



TOWN OF ASHLAND CITY Budget Meeting June 15, 2021 6:00 PM Minutes

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Allen called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Chairman Mayor Steve Allen
Vice Chairman Roger Jackson
Committee Member Daniel Anderson
Committee Member Gerald Greer
Committee Member Chris Kerrigan
Committee Member JT Smith

ABSENT

Committee Member Tim Adkins

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Ms. Reed asked to add a public forum to the agenda tonight due to employees attending and wanting to speak. A motion was made by Committee Member Greer, seconded by Committee Member Kerrigan, to approve the agenda with changes. All approved by voice vote.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. May 4, 2021 Budget Meeting Minutes

A motion was made by Committee Member Anderson, seconded by Committee Member Kerrigan, to approve the May 4, 2021 Budget Meeting Minutes. All approved by voice vote.

OLD BUSINESS

Public Forum

Jane Crisp- Ms. Crisp stated she was there about the Caldwell Park discussion and wanted to say that, even though she would love to have a 30x60 shelter, she was not sure that big of a shelter was necessary for that park. She stated that she did not believe the park would get many families, mainly hikers, so enough room for six (6) picnic tables will be enough. Further, she stated two hundred and fifty (250) square feet will be two (2) toilets and that would be plenty. She thanked everyone for the work that has been done.

Scott Sampson- Mr. Sampson stated the tax rate in Pegram was eighty cents (\$0.80) and that the county covers their police protection, their fire department was covered by volunteers, they have a sewer department, and get their water from Second South Utility. He stated that Kingston Springs had seven (7) police officers, they have a volunteer fire department, they do have a parks department, and they get their water from Second South Utility. Mr. Sampson stated Kingston Springs tax rate was seventy-two cents (0.72), Pleasant View has no property tax rate with seven (7) police officers, a volunteer fire department, no water department that they own, and no parks department. Further, he stated that Ashland City has 24-hour police protection, they have their own fire department, they own their own water and sewer plant, and have a parks department. He stated that at fifty cents (\$0.50) they get a really good deal for that rate. Mr. Sampson stated that if the council wanted him to cut his budget to cover the forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) to cover the increase, he would.

Jim Stinnett- Mr. Stinnett stated that he came here to learn what was going on with the controversy concerning coverage. He asked the council to please keep in mind that the city had a good team overall that was multitalented and there were a lot of extra things that were done by these employees.

Gena Batts- Ms. Batts stated that she worked for the school system for twenty-four (24) years and her husband retired from the post office after thirty-six (36) years. She stated that she felt that what they did was a service for the community Ms. Batts stated that they were thankful to have a job in the city and close to home. She Stated that in the corporate world, employees make more money, but people work for the government because the benefits were good. She further stated that a lot of people may take less pay because benefits make up for it.

Vice Chairman Jackson - Vice Chairman Jackson stated we have the money and we checked on that the first time. He stated that the only thing we had to do was make these employees safe and pay the employees and give them insurance. Vice Chairman Jackson stated we can afford it and we said ourselves that we were just training employees to leave and go to other places. He stated that he has a little piece of property here in the city and with as little as we are raising taxes, it isn't enough to hurt. Vice Chairman Jackson stated that the Council was costing the city more money by being there. Further, he stated that employees are worth more than the percentage raise we give them, and the departments need to put it in their budget.

Committee Member Smith - Committee Member Smith stated that he agrees with Vice Chairman Jackson that we were just a training ground. He stated that his wife was a teacher, and she didn't take the job for the money, she took it for the benefits. He stated that he would not be afraid to say that the council makes twice as much as the lowest-paid city employee. Further, he stated that he thinks we need to step up and pay these employees what they're worth.

Mayor Allen - Mayor Allen stated that we have seen times where a lot of people take jobs for benefits.

Committee Member Anderson - Committee Member Anderson stated that the insurance was horrible when he worked for the city and in his opinion, it still was. He stated that he didn't vote no for the budget because of the insurance, it was because of property tax rates. Committee Member Anderson stated that he was asked by the people that elected him to not raise tax rates, and he was keeping his promise.

Committee Member Greer - Committee Member Greer stated that he wanted to prevent us from losing more employees so we would need forty-one thousand dollars (\$41,000) for everyone to stay where they were with their health insurance.

Jamie Winslett - Ms. Winslett asked when employees would find out if they would have insurance as of July 1, 2021. She asked if the employees would need to be prepared to pay the cost of their medical expenses.

Gayle Bowman - Ms. Bowman stated that we would need to have two (2) Special Called Council Meetings, another budget ordinance, run the ad in the paper for 10 days, pass a resolution to continue on last year's budget for operating and maintenance costs only, and get the BCBS agreement passed at one of the special called meetings before July 1, 2021 in order for employees to have insurance and pass the budget.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Interim Budget Resolution

Ms. Gayle Bowman stated that this was a resolution to start on July 1 with last year's numbers. Ms. Bowman presented the council with all the budget numbers. She asked the council to set a date for the Special Called Council Meeting. Committee Member Greer requested that the meeting be at 7:00 p.m. the next Tuesday. Council agreed and the meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, June 22, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.

3. Revenue Budget

Ms. Bowman presented the council with the revenue budget showing the revenue coming in. She stated that this revenue is based on the fifty-three cent (\$0.53) property tax rate increase and the two percent (2%) increase for fire with the county with a potential increase of five percent (5%). Ms. Bowman also presented the council with a revenue budget based on each tax rate. She stated that our assessed value went down. Ms. Bowman asked the council what tax rate they would like to see in the budget. The council agreed on the rate of fifty-three cents (\$0.53).

4. Departmental Expense Budgets

Ms. Bowman presented the council with the expense budget and stated that she has broken it down to show what each department was costing, the operating expenses for what it costs to run the city, and capital outlay project costs. She stated that the city is investing in its employees. Ms. Bowman presented the health benefits to the council and explained the increase and amounts employees would pay based on their plan. She stated that the increase would be one-third of the lowest-paid employees' salary. She asked the council if they wanted the BCBS plan and asked if they would like to see the increase of the insurance pass to the employee or the employer in the budget. The council was in agreement to keep the BCBS policy and to see the increase pass to the employer in the budget. Ms. Bowman stated that hiring has been a problem, especially with our police department. She stated that she was being proactive by calling surrounding areas for their pay scales to see if our starting rate was too low. She stated that these men and women risk their lives daily and they do not make enough. Ms. Bowman stated that upon her research, she found that the city was paying their officers, corporals, and sergeants at least two dollars (\$2.00) less per hour. She stated that she wanted to raise the starting rates and it would give our current officers the new rates as well and the cost to the city would be \$95,264.00. After much discussion, the council all agreed that they would like to see the budget represent the pay increase for the police department.

5. Overall Budget Review Discussion

Ms. Bowman presented the council with budget notes for the overall budget. She stated that the notes included vacant positions and the council could decide if they wanted to hire for all of those positions. She stated that there were a few changes since the last discussion which were the costs to add Incode 10 for court, we will not get the transport van for police in FY22, an addition \$99,400 for the fire departments training grounds, the cost for Mr. Rick Gregory to update the codes manual, and the police departments increase in eAgent.

6. Caldwell Park Discussion

Mr. Scott Sampson presented the council with the costs of Caldwell Park. He stated that Committee Member Tim Adkins requested them.

OTHER

Summerfest - Mayor Allen asked Mr. Sampson about Summerfest. Mr. Sampson stated that we got four (4) nights of rain, Friday was the worst. He stated that they had to close parking on Saturday because they were full. Mr. Sampson said he got a lot of negative feedback but that it was in regard to things out of his control. He stated that the carnivals generator went down, and he had no control over the rain. Committee Member Greer thanked the parks department for their hard work.

Event permit - Mr. Sampson stated that he received an event permit from the county for the county fair.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Vice Chairman Jackson, seconded by Committee Member Smith to adjourn at 6:55 p.m. All approved by voice vote.

MAYOR STEVE ALLEN

CITY RECORDER ALICIA MARTIN, CMFO