

CITY OF LACONIA - CITY COUNCIL BUDGET MEETING
May 17, 2021
7:00 P.M.

As Mayor of the Laconia City Council, due to the COVID-19 Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this Board is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen to the meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, this is to confirm that we are:

a) Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means;
We are utilizing the Zoom platform for this electronic meeting. All members have the ability to communicate during this meeting through the Zoom platform, and the public has access to watch the live YouTube video at www.laconiah.gov/laconiah, listen to this meeting through dialing the following phone number 1-646-558-8656 or participate by the Zoom app; Webinar ID: 843 8268 9368 password 816847

b) Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting;
We previously gave notice to the public of how to access the meeting using Zoom, and instructions are provided on the City of Laconia's website at: www.laconiah.gov.

c) Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access;
If anybody has a problem, please call 527-1265 Ext. 243 or email at: cityclerk@laconiah.gov

d) Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting.
In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, we will adjourn the meeting and have it rescheduled at that time.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, also please state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law.

5/17/2021 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hosmer called the meeting to order at the above date and time.

2. RECORDING SECRETARY

Cheryl Hebert, City Clerk

3. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Hebert took a roll call attendance:

Councilor Cheney YES, Is anyone in the room with you? Physically present in the Council Chamber

Councilor Soucy YES, Is anyone in the room with you? NO

Councilor Lipman YES, Is anyone in the room with you? NO

Councilor Haynes YES, Is anyone in the room with you? Physically present in the Council Chamber

Councilor Hamel YES, Is anyone in the room with you? NO

Councilor Felch YES, Is anyone in the room with you? NO;

Mayor Hosmer noted all six Councilors are in attendance and a quorum has been established.

4. STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Scott Myers, City Manager

Glenn Smith, Finance Director

Councilor Hamel lead the Salute to the Flag.

5. PRESENTATIONS

5A. Department Budget Presentation

Chief Kirk Beattie reviewed a PowerPoint presentation. A copy of the PowerPoint is part of the record.

Assistant Chief Ellington and Deputy Chief Sean are also present via Zoom.

Chief Beattie spoke about the fire that happened on Dyer Street. He stated that this was the largest residential fire in the past 25 years. There were at least 3 departments that assisted that have never been to the City of Laconia and they came up and helped that evening. It was a 16-hour fire.

Chief Beattie wanted to especially thank Finance Director Glenn Smith for all the work that he did for taking on the tasks of all the COVID expenses.

Chief Beattie stated that Administrative Fire Secretary, Trish Valovaine retired but has come back part time to help train the new employee. Also FFAEMT Charles "Chuck" Campbell also retired. And FFAEMT Meghann Hempel was only with the department for two months, but she was injured on the job and tried for 10 months to come back but couldn't because of that injury. The Chief also recognized Lt. Jeff Desrosiers and FFAEMT Mark Bileto for their Christmas Day rescue. Also in 2020 there were 3 babies that his staff delivered.

Chief Beattie briefed the Council on the COVID-19 response. Preplanning, coordination and communication were keys to Laconia's response. He spoke almost daily with the Mayor, Council, Department Heads and the Superintendent of Schools. He would like to do an after action report to see where the City could improve and where they excelled.

Chief Beattie reviewed the 2020 incident totals, response times, overtime responses, and incidents by District. 38.5% of the emergency incidents occurred while the Fire Department was handling another incident.

Chief Beattie updated the Council with the CIP projects, Weirs Station Renovation and the new Engine 5 fire truck. For fiscal year 22, the CIP requests are self-contained breathing apparatus (air packs) with a replacement cost of \$295,000 and an utility pickup truck for \$50,000. Beyond FY 22, the department would be looking for ladder 2 replacement, new forestry truck, phase II of the Weirs Station renovation (apparatus bays), replace engine 2, and to continue with the ambulance replacement schedule.

Chief Beattie is also requesting an overtime increase which would allow us to return to full time staffing, there has been an increase in health insurance and retirement, and there will be increases over the next few years for station maintenance repairs. There has been a Hiring and Retention Committee formed to help recruiting new candidates.

Councilor Lipman asked about the CIP request for a new ladder truck. Will we end up with two new ladder trucks or one? And how does this compare to other communities?

Chief Beattie explained there would be one new ladder truck to replace engine 2 in the Weirs, so there would be two total trucks in the City. There have been two ladder trucks in the City since he can remember. The surrounding towns do not have any besides Meredith. But Meredith can not get to us in a timely manner all the time as they are volunteer based. Laconia also has the buildings that require these ladder trucks. The ladder truck that we are looking for is similar to the one that we have in the Weirs. The cost of a new ladder truck that we are looking for is about \$600,000.

Councilor Lipman asked if there is any way to stretch out the replacement time for the ambulances.

Chief Beattie explained there was talk about doing a five-year replacement cycle. He said if there isn't revenue this year to put towards the 5-year cycle it could be adjusted, but he said it is still early to possibly adjust those numbers.

Councilor Lipman asked if the Grant was received to help with staffing.

Chief Beattie said that the grant has not been received yet and has not been built into the budget.

5B. Department Budget Presentation

Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Director Amy Lovisek and Matt Mansur, Assistant Director.

Assistant Director Mansur reviewed the PowerPoint Presentation. A copy of the presentation is part of the record.

Assistant Director Mansur reviewed what went well over the past year even with the pandemic. He explained the youth sports are not run by Parks, but they do use our parks. Parks was able to keep quality fields maintained for the fall sports. Also pickleball, line dancing and hall rentals went well. Parks hosted a cardboard sled race, the annual Easter event, and trick or treating was a huge success. With a lot of our surrounding States closing their beaches, those people flooded to our beaches. The grand opening of the Skate Park was a huge success and continues to be a huge hit with all age groups. The Weirs Beach Bathhouse was renovated, Bond Beach now has handicap access throughout, restoration of the playgrounds and ADA accessibility throughout the City.

Assistant Director Mansur showed the Council a comparison of the other Parks and Rec agencies across the Country. He explained the Parks staff is being spread very thin. The one he found most comparable was from Burlington Vermont. They have 16 lifeguards. Parks was looking to out source the Weirs buoy set up but \$8,000 was not feasible, therefore they will be installed by Matt himself.

Assistant Director Mansur stated the reality is Laconia has twice the number of parks with half the staff and half the funding. He understands this can not be fixed overnight but a long term solution will need to be established. They are asking for a \$40,000 increase in the Maintenance Grounds line. This will cover the use of pesticides to remove the clover and other weeds, plus more compost, equipment repairs, and help with the increase of graffiti removal and vandalism repairs.

Councilor Lipman asked if the WOW Funds are part of this budget?

Director Lovisek explained it is not in the budget. But if Parks does any work on the WOW Trails, an invoice is submitted for reimbursement.

Finance Director Smith explained the WOW Funds are segregated into their own account in our overall grants budget and then as we receive invoices they are paid out of those funds.

Councilor Lipman asked if we had the appropriate equipment to help maintain the fields at Opechee Park, especially with the overgrowth on the baseball fields.

Director Lovisek explained there isn't a specific piece of equipment for that. They do drag the fields and there are hand tools that are used. Director Lovisek will look into see if there is a specific piece of equipment that would help with that.

Councilor Lipman asked about the clean up on Bartlett Beach.

Director Lovisek explained that beach has been and will continue to be dragged until it is completely cleaned up. That specific beach always seems to pull everything up on the beach and this is something they deal with every year. It will be done before the beaches open. She is also working with DPW to fix the ruts in the parking lot.

Councilor Hamel thanked everyone at Parks for everything they do. Councilor Hamel asked if the increase of \$70,000 in the Maintenance and Grounds line item would go towards the herbicides and fertilizers.

City Manager Myers explained there was a two part approach taken. Part of that was highlighted with COVID. Last summer there weren't any lifeguards and other seasonal positions, but there were beach ambassadors. Those positions were reimbursed through COVID funds. Parks was able to get a jump start on some of the fields with herbicides and pesticide treatments was to repurpose some of those temporary dollars that we were unable to spend this fiscal year. Now what you see built in the budget is what will hopefully carry us through the year. Then next years budget some extra dollars will need to be plugged in for lifeguards and temporary positions.

Councilor Hamel would like to be able to increase the manpower in the Parks Department.

City Manager Myers explained there is money available to hire and salaries have been adjusted but the problem is everyone is looking for employees right now.

Councilor Hamel asked about the buoy process in the Weirs.

Assistant Director Mansur explained the quote was received is too much for their budget right now so he will be installing them himself.

Councilor Hamel asked about using money from the Capital Reserve Fund for the proper cables and installation of the buoys.

City Manager Myers explained we can probably get the cables, but like all departments throughout the City, we try to be creative to stretch our dollars and do things ourselves.

Councilor Cheney spoke highly about the Skate Park and exceeded his expectations. Councilor Cheney asked for an update about Perley Pond.

Director Lovisek explained her department worked with the Conservation Commission and a maintenance plan was form. The Commission is going to staked the wetland portion out so Parks knows where to maintain. They will be planting some blue iris' to add some color.

City Manager Myers explained that it is planned to meet the needs of DES and the Conservation Commission. The permit was approved from DES to dredge if need be. The permit is valid for up to five years.

Director Lovisek reiterated that the Conservation Commission specifically said not to go past the stakes that they put in but the garbage will be addressed.

Councilor Felch thanked the entire Parks crew for everything they do. Councilor Felch also mentioned maybe the Fire Department could help with the installation of the buoys.

Councilor Haynes found it very interesting to see the comparison of other parks and thinks it will help very much.

Mayor Pro Tem Haynes recessed the meeting at 8:21 for five minutes.

Mayor Pro Tem Haynes brought the meeting back to order at 8:28 pm.

5C. Department Budget Presentation

DPW Director Wes Anderson reviewed a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation is part of the record.

Director Anderson covered the General Fund, Capital Fund, Internal Service Fund, Capital Improvement, Sanitary Sewer Fund and projects.

Director Anderson explained some of the upcoming changes for the solid waste, which the Public Works Committee is working on this. The collection contract expires October 2022. There is an increase of about \$170,000. Director Anderson explained most of his increases are because of Salaries and ISF repairs or replacements.

Director Anderson explained the pain for the stripping is difficult to get right now so DPW is looking what they can do. DPW is also looking to update the snow removal system. DPW is estimating about 9.7 roads to be improved this year. DPW is still following the objectives of "keeping good roads good." There is still a five-year coordination plan for where the City wants to go with their roads.

Director Anderson explained that poles are being removed. There is also continued work to make improvements at the traffic signals for ADA Compliant. For FY 2020 there were \$34,500 in maintenance expenditures for the parking garage. There still needs to be reinforcement of the third deck.

Director Anderson stated the Sanitary Sewer Fund is coming along well with the Wimpitaukaue Rover Basin Program. They are 63% of the annual sewer budget. There was rate increases in the Sanitary Sewer in 2019, 2020, 2021. The CIP projects that were funded by the rate increase, a bond, and CWSRF loan are the Elm Street Sewer and Lakeport Projects as well as pump station upgrades. Director Anderson explained that he is working on updates to the Sanitary Sewer Ordinance. Right now a rate model update is being worked on.

The projects for fiscal year 2022 are:

Elm Street (School to Hickory Stick) and possible grant for the sidewalk and multi-use trail.

North Main Street - (Oak to Lexington) - microsurface

Jefferson (Elm to North) - overlay

Massachusetts (Elm to Sheridan) - overlay

Crescent - (Highland to end) - overlay

Mayor Pro Tem Haynes asked if the Durkee Brook project is still going to be on time? DPW Director explained yes as of right now. A portion of the water and drainage line is being worked on. The closure of the bridge is still scheduled for after Labor Day to Columbus Day.

Councilor Lipman asked if someone could explain the negative \$25,000 on page 169 in the budget book for the ISF line item.

City Manager Myers explained the ISF has been running in the red for about 12 years now. This is one account that all departments submit their fleet maintenance into. After speaking with the auditors, it can be a paper transaction to make it go away, but for right now as far as the actuals for this years budget, the shortfall was cut by over \$100,000 down to \$25,000 with the intention to have it breakeven next year.

Finance Director Smith explained the issues with the ISF is there are two components, looking back at the past 12 years and then looking forward at the structural balance. The decision was to adjust this slowly as it effects the General Fund. The ISF for accounting purposes is two separate funds, one is vehicle repair and the other is vehicle replacement.

Councilor Lipman would like to know when the last time a comprehensive review was done of any equipment we have that we may not necessarily need or use.

Finance Director Smith stated a Fixed Asset list is sent out to each Department annually and as for vehicles those are disposed of on an annual basis.

Councilor Lipman would like to make sure we are carrying on equipment or vehicles that we don't need to be.

Councilor Manager Myers stated that we can work with Jon Gardner in purchasing to get something put together.

Councilor Hamel is curious if some of the deficit could be that when departments request to purchase certain vehicles and those are approved and then they purchase something completely different. Councilor Hamel noticed a new vactor truck that cost about \$400,000 and is wondering how that purchase came about.

City Manager Myers explained that when departments request money for certain large money purchases, it is requested of the Council. The vactor was purchased with approval by the Council that they budgeted for over the past several years. City Manager Myers wants to make it very clear that Department Heads do not just go out and purchase vehicles without prior approval. He stated that big - ticketed items are usually spread out over a few years so the large amount doesn't hit one fiscal year budget.

Councilor Hamel appreciates the sod repair on Lafayette Street but was wondering if it could be staked so people don't drive on it.

Director Anderson said that is planned this week.

6. Any other business that may come before the Council

Councilor Cheney is hoping to have in person meetings beginning next Monday and would like the Mayor Pro Tem to discuss this with Mayor Hosmer.

City Manager Myers explained there has been some updated guidance from the CDC, which caught some of our State Public Health Officials off guard. City Manager Myers will be meeting with senior personal on Thursday to discuss this further and he would like to get a feeling of their comfort level.

Councilor Lipman doesn't mind the in person meetings but the social distancing within the Council Chambers would need to be addressed.

Councilor Cheney does understand Councilor Lipman's concerns.

Mayor Pro Tem Haynes will discuss this with Mayor Hosmer.

7. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to come before the Council and hearing no objection, Mayor Hosmer adjourned the meeting at 9:13 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Cheryl Hebert, City Clerk

MINUTES OF THIS MEETING WERE APPROVED BY COUNCIL ON MAY 24, 2021