

COMMON COUNCIL
Special Work Session Meeting

October 12, 2000

Mayor Robert Raphael presided at a special budget work session meeting of the Common Council held at 7:05 PM on October 12, 2000, at One Court Plaza.

Present:

Mayor Robert Raphael
Ald. Gary Clark
Ald. Rabinowitz
Ald. Jeffrey Thornton
Ald. Sharon Jeffer
Ald. Joseph Biviano

Also:

Police Chief Joseph Angelino
Fire Chief John Tighe
H. R. Director Deborah DeForest
Director of Finance William Roberts
Community Development/Clerk Joseph Serbin
Deputy Clerk Donna Russell
B.I.D. Exec. Administrator Melissa Downey

Absent:

Ald. Patrick McNeil

Review of Tentative 2001 Budgets – Mayor Raphael turned the meeting over to Director of Finance Roberts to review scheduled categories of the tentative budget.

City Clerk: J. Serbin briefly reviewed the makeup of the budget and noted the bottom line was essentially continuing on an even level. D. Russell mentioned that the expense line for books reflected the multi-year cycle of replacements for minute and oath of office books.

Elections: Discussion covered concerns on the age and condition of election machines and the adequacy of the budget to cover related costs. D. Russell indicated that the machines are all quite old, but they are also well maintained and that few problems have been experienced. Council members requested that the maintenance repairman be consulted for an opinion on the machines' condition. There was also a brief discussion on the pay rate of election workers. The tentative budget reflects an increase from \$6 to \$8 per hour in response to concerns for the adequacy of the rate, in light of the 16-hour day for workers. While a county-wide survey indicates that the current rate is in line with other locations, the recruitment and retention of workers has become more difficult in recent years. No decision was finalized at this point.

Planning: J. Serbin outlined transitional changes affecting the Planning Department budget in three ways: the relocation of the EDZ function from the City to the Area Corporation; the absence of a CDBG grant in place for next year since the Director's position was not filled until late May after application deadline cycles; and personnel changes involving the reassignment of Clerk's function to Community Development Director, allocation of half of the department's secretary to the Fire Department, and related cost differentials. Ald. Biviano reiterated his original concerns regarding the effect of shifting the EDZ function away from the City budget. Ald. Thornton asked if this departmental cost level will be a long-term scenario. Serbin said he expected to obtain CDBG funding in the future, and that should mitigate the second effect mentioned earlier. Ald. Biviano asked about utilizing Community Development (C.D.) funds derived from sources outside the local tax base. Director Serbin cautioned against risking depletion of such funds and endangering future economic development efforts. Ald. Biviano said he was concerned about relevant administrative costs being appropriately charged to C.D. programs for which staff support is provided. Director Serbin felt that the effect would be minimal, but that he would look into it and check with HUD officials on the permissibility. Ald. Biviano indicated that every bit of avoidance of cost impact on the property tax base, however small, could add up over the entire budget and was worth the effort whenever possible.

Business Improvement District: W. Roberts pointed out that the B.I.D. budget is not part of the General Fund budget, but is covered under the Special Grants section. It has not varied that much in recent years, with a total in the mid-Fifty Thousand dollar range. The upcoming year, however, represents a significant transition with the amended plan for a 5-year reassessment, the involvement with the TEA-21 Grant, and the Streetscape Project. He then asked B.I.D. Executive Administrator Melissa Downey to review the preliminary budget with the Council. She indicated that the B.I.D. board has not yet voted on the proposed budget, but that at this point it should provide some insight on the scope of plans for next year. General discussion followed on the sources of revenues, administrative overhead costs, and program activities. Ald. Thornton asked about the budget history, and W. Roberts replied that the programs activity of the budget had ranged over the past 4 years from approximately \$14,000 to \$20,000. He noted that the proposed 2001 budget was significantly higher at \$48,750 with the addition of new programs such as the Pumpkin Fest. Ald. Clark asked about First Night. Director Downey replied that no one has yet come forward to spearhead the continuation of that program.

Human Resources: Director DeForest reviewed changes involving the effect of a five-year step in personal services, and a continuing level of slightly higher employee physicals costs. Costs under contracted services include fees for labor attorney and PERB fees.

Attorney: W. Roberts briefly covered the budget, confirming that contracted services cover costs above and beyond the day-to-day routine activities. They may be additional fees paid either to the City Attorney for special projects such as the school tax issue on the Wastewater Facility, or to outside Attorneys for in-depth special activities. The office expense line is a flat amount paid to defray the office overhead costs incurred by the City Attorney in operating out of his own office. Roberts added that Attorney McBride's office has provided very substantial legal support services just from his involvement. Mayor

Raphael also added that all department heads have been very satisfied in every regard with the responsiveness and effectiveness of the Attorney's office.

Police Department: Chief Angelino reported back to the Council in response to the question raised at the October 9th budget review meeting with regard to possible alternatives to the acquisition of a dog control vehicle. He indicated that the practicalities of trading vehicles with Codes did not offer any meaningful or cost-effective opportunities. As for other approaches, he explained cash flow options under leasing versus buying, postponing the purchase, or entirely deleting it from the budget for now. Ald. Biviano suggested that the Council will revisit the matter when the whole picture becomes available for the General Fund budget.

Fire Department, Code Enforcement, & Emergency Squad: Chief Tighe began with the review of major line items. He summarized the organizational changes affecting the personnel services line, and the need for adequate overtime costs to accommodate injuries, sick time, and an anticipated increase in ambulance transports. Finance Director Roberts interjected that a technical correction needed to be made on the line for contracted services (A3410.4020). This line represents the negotiated 9% allocation to the volunteer companies from the fire services contracts revenue to the towns. The 2001 amount charged to the towns was scheduled for a modest increase, which in turn requires a corresponding increase in this budget line, correcting the budgeted amount to \$44,547. Chief Tighe also pointed out that the Codes department would be higher in 2001 as the result of not having an allocation charge out to a CDGB grant, such as the current year's Mitchell Street project. On the Emergency Squad, other than fluctuation in the equipment line from this year's new equipment, the only significant increase was in billing services, which reflects a planned increase in ambulance transport activity and corresponding revenue. The Council concurred that as mentioned earlier, the whole budget picture will determine any further review of the foregoing tentative department details, and concluded the review for this meeting.

Executive Session - Ald. Biviano moved to go into executive session at 8:25 PM to discuss the employment history of a particular individual. Seconded by Ald. Clark and duly adopted, ayes all.

Ald. Thornton moved to go out of executive session at 8:43 PM. Seconded by Ald. Jeffer and duly adopted, ayes all.

Adjournment – Ald. Clark moved to adjourn at 8:44 PM. Seconded by Ald. Biviano and duly adopted, ayes all.