

**Committee of the Whole Budget Workshop
April 28, 2020
Meeting Conducted Remotely
6:40 PM**

COUNCILORS PRESENT REMOTELY

*Councilor Abbott
Councilor Belken
Councilor Bogan
Councilor Gray
Councilor Hainey
Councilor Hamann
Councilor Hutchinson
*Councilor Lachance
Councilor Lachapelle
Councilor Rice
Councilor Walker
Deputy Mayor Lauterborn
Mayor McCarley

OTHERS PRESENT REMOTELY

Blaine Cox, City Manager
Katie Ambrose, Deputy City Manager
Terence O'Rourke, City Attorney
Mark Sullivan, Deputy Finance
Director
Kyle Repucci, Superintendent of
Schools
Linda Bartlett, Assistant

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Mayor McCarley called the remote Committee of the Whole Budget Workshop at 6:40 PM. The preamble was read at the start of the immediate previous meeting as follows:

Good Evening, as Chairperson of the City Council, I am declaring that an emergency exists and I am invoking the provisions of RSA 91-A:2, III (b). Federal, state, and local officials have determined that gatherings of 10 or more people pose a substantial risk to our community in its continuing efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19. In concurring with their determination, I also find that this meeting is imperative to the continued operation of City government and services, which are vital to public safety and confidence during this emergency. As such, this meeting will be conducted without a quorum of this body physically present in the same location.

a.) Providing public access to the meeting by telephone: At this time, I also welcome members of the public accessing this meeting remotely. Even though this meeting is being conducted in a unique manner under unusual circumstances, the usual rules of conduct and decorum apply. Any person found to be disrupting this meeting will be asked to cease the disruption.

Should the disruptive behavior continue thereafter, that person will be removed from this meeting. The public can call-in to the below number using the conference ID #. Please remember to use *6 to mute your phones when signing into the meeting, as there will be no public input allowed during this particular meeting.

Phone number: 857-444-0744
Conference code: 843095

b.) Public access Troubleshooting: If any member of the public has difficulty accessing the meeting by phone, please email PublicInput@RochesterNH.net or call 603-332-1167.

c.) Public Input: Due to the ongoing situation with COVID-19, the City of Rochester will be taking extra steps to allow for public input, while still ensuring participant safety and social distancing. In lieu of attending the meeting, those wishing to share comments, when permitted, with the City Council (Public Hearing and/or Workshop settings) are encouraged to do so by the following methods:

- **Mail:** City Clerk/Public Input, 31 Wakefield Street, Rochester, NH 03867 (*must be received at least three full days prior to the anticipated meeting date*)
- **email** PublicInput@rochesternh.net (*must be received no later than 4:00 pm of meeting date*)
- **Voicemail** 603-330-7107 (*must be received no later than 12:00 pm on said meeting date in order to be transcribed*)

Please include with your correspondence the intended meeting date for which you are submitting. *All correspondence will be included with the corresponding meeting packet (Addendum).*

d.) Roll Call: Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by Roll Call vote.

Let's start the meeting by taking a Roll Call attendance. When each member states their name and ward, also please state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to-Know law. Additionally, Council members are required to state their name and ward each time they wish to speak.

Kelly Walters, City Clerk, called the roll. The following Councilors announced that they were present alone in the location they were remotely connecting from: Councilors Belken, Bogan, Gray, Hailey, Hamann, Hutchinson, Rice, Walker, Deputy Mayor Lauterborn, and Mayor McCarley

acknowledged they were present. Councilors Abbott and Lachance both arrived late for the Budget Workshop meeting.

2. Public Input

City Manager Cox read the two emails that were submitted for Public Input:

Keenan, Justin
Barnett, Ray

City Manager Cox indicated that these comments were included online as an addendum for this City Council packet.

3. Budget Presentations:

City Manager Cox informed the City Council that the Welfare Department Budget presentation is delayed by one week.

3.1. School Department

Kyle Repucci, Superintendent of Schools, addressed the City Council. He introduced Linda Bartlett, who presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining the proposed School Department Operating and CIP Budgets, which were approved by the School Board on March 19, 2020. (*The Power Point presentation can be found as an Addendum to the City Council Packet*).

- The proposed operating budget is \$72,715,554; which is an increase of \$6,398,470 or 9.6%. The Special Grant Appropriation has decreased by \$200,000. The Food Service line item has been level funded at \$1,900,000. The proposed operating budget grand total is \$77,825,554; an increase of \$6,198,470 (8.7%).

Ms. Bartlett reviewed the budget and concerns about COVID-19. Ms. Bartlett stated that the proposed budget includes no new staffing positions or new programs. It is the same level of service as the previous year.

Ms. Bartlett reviewed the following CIP projects for Fiscal Year 2021:

- William Allen Fence \$75,000
- William Allen Playground \$100,000
- Field Irrigation \$93,500
- Field Equipment \$46,000
- Stage Improvements \$140,000

- District Roof Upgrades \$335,000
- Nancy Loud Siding \$250,000
- Boiler and Hot Water Upgrades \$50,000
- New Spaulding High School Field Storage Building \$150,000
- Electric Infrastructure \$200,000
- Asbestos Removal \$180,000
- Bud Carlson Cafeteria/Entry \$60,000

Ms. Bartlett reviewed the Cash CIP projects, which includes the “cash” payment to pay off the CTE Renovation Project loan [\$4,800,000], which will save the City thousands of dollars on the interest payments compared to bonding this project.

Councilor Lachapelle questioned the Gonic School Roof Replacement Program. He recalled that the roof had been replaced at Gonic School within the last five years. Superintendent Repucci replied that there was the catastrophic roof failure to the left side of the building about five years ago; however, this is damage on the right side of the building and other work is to be completed on the flat roof (original to the building).

Councilor Lachapelle asked how much money would be saved by paying cash on the CTE loan. Deputy Finance Director Sullivan said it would save the City approximately three hundred eighty thousand dollars in interest payments.

Councilor Gray asked which fields would need funding for irrigation and which fields would need new equipment. He additionally asked for clarification for some of the maintenance projects. Superintendent Repucci replied that the fields included in the CIP project are all of the fields at Spaulding High School, which are at the same level as the football field. He added that those are the fields, which are being proposed to receive the new equipment. He said the equipment to be purchased is one sod cutter and a line painter. Councilor Gray asked if this is the same equipment listed in another place in the budget. Superintendent Repucci confirmed that those items are only listed in one place.

Councilor Gray referred to the chart, which showed the price per pupil compared with the State average. Councilor Gray gave reasons why he would like to know how the City of Rochester compares with our surrounding communities, instead of just how the City compares with the entire State.

Superintendent agreed to provide that information to the City Manager for distribution to the City Council.

Councilor Walker questioned what vehicle would be replaced for \$70,000. Superintendent Repucci replied the vehicle to be replaced is the sand/salt dump truck. Ms. Bartlett said the current vehicle is from 2004 and it is not likely it will pass inspection this year. Superintendent Repucci added that the Maintenance Director is in the process of treating the vehicles, on a regular basis, in order to increase the life of the vehicles.

Mayor McCarley thanked the School Department for the presentation. She encouraged Councilors and the public to reach out to the Superintendent or the City Manager if they have further questions.

3.2. Police

Chief Toussaint gave a Power Point presentation for the Police Department's proposed budget for Operating, CIP, and Issues and Options. (*The Power Point presentation can be found as an Addendum to the City Council Packet*).

- The proposed Operating budget is \$7,866,024; which is an overall increase of \$562,590 (7.7%). The O & M lines meet the City Manager's 2% mandate which was an increase of \$112,664 prior to the Issues and Options items being added to this budget and it does not include increases to the salary and benefit line items.

Chief Toussaint reviewed the budget and the Issues and Options request for two additional patrol officers (\$189,580). Chief Toussaint said the City Manager's proposed budget includes two additional patrol officers; however, the hiring is delayed until January 2021 to reduce the cost as follows:

- Additional Patrol Officers \$98,640 (included)

Councilor Lachapelle asked what items are covered under Contracted Services. Chief Toussaint said this line item pays for the full time crime analyst, which is not a direct employee but rather a contracted service through LexisNexis. He briefed the Council about what that job entails as it relates to analyzing crime trends.

Councilor Lachapelle asked about a line item called "animal boarding." Chief Toussaint said that is a line item that it utilized in cases of lost dogs that must be boarded for a period of time. Councilor Lachapelle asked if any of

that money is collected by the dog owner once the issue has been resolved. Chief Toussaint replied yes, normally, there would be a Civil Forfeiture fee imposed and the cost of the boarding; however, the Police Department must pay up-front for the boarding fees.

Councilor Gray said that in order to free up some of the sworn police officers some of the positions were replaced with civilians. He suggested that asterisks be included next to those positions indicating the specific dates when those changes occurred in the budget. Chief Toussaint concurred.

Councilor Rice asked if the \$20,000 in the clothing line item is due to new officers coming on board in the new fiscal year. Chief Toussaint replied yes, and additionally the funding will pay for replacement uniforms as well. Chief Toussaint explained that uniforms are subject to the bidding process and the current contract is due to expire this year. The estimate is based on a slight increase due to the expiring of the current contract.

Councilor Rice asked a question about an increase to the equipment maintenance line. Chief Toussaint explained that there are upgrades to the RMC Records Maintenance system.

Mayor McCarley asked how soon the two new police officers (proposed budget) would be available and on the streets of Rochester if they were hired in January 2021. Chief Toussaint said it depends on what happens with the Police Academy. He said two police officers who just graduated from the program had to do so "virtually". He added that it is typically a four month program. He said most of the academies have waiting lists already; the best case scenario would be that the two new officers would be sent to the January academy for at least four months followed by field training for a few more months. Chief Toussaint said the Department would also be seeking to bypass that process by hiring certified officers if possible.

Councilor Rice asked how many detectives are currently working in the Police Department. Chief Toussaint said there are seven detectives plus one detective sergeant.

Councilor Rice asked if any Police Staffing grants have been sought out to assist in the funding of patrol officers. Chief Toussaint replied yes, in fact, the elementary School Resource Officer (SRO) had been hired through a grant. The Department is now seeking COPs Grant for similar funding. He added that grants are focused more on assistance with the implementation of starting initiative programs in the department rather than increasing the patrol line.

Dispatch:

Chief Toussaint gave a brief overview of the Dispatch Center, which has overall shown a slight decrease.

Councilor Gray asked for a status update on the equipment upgrades at the Dispatch Center. Chief Toussaint replied that there is an increase of \$4,100 to the O & M Dispatch Budget for the paging module. Chief Toussaint explained that this is paging system used to automatically reach out to both the Fire Department and Police Department during emergencies. Chief Toussaint said there is another increase of \$4,500 to the Equipment Maintenance line item for the Department's records management system.

Chief Toussaint said there were a few decreases in the Dispatch O & M proposed budget such as Liability Insurance. The Administrative Equipment line item increased by \$813.00 (replacement equipment).

Councilor Rice said the Police Department and Dispatch Center work hand-in-hand; however, there is a "call for service" spike on the Dispatch reporting. Chief Toussaint clarified that these are the figures associated with the reports generated from the Dispatch Call Center. The numbers aside from those figures are generated from self-initiated stops, such as a Police Officer initiating traffic stops. That is why the figures do not ever match up.

Councilor Rice said the Police Department's monthly report includes a graph for "productivity". He inquired, with the onset of two new police officers, what changes would the Council likely see to that reporting of productivity. Chief Toussaint replied that the more police officers on duty, the more proactive time would be spent on patrolling neighborhoods, activity inquires, and more traffic stops would occur. These are the type of activities that are not as likely to happen without the additional support of two new sworn officers.

3.3. Library

Brian Sylvester, Director of the Rochester Public Library, gave a brief overview of the O & M proposed budget along with the Issues and Options for the Library, which were proposed prior to COVID-19. The Issues and Options are not included with the City Manager's proposed budget and are as follows:

- Upgrade PT Library Assistant to FT \$68,351
- Replace Microfilm Reader
- Mitigate Loss of Fine Revenue

Councilor Lauterborn recalled that the Friends of the Rochester Library have a very healthy fund balance. She asked if it is possible to seek funding

from that program to assist in purchasing the microfilm reader or mitigating the collections purchase decrease due to the lack of collection in fines. Mr. Sylvester said the Friends of the Library Program could potentially assist in such purchases. In fact, they recently purchased an Early Literacy station for the Children's Room, unfortunately, it did significantly decrease their funds. He agreed to speak with the Friends of the Rochester Library; however, it would not be a realistic solution to this problem.

Councilor Hailey asked if there was a line item for the purchase of new materials. Mr. Sylvester replied yes, line item 562400 which is named collection development [\$71,000].

Councilor Rice asked about possibility of transferring the microfilmed newspapers to a digital format. Mr. Sylvester replied that he has spoken with a vendor who gave an estimate of approximately \$140 per roll of microfilm. In order to convert the Rochester Courier and Rochester Times over to digital from microfilm would cost approximately \$25,000. Mr. Sylvester suspected there would be a hosting fee as well.

Mayor McCarley asked about the new Part-Time Tech Support position implemented last year. Mr. Sylvester said one of the current employees migrated into that position; unfortunately, the employee only worked a few weeks in that role when the on-set of COVID-19 resulted in the closing of the Rochester Public Library. This employee has been invaluable while the library has been closed in term of working on the digital services that the Library offers.

3.4. City Clerk

City Clerk Walters gave a brief overview of the City Clerk's proposed budget and asked if any Council Members had questions.

City Clerk Walters gave a brief overview of the proposed Elections budget and preparedness during COVID-19 and the upcoming Elections.

Councilor Gray said the State is discussing the potential increase to the Absentee Ballots which is likely to cause delays in reporting the election results. He suggested adding additional election workers the day of the election to assist in off-setting some of those delays. He spoke briefly about the possibility of keeping ballot box outside. He added that it would have been helpful if electronic poll books had been approved by the State. He said it is possible that plexiglass screens will be necessary at polling locations. He agreed that it would be difficult to estimate some of these expenditures this early in the process.

Mayor McCarley agreed that it is too soon to know what expenditures would be needed dealing with COVID-19.

Councilor Gray reiterated that poll books (electronic) would have been very useful especially if the City must resort to an outside ballot box scenario. He explained that a paper checklist could only be in one place whereas an electronic poll book could have the mechanism of checking in voters from several locations inside or outside the polling location. He agreed to follow up with the Secretary of State's office.

Councilor Lachapelle asked if there were any issues with the ballot machines at the past election. City Clerk Walters replied yes, there was a breakdown of the ballot machine in Ward 2, which caused issues with balancing election evening.

Councilor Lachapelle asked how old these ballot machines are currently. City Clerk Walters deferred the question to Councilor Gray; however, she recalled they began manufacturing these machines in the 1980's. Councilor Gray recalled they stopped manufacturing these machines in 2000's. City Clerk Walters added that it was helpful that the City has one spare machine on hand to switch out during a potential failure.

3.5. Assessing

Jonathan Rice, City Assessor, gave a brief overview of the proposed O & M budget for the Assessing Department. He gave reasons why there is a proposed increase of \$1,300 to the Staff Development Line.

Mr. Rice said there is a reduction of \$5,000 to the Appraisals Line since the re-evaluation was completed last year.

Mr. Rice gave reasons why there were slight increases to the Communications line, clothing line, Dues and Fees line, and administrative equipment line. The total increase to the budget meets the City Manager's 2% guidelines for budget increases not including salaries or benefits.

3.6. Tax Collector

Doreen Jones, Tax Collector, gave a brief overview of the proposed O & M budget for the Tax Collector's Department, which is under the City Manager's 2% guideline. There were no questions for Ms. Jones.

Ms. Jones gave a lengthy overview of the need for one Issues and Options request as follows:

- Additional PT Clerk \$18,081

Ms. Jones stated that this part time position had been added to the Tax Collector budget in the early 2000's and unfortunately, it had been cut during the recession. At the time, a Part Time Clerk was due to retire and the position has been eliminated at that time. Ms. Jones gave reasons why this position is needed now.

3.7. Welfare – *Postponed until the next budget workshop*

3.8. Finance

Katie Ambrose, Deputy City Manager/Director of Finance and Administration, gave a brief overview of the proposed budgets for Finance, Human Resources, General Overhead, City Manager, and Council.

Katie Ambrose gave an overview of the Issues and Options request to for additional part-time funding directly related to the announcement of the retirement of Deputy Finance Director Roland Connors. She said Mr. Connors has thirty years of specialized experience in the City and his institutional knowledge will be vital as the Finance Department transitions in fiscal year 2021. This request has been included with the City Manager's proposed budget.

Deputy City Manager Ambrose gave a brief overview of two additional Issues and Options which were not included in the City Manager's proposed budget but are being proposed as an "either/or" scenario:

- Increase the current part-time position along with a reclassification for that position, or:
- Increase the current part-time position but do not reclassify that position

Councilor Walker asked about the \$1,000 increase to the "Consulting, Other" line item. Deputy City Manager Ambrose recalled that this is a contingency for consulting needs throughout the year. She added that since the Contracted Service line had been reduced, this line item has slightly increased.

3.9. General Overhead

Deputy City Manager Ambrose gave a brief overview of the General Overhead proposed budget, which has many adjustments due to COVID-19. She indicated that revenues have been reduced by approximately 54%.

Mark Sullivan, Deputy Finance Director gave a brief overview of the revenues related to Host Community Fees and Auto Registration which are typically conservatively projected. He gave reasons why he reduced the projection of revenues for the Rooms and Meals line item by about 36% because of COVID-19. He listed other revenue adjustment which were made due to COVID-19.

Mayor McCarley noticed that there was a significant reduction in the revenue projects for Payments in lieu of Taxes. Mr. Sullivan replied that it representing a change from Frisbie Memorial Hospital from a pilot to a taxable entity, which is estimated at about \$164,000.

Mayor McCarley thanked Mr. Sullivan for preparing these adjustments. She added that it is looking like a tough year ahead because of COVID-19.

Councilor Walker asked about the Municipal Aide line item which looks like a new line item. Mr. Sullivan recalled that this is the second payment of unanticipated revenue as part as the distribution from the State which is part of the \$40,000,000, established two years ago by the State. Last year it was included with unanticipated revenue; however, this year, the City must show that is expected to receive that revenue. Deputy City Manager Ambrose agreed.

Deputy City Manager Ambrose gave a brief overview of the proposed General Overhead O & M budget and some of the unexpected purchase from COVID-19. The City Council did not have any questions.

3.10. Council/City Manager

Deputy City Manager Ambrose gave a brief overview of the proposed City Council and City Manager budgets.

Deputy City Manager Ambrose gave a brief overview of an Issues and Options request which was excluded from the City Manager's Budget: To Increase Public Relations.

Councilor Hamann asked about the Government Channel and Comcast. City Manager Cox stated that the City does have an agreement with Comcast; however, there would not be a line item for that agreement in the budget. Comcast is working on being able to simulcast with the Government Channel.

Councilor Hamann asked about the equipment upgrades. City Manager Cox replied that was for equipment upgrades to the Government Channel equipment located in the City Council Chambers.

3.11. Other

Mayor McCarley encouraged Councilors to get back to the City Council with any other budget questions that they may have missed due to the confusion with conducting all the meetings remotely.

4. Adjournment

Mayor McCarley **ADJOURNED** the remote Special City Council meeting at 8:39 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Walters, CMC
City Clerk