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The City Council of the City of Roanoke Rapids held a budget work session on the above date at 3:00 p.m. in the first floor conference room of the J. Reuben Daniel City Hall & Police Station.

 Emery G. Doughtie, Mayor

 Ernest C. Bobbitt)

 Suetta S. Scarbrough)

 Carol H. Cowen)

 Wayne Smith)

 Joseph Scherer, MPA, MS, City Manager

 Lisa B. Vincent, MMC, NCCMC, City Clerk

 MeLinda Hite, Finance Director

 Larry Chalker, Public Works Director

 John Simeon, Parks & Recreation Director

 Carl Ferebee, Mayor Pro Tem

**Presentation of Parks & Recreation Department Budget**

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon reviewed the General Fund and Capital Outlay budgets for the Parks & Recreation Department as outlined in the Council’s budget workbooks. This budget includes the following divisions: *T. J. Davis Recreation Center; Aquatic Center; Parks; Chaloner Recreation Center; Jo Story Senior Center; Transportation Grant; Miscellaneous Grants; Community Center; Library* and *Roanoke Canal Museum.*

*T. J. Davis Recreation*

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated they are requesting an increase of approximately $1,200.00 in the line item for officials because of the tremendous interest in adult athletics over the last few years.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated his number one priority is to reinstate the position of T. J. Davis Supervisor that has been frozen since 2011. He stated it has been

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a strain on his employees to maintain programming without this position. He stated there is a real demand for grants and with our continuing work with the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust Fund, our employees are stretched out really far which has caused health problems for some of them.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked what this position would do.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated this position would be at the T. J. Davis Recreation Center and would handle all programming. He stated this position would also help with administrative support and take care of all of the adult athletic leagues. He stated this was the position previously held by Alan Mitchell. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated this is a key position in planning special events such as the canal half marathon, the Christmas parade and the dog competition. He stated this position would also help to bring in athletic tournaments. He stated there have been holes and gaps in our softball program recently and it is being administered by one of our maintenance guys.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated new basketball goals are needed in gym 1 which is the original gym at T. J. Davis. He stated these are the goals that they lower for the younger basketball leagues. He stated they are starting to slip and have become a real safety hazard. He stated they have already had a few close calls this year.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated a treadmill is needed in the fitness room at T. J. Davis. He stated we increased fees when we put the fitness room in.

Councilman Bobbitt stated he thought one of several things done was to have insurance for maintenance purposes. He stated we discussed many times having plans to fix the equipment.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated the annual ID passes were increased in phases from $5.00 to $25.00 as a part of adding the fitness room.

Councilman Smith asked if the Senior Center has a treadmill.

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Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated yes. He stated the fitness center is used tremendously. He stated it was paid for by grant funds for use by seniors. He stated the fitness center is one of the more popular activities at the Senior Center.

Councilwoman Scarbrough stated it is used every day.

Councilman Bobbitt stated he thought when we received the equipment from the doctor’s office, some of it was put at the Chaloner Recreation Center.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated that is correct. He stated that equipment is still at Chaloner.

Councilman Bobbitt asked how many pieces are at Chaloner.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated two or three. He stated in the capital outlay budget, they are requesting $59,000.00 to replace the HVAC controls at T. J. Davis. He stated the system is 15 years old and it is close to failure. He stated they are only able to turn the heat on or the A/C on. He stated they cannot control the temperature. He stated they receive a lot of complaints from people renting the facility.

*Aquatic Center*

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated the pool heater at the Aquatic Center is almost beyond repair. He stated it requires constant maintenance and can shut down at any time.

Councilman Smith asked why this was not fixed when the dehumidifier was purchased.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated they are two separate pieces of equipment.

Councilman Smith stated he realizes that but if they were having trouble with it, we should have spent the money on it then.

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Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated they are requesting funds to replace the sand filter. He stated it should be changed every five years. He stated it has been 10 years and we are seeing problems with it.

*Parks*

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated they are requesting funds to purchase a front end plow for the John Deere tractor. He stated this is needed for routine maintenance on the trail and ball fields--and also to help with snow removal.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated in the capital outlay budget, the line item for tennis court renovation is more for information. He stated we are not seeking funding at this time. He stated we are currently meeting the demands but the tennis courts at Emry Park are close to being beyond repair.

Councilman Smith asked how much they are being used. He stated it is very little from what he can see.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated it goes in cycles. He stated tennis is not as popular as it was 10 years ago.

Councilman Smith stated maybe we should close the tennis courts at Emry Park.

City Manager Scherer stated the purpose of these work sessions is to discuss these types of things.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated for safety reasons, we may have to close the courts at Emry Park.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked about the condition of the tennis court at Rochelle Park. She stated she sees people playing there.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated it is dated by playable. He pointed out that there has been some discussion with the School System of them putting tennis courts on

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their property.

*Chaloner Recreation Center*

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated they are moving money around within line items but not requesting any additional funds. He did point out that the capital outlay-equipment line item was put in for auditing purposes for computer related items.

*Jo Story Senior Center*

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated they have moved around some line items to compensate for the retrofit and no longer having the gas boiler. He stated they are requesting $19,500.00 to replace the side porches on the building. He stated the building has sustained interior damage because of water leaking and the porches are dry rotted. Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated they are beyond repair.

City Manager Scherer asked if the porches need to be redone or if they can be taken out.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated he would need to check on that. He stated he does not know how they are attached.

Mayor Doughtie suggested putting up a canopy.

Councilwoman Cowen stated they do not work well, especially in a wind storm.

Mayor Doughtie stated the ones he has on his house have been through a hurricane.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked how often the other side entrance next to 7th Street is used.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated it is not used as much as the other side entrance but they do use it occasionally during certain activities.

Councilman Smith asked why we wait until everything is rotted out.

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Councilwoman Cowen stated because we do not have the money.

Councilman Smith stated you end up spending twice as much to replace something. He stated you cannot let things rot. He stated we need to think about this in the future.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated in the capital outlay budget, the replacement of the senior center bus is listed. He stated this is not requested at this time but he wanted to let Council know that it will need replacing in the future. He stated it is a 1992 bus and it is fragile. He stated the Public Works Department sees it often for maintenance. He stated it may last three years or three months.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if we could get something like this from State surplus.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated you can but generally what they are getting rid of is already old.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked about grants for this type of purchase.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated grants are tough to get for vehicles and equipment.

City Manager Scherer asked the main use for this bus.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated it is used every Wednesday to pick up seniors for bingo. He stated it is used to take the seniors shopping and to the State Fair. He stated it is also used to pick up seniors for congregate meals.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if the bus was purchased new or used.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated he believes it was purchased used.

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*Transportation Grant*

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated the Transportation Grant budget is pretty straightforward.

*Miscellaneous Grants*

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated the grants for the Skate Park and the Chaloner Walking Trail are in the budget but they have not been funded yet. He stated they are in the budget for accounting purposes.

Mayor Doughtie asked if the walking trail will be on City property.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated they are still meeting with residents about this.

Mayor Doughtie stated he does not want us to get something that will cause us to have to spend $10,000.00 to $15,000.00 a year for maintenance.

Councilman Bobbitt asked who we are working with on the Ledgerwood Concession Project.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated Tourism.

*Community Center*

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated we are moving line items for accounting purposes for operational expenses. He stated they are requesting funds for a new sound system. He stated the unit is outdated and if you are sitting in the wings of the center, you cannot hear guest speakers. He stated they have received many complaints about this. He stated the bathrooms in the center are worn and outdated.

Mayor Doughtie stated he has had several conversations with John about the bathrooms.

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Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated they would like to put up new partitions. He stated they would also like to put new tile on the floor halfway up to the wall and paint. He stated they would also like to get new sinks and do something similar to the bathrooms at the Community College.

Councilman Bobbitt asked about new toilets. He stated with all of the concerns about germs, a lot of places have the auto-flush toilets. He stated he feels that is more important than tile halfway up the wall and some paint. He stated with so many people using this facility, this should be a priority.

Mayor Doughtie stated we would be able to see a plan before work is started.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated they are also requesting a new carpet machine for routine cleaning. He stated the carpet is worn. He stated they are also requesting a partial table replacement as many of the tables are also worn.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated in the capital outlay budget, they are requesting carpet replacement. He stated this facility is used nearly every weekend and it is tough to keep the carpet clean with that much activity.

Councilman Smith asked where the carpet is located in the building.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated in the wings and on the stage. He stated the carpet acts as a good sound absorber.

*Library*

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated there are no requested changes to the operational expenses for the Library. He stated they are requesting 13 new public access computers. He stated Bob with The Computer Guy & Company has done a marvelous job trying to maintain them but he is recommending changing them out. He stated they are also requesting funds to complete the carpet replacement we started two years ago. He stated Dr. Ketoff expressed an interest in this during last year’s budget public hearing.

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Councilwoman Scarbrough asked about the line item for State Aid Per Capita.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon explained that our Library receives State aid based on our population.

Finance Director Hite stated we get $1,082.00 per month from the State.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon pointed out that the amount fluctuates year to year.

Councilman Bobbitt asked what the money is used for.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated mainly for equipment purposes.

Finance Director Hite stated for maintenance issues, toner, paper, supplies, etc.

Councilman Bobbitt stated if it can be used for equipment, we could use the money for the computers.

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated they are also requesting funds to upgrade lighting to more energy-efficient lighting at the Library.

*Roanoke Canal Museum*

Parks & Recreation Director Simeon stated the increase in the equipment maintenance is to replace some exhibits that are older and in need of repairs. He stated they have four monitors that are giving us some trouble and also some water exhibits that have issues with pumps. He stated the security system is outdated and very difficult to use. He stated the Police Department has also suggested that we install outside cameras.

**Presentation of Public Works Department Budget**

Public Works Director Chalker reviewed the General Fund and Capital Outlay budgets for the Public Works Department as outlined in the Council’s budget workbooks. This budget includes the following divisions: *Government Buildings; Public Works; Central*

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*Garage; Street; Solid Waste; Refuse; Cemetery* and *Property Maintenance.*

*Government Buildings*

Public Works Director Chalker stated energy-efficient measures put in place at City Hall are paying off with the use of LED lights. He stated they budgeted $32,000.00 for electric utilities at the beginning of the fiscal year and the actual budget is at $17,534.00. He stated he is requesting $30,000.00 for the upcoming fiscal year.

Councilman Bobbitt asked about the A/C units here in City Hall.

Public Works Director Chalker stated they have spent some money here and there but they are working fine now.

Public Works Director Chalker stated in the capital outlay budget, they are requesting a generator to replace the one out at the back of City Hall. He stated it has many, many hours on it and it is used quite regularly. He stated they are also requesting funds to replace the roof at City Hall. He stated the roof is out of warranty and needs replacing.

Councilman Bobbitt asked how old the roof is.

Public Works Director Chalker stated 15 to 20 years old.

*Public Works*

Public Works Director Chalker pointed out that in the line item for telephones and postage, they saw a spike in their cell phone billings this year. He stated they worked to get this corrected and they have received credits to the account with more to come. He stated they have increased this line item by $1,000.00 because of the cost of certified letters they are required to send out for nuisance abatement. He stated Walter Johnson is doing a great job with this and we send out many letters.

Mayor Doughtie asked about the decrease in the line item for salaries.

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Finance Director Hite explained that they had one employee transfer to another department.

Public Works Director Chalker stated they were able to decrease the line item for fuel since they have saved a ton of money by burning used motor oil. He stated they increased the maintenance and repairs budget for next year since they are already over budget for this year. He stated the Public Works building is old and in need of many repairs.

Public Works Director Chalker stated he is requesting $10,000.00 for a radio system upgrade. He pointed out that the Public Works Department supports the City’s radio system and indicated that down the road, digital will be required. He stated he is also requesting $4,000.00 for handheld radios. He stated they use these radios all the time as their primary source of communication. Public Works Director Chalker pointed out that the generator for City Hall is very important because all of the radios are based out of this building.

Public Works Director Chalker stated they are requesting $2,000.00 for computer software that will work with our cemetery records. He pointed out that the recent software conversion to Smartfusion, which is a financial software program, does not work for cemetery records and fleet maintenance. He stated the FLH software they have been using for fleet maintenance and the cemetery is very outdated and hard to manage. He stated they need this new software because this information is critical to what they do.

*Central Garage*

Public Works Director Chalker stated there are three full-time mechanics in the garage and they are all ASE certified. He stated one is a working supervisor. He stated he is requesting an increase in the line item for training, meetings and schools to keep these experienced mechanics trained.

Public Works Director Chalker stated he is requesting an increase in the building maintenance line item as they have overspent this year. He stated they are reducing the

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equipment maintenance line item.

Councilman Smith asked the difference in these maintenance accounts.

Public Works Director Chalker explained that the 1700 maintenance line item is for vehicles; the 1600 maintenance line item is for equipment and the 1500 maintenance line item is for buildings. He pointed out that they are requesting $4,000.00 for shop tools and more specialized equipment.

*Street*

Public Works Director Chalker stated this is one of our biggest divisions in the department. He stated everything in this budget is pretty much the same but they did decrease the 1700 vehicle maintenance line item.

Councilwoman Scarbrough noted the line item for maintenance of railroad signals. She asked why we have to maintain the signals.

Public Works Director Chalker explained that we pay CSX to maintain them. He stated the City has an agreement with CSX.

Mayor Doughtie asked if we can do anything about the rocks and cross ties they left behind when they improved the crossings.

Public Works Director Chalker stated we are continuing to try to work with CSX on this. He explained that they work through DOT. He pointed out that potholes are forming where they did repairs.

Councilman Bobbitt pointed out that there is a line item for the railroad signal maintenance and another for railroad maintenance.

Public Works Director Chalker stated we have two different agreements with CSX.

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Public Works Director Chalker pointed out that they have increased the budget for tires. He stated they added one vehicle that has six truck tires on it and it is time to purchase motorgrader tires which are very specialized tires.

Public Works Director Chalker stated he is requesting $60,000.00 for storm drainage work. He stated we want to get it back right and get rid of sinkholes. He stated they will spend more than the budgeted $40,000.00 for the current year.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked how the department is getting along with mapping the infrastructure.

Public Works Director Chalker stated one of the software companies they are looking at also has a mapping program. He stated the progress has been very slow going with the storm drain camera.

Public Works Director Chalker stated they are requesting $15,000.00 for snow equipment. He stated our snow plows are in good shape but we do not have one that will fit the new truck. He pointed out that they got the big plows from DOT for $75.00 but they will not fit the new truck. He stated he is also requesting funds for a stainless steel sand/salt spreader. He indicated that it does not cost that much more for stainless steel and it will last ten times longer. Public Works Director Chalker pointed out that we did purchase a dump truck/spreader from State surplus for $3,800.00.

City Manager Scherer stated we do try to find good deals.

Councilman Bobbitt asked if the $15,000.00 would be for one plow.

Public Works Director Chalker stated it will probably cover two plows.

Public Works Director Chalker stated in the capital outlay budget, they are requesting $70,000.00 for a rubber tire loader. He stated this 1988 piece of equipment is used every day and it is in rough shape. He pointed out that they get an equipment trader magazine and that is how they estimate a price. He stated a brand new rubber tire

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loader costs around $280,000.00 and that is why they shop for used equipment.

Public Works Director Chalker stated they are requesting $320,000.00 for the annual resurfacing program. He stated this amount will cover about 24 blocks/16,000 linear feet of asphalt.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked how they determine which streets to resurface.

Public Works Director Chalker stated they use a street survey conducted by DM2 Engineering. He stated they will resurface the top worst 24 blocks.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked if we are still receiving Powell Bill funds.

Public Works Director Chalker stated yes but we will lose an estimated 1%.

Public Works Director Chalker stated he is also requesting $60,000.00 for crack pouring which will be done by a contractor. He stated there is a tremendous amount of crack pouring to do and we do not have the men to do this.

Public Works Director Chalker reported on the amounts requested for alley improvements. He stated there has been an increase in granite and we will need a lot. He stated some of the alley aprons are in terrible shape and it is rough on our trash trucks and our police vehicles.

Public Works Director Chalker reported that they are requesting $32,000.00 to upgrade the traffic signal at 7th Street and Park Avenue. He stated the red light goes off before the green light comes on. He pointed out that this is the last signal to be upgraded.

Councilman Bobbitt asked how many signals the City owns.

Public Works Director Chalker stated three.

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Public Works Director Chalker stated they are also requesting $41,000.00 for a vacuum trailer. He stated this would be nice to have but it is not a necessity at this time. He stated this piece of equipment creates a suction to clean pipes out. He stated we do not need it this year but down the road.

*Solid Waste*

Public Works Director Chalker stated they are requesting $26,000.00 for maintenance and repair of vehicles. He stated they are decreasing the line items for departmental supplies and safety supplies, and increasing the line item for uniforms. He pointed out that the uniform accounts are one of the hardest accounts to keep up with.

Public Works Director Chalker stated there is a decrease in the landfill tipping fee from $294,000.00 to $275,000.00. He pointed out that when the County built their transfer station, Waste Industries offered us the same price to continue to use their transfer station.

Councilman Smith asked the difference in price.

Public Works Director Chalker stated not a penny.

Councilman Smith asked if the County’s transfer station is further out.

Public Works Director Chalker stated yes.

Public Works Director Chalker stated each year they request $5,000.00 for “operation clean sweep”. He stated we did not use the funds in this year’s budget but transferred the funds to the theatre maintenance account. He stated they do a lot of maintenance work at the theatre.

Public Works Director Chalker stated they are requesting $1,200.00 for parts for roll out trash carts. He stated they fix trash carts every day. He pointed out that they ordered about 400 trash carts for $3,500.00 in this year’s budget.

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Councilman Smith asked if the solid waste fee covers most of these costs.

Public Works Director Chalker stated yes.

Finance Director Hite stated we take in about $1.2 million.

Public Works Director Chalker stated MeLinda has an accounting of where that money goes.

*Refuse*

Public Works Director Chalker pointed out that refuse is junk and limbs. He stated they are reducing the line item request for equipment but increasing the line item request for automotive supplies for tires by $4,000.00.

Public Works Director Chalker stated the leaf machine is an important purchase. He stated there are newer regulations for diesel engines and they have increased. He pointed out that we are getting better and longer use because of maintenance and better training of people using the equipment.

Councilwoman Scarbrough asked about the street sweeper.

Public Works Director Chalker stated we have one street sweeper and four trucks with leaf vacuums. He stated they would like to get a leaf truck that can be operated by one man. He stated it takes three people to run our leaf trucks. He stated when we run the leaf trucks, it takes men from other jobs.

Public Works Director Chalker stated in the capital outlay budget, they are requesting one knuckleboom. He stated we purchased one two years ago, and it has been an excellent piece of equipment but the ladder is very narrow and extremely dangerous. He stated if we do not get this piece of equipment this year, he will request it again next year. Public Works Director Chalker stated it is not critical this year.

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*Cemetery*

Public Works Director Chalker pointed out that in his monthly report he includes how much money the City takes in at the cemetery. He stated he does not think we are at a point where the cemetery is funding itself but the day is coming after we cut the remaining trees that we will get to a point where we are filled to capacity. He stated when that happens, there will be no revenue from the cemetery but the maintenance will be perpetual.

Councilman Bobbitt asked how many grave sites we have available.

Public Works Director Chalker stated less than 100. He stated when we get low, we call our surveyor to lay out more sites. He stated this is a very careful process.

Public Works Director Chalker stated they have made some small adjustments to the line items in the cemetery budget. He stated there is a lot of activity in the cemetery especially with grass cutting.

Public Works Director Chalker stated they are requesting $6,000.00 to install a central heating and air system in the cemetery office. He stated the old unit is a window unit from a single-wide trailer.

Councilman Smith stated a portable unit was used for a time at the Senior Center. He asked why that unit could not be used at the cemetery office.

Public Works Director Chalker stated a heat pump is more efficient.

*Property Maintenance*

Public Works Director Chalker pointed out that this division probably touches more different types of things from the Theatre to the Neighborhood Resource Center. He stated the men in this division work all over the place. He stated one major increase is to the line item for maintenance and repairs for vehicles. He stated this is due to the addition of a vehicle to their fleet. He pointed out that they have already overspent in the building maintenance line item.

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Councilman Bobbitt asked what that money was spent on.

Public Works Director Chalker stated work at the Public Works facility to retool the operations there. He stated they worked on different buildings and sheds. He stated they do just about all of their own work and they also work on other City buildings. He pointed out that the Theatre maintenance is also included.

City Manager Scherer pointed out that they also did a lot of work at City Hall including a remodel of the Police ID room.

Councilman Smith stated he does not envy the City Manager. He stated this looks like an increase of about $3 million from last year’s budget. He stated it appears we are looking at a $17 million budget and it will be a job for the City Manager to cut this budget. Councilman Smith stated he would like to see a budget under $14 million.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.

 

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