

BE IT REMEMBERED that the Mayor and Board of Aldermen met on August 5, 2021, at 4:30 P.M., this being the special recessed meeting time. Mayor Graves called the meeting to order and the following Aldermen were present: Dear, Hale, Moore, Simpson and Tanksley. Also present were Ginger Miller, City Attorney; Katie Harbin, City Clerk; Fran Johnson, Bookkeeper; Richard Chandler, Police Chief; Matt Defore, Assistant Police Chief; Ethan Foresman, Fire Chief; Earnestine Cowan; Utility Supervisor, and Michael Cathey.

#### Discussion of the Budget FYE 2022

Mayor Graves stated that we need to review and discuss the proposed budget numbers. Mayor Graves asked Fran Johnson to go over the key points in the budget numbers presented.

Bookkeeper Fran Johnson went over the different columns on the sheet presented to the Board. There are different options for different raises and millage. Mrs. Johnson stated that there are also projects in the proposed budget like the redistricting, Board Room renovation for painting and floors, etc.

Mayor Graves stated that the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance is in there, we will also need to do the redistricting after the census numbers are released.

Alderman Simpson stated he would like to see what the current numbers are.

Fran Johnson printed and handed out a revenue and expense report.

Mayor Graves stated if we get a hotel, that will help. I would like to see more tournaments at the Sports Park, possibly 3-day tournaments instead of 1. Mayor Graves ask Police Chief Chandler about the Dispatch Department.

Police Chief Chandler stated they combined a position, that is why it is less in that category.

Alderman Simpson asked about the Animal Control Officer, what all does he do.

Police Chief Chandler answered Code Enforcement, Animal Control, and he is still a Certified Police Officer.

Alderman Simpson mentioned that the sales tax is up.

Mayor Graves agreed, we are projecting it will be \$3,700,000.00.

Alderman Simpson stated he thinks it will keep going up.

Fran Johnson agreed.

Alderman Moore asked about the total revenue numbers, it looks like it is at 89% for the year.

Fran Johnson agreed, the total budgeted number is \$7,400,000.

Alderman Simpson asked about the Park salaries.

Fran Johnson explained who comes out of what area.

Alderman Simpson stated at Northwest we didn't ever need full time turf management. I look forward to Rob explaining the proposed plan.

Alderman Dear asked what revenue did the Sports Park bring in.

Fran Johnson answered \$102,000.

Alderman Tanksley stated it brought in \$102,000 and we spent \$600,000.

Alderman Simpson stated he's always been confused about the Sports Park. Who gets the money?

Alderman Moore stated the League gets the revenue from the programs.

Alderman Simpson asked about the concessions.

Fran Johnson explained that the City pays the expenses for the concessions and gets the revenue.

Alderman Moore asked if there is anything that says we can't host two different organizations of competitive youth baseball at the same time.

Mayor Graves stated I will get Rob to explain.

Alderman Simpson stated that it is a beautiful park, but we need to have more tournaments.

Alderman Moore stated we need to start now with the 3-day tournaments, not wait until we get a hotel. I've heard ours is better than any other sports park around.

Alderman Simpson spoke about the Animal Shelter. It was a 50/50 deal with the County and the City. The County then capped their budget for it at \$82,500. The City's budget is increasing. Three fourths of the animals come from the County and one fourth from the City. No matter what raises or none, the County pays the same, no increase. Either the County needs to pay more or we need to pay less, to be the same. It looks like the best case, the City pays \$104,000 and the County pays \$82,500. Why is it going up?

Mayor Graves stated we still have an employee in that department that has been out sick, but we think she will be coming back soon.

Alderman Moore stated we need to reduce the budget and have them go to the County if they need more. I think we can increase as much as the County agrees to increase.

Alderman Moore asked Fire Chief Foresman what he thinks we might get from Northwest.

Fire Chief Foresman stated that he met with Northwest about helping out with the funding for a new Fire Truck. I asked for \$200,000, but I am not confident we will get it. It would help with the truck payment and money for an additional Fire Station and staff. We've provided Northwest with a copy of an agreement that another City did with a university for the same type situation. Hopefully they will look into that and consider helping the City out, so that we can help them out.

Alderman Moore asked if there is anyway to push and possibly get an answer before we have to adopt the budget.

Fire Chief Foresman stated that he can ask. We are also looking for grants to help with the purchase. It will be a working truck.

Alderman Kevin asked about the old trucks.

Fire Chief Foresman answered we would like to cycle them out.

Alderman Moore stated he'd like to look at 1% and 2% option across the Board for raises and cut the Animal Shelter back to the same budget amount it is this current year, also add the increase for health insurance.

Mayor Graves stated we also haven't discussed street paving.

Alderman Moore asked what should we spend on paving.

Mayor Graves stated we can drive around town and look to see what all needs to be done, and then get with Jeff about getting a price.

Michael Cathey stated that Cauthen Circle is the worst street in town.

Police Chief Chandler stated if we do Cauthen Circle, we need to make it one way, a turn around.

Fire Chief Foresman agreed, we have discussed doing that.

Alderman Dear agreed, parking on the street is an issue also.

Police Chief Chandler stated that it needs to have “no parking” painted lines for fire lanes.

Mayor Graves asked if it would be about a quarter of a mile. Stated we can check with Mrs. Richardson to see if they can help with any of those things.

Alderman Tanskley answered I believe so.

Michael Cathey stated I don't think that would be in their realm of things they can do.

Mayor Graves asked Police Chief Chandler if we were getting any better, more competitive, with the officers' salaries.

Police Chief Chandler answered the officers like the environment. We won't ever get caught up to Desoto County, or any other larger county or cities. I am trying to raise it to be more competitive with smaller, more comparable communities.

Alderman Tanksley asked if officers leave within a certain time frame of the City hiring them and paying for them to attend the academy, don't they have to pay some back.

Police Chief Chandler answered it's pro-rated.

Fire Chief Foresman mentioned that the Fire department is in the same boat. A lot of employees come to us, get training, and stay for just a short while before leaving to another municipality that can pay more.

Police Chief Chandler stated that we've added a lot of revenues, added fees that we've collected and also applied for and received grants.

Alderman Simpson stated this is our first meeting on the budget, I'm sure we'll have more. It was embarrassing what we paid employees and it's still embarrassing, but better. If we are having trouble recruiting against Byhalia, Tunica and Northwest, we need to improve. What we are asking and seeing is great, but revenues won't fall out of the sky.

Mayor Graves stated we put in different mills to see what the Board would want to do. We put in 1 mill for the purchase of a fire truck and we also put in an additional mill to cover expenses and projects coming up through out the City, to see what you would want to do. I know we don't like to do tax increases, especially not often.

Earnestine Cowan went over a proposed water rate fee increase. Mrs. Cowans stated that if we went up on just the residential minimum bill \$0.80, it could generate about \$23,000 a month. Mrs. Cowan also stated that the late fee revenue would increase slightly because it is based on the bill amount. We also generate about \$3,000 to \$4,500 a month for bills not delinquent fees. Mrs. Cowan stated that she desperately needed employees to read meters, we are having a hard time finding workers.

Mayor and the Board of Aldermen held a discussion regarding the water rates and usage.

Alderman Simpson stated no one wants to pay more. I know no one wants to come to work. We really may have to go up on some of this. No one wants to, but we have to do something.

Mayor Graves stated that we can figure out the changes requested and bring this back. We can do a meeting on August 10<sup>th</sup> if you want.

Recess

Motion was made by Alderman Simpson and seconded by Alderman Dear, to recess until August 10, 2021 at 5:00pm. All voting yea, motion carried.

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Greg Graves, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Katie Harbin –City Clerk