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***Roanoke Rapids City Council***

***June 11, 2014***

The City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids held a budget work session on the above date at 4:00 p.m. in the first floor conference room of the J. Reuben Daniel City Hall & Police Station.

 Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

 Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem

 Ernest C. Bobbitt)

 Suetta S. Scarbrough)

 Carol H. Cowen)

 Wayne Smith)

 Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager

 Lisa B. Vincent, MMC, City Clerk

 MeLinda Hite, Finance Director

 Tommy Hathaway, Police Chief

 Larry Chalker, Public Works Director

 John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director

 Stacy Coggins, Fire Chief

Mayor Doughtie called the meeting to order and indicated that Council felt it would be a good idea to hold a work session to discuss the budget further.

City Manager Scherer presented the following list of recommended changes to the proposed FY 2014 - 2015 Budget and indicated that the list includes items some Council members had discussed with him. He stated these items need to be discussed and a consensus given in order to prepare the budget ordinance. City Manager Scherer pointed out that these changes do not increase the overall budget totals previously presented to Council.

**FY 2014 - 2015 PROPOSED BUDGET**

**Recommended Changes - Budget Work Session 06/11/2014**

 **Balance in Account**

**Total Proposed Budget $ 14,964,878.00**

Recycling Program $ (255,000.00) 10.6999.9905 (Transfer to Recycling Program - Project)

Miscellaneous Grants $ (20,000.00) 10.6246.5700 $ 25,000.00

Wellness Program $ (7,000.00) 10.5300.3310 (Fire Department) $ 1,000.00

Part Time Salaries $ (13,310.00) 10.6778.0300 (Roanoke Canal Museum) $ -

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Dues & Subscriptions $ (450.00) 10.6778.5300 (Roanoke Canal Museum) $ 300.00

Grant Writer $ (5,000.00) 10.4200.0320 (Administrative Department) $ -

Contribution $ (8,000.00) 10.6700.5710 (Rescue Squad) $ 17,000.00

Maintenance & Repairs-Building $ (20,796.00) 10.6245.1500 (Andrews Meeting Hall) $ 13,000.00

Group Health Insurance $ (15,020.42)

3% COLA for ALL Employees $ 177,576.42

Operation Clean Sweep $ 5,000.00 10.5810.5720 (Operation Clean Sweep)

Body Cameras $ 30,000.00 10.5100.7404 (Police Department)

In Car Cameras $ 30,000.00 10.5100.7402 (Police Department)

Radio System Upgrade $ 7,000.00 10.5450.7402 (Public Works Department)

Hand Held Radios $ 3,000.00 10.5450.7403 (Public Works Department)

Ice Machine $ 7,000.00 (Kirkwood)

Floor Machine $ 5,000.00 (T.J. Davis)

Tractor - Front End $ 5,000.00 (Parks)

Roll Out Carts $ 35,000.00 (Solid Waste)

Storm Drain Repairs $ 40,000.00 (Street)

 **$ 14,964,878.00**

$ -

City Manager Scherer stated even though we are removing the recycling program at this time, he would still like for Council to consider a grant program for $13,000.00 with the City providing a match of $3,500.00 for 270 roll out recycling carts. He stated we would use 50 or so at City facilities and in parks, and the remaining would be given to the businesses on our solid waste collection route. He stated the Public Works Department could do the recycling program on a weekly or bi-weekly schedule on Wednesdays. City Manager Scherer stated he feels this is something we could afford and it would demonstrate to the State that we are trying to decrease our waste stream through recycling.

City Manager Scherer stated if we accept the $255,000.00 grant for the curbside recycling and are not able to participate this year, we could ask for an extension for FY 2015 - 2016. He stated if we are not able to participate then, we would lose the grant but there would be no penalty. He pointed out that these recycling funds will not be offered in the future.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if we would still have to put in additional monies if we decide to take the grant and use it in FY 2015 - 2016.

City Manager Scherer stated yes. He stated we would still have to purchase the carts.

Councilman Smith asked Public Works Director Chalker what he would use to pick up the recyclables.

Public Works Director Chalker stated they would utilize an existing trash truck.

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City Manager Scherer pointed out that this would not require any sorting.

Councilman Smith asked how much we would be charged for the recyclables.

Public Works Director Chalker stated they would pay us for what we take to them if the volume was enough. He stated if not, they would charge us but the charge would not be as much. He stated it is based on volume.

City Manager Scherer indicated that Public Works Director Chalker is looking at establishing two more centrally located recycling drop-off sites.

Councilman Smith asked if these costs would come out of the $255,000.00.

City Manager Scherer stated we would have to figure out a budget.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if two men would be needed on the back of the truck to pick up recyclables.

Public Works Director Chalker stated they would need at least one but they typically use two on the back of a truck. He stated it will depend on the volume.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if we foresee the State making recycling mandatory.

City Manager Scherer stated yes.

Councilman Smith stated the City tried this once before.

Public Works Director Chalker stated yes but the primary difference is that City forces had to sort the recyclables. He stated this would be a co-mingle program like the County is doing.

City Manager Scherer discussed the decrease in the $7,000.00 originally budgeted for the Fire Department’s wellness program. He stated because of the strenuous activities performed by the firefighters, he is proposing that we keep $1,000.00 for the older firefighters.

Councilman Bobbitt asked how many firefighters $1,000.00 would cover.

Fire Chief Coggins stated about four.

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Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he would recommend that it be all or none. He asked how we would determine which firefighters get the physicals. He stated you cannot predict who will have a heart attack. He stated a 25 year old could have a heart attack just as easily as a 45 year old.

Fire Chief Coggins stated in this sue happy society, lawyers would want to know what measures the City had in place to make sure our employees are fit for duty. He stated our employees are our most important asset.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if this is a new program.

Fire Chief Coggins stated they have been doing this for 15 years.

Councilman Bobbitt stated this program started with the Police Department.

Fire Chief Coggins stated they used to do the physicals with the Police Department years ago and they were done by a group out of Greenville. He pointed out that they switched to Halifax Works last year to keep it local and save money.

Councilman Bobbitt stated the program for the Police Department was unfunded years ago.

City Manager Scherer stated this decrease was recommended because several Council members had questioned the need for $7,000.00 for this program.

Finance Director Hite stated the cost for the program has been running around $7,500.00 to $7,800.00.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated we may be able to negotiate with Halifax Works for a lower price.

Mayor Doughtie asked the difference between firefighters and the men in Public Works and Parks & Recreation that run a weed eater in the heat of the day. He stated they are certainly at risk. He asked if we are doing something for one department and not the others. Mayor Doughtie stated the cost of the program is $8,000 and we are trying to be as efficient as we can while also trying to include some sort of compensation for all of our employees.

Councilwoman Scarbrough stated this comment is not meant to take away from other departments but unless you have seen the Fire Department’s training film, you have no idea of what our firemen go through. She stated they go through strenuous training and activities, and we need to consider that.

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City Manager Scherer stated it would be his recommendation to fully fund the program.

Councilman Smith asked if we could hold off on making a decision until we go all the way down the list of items to be discussed.

City Manager Scherer continued with the list and indicated that another recommendation is to remove funding for part-time salaries at the Canal Museum.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated the part-time employees at the Canal Museum help us promote the museum. He stated this was an emphasis when the Cultural Resources Leader position was unfrozen. He stated the part-time employees also help to cover when the Cultural Resources Leader is on vacation, at a meeting or out sick. He stated it is also extremely important to have part-time people to help with tours and other special events such as summer camps at the museum, the Haunted Trail, the Canal Half Marathon, and the very popular lecture series. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated we could not have these activities without part-time employees. He also mentioned the new butterfly program started by Mrs. Tina Gregory.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked how many days a week the museum is open.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. He stated they sometimes have to stay open later for Canal Commission meetings and also open when Tourism wants to bring State Representatives, clients, etc. by for a tour.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if we have always had a part-time person at the Canal Museum.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated yes. He stated we used to have at least twice as many when we first opened.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if the museum is still experiencing good attendance.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated yes. He stated they recently had all of the fourth graders in the Roanoke Rapids Graded School District, students from KIPP and a group from a college in Maryland, as well as a group from Virginia Beach.

Councilman Scarbrough stated a couple from Poland specifically came to go through the museum.

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Mayor Doughtie asked about using volunteers.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated the Friends of the Canal are very active and help with some events but they are not always available when we need them.

Councilman Smith asked the cost compared to the income received.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated since the position was frozen for about two years, those figures are not available but he estimated between $8,000.00 and $12,000.00. He stated we receive $11,000.00 from Tourism to help with operations.

Councilman Smith asked the cost to keep the museum open.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated the total budget for the Canal Museum is $79,890.00.

There was discussion regarding the decrease in the amount for dues and subscriptions for the Canal Museum, and Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated this is for professional development. He stated the full-time position at the Canal Museum has in the past participated in the Chamber’s Leadership Class.

City Manager Scherer pointed out that funding for a grant writer has been removed.

There was also discussion regarding the contribution to the Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad and City Manager Scherer indicated that he met with Councilman Smith, Chief Coggins and the head of the Rescue Squad about the Squad’s difficulty in funding a full-time position. He stated the original request was for at least $35,000.00. He stated his recommendation is to give them $17,000.00 unless Council feels differently.

Councilman Smith stated $25,000.00 was originally put in the budget.

Mayor Doughtie asked about the amount given to them last year.

Finance Director Hite stated $10,000.00.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked why they needed the funding they are requesting.

City Manager Scherer stated to fund one full-time position. He pointed out that they asked the County for $50,000.00 and were given $15,000.00.

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City Manager Scherer stated $24,000.00 was in the budget to replace two HVAC systems at the Lloyd Andrews City Meeting Hall. He stated we continue to throw good money after bad in repairing these systems. He stated we are now only asking for $13,000.00 for maintenance and normal upkeep.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if this is money left over from the repairs recently made to the building.

City Manager Scherer stated no, this would be new money.

City Manager Scherer pointed out that we were able to save on our group health insurance and put $15,020.42 back into the budget.

There was much discussion on funding the body cameras and in car cameras for the Police Department.

Councilman Smith asked how many body cameras were needed.

Police Chief Hathaway stated 28. He explained that these cameras are attached to an officer’s uniform and provide coverage beyond in car camera systems. He stated it is actually an insurance policy for the City.

Councilwoman Cowen asked if there was any information on the success of these body cameras. She stated she is leery of buying 28 of something that we have not even tried. She asked if they are successful.

Police Chief Hathaway stated some of the major departments such as Los Angeles and New York are using cameras made by several different companies. He stated the camera being used by the United States Military is very rugged. He pointed out that if we have a live on-scene video, it would save us from a lot of issues. Police Chief Hathaway stated these cameras have been used very successfully over the last seven or eight years.

Councilwoman Cowen asked how we can justify purchasing these cameras. She stated this is a lot of money.

Police Chief Hathaway stated with in car cameras, there is a gap when an officer walks away from the range of those systems. He stated with body cameras, you have real time face to face interaction.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he is sure this would cut down on accusations of police harassment.

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Police Chief Hathaway stated yes.

City Manager Scherer stated he spoke to one of the District Court Judges who indicated that juries expect this type of information and more that they see on television. He stated this would be another element to add to those cases.

Councilman Bobbitt stated he would expect big cities such as Los Angeles and New York to have these cameras. He asked about North Carolina cities such as Charlotte and Greensboro.

Police Chief Hathaway stated Weldon is considering them.

Councilman Bobbitt stated Weldon would not need but a few. He asked if this would include the detectives.

Police Chief Hathaway stated yes.

Councilwoman Cowen stated there seems to be an imbalance. She stated we are asking to consider $60,000.00 for body cameras and in car cameras for the Police Department and cannot afford $8,000.00 for physicals for the Fire Department.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked Police Chief Hathaway which would be the most important in the event he could not get both.

Police Chief Hathaway stated the in car cameras.

City Manager Scherer stated the in car cameras need to be replaced because the units use VHS tapes. He stated these units cannot be repaired and VHS tapes are extremely hard to find.

City Manager Scherer stated the radio system upgrade for the Public Works Department is needed as our radios take a lot of abuse.

City Manager Scherer stated the ice machine at Kirkwood Adams Community Center is dead. He stated it is important to replace the unit because of the amount of events held at the facility.

City Manager Scherer stated he has used the T. J. Davis Center extensively and the floors are in extreme need of cleaning. He stated the floor cleaner is very much needed.

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Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated their front end tractor is no longer safe. He stated the attachment needs to be replaced. He stated this equipment is used for mowing and spraying ball fields.

City Manager Scherer stated the Public Works Department has used the entire inventory of roll out carts and we need to purchase a load. He stated the department tries to do the best it can to repair the carts.

City Manager Scherer stated $40,000.00 has been included in the budget to continue storm drainage repairs.

Mayor Doughtie asked if there are monies in the budget for crack pouring.

City Manager Scherer reported that funding was included in the original draft budget for potholes and street repairs.

Mayor Doughtie pointed out that when we adopt the budget, it does not mean the money is in the bank.

City Manager Scherer stated that is correct. He stated we try not to spend like the Federal Government.

Mayor Doughtie asked if there is a way to gauge how we fund capital projects. He stated this money has to last a whole year. He stated if in January or February we see a situation like this year, we may have to curtail some of the spending. Mayor Doughtie stated we do not like to cut anything but one thing no one wants added is a tax increase.

City Manager Scherer pointed out that every department reviews their budgets on a monthly basis.

City Manager Scherer stated in regard to capital items, we are looking at installment loans. He reviewed the following with Council:

**INSTALLMENT PACKAGE #1 (VEHICLES & EQUIPMENT)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Department** | **Items** | **Estimated Cost** |
| Fire | Two Staff Vehicles | $ 60,000.00 |
| Police | Patrol Vehicles | $ 207,000.00 |
| Public Works | Replacement Vehicles | $ 32,653.00 |
| Street | 1 Dump Truck | $ 85,000.00 |
| Solid Waste | Rear Loader Trash Truck | $ 195,000.00 |
| Property Maintenance | Maintenance Pickup with Toolbox | $ 30,000.00 |
| Parks & Recreation | Two Trucks | $ 51,475.00 |
| **Total** |  | **$ 661,128.00** |

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**Total Amount to be financed $661,128.00, term 5 years, annual payment in arrears**

**with an interest rate of 1.85%. Annual Payment = $ 139,653.79**

**INSTALLMENT PACKAGE #2 (MAINTENANCE OF BUILDING)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Department** | **Items** | **Estimated Cost** | **Recommendation** |
| Fire | Roof Station #1 | $ 40,000.00 | $ 40,000.00 |
| Senior Center | HVAC Unit (retro fit) | $ 85,000.00 | $ 85,000.00 |
| Andrews Building | HVAC Unit | $ 24,000.00 | $ 24,000.00 |
| **Total** |  |  | **$ 149,000.00** |

**Total Amount to be financed $149,000.00, term 3 years, annual payment in arrears**

**with an interest rate of 1.43%. Annual Payment = $ 51,054.39**

Councilman Bobbitt asked when the HVAC in this building (City Hall) was last replaced.

City Manager Scherer stated one unit was replaced last year.

Public Works Director Chalker stated he thinks we are good to go for a while.

Councilman Bobbitt asked about the long-range plans for the City Hall generator.

City Manager Scherer stated his next recommendation will be to come to Council with a three to five year capital improvement plan that would include that and other items. He indicated that he feels we can afford the payments shown in each of the installment packages. He stated the first payment would not be due until FY 2015 - 2016.

There was a brief discussion regarding the types of trucks listed in the installment package for the Public Works and Parks & Recreation Departments.

Councilwoman Cowen stated she is still getting questions about the indoor pool. She stated she thought this was going to be addressed.

City Manager Scherer stated Parks & Recreation Director Simeon has received engineering proposals. He stated we are not ready to have this discussion.

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Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked about the cost for the dehumidifier.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated $250,000.00, give or take.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the facility is currently being used.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated very little. He stated we are getting into trouble on days like today with the humidity.

Councilman Smith asked about the current water temperature.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated 78 degrees but that is not the issue. He stated it is the humidity.

Councilman Smith asked about the shape of the other two pools.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated they struggle with the Chaloner Pool because of age. He stated the T. J. Davis Pool is starting to show wear and tear, and he is not sure the decking will pass inspection next year.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked about the funding for two new drug officers.

City Manager Scherer stated it was his recommendation that two new drug officers were not as critical as some of the other items. He stated he and Police Chief Hathaway discussed this and felt if there had been a serious specific issue they could be targeted to, that it would be a better use of resources. He stated all cities have drug problems but we are fortunate that our Police Department has done a good job keeping the big drug dealers out of the City.

Councilman Bobbitt stated he hopes we do not get too far behind. He stated the little town of Weldon is requesting one drug officer. He stated we need to think about what is important and be proactive.

Councilwoman Scarbrough stated she will bring this back up next year.

City Manager Scherer stated we may be able to look at this again mid-year.

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Mayor Doughtie stated we need to focus on marketing the Theatre. He stated we are over encumbered with the debt on that property. He stated we would not have to cut items if we did not have to give 30% of our budget to Bank of America. He stated we need to get serious and market the Theatre nationally so we can get Bank of America to release us from these financing agreements that no one seems to understand.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if we have had any positive conversations with Bank of America.

City Manager Scherer stated no. He stated he plans to get in front of those folks soon.

At the conclusion of discussions, Council went back through the list of recommended changes to give consensus on the following that were in question:

⮚*Keep funding at $13,310.00 for part-time salaries for the Roanoke Canal Museum.*

Councilman Bobbitt suggested that staff address how the facility is booked.

Mayor Doughtie suggested having the Canal Commission meet at some time other than at night and also utilize volunteers.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated the facility is probably not used that much during the winter.

⮚*Fund $300.00 for Dues & Subscriptions for Roanoke Canal Museum.*

⮚*Cut $5,000.00 for Grant Writer.*

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee asked if we have others that can help write grants.

City Manager Scherer stated yes. He stated some Department Heads are doing their own.

Councilman Smith stated even though he is no longer on the Board of the Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad, he would hate to see the funding cut from $25,000.00. He stated if something happens and they decide to quit, it will throw a huge burden on our Fire Department. He stated we will also have to spend money to get additional vehicles.

City Manager Scherer stated he has discussed that situation with Chief Coggins but have no definitive answers at this time.

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Councilman Bobbitt asked how they raise money.

Councilman Smith stated through the County and what they make on transports. He stated there have been some issues with billing.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked about their annual budget.

Councilman Smith stated it is about $1,000,000.00.

Mayor Doughtie asked if they owe any money on the building sold to the County.

Councilman Smith stated no.

Mayor Doughtie stated if the County would take over the billing and the City and County operated it, it could be done more efficiently. He stated he does not believe the general public knows who responds to which areas in the City.

Councilman Smith stated the City covers everything from 7th Street south and Roanoke Valley covers everything north. He stated they are first responders for Halifax EMS.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee stated he respects Councilman Smith’s comments but we only gave them $10,000.00 last year. He stated he would say no more than $20,000.00. He stated we want to be good partners and we would still be giving more than the County.

Councilwoman Cowen stated she feels we need to look at all of our needs. She stated $1,000.00 a month is a lot, and more than last year.

⮚*Fund $17,000.00 contribution to the Roanoke Valley Rescue Squad.*

There was more discussion on the body cameras and the need to see how they work before purchasing 28. There was also more discussion regarding the in car cameras with Public Works Director Chalker commenting from a technical side as he installed the current ones. He stated they all are defunct.

Mayor Pro Tem Ferebee suggested fully funding the in car cameras and a smaller number of body cameras to see how they work.

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City Manager Scherer stated we could do a test run with the body cameras.

Councilman Smith asked if the body cameras could be changed from one officer to another.

Police Chief Hathaway stated no. He stated they are programmed for one person but that is something we could explore.

⮚*Fund $30,000.00 for in car cameras and fund $8,000.00 for body cameras for the Police Department.*

It was also the consensus of Council to move forward with the installment loans.

Councilman Smith stated he rode around and looked at all of the Parks & Recreation facilities. He stated he does not know how staff will be able to maintain these facilities with a $22,000.00 maintenance budget. He asked if there was any way to increase this amount.

City Manager Scherer stated they would look into that.

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilwoman Scarbrough, seconded by Councilman Smith and unanimously carried to adjourn.

 

 7/1/2014