

CITY OF SOUTH JORDAN
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING #1
WORK ROOM
January 26, 2022

Present: Mayor Dawn Ramsey, Council Member Jason McGuire, Council Member Don Shelton, Council Member Brad Marlor, Council Member Tamara Zander, Council Member Patrick Harris, City Manager Gary Whatcott, Assistant City Manager Dustin Lewis, City Attorney Ryan Loose, Strategic Services Director Don Tingey, Planning Director Steven Schaefermeyer, IT Director Jon Day, Administrative Services Director Spencer Kyle, Public Works Director Jason Rasmussen, City Engineer Brad Klavano, Fire Chief Chris Dawson, CFO Sunil Naidu, Police Chief Jeff Carr, Assistant Controller Nick Greer, Commerce Director Brian Preece, HR Director Teresa Cook, City Recorder Anna Crookston, Meeting Transcriptionist Diana Baun

5:27 P.M.

A. Welcome, Roll Call, and Introduction – *By Mayor Dawn Ramsey*

B. Invocation – *By Council Member Don Shelton*

C. Discussion Item

C.1. Fiscal Year 2022-23 Budget

City Manager Gary Whatcott reviewed a prepared presentation (Attachment A).

Council Member Don Shelton asked about contributions to savings.

City Manager Whatcott said there will be no deposits to savings this year, and no additional money for Capital Improvement Projects (CIP).

CFO Sunil Naidu reviewed a handout regarding the budget (Attachment B). The total revenue was slightly lower than expected; he noted that at the last budget meeting they discussed interfacility transfers, and how our fire department had a plan to expand those services. That revenue has been taken out of the total and will be recorded and reported separately.

Council Member Shelton asked if the employees involved with the interfacility transfers are being accounted for separately as well, like an enterprise fund.

CFO Naidu said yes, they will be recorded separately as well. He continued reviewing the budget handout (Attachment B).

Council Member Harris asked for examples of proposed items in the operations portion of the budget.

CFO Naidu mentioned Bingham Creek Park, where our share of maintenance is over \$200,000 annually. It also includes operating costs for our streets department, police department, special events, the lease

costs for buildings, and other miscellaneous city operating costs. He continued reviewing the budget handout (Attachment B), he noted that many of the numbers being given tonight will have minor changes in the future, but if any have substantial changes he will let everyone know. He noted that this budget only covers the prioritized costs listed on the handout, it does not appropriate any new money towards Capital Projects; we are not raising taxes to pay towards any of those projects. His thinking is that property values should continue to rise, which will result in a decrease in the property tax rate; the tax commission will finalize those numbers in June. He then moved on to reviewing the General Fund and the Truth in Taxation pages from Attachment B.

Council Member Tamara Zander asked if anyone or anywhere has ever discussed or implemented a lower tax rate for low income homes, offset by larger homes.

City Manager Whatcott said there is only one tax rate, set by the county. Homeowners can file for a hardship with the county.

City Attorney Ryan Loose said there is no tiered rate structure for property taxes, set forth by Utah code. There is no proof that someone in a \$400,000 home makes less than someone in a \$600,000 home, as we don't know everyone's income levels.

CFO Naidu moved on to the last page of the handout (Attachment B) and discussed the graph showing how we compare to other cities. He noted that our average home value is higher than many neighboring cities, which means our tax rate is lowered to capture the same amount as the homes in other cities that are valued less on average than ours.

Council Member Zander asked about the cities with split colors on the graph, if those were specifically the cities with special fees.

CFO Naidu said no, those represent their tax districts; their special fees are not shown on this graph.

City Manager Whatcott said many of these cities only like to show their General Fund to the public, they leave police and fire out, which is not entirely truthful.

Mayor Ramsey asked how Riverton funds their General Fund if they have special districts for other areas like fire and safety; what do they classify all of their operating costs under.

Assistant City Manager Dustin Lewis said it's done from sales tax and other revenues; if the economy were to go down, they would be in trouble.

CFO Naidu said their property tax rate was based on what Unified Fire Authority (UFA) and Unified Police Department (UPD) were charging; they took that rate and transferred it to the city, as their police and fire doesn't cost the same now. We are transparent with our information in our city, unlike many of these other cities who hide how much they are charging their residents.

City Manager Whatcott mentioned that the proposed federal tax rate number is the same as our rate back in 2000.

Council Member Marlbor said one of the reasons we are discussing a truth in taxation and a tax increase is because of inflation this year. He would like to know, since we last raised taxes, what the full inflation rate has been over the past years; we should incorporate that into our truth in taxation discussion and show that the inflation rate has been "X%" since the last raise, and we haven't raised taxes at that same rate. Explain that one of the reasons we are needing to do a tax increase is simply to capture the rate of

inflation imposed on us as a city, let alone the fact that we have grown tremendously over the last six or seven years.

City Manager Whatcott said the biggest inflated factor is salaries, there is a huge difference today from the amounts of salaries back in 2007. We made huge jumps in law enforcement salaries, much more than a normal raise, because the market has swung the numbers.

Council Member Marlor said we should talk about inflation rate, growth of the city, and the need to provide municipal services to thousands more people than we used to.

City Manager Whatcott noted that it's also lane miles, sidewalks and parks. The last time we added any money, outside of growth and the growth of sales tax, was in 2007; the last time taxes were raised in 2017 that revenue went straight to the debt for the new fire station, and didn't add any new money to the General Fund. In 2007 we held the rate and captured a portion of that, and we only took a portion at that time. It has been a long time since we actually did a truth in taxation to raise money for the General Fund.

Mayor Ramsey asked when this happened last.

CFO Naidu said he thinks it was before 2000.

Council Member Marlor said it was before 2000 when he was first on the council.

CFO Naidu said he doesn't know if the property tax rates were raised in the 90s, but he knows there was a general obligation bond in the mid-90s to build Jordan Gateway.

Mayor Ramsey asked if someone could look up the last time something like this happened, where the city was forced to deal with the same issues we are right now.

CFO Naidu said it would have been before 2000.

Mayor Ramsey pointed out that the manufacturing bill passed in 2019 that made changes to the sales tax caused us to lose \$1 million dollars in revenue. The staff has worked really hard to stretch those dollars, but you can't lose \$1 million and not feel it.

Attorney Loose said it was not a sales tax targeted bill, it was just that the manufacturing bill adversely affected where our sales tax came from.

Mayor Ramsey said that has long term implications. It may have worked out better for that company, but it hit us in a way that took a lot, and we had nowhere else to get that money back from. She also wanted to make sure we emphasize the salary increases and inflation, more than growth; she doesn't want existing residents who have lived here for a long time to think that taxes are going up because more people are moving in. She wants to make sure that residents understand new money is collected from new residents, but because of inflation and rising salaries we need to raise taxes.

City Manager Whatcott said part of the problem is how the tax code is written. Many people don't understand that we don't set the tax code, it's a state related issue. The ways we capture money, including growth money, is set by the state.

Council Member Marlor said that fundamentally we do incur more costs with new growth; impact fees typically go to very specific things, like parks and infrastructure, but more people means more services. We've always said that municipal costs for residents are higher than what we get from their taxes, so the way he sees it, we do end up paying more for more people.

CFO Naidu said he hasn't done a study on that, but the University of Utah did a study trying to project how much it costs for revenue generated by a single-family home versus a townhome versus a business. That study showed that a single-family home costs the city more than the revenue generated from the home.

Council Member Marlor agrees with the mayor's theory, and that we should emphasize the things she was discussing. However, the reality is that it costs us more for each person that moves into the city. We have to eventually be able to maintain all of the inflation and operating costs.

Mayor Ramsey wants to avoid the "us vs. them" mindset, which is already an issue here.

Council Member Shelton said it's all about service levels. We need to look at our service levels and decide if things like our police response time are where we want them.

Police Chief Jeff Carr said that for Priority One calls, we have gone up one minute and 20 seconds in the last three to four years. As the city grows, it takes longer to get places with more congestion.

Council Member Shelton said he would like to know what our response times are now, compared to two years ago and five years ago, for fire and police. What about street maintenance, are we at the same service level we were in the past two to five years. What about our parks, how has that changed. He'd like to compare those numbers and be able to show where we were, and where we are now; discuss whether we're at a place we want to be, or do we want to move back to a service level that really made our city stand out and was unique to us. If we allow service levels to continue to diminish, eventually what made South Jordan unique will no longer be there, it will be gone.

City Manager Whatcott noted that the cost of asphalt products are now 25% more; that has nothing to do with employees, but it takes money away from that fund and how much asphalt we can use. With less asphalt available, our service level drops. By adding more roads, and the city getting older, we are heading more towards a maintenance focused orientation rather than building. Thankfully we still have new growth, but once that stops we lose that revenue, same with our sales tax.

Council Member Shelton said the emergency response times will always seem too long in an emergency, so we want to keep those response times as short as possible.

City Manager Whatcott said that's the trick, we can't have an officer or firetruck on every corner; we have to constantly work to find that reasonable level of service with the money we have.

Council Member Shelton would like to see those comparisons of service levels, in every way we can measure, compared to previous years. Those comparisons will be how we show our residents we need the additional funds.

Council Member Harris said we have done a great job with not deferring maintenance, avoiding those huge costs later on. We need to explain that this has saved the taxpayers a lot of money.

Mayor Ramsey said if we hadn't kept up on our maintenance, we'd be in the same predicament Salt Lake City is, unable to catch up and keep up while the roads fall apart.

CFO Naidu said they have been keeping track of service levels, and a few years ago they presented them to the council. What we cannot measure is our employee productivity. We have great employees, and whether they get a raise or not, they get their jobs done.

Council Member Shelton agrees with us having great employees, but without competitive pay we can't keep that level of employees. There comes a point where the employees can't justify not taking the higher paying jobs elsewhere.

CFO Naidu said we made the choice to raise the police salaries just in time, who knows how many officers we would have lost.

Council Member Zander still remembers the meeting a few years ago where they sat and watched the disparaging slides regarding fire department response times. As they continue to move forward with the discussion of raising taxes, she would like to see that data as well.

City Manager Whatcott said that once we decide tonight where we want to go, they can start building those justifications and the way they will market all of the information.

Council Member Zander said it was because of those slides Chief Dawson presented that she voted yes for Station 64.

City Manager Whatcott said there is a silver lining here. They have used the CARES and ARPA money over the past few years, based on the treasury's definitions of use; we found ways to use that money to supplant our budget and pull that money out of our budget and put it in savings. That means that currently we are sitting on about \$9 million of one-time cash. With that, there are a few things we need to be thinking about. We know we have the underpass to do, we don't know how much we will get from the legislature for that. We need to build a Public Works yard on the west side of town. We are trying to cut a deal for the senior center, but if we need more square footage there would be some money for that. We have talked about working on the old community center, making it into an Arts facility with a 200 seat black box as a venue we currently don't have. That money is available for use and the possibilities can be talked about in a future meeting, those uses could include putting some in the general savings account, rainy day fund, or anything mentioned previously.

Council Member Zander said that was a brilliant way to use that money effectively, so it is no longer tied to anything.

CFO Naidu said an organization he belongs to sent some great information on revenue calculations when applying for money; he worked hard to apply and then report on how the ARPA funds were used by the deadline.

City Manager Whatcott said they did use some of the one-time CARES money to cover the law enforcement raises. He mentioned they have a hand out on the CIP (Attachment C) for the everyone to review before the next meeting. The splash pad is still in the budget, they are bidding for it right now; that money was already set aside and hasn't come out of any savings.

Mayor Ramsey is interested to see how many other cities end up raising taxes.

City Manager Whatcott said he was told by West Valley that they are raising their taxes about \$34, and this is more than just the regular adjustment.

Mayor Ramsey said the new police department in Taylorsville, two weeks ago, was given another \$4 an hour increase; that raise bumped our city from the top five in the county. Sandy City has asked her what we are going to do to cover the public safety raise, she explained it was from our one-time funds but Sandy doesn't have that extra money. Many cities are using their ARPA Funds to increase their ongoing funding.

City Manager Whatcott said we are small compared to these larger cities like West Jordan, Sandy and Provo. There is no way they have that much money continually coming in without raising taxes.

Attorney Loose said the state is talking seriously about an income tax cut which would mean the total tax burden on a resident should shift and hopefully lower their income tax to offset cities raising theirs.

Council Member McGuire thanked CFO Naidu and the staff for staying within the parameters from previous meetings, but he is worried this won't be enough. The fact that we aren't contributing to our savings concerns him. He likes the one-time money we have available from ARPA and CARES, but he doesn't want to cut levels of service to residents by cutting the amounts we add to our savings in case of an emergency. He said he would be willing to go up as high as \$75 a year for the tax increase.

Mayor Ramsey shares Council Member McGuire's concerns, she wonders if a \$5 a month average is enough. If this is a Band-Aid for this year, next year we still won't have extra money to put in savings, add to the CIP, etc.

City Manager Whatcott said he thinks that if we do this, and then hold the rate for a few years in a row, we can make things work.

Council Member Marlor said again that he thinks small or incremental adjustments are easier for residents, and would produce a lot less ire, if we gradually raised it versus a huge jump; we have to decide if we want to do it quickly and painfully, or slowly. It has to be done this year, but his thought is if we raise it 2%-3% they'll attribute it to inflation. Fixed incomes can keep up with smaller changes, but not the larger changes. He is supportive of the current plan, but if we have to go higher he knows we have to do what we have to do.

Council Member Zander agrees with concerns about whether it's enough, but she does agree with Council Member Marlor. No council in the past has had the opportunity, or the backbone, to do this. She doesn't think we need to feel the burden this year to fix everything. Let's put this in front of the public, present it with great marketing and information, and then maybe address it again in a few years. If we're going through the process, let's make it palatable to the residents. She would lean towards keeping the number where it's at since we're starting a process that hasn't been done in over two decades. Let's get the residents comfortable, present it so well that the residents get what we're doing, and then we only have to ask for small raises in the future.

Council Member Shelton said we can add to the rainy day fund from the one-time money, but it's less for the CIPs.

Council Member Harris believes it is their job to forecast for this year, not further ahead. They need to make sure they aren't deferring things and staying on top of them. As long as the choices we make today create a budget that gets us through the year, maintains the same level of service, and continues to allow us to stay on top of maintenance, we can look at supply, demand and inflation at the next budget meeting and address it then.

Council Member Marlor said most councils don't want to raise taxes, but it's the council's responsibility to take care of the needs of the residents; it needs to be addressed constantly. Truth in taxation should be done often. He'd love to do a Truth in Taxation next year and not raise taxes; show the public we are doing everything we can to hold the line and not raise taxes.

CFO Naidu said if you go back to around 2006-2007, there was a massive water study and it was discovered we needed water tanks. That study showed bonds were needed and we were able to be efficient and not raise the rates to cover them. We have shown in the past that we can work with what we have.

Council Member Marlor mentioned again that many councils have been kicking this down the road, they didn't want to do all the bonding but we finally have a council that knows this needs to get done. This council needs to set an example for future councils that it's not pleasant, but it has to be done.

City Manager Whatcott thinks this is a conservative budget, without a lot of fluff, which is what the council wanted. He thinks they are on track to do the right thing; he feels good about the budget number even though we have to raise taxes. It will keep our service levels where they should be, and if we have to hold taxes one year to collect a little bit more then we will. Everyone can see the list of positions we were unable to fill on the handout (Attachment B), but we were able to add a whole new Parks crew and Streets crew, which was needed.

Council Member Zander would still like to see a presentation from each department, showing their service levels and numbers, as she will get asked and would like to have those numbers to share with the public.

Council Member Marlor said it needs to be emphasized in the upcoming meetings what levels of service the residents expect, and what it costs to meet those expectations. When it snows they want the roads plowed, when they call 911 they want us there; we have to fund those resources to meet the residents' expectations.

Mayor Ramsey asked if it was true that West Jordan stopped plowing residential streets a few years ago.

Assistant City Manager Lewis said yes, many cities have stopped plowing neighborhood streets and cul-de-sacs.

Council Member Marlor said that is unacceptable.

City Manager Whatcott said it wasn't that long ago we were paying around \$35,000 for a police car, now we're closer to \$56,000; those are the kinds of things that have changed just in the past few years. He suggests we go back about five years to tell the story of what it was then, and where we are today.

Council Member McGuire knows we'll have great messaging, but people will still be angry and concerned; the data points won't matter.

City Manager Whatcott said we might want to wait and not be the first city to announce we are raising taxes. We should start reporting our numbers to the county so they can put things together, then we need to work on the CIP and have another meeting to discuss those projects. Then, somewhere around April and May we should get together, after collecting those data points, and discuss doing a truth in taxation in August.

CFO Naidu said we would need to adopt a tentative budget, usually that's done in March or April. Once everyone is comfortable with the numbers, he will start preparing the tentative budget. Once that tentative budget is approved and open to the public he will give those numbers to the county with the information on what tax increases we are looking for so they can give us a public hearing date.

Council Member Marlor asked if this was all public information at that point.

CFO Naidu said yes, it's available to the public once we adopt the tentative budget.

Council Member Marlor said it sounds like City Manager Whatcott is suggesting we hold off on making the budget publicly published, until a few cities have announced their plans to raise taxes.

City Manager Whatcott suggested publishing it around the first of May. In the meantime, we can still have work meetings and talk about marketing and presentation materials. He reminded everyone that they are getting a packet to review tonight regarding the CIP budget (Attachment C).

The council discussed future meetings for the regular budget and the CIP budget.

Council Member Marlor would like to address the rainy day fund, either during a work meeting or another time, to look at putting something into that fund.

Mayor Ramsey suggested a special meeting.

Everyone agreed on Wednesday, February 23 from 5:00-7:00 PM.

City Manager Whatcott said that night they will discuss the CIP, talk about the rainy day fund, and anything else the council would like to do with the savings money.

Mayor Ramsey requested that on the night we end up doing a Truth in Taxation hearing that is the only item on the agenda.

City Manager Whatcott said the county sets that date for us.

Attorney Loose said they will move other items on the agenda so there is nothing else when we get that date.

Mayor Ramsey said that we are very fortunate to have two years for this current body to work together and accomplish a lot, working towards good things. She wants to take the next two years to do the hard things, and the right things, for the residents here. It sounds to her like there is support for the presentation with the \$1.8 million proposed increase, and for the layout that has been presented. There are no official decisions being made tonight, but they really need to decide if they will hold a Truth in Taxation every year whether or not they are raising taxes; they can discuss that when they meet again.

City Manager Whatcott said that once the tentative budget is shown and approved its public knowledge, and it's usually done the first part of April.

Everyone agreed on holding another regular budget meeting on Wednesday, March 9 at 5:00-7:00 PM to have department directors discuss service levels.

Mayor Ramsey has a Jordan Valley Water Board meeting that day, she will just plan on leaving early to make it here.

City Manager Whatcott said based on the meeting in March, they will decide when to announce the raises in taxes.

Council Member Marlor wants to wait as long as possible to let other cities take that heat first.

Attorney Loose said in August 2021 a list was published showing who is doing a Truth in Taxation, there were 55 entities who held that hearing. The article discussed how many entities avoided it in 2020 due to Covid, but they had to do something by 2021.

CFO Naidu said once we start communicating with the county, the Taxpayers Association gets their report and they will publish it and contact us with their questions.

Mayor Ramsey said Holladay is dealing with a lot of deferred maintenance, including storm drains that collapsed; they had to raise a lot of money to be able to do those repairs. Our city is saving our taxpayers money by being responsible and maintaining our roads and infrastructure.

Council Member Shelton motioned to adjourn this meeting. Council Member McGuire seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous in favor; Council Member Zander was absent from the vote.

Budget Meeting ended at 7:10 P.M.