

## Comments from Ray Varney

**May 4, 2020**

**School Budget** – I am opposed to the creation of a Special Education Reserve Fund to be controlled by the School Board. In this specific instance \$706,000 would be transferred from undesignated fund balance to the proposed new special education reserve fund where it could be spent without City Council oversight. The 2/3 majority required by the City Council to exceed the budget by supplemental appropriation is an important control point. The City Council was responsive with past supplemental appropriations such as school security, Gonic roof and at least two special education requests each in excess of \$1,000,000 and all funded from undesignated fund balance. The FY21 school budget requests more than \$3.2M from undesignated fund balance in addition to \$878,127 from Host Community Fees. Within the \$3.2M request \$706,000 in the new fund and \$839,216 existing in the SBCRF would not have an identified need.

There are no management benefits from creating this new fund and considering current economic conditions and massive unemployment this is not the time to create additional reserve funds with no identified need. The City has maintained a reasonable level of undesignated funds and in my opinion should continue to do so while retaining responsibility and accountability for all budget exceedances.

I suggest reducing the proposed transfer of \$1,664,787 from undesignated fund balance to the SBCRF by the existing SBCRF balance of \$839,216 leaving \$1,664,787 in the SBCRF to be transferred to the School Board budget. The \$821,571 remaining after reducing the proposed transfer plus the \$706,000 total \$1,527,571 which could be used to reduce the proposed tax rate increase from \$0.846 to \$0.249 without cutting any portion of the O&M or cash CIP budgets.

This could be a good starting point for further budget reductions.

### **School cash CIP requests**

**District paving \$350,000** - There should be over \$200,000 remaining in the supplemental appropriation approved for the CTC/JBC. There was some discussion about using this project surplus for paving. Either the JBC approves it for paving (although it is not project related) and the FY21 budget request is reduced by the same amount or the project surplus is deauthorized and returned to undesignated fund balance.

**Vehicle replacement \$70,000** – Do you need a dump truck? What about a one ton pickup? I assume you want a plow and sander. How many vehicles does the School Department have?

### **School bonded CIP requests**

**Field irrigation \$93,500** – I have been assured that the existing irrigation system is more than adequate. What little labor that is saved by not having to snap the sprinkler heads in place would not justify this expenditure.

**Field equipment \$46,000** – This equipment would serve only the baseball and softball fields. A sod cutter could be rented. A new sod cutter is \$7,000 and a new line painter is \$5,000. How do you get to \$46,000?

**Nancy Loud siding \$250,000** – We should be getting out of this building not investing. Scrape and paint? Does it leak or just look shabby? Repair as necessary rather than the entire building.

**New Spaulding High field storage building \$150,000** -The City Council has denied this at least twice. Make more efficient use of the red building behind the CTC and the new storage area under the CTC. A storage building the size of the existing structure would not cost anywhere near \$150,000.

**Electric Infrastructure \$200,000** – Specifically what does this project entail?

**Asbestos \$180,000** – Is this in an area accessible to students and staff? If it is undisturbed why not leave it alone?

**Bud Carlson Cafeteria/Entry \$60,000** – This must be a spectacular entry for \$60,000. Has Public Buildings reviewed this? Where is this?

### **O&M Budget**

**Police** – I support the two additional officers starting Jan 1, 2021.

**Library** – Replace the microfilm reader or better yet, convert to digital.

**Tax Collector** – I don't mind waiting in line for a few minutes and some transactions can be done on line or thru the mail. Reducing the cost of on-line transactions would reduce foot traffic.

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Comments from Jim Shannon

Hello,

I am a resident of Rochester, residing at 64 Riverview Drive.

I am a member of the Board of Trustees of the Homeless Center for Strafford County ("HCSC").

I respectfully request that the Council approve the CDBG grant requests of the HCSC.

The first request, for \$15,000, is for operational needs. The HCSC in the past season of operation provided in excess of that value to residents of the City of Rochester, providing over 360 bed nights to city residents/referrals. I hope you agree that helping meet a portion of our operating budget merits this modicum amount of financial support.

The second request, for \$50,000, is for purchase of equipment and needs to be used in the new shelter we are planning to build in the near future. This grant will help provide essential items, likely kitchen and other capital intensive items, that are essential for operation in our future facility. Again, I hope that providing such essential equipment is within the means of the city to help us equip our new facility when it is constructed.

Thank you for your considering and approving these two requests.

Best wishes,

Jim Shannon

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## Comments from Ray Barnett

Evening

I'd like to make a few comments about the school budget.

There was some discussion about \$839,000 dollars in surplus in the school capital reserve fund. If there is a surplus, then it need to be returned to the city and the unassigned fund balance. Then there was a discussion about establishing another fund of \$706,000 dollars. Are you kidding me. The spoiled child just keeps asking for more and more. Then of course there is the 1.6 million for the capital reserve fund. When is the council going to put an end to this cash hoarding. How bout I not pay the over \$4,000 dollar school tax bill and start my own go have some fun account.

I believe there is over 200,000 dollars left over from the CTC/JBC. Where is that money going? Into another account?

I'm sure you are all aware of what's going on. An 84 cent tax hike is a little much. Then add a new increase in the water and sewer rates is another great gift from the city. The school budget can be cut in various areas and reduce the tax increase. I agree with Mr. Varney and his laundry list of items than needs to be addressed.

Thank you

Ray Barnett

Crimson Lane