

MINUTES OF MARION CITY COUNCIL
BUDGET WORKSHOP
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 2022
5:30 P.M.

A budget workshop was held by Marion City Council on Wednesday, May 25, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. in which Mayor Ashley Brady presided. Council members Ronald Atkinson, Michael Baker, Joseph Frazier, Donny Gerald, Mayor Pro-tem Emerson Hunt and Tassie Lewis were present. Staff present were City Administrator Alan Ammons, City Treasurer Patricia Brown, City Clerk Lakesha Shannon, and Fire Chief Jeremy Bass.

Mayor Ashley Brady called the meeting to order, and stated that Council will discuss the 2022 – 2023 fiscal year budget for Stormwater, Hospitality Tax, and Operations.

WORKSHOP FOR PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022 – 2023:

Mayor Brady led the discussion on the Stormwater Budget. He stated that this budget includes stormwater fees, and is used to pay the salaries and expenses for the vacuum truck. Mr. Ammons noted that this is an enterprise fund which has to be spent only on stormwater related expenses. Councilman Ronald Atkinson commented on the issue of debris covering the storm drains on Harmon Park.

Council discussed the Hospitality Tax Budget in much detail. Councilman Joseph Frazier asked for an explanation of the funding allocated for Amazing Grace Park, as well as what the County is funding for the park. Mayor Brady explained that the City funding is for maintenance

and upkeep of the grass, and the County funds the bulk of the cost to include maintenance and salaries. Mayor Brady commented that Amazing Grace Park helps bring tourism to the City.

Councilman Michael Baker questioned the funding and support of the County in regards to them providing police manpower to aid with the officer shortage in the City. He expressed concern with the County not providing assistance as previously requested. He stated that he and Mr. Ammons discussed having the County provide 2 officers to assist the City on shifts during their off days. Mayor Brady stated that he spoke with Sheriff Brian Wallace and was advised that he would provide assistance when needed on a shift, or in emergency situations. Mr. Ammons further commented that the County is working with their attorney to review options for assisting the City. Councilman Baker recalled prior years in which the sheriff's department aided the City police without attorney involvement. Councilman Baker commented further that the sheriff department has countywide jurisdiction; therefore, they are not being asked to do something they can't.

Councilman Frazier asked about the funding for digital signs in the City. Mayor Brady explained that the budgeted funds are for the digital sign located in front of Gore's Tire. He stated that American Rescue Plan (ARP) funding will be used to replace the digital sign located by the old Beneteau plant. He added that due to the size of that sign and the need for double-sided display, the cost will be around \$55,000. Mayor Brady stated that there will be eventually be 4 digital signs located in the City.

Mayor Brady stated that \$648,000 in contingency funds will be used to balance the 2022-2023 budget. He noted that the balanced budget will include a 3% cost of living raise for all employees, an increase of \$4 to the sanitation cart fee, and a 6 mill tax increase.

Mayor Brady noted that the fuel surcharge could increase to about \$180,000 as gas prices continue to rise. He recommended that the sanitation cart fee be increased by \$5, which will generate about \$187,000. He stated that the \$5 increase would bring the City of Marion in line with the neighboring cities of Mullins and Dillon. The current cart fee is \$19.75. Mayor Brady recommended that the discount also be eliminated on the second cart.

Council discussed options for increasing the tax mills. Mayor Brady noted that a 6 mill increase will generate \$85,000, and the maximum increase allowed of 10 mills will generate \$140,000. Mayor Brady recommended a 7 mill increase which would generate \$98,200.

Councilman Michael Baker questioned the amount of \$2,500 budgeted to fund PDRTA, and asked what the agency originally requested. Mayor Brady stated that their request was for \$10,000. Council discussed the budgeted amount and the services provided by PDRTA. Councilman Michael Baker noted that more funding was requested by the agency so that they will be eligible to receive federal funding matches. Mr. Ammons commented on the proposed in-county route that was presented to council by the PDRTA Director during a previous meeting, and noted that such a route would be beneficial to the City Of Marion. Mayor Brady stated that he would be okay with increasing the funding amount to \$5,000.

Councilman Baker provided specific examples of how PDRTA benefits this community and the surrounding communities with various transportation needs.

After much discussion, council agreed to fund \$10,000 to PDRTA this coming budget year pending progress results and regular reports to council from the City's Transportation Committee representative Vivian Rogers.

Mr. Ammons recommended that the City's building permit fees be increased to match the current building code standards. He noted that the fees have not been updated in about 20 years. Council agreed to allow Mr. Ammons to prepare an ordinance to increase the permit fees.

Mr. Ammons recommended that the Rose Hill Cemetery grave opening fee be increased from \$250 to \$750. He noted that the current ordinance and fee was adopted years ago and has not been updated. He stated that the current norm for this type fee is \$600-\$750. Mr. Ammons stated that he will prepare an ordinance to increase the burial permit fees. Mayor Brady stated that the burial fees collected are used to pay for cemetery's upkeep maintenance charges .

Mr. Ammons recommended that the current yard sale permit fee be increased from \$5 to \$10 per day. This increase would at least cover staffing time for issuing the permits. He stated that he would work to prepare an ordinance for this permit fee increase.

Mayor Pro-tem Emerson Hunt commented on technology upgrades to decrease the amount of paperwork received by council for meeting materials. Mr. Ammons stated that he

discussed this issue today with City Clerk Lakesha Shannon, and going forward we will utilize more email communications to provide correspondences to council. He mentioned the proposed upgrades to the council chambers will include video screens that will be used to show all documents being discussed by council during the meetings.

SET DATE FOR PUBLIC HEARING:

Council agreed to schedule a public hearing for June 30, 2022 at 5:30 pm for final reading of the 2022-2023 budget.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A motion was made by Councilman Ronald Atkinson to go into executive session to discuss personnel matters regarding the Police Department. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro-tem Emerson Hunt, and carried unanimously.

Councilman Joseph Frazier made a motion to return to regular session. The motion was seconded by Councilman Michael Baker, and carried unanimously.

POSSIBLE ACTION ON EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS:

Councilwoman Tassie Lewis motioned to raise employee compensation for police and fire officers. The motion was seconded by Councilman Michael Baker. Mr. Ammons noted the following compensation increases for police and fire officers:

Starting salary for non-certified officers will be \$33,000, and \$35,000 for certified officers.

Current officers will be \$36,050, plus the 3% cost of living raise.

Current officers with salary of \$36,051 up to \$39,999 will receive a 7% raise.

Current officers with salary of \$40,000 - \$49,999 will receive a 5% raise.

Current officers with salary of \$50,000 and over will receive a cost of living raise of 3%.

Mr. Ammons stated that a miscalculation was made with the recent employee retention policy calculation. He stated that the full time part time employees that work a minimum of 20 hours a week were not included. He recommended that these employees receive the same \$250 per year of service payment as regular full-time employees.

Councilman Michael Baker motioned to approve the recommendation. The motion was seconded by Councilman Ronald Atkinson, and carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Hearing no further business, a motion was made to adjourn by Councilman Michael Baker and seconded by Councilwoman Joseph Frazier; motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Ashley Brady

City Clerk Lakesha Y. Shannon