

BUDGET COMMITTEE
Wednesday, July 10, 2013 @ 4:00 P.M.

PRESENT: Julius Alsandor, Chairman, Blair Briggs, Reginald Tatum, and Jacqueline Martin
ABSENT: None

1. Presentation by Mr. Clarence Watson, Parks Director, regarding fee increases for the Parks summer programs. Mr. Watson presented a fee increase schedule. He provided fee schedules from various organizations and pointed out that these organizations do not even provide the equipment for the players. Mr. Watson stated that the City supplies all of the equipment for the summer programs. He is proposing an increase of \$10.00 on Basketball, Baseball and Flag Football fees per child and an increase of \$5.00 per week for tennis lessons. The fee for Contact Football would remain at \$75.00 but the \$25.00 refundable fee would no longer be given back to the player at the end of the program. The new registration fees would be as follows:

Basketball and Baseball fees - \$25.00

Flag Football - \$25.00

Tennis lessons - \$8.00 per week

Contact Football – \$75.00 with no refundable deposit

Mr. Kerstan Major stated that he is on the Parks and Recreation Commission and he has a concern about the fees. He stated that everybody else offer more than we do. He is concerned that it will create a hardship on some families with more than one child participating. He feels that they should go up \$5.00 every few years and not all at once.

On a motion by Alderman Reginald Tatum, seconded by Alderwoman Jacqueline Martin, it was recommended to approve the proposed fee increases for the Parks summer programs and forward to the full council for approval. All in favor.

2. Discussion regarding the request for suspension of the 2 ½ percent cost of living increase for the fiscal year 2013-2014 and request to go before the Municipal Civil Service Commission for approval. Ms. Laura Balthazar, Chief Administrative Officer, read the following memo from Mayor Cravins:

To: All Department Heads

From: Mayor Donald R. Cravins, Sr. 

Reference: Civil Service Rule XII, Section 5.2

Please convey to your employees that I am recommending to the Board of Aldermen and Alderwoman that we approve the 2.5 percent raise, effective September 1, 2013 for all municipal civil service employees.

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Ms. Karen Frank, City Clerk, stated that it would cost the City (for the municipal civil service employees only) approximately \$66,000 to implement the 2 ½ percent increase, not including any overtime. When you add in the Marshal, City Court, Fire and Police Departments, it would be an additional \$177,000, not including any overtime. When Water and Sewer departments are added in to the general fund, it will be an additional \$24,377, not including any overtime. The City pays approximately \$850,000 to \$1,000,000 in overtime annually. Alderman Tatum requested a breakdown of overtime paid by individual employees. Mr. Slaven, with the auditing firm, stated that the City would break out even with no surplus. The projected 2 ½ percent increase for all employees, without any additional source of revenue to absorb that additional cost would cause the existing surplus to be eliminated over the next two years and the City would be in violation of State statute. Alderman Tatum wanted to know if the City also had to pay the previously suspended 2 ½ percent increase. Mrs. Linda Walker stated that the City was supposed to pay this money when the funds became available. Alderman Julius Alsandor asked if the Civil Service Commission was going to hold the City to paying back monies that they did not have. Mr. Slaven suggested that the City get an Attorney General's opinion regarding the previously suspended increase.

A motion was made by Alderman Blair to recommend that the 2 ½ percent increase for the fiscal year 2013-2014 be applied to Municipal Civil Service employees only.

Alderman Reginald Tatum stated that he does not feel it is fair to leave out the Fire and Police Departments. ***Alderman Jacqueline Martin stated that since the agenda only referenced the Municipal Civil Service employees then she would second the motion and discuss the Fire and Police Departments at the Regular Meeting.***

Mr. Lee Cahanin, Fire Chief, stated he would hate to see a recommendation go to the Council that segregates employees and, if it is not all inclusive then it's probably not fair. He stated that when the department heads are asked to prepare their budgets, the very first thing they do is go to Personnel Services (salaries, retirement, benefits) before they go to any other item. He stated that the employees need that recognition that the increase provides. Alderman Martin suggested that they rescind the original motion and make a substitute motion. Ms. Frank stated that she needs someone to tell her where they are going to get the funds to pay the increases. She pointed out that if there is an emergency situation next year then there will not be any money in the fund balance.

Alderman Briggs rescinded his motion.

Mr. Germon Morgan, Street Department employee, stated that the street department needs this raise because they have been withheld money. He pointed out that their department is losing personnel daily. He thinks that they don't get as much because they don't make money for the City so a lot of people feel that they can do without the services the Street Department provides; but the minute their services aren't provided or go undone, then it's a hailstorm.

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Mr. Wilbert Levier stated that no one lobbied for the City in the Legislature therefore the City go nothing.

Alderman Alsandor stated that it is unfortunate that we are in the situation that we are in now. Every other day you read where some municipality has had to cut back because of the economic times we are confronted with right now. He pointed out that if we give raises and need to cut in six months and lay off employees what happens to the services we have to provide.

On a motion by Alderman Reginald Tatum and Alderwoman Jacqueline Martin, it was recommended to grant the 2 ½ percent increase for fiscal year 2013-2014 to all Municipal Civil Service employees, Marshal's Office employees, City Court employees, and Fire and Police employees and forward to the full council for approval. A roll call vote was taken with the following results:

YEAS: Blair Briggs, Reginald Tatum, and Jacqueline Martin.

NAYS: Julius Alsandor

ABSENT: None.

THE MOTION PASSES.

On a motion by Alderman Blair Briggs, seconded by Alderwoman Jacqueline Martin, the Budget committee adjourned at 5:15 p.m.