

BUDGET COMMITTEE
Wednesday, August 7, 2013 @ 4:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Julius Alsandor, Chairman, Blair Briggs, Reginald Tatum, and Jacqueline Martin

ABSENT: None

1. Discussion regarding the fiscal year 2013-2014 budget. Ms. Karen Frank, City Clerk, gave an overview of the 2012-2013 amended budget. She stated that the Fire Department and the Police Department will more than likely go over their budget for the 2012-2013 fiscal year. She stated that the City will probably maintain a flat budget for the proposed 2013-2014 budget. She pointed out that the 2 ½ percent increase for Municipal employees from last fiscal year, the 2 ½ percent increase for Municipal employees for this fiscal year, and the 2 percent state mandate for the Fire Department are the only increases being presented by the Mayor in the proposed next fiscal year budget. Also included in the 2013-2014 budget is the \$50.00 more per month per employee increase for group health insurance due to significant losses the City has been incurring over the last few years. Alderman Tatum pointed out that at the last Council meeting they voted for an increase for everyone, not just for the municipal employees. He wanted to know why that was not included in the budget since the Mayor could not veto it. Ms. Frank stated that the figures she gave are what the Mayor is proposing.

City Court has an increase of \$10,000 for health insurance and retirement benefits.

City Marshal will remain the same as last year's budget

Purchasing has an increase of \$10,000 for health insurance, retirement benefits, and 5 percent increase.

Municipal Civil Service has an increase in health insurance, retirement benefits and 5 percent increase but her budget reflects a decrease because there is money left over in her attorney's fees line item.

Fire and Police Civil Service had an increase in their amended budget of \$2,500 due to attorney's fees.

City Planning (Executive) includes payments to Boys & Girls Club (\$30,000 annually), Council on Aging (\$6,000 annually), rent for DMV office, City Attorney fees and Auditing Firm fees, and repairs and maintenance for City Hall and security cameras. Proposed 2013-2014 budget will reflect \$15,000 annually for Boys & Girls Club. Auditing Firm fees were originally taken from Executive but will be taken from City Planning beginning with 2013-2014 budget. There are no employees in the City Planning department. Alderman Briggs suggested that this would be a good department to look at if they need to make some cuts to fund other departments. Ms. Frank disagreed because she stated that there will have to be a lot of repairs made to City Hall in the future due to the leaking roof.

Police original budget was amended last month by \$25,000. Their budget will have an increase in health insurance. Proposed budget will be \$5.53 million.

Fire amended budget includes cost for Chief's new vehicle. Proposed budget will have an increase in retirement benefits and 2 percent state-mandated increase. Chief Cahanin stated that he has issues with his employees not receiving the whole increase amount and with the fact that employees who have been with the City less than three years or more than 20 years will not receive anything. Alderman Reginald Tatum pointed out again that the Council voted to pay all employees the 2 ½ percent increase and that it is law and should be included in the budget. Ms. Frank pointed out that additional monies for pay increases for the Fire and Police Departments will have to come from the City's fund balances. Chief Cahanin stated that they should start laying off employees in order to fund the pay increases and he would start with his department. Alderman Julius Alsandor stated that in three years they have not laid off employees—they have cut back to the bare minimum. Assistant Fire Chief John Saucier addressed the Board and read a statement saying that in 1966 the Civil Service Board was created for the City. Every administrator before them has given a 2 ½ percent to all City employees. He cited the fact that a former employee sued the City in a class action suit for back pay because they did not pay the 2 ½ percent increase for 3 years. He emphasized that the employees are put last when it comes to the budget. He stated that the employees should be taken care of from the top of the budget and not from the bottom with what is left. He pointed out that it is stated that the increase is for all employees. Alderman Tatum pointed out that the 17 illegally-appointed unclassified employees salaries equate to \$400,000 per year and that money could have been used to fund the pay increases for all of the employees. Police Chief Perry Gallow stated that he is constantly losing employees to other law enforcement agencies and private agencies because of pay issues. He stated that morale is at an all-time low now. Alderman Blair Briggs stated that they should meet the Fire and Police Departments halfway by giving an additional \$15,000 to Fire and an additional \$30,000 to Police. Chief Cahanin stated that he will not replace the employees who will be retiring soon so that he can have more money in his budget. Mr. Kim Fontenot stated that he does not think this is fair because the Municipal Civil Service employees cannot do this. Alderman Alsandor stated that he is not against raises but he wants to know how they will sustain it. He agrees that the numbers for the increase that was approved should be reflected in the budget even if they are vetoed later.

Street proposed budget needs an additional \$303,000 for improvement costs (Derailment costs - \$27,000; Heather Street Bridge, Sandoz Street Bridge, and Mouton Street Bridge repairs - \$236,000; and Karma Schad Culvert repairs - \$40,000). Mr. Fontenot stated that in regard to the 2 ½ percent increase, he feels that the City is obligated to pay Municipal Civil Service employees and are not obligated to pay Fire and Police but it is the right thing to do. Mr. Saucier stated that the Civil Service rules stated "all" employees. Ms. Linda Walker stated that these are the rules of the "Municipal Civil Service" which governs civil service employees. She pointed out that the Fire and Police Civil Service rules state that their employees can receive 365 days of sick leave per year but the Municipal Civil Service employees only receive 96 hours per year.

Municipal Garage budget will have an increase in health insurance and 5 percent increase and includes three full-time employees and one part-time employee.

Code Enforcement proposed budget is \$343,000 and reflects increases in health insurance, retirement benefits, and 5 percent increase. Code has lost several employees and does not have overtime costs. Ms. Margaret Doucet stated that the numbers need to reflect replacement of two employees—1 assistant and 1 laborer.

City Court – Ms. LaVonya Malveaux was in attendance but had to leave before her department was addressed.

Parks and Recreation proposed budget will have increases in health insurance, and 5 percent increase and includes funds for operation of North Park swimming pool.

Tourism proposed budget includes \$30,000 for Spice Festival fees. Alderman Briggs feels that festivals should be run by private associations and not by the City and this would free up \$30,000 for employee raises. Alderman Tatum asked for the revenue figures for the prior year's Spice Festival. Ms. Frank will get the revenue figures from last year's Spice Festival to give to the Board.

Museum – Ms. Delores Guillory was in attendance but had to leave before her department was addressed. Alderman Briggs stated that this department had approximately \$30,000 left over in their amended budget last fiscal year and was looking for something to spend it on. Ms. Frank pointed out that the Museum's proposed budget has been reduced by approximately \$3,000. Ms. Laura Balthazar stated that the additional funds will be used for more exhibits.

Community and Economic Development has one full-time employee and one contract employee and includes Keep Opelousas Beautiful program. Projects in this program are funded by a refundable grant which the City has received.

At this time, Ms. Linda Walker asked the Fire Chief what year the Fire and Police Civil Service Board was established. No one had the answer to that question. Alderman Alsandor asked Ms. Walker what was the reason behind that question. Ms. Walker stated that Fire and Police employees stated they were included in Municipal Civil Service when it was created in 1966 and if Fire and Police Civil Service was created later on, then why would the Fire and Police employees still be included under Municipal Civil Service rules.

Alderman Blair Briggs stated that they would need to meet again to go over the budget figures. Ms. Frank stated that she would bring all of this information to the Mayor for review. Alderman Alsandor suggested meeting again on Tuesday, August 13, 2013 at 4:30 p.m.

On a motion by Alderwoman Jacqueline Martin, seconded by Alderman Reginald Tatum and unanimously carried, it was resolved to adjourn until **Tuesday, August 13, 2013** at 4:30 p.m. for another Budget Committee Meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.