



COMMITTEE of the WHOLE

CITY COUNCIL

SUMMARY
October 12, 2022
5:00 P.M.
Hybrid Meeting

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

D. Reed, C. Miller, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, J. Cepeda-Freytiz, M. Ventura - in person and W. Butler and C. Daubert - virtually

OTHERS PRESENT:

L. Kelleher, K. Zeiber, F. Freytiz, J. Kelly, M. Rodriguez (in person), S. Smith, F. Lachat, WFMZ, M. Lynch, T. Krall, D. Hoag, L. Kissinger, W. Reilly, S. Harrity, M. Oppenheimer (virtually)

Ms. Cepeda-Freytiz called the COW to order at approximately 5:02 pm. She asked the administration to provide the overview of the Public Works Budget.

Note: During Budget Review this symbol → will be used in all meeting summaries to show items referred into the Parking Lot for further consideration.

Mr. Kelly explained how to access the budget on the website, which is made up of the General Fund, Capital Plan, ARPA and position ordinance. He stated that overall the largest expense driver in the 2023 budget is salary increases. Four percent wage increases are included for AFSCME 3799 and 2763.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz and Ms. Reed questioned how budget updates will be prepared and distributed as adjustments are made throughout the review process. Mr. Kelly stated that changes to the hard copy will not be made and distributed until the review process and enactment are completed but changes to the electronic copy will be made and distributed as the review process moves forward.

→ Throughout the review of the Public Works budget, Mr. Daubert noted inconsistencies in the allocations for Social Security and Pensions overall. This will be placed in the Parking Lot along with the allocation for fringe benefits and health, RX, vision and dental insurances (New quotes were received after the draft budget was prepared).

- Discussion on providing incentives for employees residing in Reading and/or purchasing a home within Reading (owner occupied)
- Reconsider \$15 an hour for part-time positions

I. Public Works

Mr. Kelly reviewed the detail of the Public Works budget assisted by Mr. Zeiber.

- Garage – apart from Salaries, the largest increases are 17% for overtime and 18% for tires/tubes. The Garage is staffed by 5 mechanics, a small engine repairman, a maintenance worker, a foreman and a secretary. The PT clerk was eliminated in years past. The fire apparatus repair position is housed within the Fire budget.
- Engineering – this area has no employees and carries expenses associated with health benefits for retired employees
- Traffic Engineering – no employees. Expenses covering street lighting, power, etc.
- Downtown Corridor – these expenses are covered under the Managing Director’s budget area. Mr. Kelly stated that these expenses are more aligned with “City Hall” than Public Works services. Mr. Zeiber noted that the Ambassadors duties have a dual role. While they perform some cleaning activities, a major part of their day is spent interacting with business owners and visitors; whereas under Clean City, employees are assigned to cleaning/maintenance only.
- Discussion re relocation of Downtown Corridor expenses to the Managing Director’s budget
- Reestablish P3 meetings
- Parks – 60% overtime increase and 69% PT wages increase. Mr. Zeiber explained that this budget area covers the maintenance of parks/playgrounds regarding equipment, fencing, grass, etc. Buildings, field houses, City Hall, etc. including the greenhouse are covered by the Public Property area.
- Public Properties – 73% increase in PT wages and 25% increase in electric.
- Meeting to review the use and condition of each public building
- Review increase in PT wages and decrease in fuel costs
- Shade Tree – Mr. Kissinger explained that the Maintenance line item covers the repair of tools used to perform the required work.
- Liquid Fuels – Mr. Kelly stated that \$7.5M is available for street paving. Mr. Zeiber and Mr. Krall explained that the required forms for the 2022 funding were recently submitted to PennDOT and the funding should be transferred soon.
- 2023 Paving Plan and Cost and funding expected in 2023
- Sanitary Sewers – Mr. Zeiber and Ms. Hoag explained that the internal expense “INT DIR” reimburses the Highways area for repairs they make when the street is opened for sewer repairs. Ms. Hoag explained that the increases in power and water charges are caused by the larger water meter at the 6th and Canal Pump Station and back charges due to a billing miscalculation.

- Sewage Treatment - Ms. Hoag explained that the increases to the water and power line items are caused by the improvements made to the WWTP facility. She noted that the extraction of liquid from the final solids products decreases the need to take the solids to the landfill and lowers that cost. She also explained need for a new 19th Ward Pump as the existing structure is unable to support the required upgrade.
- Storm Water – Ms. Hoag explained that Fund 55 is the Retail Sewer Fund containing the fees paid by City and bulk ratepayers (other municipalities) and Fund 54 is the Collection System
- Review purchase and installation of filters/grates over storm sewers to reduce entry of litter and piping to reduce entry of litter into waterways
- Recycling – Mr. Harrity stated that the education line item covers school programming and direct customer education such as door hangers and advertisements regarding schedule changes
- Solid Waste – Mr. Harrity stated that the collection fee has increased 3% for 2023 which is included in the contract. He noted that the fee paid by Reading customers is lower than most municipalities and provides an expanded program that allows a weekly bulky item collection plus tire and electronics collection. The need for the contractor to pick up spilled trash was discussed.
- Highways – is composed of 9 Equipment Operators (1 is the City’s Arborist), 2 Maintenance Workers and a PT Office Assistant. Part-time wages has increased by 52%

Mr. Miller moved, seconded by Ms. Reed, to adjourn the COW at 7:30 pm.

*Respectfully Submitted by
Linda A. Kelleher, CMC, City Clerk*