

# Special City Council Work Session

8:00 AM  
Community Center  
Date: January 10, 2015

## ATTENDANCE:

Mayor/Council (please check) x Hanel, x Cromley, x Yakawich, x Cimmino,  
x Pitman, x McFadden, x Bird, x Swanson, x McCall, x Crouch, x Brown

## Agenda

### **TOPIC #1: Public safety Levy Discussion**

Self introductions.

Tina: describes printed material. Reviews the Powerpoint presentation. Post presentation on the website on Monday

Pitman: bubble in retirements in PD and FD?

Bird and McCall and Cimmino: questions about transitioning special unit officers into routine patrol.

St. John: reviews call/dispatch info.

Long discussion about police and dispatch staffing and dispatch responsibilities

Tina: back to presentation, things that could change the financial forecasts, questions for Council, don't expect answers today but maybe on Jan 20? Reviews Todd Buchanan email.

Yakawich: public distrusts city and how it spends money and could we freeze wages?

McFadden: levy period was 10 years, too long. Might have been supported if for a shorter term.

Pitman: why can't dispatch be its own dept, not part of FD and its funding and would that help anything? FD needs to consider different shifts if that saves money or improves service. Should FD be allowed to have volunteers? Change additional criminal charges to infractions? Does FD need to go on all EMS calls?

Hanel: have to get the message out to the public about PS and its funding, shorten the dollars or years in a levy request, levy request has to occur soon so that current Council makes the decision.

Bird: public telling her that they don't like new PD funding, need citizen supporters, need other sources of \$ - local option. Keep big picture in mind. Need to get info out to the citizens, educate them.

Tina: options available to Council.

Dextras: discusses advantage of changing shift schedules, will work more on a proposal if Council and Administration support it.

(Tom Z question: in 2011 when street assessments increased 15%, was that for both districts or only district 2?)

Pat: draft budget schedule; let us know if you want any changes. Brief discussion about Priority Based Budgeting (PBB).

Yakawich: if PD and FD have to reduce budgets in FY 18 or FY 19, are they asked to cut a certain %?

Bird: grant matches?

Pitman: graph assumes using reserves to maintain services? There are little things that we could do, such as eliminating Council contingency? Combining them may produce genuine savings.

Cimmino: defends Council Contingency, valuable tool and not a lot of money.

Hanel: overarching question: do we need to continue working soon/now on the PS and GF funding issues?

McFadden: need another election before considering laying offs.

Bird: support new levy election

Brown: consider cuts and trim the levy request.

Hanel: how many years?

Cimmino: 5 years.

Pitman: separating questions among departments? (PD, FD and Dispatch)

McCall: agree with 5 years and decrease the amounts of levy.

McFadden: agree with shorter term.

Crouch: shorter term may not be fair to our replacements – kick can down the road.

Yakawich: agree with 5 years

Swanson: also estimate the amounts for a 7-8 year levy.

Bird: everything, including GF, has to be on the table. Example is the FD shift changes, which could make the request more palatable.

McFadden: disagree with separating departments in a new levy request. Better communication and education with the public.

Bird: agree with education task and don't want to separate the departments in a new request.

McFadden: Buchanan reported that FD was not favored in the levy. Need to get more public feedback about that. Consult with Buchanan again?

McCall: need a formal campaign, with campaign funding, need to frame the question correctly, should create a citizen support committee.

Hanel: citizen committee is important.

Brown: general and ongoing info to citizens better than spending money on a PS campaign?

Bird: need someone who speaks for the city - on-going not just this campaign.

Hanel: shorter term and lower amount for levy may be supported publicly.

Bird: Council message to staff has been frugality, some fortunate outcomes but that's created the need for more money now, and all of a sudden. Don't kick the funding can down the road.

Hanel: spend unrestricted reserves for more staffing, when it's gone, ask for more money in a levy request?

Swanson: would like to see numbers for 7-8 year levy.

Brown: just shortening the number of years may not change the outcome if we don't do anything about expenses.

Pitman: remember big picture; includes all departments in the GF.

McCall: keep FD and PD together on a ballot. Good services, things like lawsuits degrade public confidence.

Brown: any advantage and possibility of getting more help from Sheriff's office or others?

St John: don't have a formal agreement to cover each other's calls, but do support each other in emergencies/as needed. Dextras: have mutual aid agreements in place with all surrounding depts.

Cimmino: staff going to work on PBB, reminder that we have a new strategic plan that could impact the outcomes. Agree with shorter levy term for ballot. Consider creating dispatch as a department, make Kindness a Dept. Director.

Tina: dispatch usually combined with either PD or FD. Predecessor reduced the number of depts. Used to have many independent departments, usually better management practice to have fewer top managers and to have divisions within the depts.

Crouch: support changing shifts for FD.

Tina: will need to est the cost and compare with adding 6 firefighters.

McCall: timing is critical, need to work out how much time is needed to develop an effective campaign. Advice from staff and Council discuss within 30 days, either a separate meeting or at a work session.

Brown: status quo funding or add personnel?

Tina: will estimate costs for both.

Cimmino: another separate session? When?

February 7 recommended.

## TOPIC #2: FY 16 BUDGET SCHEDULE

Earlier in session - Pat Weber reviews the schedule, focusing on the Council role and dates.

### Public comments:

Tom Zurbuchen, 1747 Wicks Ln.: GF personnel get wage increases, PS levy is mis-named because the levy allows higher wages or more people in other GF departments. Hard to support levy when PD responds to address multiple times – declare them a public nuisance. Loitering, drinking, fighting, and residents pay taxes to support responses to those incidents. Attended lots of the PS meetings, still talking about the same things such as 3% annual wage increases. Should not apply the same % to all benefits. Council needs to be more assertive with setting spending limits on personnel costs. Can cut the cost of levy by reducing the estimated cost of living increase. Get more exact about future cost increases and stop using past 10 year history to predict the future. Double-dipping. Polygamist being ignored.

McFadden: people should be ticketed if they misuse the emergency services.

Yakawich: Tom discussed cost of living increases in the past. Union negotiations – employee wages too high? Recites info on median ages.

Tina: compounding wages. Mediation/arbitration for PD and FD. Retirement costs, esp for PD and FD, set by the state retirement system, younger retirement ages require higher contributions.

Weber: describes assumptions and basis for them.

Terry Odegard, Heights resident and volunteer: common ground among Heights residents – worry that taxes will continue to increase, when will it end? Woman told him that she didn't get response about illegal fireworks, so won't support more money for PS when she gets poor service. Need to listen to people about services and taxes. She saw PD directing traffic instead of enforcing fireworks law. Support local option tax, support replacing legislators and governor if they won't support it. Learned a lot about dispatch today, more people need to be informed.

Teri Galuchy: 1 year resident of Billings. Seeing large city problems. What message is sent if city hires PR person? Maybe tap citizens on-going, instead of hiring PR, don't wait for a crisis.

Dave Wanzenreid, 3101 Peregrine Ln.: inherited problem from Legislature when they reduced business equip tax, temporary reimbursement to cities, local option tax supported by Chamber at the same time they want lower business equip tax. Expectations are out of step with realities of service. Need more info from city on a levy next time.

Kevin Nelson, 4635 Bruce Ave.: Legislature passes laws that reduce tax collections by city. Legislature allows cities to abate taxes and to create tax increment districts. Support economic development but at least for awhile, city should not divert those tax dollars for other things and keep and use them for PS services. How much is city saving by lower gas prices?

Other items:

Tom Z.: downtown businesses choose to be downtown, know what the costs are for street maintenance and that they get higher level of services. Charged more because they get more. Rest of city residents shouldn't have to pay for their services.

Kevin Nelson: city council needs to meet again and talk about and make decisions on snow plowing. Make a policy that meets people's needs and stick with it.

Adjourn at 12:00.