

Meeting of: COLUMBIA HEIGHTS CITY COUNCIL
Date of Meeting: October 5, 2020
Time of Meeting: 7:30 pm
Location of Meeting: Library Community Room
Purpose of Meeting: Work Session

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL - The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm

Present: Mayor Schmitt, Councilmembers Novitsky, Buesgens, Murzyn Jr., and Williams

Staff present: Kelli Bourgeois- City Manager, Kevin Hansen- Public Works Director, Jim Hauth- Utilities Superintendent; Keith Windschitl- Recreation Director, Lenny Austin- Police Chief, Charlie Thompson- Fire Chief, Dan O'Brien- Assistant Fire Chief, Aaron Chirpich- Community Development Director, Ben Sandell- Communications Coordinator, and Nicole Tingley- City Clerk.

1. Purchase and Replacement of Non-residential Water Meter Registers

Public Works Director Hansen explained that the City currently has two water meter reading systems which are Neptune for commercial meters and Sensus for residential meters. He stated that in preparation for the replacement of all residential meters in the next 4-6 years, it is desired to have all radios on the same reading system.

Utilities Superintendent Hauth reiterated the desire to have one meter reading system noting that Sensus is the best and most efficient system that they have been able to identify. One reason is that the meters can be read from a further distance away. Hauth clarified that the proposal is to change out the Neptune radios and registers so that they can be read by the Sensus radio system.

Hansen stated that this would require a budget amendment, but funds have been set aside through the meter fee.

Mayor Schmitt asked what the estimated cost would be. Hauth explained that the Utilities department would be installing the new registers and radios over the winter so the installation is already included in the budget. The estimated cost of the registers is \$40,080 and the estimated cost to replace the radios is \$45,520.

It was clarified that this item would go before the City Council at their meeting on October 12.

2. 2021 Budget Discussion

A. Recreation

A video by Recreation Director Windschitl that provided an overview of the proposed 2021 Recreation Budget was shown. Highlights are as follows:

- Overall Recreation budget decrease of approximately 1% or \$9,212
- Increases are only for wage adjustments and fringe
- Decrease of \$10,000 to trips and outings budget as seniors are using mini bus for daytrips instead of motor coach trips.
- Recreation administration increased by \$5,000 to purchase recreation registration software
- Murzyn Hall budget decreased by \$23,000 due to the elimination of Honeywell allocation that was used for upgrades to the HVAC system.

Mayor Schmitt stated that she is amazed by the recreation programs provided for the little amount of money they are provided.

B. Police

A powerpoint presentation by Police Chief Austin that provided an overview of the proposed 2021 Police Budget was shown. He stated the largest changes to the 2021 Police Department budget are for personnel. A 29th sworn officer and a second full-time CSO are being requested based on the 2019 Staffing Study. Starting in 2021 all CSO positions will be subject to a 3-year term to allow it to be better used as a recruitment tool for police officer positions.

Austin provided a summary of the budget under the other main categories of supplies, other services and charges, and capital equipment. Some of the main points were:

- Decrease in fuel costs due to hybrid squads
- \$4,500 added for services for cop-competent therapists and in 2021 the department will start mandating officers visit with a cop-competent therapist annually
- \$5,000 was included to cover a captain's attendance at the Northwestern School of Staff and Command
- Two vehicles are being requested- one is a patrol vehicle and the other an unmarked vehicle. The budget includes purchase and outfitting of these vehicles.

Austin concluded by sharing items to think about for 2022 and beyond. These were building updates, building security, training, criminal investigations, and community policing.

Councilmember Buesgens asked how many hybrid vehicles the department has. Austin said they have two in service and two that just arrived a few weeks ago. Two more are proposed to be purchased in 2021. Buesgens asked about the life of the hybrid vehicles. Austin explained how they rotate the vehicles out and stated the main question would be maintenance.

Buesgens asked Austin about what is the reasonable number of officers that the department should have. Austin said that he would have to look into it further explaining there are a number of factors including younger officers more often having families and using leave and criminal investigation numbers.

Councilmember Williams asked about an increase in drug possessions. Austin stated that the amount seized during each incident has increased.

Williams asked about the attitude/moral of officers during these uncertain times in policing. Austin explained that the officers understand that the vast majority of citizens do appreciate the work they are doing.

Williams asked about the status of the drone program. Austin explained they are working on training and working through FAA regulations. He hopes to start using them in November.

Williams asked about the City's relationship with the Anoka County Sheriff's Office. Austin stated that the City and County have a good working relationship and work closely.

Williams inquired about the work of City Attorney Hoeft. Austin said that Hoeft is very helpful and provides great counsel.

C. Fire

A powerpoint presentation by Fire Chief Thompson that provided an overview of the proposed 2021 Fire Department Budget was shown.

For the Fire Department Budget, Thompson provided a summary of changes in the main budget categories as follows:

- Personnel Services: Regular, part-time, other, and overtime regular at a 3% increase, fire pay and training have an additional increase due to hiring of additional paid-on-call firefighters in 2020
- Supplies: Uniforms and PPE costs have increased to accommodate new paid-on-call firefighters
- Other Service Charges: Increase to out of town travel costs for Emergency Management training

For the Property Maintenance Budget, Thompson provided a summary of changes in the main budget categories as follows:

- Personnel Services: Reduction by 6% due to starting wage scale of new inspectors and new calculations of percentages allocated to the program from each department position.
- Supplies: No change from 2020 budget
- Other Services Charge: No change from 2020 budget

Thompson discussed the proposal of purchasing a new fire truck in 2021. The estimated cost is \$640,000 for a custom truck as recommended. Thompson explained the differences between a commercial fire truck and a custom fire truck.

Councilmember Williams complimented Fire Chief Thompson and Assistant Chief O'Brien.

Councilmember Buesgens stated she is support of a custom truck as it looks better to work with. Buesgens asked how the inspection program is going with two new inspectors. Assistant Chief O'Brien answered that things are going smooth despite challenges with not being able to complete internal inspections and transitioning to a new records management program.

Councilmember Buesgens inquired about if the department is staffed correctly. Thompson stated he feels comfortable with staffing levels.

Finance Director Kloiber commented that for the custom fire truck more money will be paid up front, but they are kept for many years.

D. Administration

A powerpoint presentation by City Manager Bourgeois that provided an overview of the proposed 2021 Administration Department Budget was shown. She provided highlights of each of the budgets that make up the Administration budget.

These were as follows:

- Assessing budget is proposed to increase by \$59
- Legal Services budget is proposed to increase by \$100.
- The Mayor and City Council budget has the largest increase of 11%. Increases include PERA, supplies for the 100 Year Anniversary celebrations, agenda management software subscription, and training and conferences for Mayor and City Council.
- The City Manager budget is proposed to increase by 1.8%. A 2.4% personnel increase is offset by decreases in supplies and other services and charges.

- A \$30,000 compensation study is included in the general fund department
- The City Clerk budget is proposed to decrease by 21% as 2021 is a non-election year. Personnel decreased and other services and charges increased. Increases include minute taking services, and Laserfiche organization.
- The Cable Television budget is proposed to decrease by 2.8%. A personnel services increase of 4% due to COLA and merit step increases is offset by decreases in supplies, other services and charges, and transfer out line items.

Councilmember Buesgens thanked City Manager Bourgeois for including enough funds for 2 people to attend the National League of Cities conference. Buesgens commented that a staffing study is needed.

Mayor Schmitt asked what the total budget was for the 100th Anniversary Celebration. Bourgeois noted that the budget for the 100th Anniversary is within multiple line items with the Mayor and Council budget. The majority is under the general supplies line item which has a total of \$18,000. There are also some expenses included under expert and professional services which has total of \$2,600. Kloiber added that staff could provide more information to City Council on the funding sources for the 100th Anniversary celebration in the green sheet.

E. Community Development

A powerpoint presentation by Community Development Director Chirpich that provided an overview of the proposed 2021 Community Development Department Budget was shown. He provided highlights of each of the budgets that make up the Community Development budget.

The Planning and Inspections Department budget is proposed to decrease by 2%. Other services are increasing and personnel services will be decreasing. One administrative assistant position will be part-time and less of the Community Development Director's wages will come from this department.

The Economic Development Authority budget is proposed to increase by 6.5%. The majority of the increases are from changes to personnel services. These include COLA, merit step increases, additional supervisor wages being allocated and transfers out.

The Downtown Parking fund is proposed to increase by 125%. Chirpich noted new expense increases are matched with new revenues. The budget change is due to primarily the removal of the 40th avenue ramp and change in the management structure for the Fairview ramp.

The Commercial Revitalization fund has no changes. It is primarily for funding the façade improvement grants and strategic property acquisitions.

Chirpich concluded by noting that it is difficult to predict what impact COVID-19 will have on permit revenues for 2021 and that staff is anticipating a drop in construction activity.

There was a discussion regarding the impact of the announcement of the closure of the Fairview clinic that was made on October 5, 2020 on the downtown parking fund. Chirpich explained that they do not know when the facility will close, but in the agreement that was signed they have to give a 90 day notice and still have to pay for one year from when they give the notice. Fairview has paid the \$90,000 they agreed to for capital improvements. He also noted the department is working on other revenue sources

for the ramp and bringing in other users. Additionally, another funding source for the downtown parking is funds from the T-mobile and Sprint cell tower lease.

Mayor Schmitt asked about the use of Laserfiche and increased efficiency. Chirpich answered that offering permits online will help increase efficiency. It will also be more user friendly.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectively Submitted,

Nicole Tingley, City Clerk/Council Secretary