



# *COMMITTEE of the WHOLE*

## *CITY COUNCIL*

### **BUDGET MEETING REPORT**

**October 27, 2009**  
**5:00 P.M.**

#### **COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:**

D. Sterner, S. Marmarou, S. Fuhs, V. Spencer, J. Waltman, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, M. Baez

#### **OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

L. Kelleher, C. Younger, R. Hottenstein, T. McMahon, C. Geffken, C. Weidel, D. Cituk

Mr. Spencer called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

#### **Police**

Mr. Geffken stated that 45 sworn officer positions will be eliminated, 31 of those are “live officers” and the majority work in the Patrol section. The Chief increased the overtime expenditure to provide additional coverage. In the Criminal Investigator area one (1) sergeant and (1) detective will be eliminated.

Mr. Sterner stated that the budget reduction of \$384,446 does not match the elimination of one (1) sergeant and one (1) detective. Ms. Weidel stated that the reduction considers the number of officers who are expected to retire when completing the DROP.

Mr. Geffken stated that 40 officers are eliminated from the patrol area and 48 positions are eliminated (a combination of sworn officers and rank and file workers).

Mr. Marmarou inquired if the displaced rank and file workers will be eligible for pensions. Mr. Hottenstein stated that AFSCME layoffs will occur from the bottom up, which will make displaced employees ineligible for pensions. He explained that FOP layoffs are based on seniority and AFSCME employees are based on seniority.

Mr. Marmarou inquired how many officers will resign due to the proposed reorganization. Mr. Hottenstein stated the Administration is unsure.

Mr. Geffken and Mr. Hottenstein stated that after layoffs and retirements the Police Department will go from 205 sworn officers to 159 sworn officers, as recommended by the Police Chief.

Mr. Spencer inquired about the \$21,000 allocation for temporary wages in Criminal Investigation. Mr. Hottenstein stated that he does not have that information and will report back.

Mr. Cituk and Ms. Kelleher responded to the questions pertaining to the rental/lease allocation in Criminal Investigation. This allocation provides rental cars for undercover activities.

Mr. Marmarou questioned how the Police Department will respond to calls for service over four (4) shifts with only 124 officers. Mr. Geffken explained that officers will be reallocated/transferred to cover patrol needs. He stated that he will provide additional information after speaking with the Chief.

Mr. Marmarou expressed the opinion that the reduction in the Police Department will be eaten away by increased overtime costs. Mr. Geffken stated that the Police overtime was decreased overall by approximately \$1.25M.

Mr. Fuhs suggested cross-training police, fire and EMS personnel. Mr. Younger stated that this could not happen as long as the three (3) contracts are active. He also noted the need for extensive training and education, such as Act 120 certification for police officers.

Mr. Fuhs expressed the belief that fire service is more critical than police service as fire service protects loss of life and property. He suggested that fire personnel be trained to respond to police calls during down time and vice versa. He suggested that the three (3) groups be joined to form a Public Safety Department. He stated that during critical times, out of the box thinking is essential, as the City's financial problems need to be addressed for multiple years.

Mr. Waltman agreed with the need to redesign public services but stressed the need for these strategies to be discussed well in advance, rather than during budget discussions.

Mr. Spencer agreed that existing contracts and the need for extensive personnel training would prevent this immediate type of redesign.

Mr. Waltman stated that the Administration should have been scaling operations back over the last six (6) years rather than waiting until the last minute to pull the plug.

Mr. Geffken stated that the budget reflects personnel cuts based on seniority. He explained that the budget is based on the money available and the need. He stated that a mid year budget adjustment may be required.

Mr. McMahon stated that he has been in discussion with the Reading School District about covering the cost of officers who will be assigned to schools. A decision should be rendered within two (2) days.

In response to a question Mr. Hottenstein explained that Special Services covers dispatch, traffic, the academy and records.

Mr. Spencer inquired if the City has approached the County about joining their 911 center. Mr. Hottenstein stated that discussions are occurring; however, the transfer will be delayed for approximately 15 months due to the differences in handling styles. For example, the 911 center assigns based on "first in, first out" and our dispatch assigns calls based on the triage or priority approach.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the severe reduction in the Police Academy allocation. Mr. Marmarou suggested that savings could be achieved using federal agencies to train, rather than bringing in adjunct instructors.

Mr. Cituk stated that K9 could be reduced as no funds have been expended to date. He also suggested reducing General Office as their spending over the past two (2) years has been below \$10,000. He stated that his final recommendations will be submitted within the next two (2) weeks.

The group next discussed the need to seek relief from the state for state mandates such as pensions.

### **PMI**

Mr. Hottenstein stated that this budget is unchanged from last year due to the need to continue to address housing issues. Only the temporary help assigned to assist with processing housing permit applications has been eliminated.

Ms. Kelleher inquired if the Health Officer will be replaced. Mr. McMahon replied affirmatively.

### **Zoning**

No budgetary changes were made in this area. Ms. Kelleher noted that the Zoning budget does not include pension costs. Ms. Weidel stated that this oversight would be corrected.

### **Impact of Land Use and Zoning Fee Increases**

Mr. Waltman noted the need to understand the impact these increases will have on the originally proposed budget. Mr. Geffken said he will have this report completed for Thursday's meeting.

## **Recycling and Solid Waste**

Mr. Hottenstein stated that seven (7) Streets employees are being transferred to Solid Waste and Recycling as their main duties are to collect yard waste, solid waste from municipal buildings, etc. He stated that the Administration will be proposing a \$24.10 increase in the Recycling fee and an \$8 per year increase in the Solid Waste fee.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz inquired if a fee for yard waste collection has been considered. Mr. Hottenstein stated that the collection of yard waste is included in the annual recycling fee.

## **Topics for Upcoming Budget Meetings**

Mr. Waltman recapped tonight's discussion. He requested a report comparing the direct cost reimbursement to the increases required to cover the cost of transferring employees to enterprise fund areas.

The Budget Meeting adjourned at approximately 7 p.m.

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