Facility. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Alderperson Olson, second by Alderperson Able to send the expenses of \$25,222 relating to Software and the WRS pension to the Wastewater Treatment Facility Board for approval of transfers to the City's Debt Service Fund. Discussion followed regarding the appropriate accounting for moving the funds. It was decided a transfer was the more appropriate method to account for the charges. Motion carried unanimously.

Next, City Clerk and Deputy Treasurer Jennifer Hudon brought forth concerns she had with a reduction in staff and staff hours in a year when her department was required to run additional elections. Jennifer suggested to the Committee that her halftime person become fulltime in the Clerk's Office. Her reasoning being that the Police Department staff of 8.5 people could absorb the loss of a .5 FTE easier than her staff of 3.5 FTE's could absorb the loss of one staff member.

The Committee and Mayor discussed the issues of the Clerk's Office including duties, number of elections, seasonal/event staffing adjustments and statutes affecting requirements by the State of Wisconsin. Alderman McMeans asked the Mayor to look further into the staffing issues and concerns brought forth by a number of people at the meeting. He also mentioned to the Committee that he has Human Resources looking into health insurance options (deductibles etc.).

Representatives from Baird and Schenck will be at the next meeting to go over the 2010 CAFR and the TIF refinancing plan. Wednesday, November 2nd at 6:30 PM and Thursday, November 3rd at 6:30 PM were set for the next two meetings.

Motion by Alderperson Olson and second by Alderperson Able to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Chairperson McMeans declared the meeting adjourned at 7:53 PM.

Alderperson Scott McMeans
Chairperson
Finance Committee

By: Anthony J. Scherer
Interim Finance Director

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