

**ROCHESTER CITY COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
May 14, 2013
7:07 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Councilor Hervey
Councilor Hynes
Councilor Keans
Councilor Lachapelle
Councilor LaBranche
Councilor Lauterborn
Councilor Larochelle
Councilor Reed-Erickson
Councilor Savoie
Councilor Torr
Councilor Varney
Councilor Walker
Mayor Jean

OTHERS PRESENT

City Manager Fitzpatrick
Deputy City Manager Cox
Deputy City Manager Pollard
Commissioner Nourse

MINUTES

1] Call to Order

Mayor Jean called the City Council Budget Workshop to order at 7:07 PM. All Council members were present.

2] Public Input

Mayor Jean invited the public to address the City Council relative to budgetary concerns.

Robert Gates, resident, addressed the City Council about the proposed budget. He requested that the City Clerk include documents which he submitted to be included in the minutes.

Doris Gates, resident, addressed the City Council about the proposed budget.

Fred Leonard, resident, addressed the City Council about the proposed budget.

Greg DeNobile, resident, addressed the City Council about the proposed budget.

Mayor Jean asked if any other member of the public wished to address the City Council. No other member of the public came forward. Mayor Jean closed the public input portion of the meeting at 7:22 PM.

3] Budget Presentations:

- **School Department**

Michael Hopkins, Superintendent of Schools, gave a PowerPoint presentation of the proposed School Department's Operating and CIP budget for Fiscal Year 2014.

Councilor Varney said there is an estimated \$2,000,000 worth of CIP projects, not including the \$13,100,000 cost of the proposed East Rochester School building. What does the additional interest of the \$2,000,000 cost the City of Rochester over twenty years and what would the interest rate be for the debt service? The Finance Team worked to calculate these figures for the City Council. Deputy City Manager Cox informed the City Council that the first payment of principal and interest would be about \$160,000 in order to borrow an additional \$2,000,000. He added that this figure is an estimate using a three percent interest rate over a twenty year period, which would include the remaining payments estimated at \$132,000 each year of the loan.

Councilor Varney listed the items which would increase the debt service through 2016. He asked how the School Department planned to pay for this additional debt service, with the anticipated increases associated with the School Department's obligation of the retirement and health benefit costs. Superintendent Hopkins stated that it will be a matter of balancing the budget with all of the increases previously mentioned by Councilor Varney and taking into consideration the additional cost of special education services, which is basically "financially" tearing down other necessary programs. Councilor Varney said it is important to outline all of the significant projects and debt service over a span of years instead of projecting only the projects on the books for this year; it would give the City a better idea about future debt service in order to avoid a lay-off of current staff members. Superintendent Hopkins agreed and added that the Space Study Needs Committee realized that not all of the listed school projects would have an opportunity to be completed. This is why the Board focused on the projects that would rid Rochester of the modular classrooms. The modular classrooms were only meant to be a temporary solution and would not last forever.

Council briefly discussed the roof repairs with Superintendent Hopkins.

Councilor Varney asked what specific repairs should be made to the High School Auditorium related to safety issues rather than cosmetic design of the structure. Superintendent Hopkins replied that the proposed auditorium project was brought forth as a result of seeking the advice from a consultant relative to restoring the auditorium to a safer environment for the students. He said basically, the flooring could not be included as a "needed" safety repair; however, the flooring does not calculate much to the entire cost of the project. He said a major part of the project is the replacement of

the curtain structure and loft area, which does pose a safety hazard to the students, according to the consultant.

Councilor Savoie asked if any elementary schools could be closed as a result of the decreasing student enrollment and the expansion of the East Rochester School building. Superintendent Hopkins stated that there are currently no empty classrooms. He explained that State regulations have changed the way in which the school department is required to provide programs and this is what has increased the need for more space. He said a similar situation happened back in 2002 at the Rochester Middle School. He briefed the City Council about the State requirements relative to size of classroom space as well as special education requirements that are creating space compliance issues.

Councilor Savoie asked about the teacher/pupil ratio. Superintendent Hopkins reviewed the current requirements of the teacher per student ratio per grade level; however, he informed the City Council that the ratio of teacher per pupil is not the same as teacher per students in a classroom. The teacher per pupil ratio is based on the entire staff and all students. The number of students per teacher in the City's classroom is an average of twenty-one students per teacher in a classroom setting. There are a few classrooms with fewer students at the high school level.

Superintendent Hopkins reviewed the State requirement of providing 36 square feet per student, which equates to about 900 square feet per classroom. This is the size of the classrooms being proposed at the East Rochester School building, which would only provide a few more students per classroom than are currently attending the East Rochester School. He briefed Council about the issues with the existing "open concept" setting at the East Rochester School building and said this was the reason for inviting the public to take a tour of the building, which took place on April 25, 2013.

Mayor Jean asked if the School Department anticipated facing another spending freeze on supply goods and service early in the budget season this year, as was the case during the 2013 fiscal year budget. Superintendent Hopkins said that during the budget presentation he spoke about the expensive cost of providing special education. He said this area of education is what had caused the spending freeze during this fiscal year and it is also a potential cost item that could lead to the same situation again with the next fiscal year.

Mayor Jean stated that during the current fiscal year and fiscal year 2014 the Local Government Center LGC provided a premium "holiday" [\$378,000], which was basically a portion of what LGC collected during the legal settlement; however, this is not anticipated to be the case for fiscal year 2015. He questioned how the School Department is planning to overcome this obstacle. Linda Casey, School Department, agreed that the loss of the additional \$378,000, which is being adjusted through the health insurance and dental line items, would have a negative impact on the fiscal year 2015 budget. Mayor Jean said this is a significant area of the school department's budget, which should be addressed during this budget process.

Mayor Jean asked what the staffing level would be for the CIC Department, once the proposed budget cuts have been made. Superintendent Hopkins said there are three high staff persons working on networking and high level computer programs. There would be three staff technicians working on equipment for the CIC Department, however, one of the three positions is on the list to be cut from the budget. He added that there are two certified teachers assisting in this department and only one is needed to meet the "Certified Media Specialist" State requirement. This person provides media services and librarian services. The other teacher would be charged with web design and assisting other teachers to implement technology based programs. Superintendent Hopkins added that the CIC Department has made a lot of good software decisions which has saved the School Department time and money.

Mayor Jean thanked the School Department for presenting the budget.

- **Recreation & Arena Department**

Mayor Jean indicated that the City Council would be presented with the Operating Budgets of the Arena and Recreation Department. He added that the CIP for the Arena and Recreation would be postponed until June 11, 2013.

Chris Bowlen, Director of the Arena and Recreation Department, began the PowerPoint presentation with the Arena Department's budget and opened up for questions.

Councilor Lachapelle asked if the fees for "ice-time" at the Arena were increased this year. Mr. Bowlen replied yes, these fees must be adjusted on an annual basis. The current fees are competitive with the similar neighboring towns. The goal is to keep the increases as minimal as possible.

Mayor Jean asked about the increase in the utilities line item for the Arena's operating budget. Mr. Bowlen explained that this increase reflects the cost associated with maintaining the additional building [former YMCA building].

Mr. Bowlen continued the PowerPoint presentation reviewing the Recreation Operating Budget and made the following two request of the City Council:

- Take a Sense of Council in order to secure staffing for summer programs.
- Allow the Director of the Recreation and Arena Department to have a communication period once a month on the Workshop Agenda.

Mr. Bowlen invited Jim Chambers, Rob Feeney, and William Marshall to answer questions relative to the proposed Disc Golf Course at Squamanagonic in partnership with Granite State Disc Golf, which was vetted through the Recreation Commission and the Community Development Commission. Mr. Chambers assisted Mr. Bowlen with the

Disc Golf portion of the PowerPoint Presentation and gave a brief history of the Disc Golf course built at Bellamy Park in Dover, New Hampshire.

Councilor Lauterborn questioned where the funds would be drawn from for the Disc Golf project. Mr. Bowlen replied that the line item associated with this investment could be found on page 144 of the Operating Budget under "equipment." Councilor Lauterborn asked what items were cuts in order to produce the \$5,000 in the equipment line item. Mr. Bowlen stated that savings were established due to personnel changes and other areas of the budget which were showing a decrease over the last few years. This savings was allocated to the Disc Golf Course because it was identified as a program need.

Councilor Keans asked how the Disc Golf Course would generate revenue for the City of Rochester. Mr. Bowlen gave a number of reasons why he felt this program would generate revenue to the City by attracting people to visit the City of Rochester. He said eventually the site would be sponsoring tournaments, which would attract even more people to the City of Rochester.

Councilor Keans asked if additional staff hours would be required in order to hold a tournament. Mr. Bowlen stated that it would be a combination of hired staff and volunteers. This would be no different than other recreational programs provided by the City on the weekends.

Councilor Keans asked if there was a "master plan" of the proposed site to allow the City Council to see exactly which trees would be cut down at the Disc Golf Park. Mr. Bowlen stated that there was no formal map; however, he ensured the City Council that this was an area in which he would work with the volunteers in order to be respectful of the land. Mr. Chambers described the work that would be done at the park and gave reasons why the volunteers would not cut down a lot of trees.

Mr. Chambers gave a brief overview of the desire to expand the sport of Disc Golf in New Hampshire. He described the three men in attendance in the audience as "Disc Golf" advocates. He informed the City Council that he is also a citizen of Rochester, New Hampshire. He explained the process of building the course and eventually being allowed to hold Disc Golf tournaments.

Councilor Varney wished to clarify that the Recreation Department would remain in charge of managing the site. He questioned how the volunteers planned to construct the course and if the volunteers would be supervised. Mr. Bowlen said that he is in the process of reviewing this matter with Deputy City Manager Cox.

Councilor Laroche supported the project; however, he cautioned that it must be maintained or it would once again become a party hang-out as in the past.

Councilor Lachapelle questioned the use of cement at the park. Mr. Chambers confirmed that the Disc Golf baskets would be portable.

City Manager Fitzpatrick informed the City Council that any volunteer for this project would be covered by the City's insurance and follow the requirements of the City through the volunteer process. He said the project would not begin until the policy procedures are followed.

Mayor Jean supported the program; however, he requested to have a formal proposal brought back to the City Council at the June 11, 2013, City Council meeting. Mr. Bowlen concurred.

Councilor Keans asked if by implementing a disc golf site, would this limit the activities on the property by any other groups. Mr. Bowlen replied no, the Recreation Department would continue to work with other groups and associations that it has in the past.

Councilor Varney asked about the status of implementing electronic payments. Mr. Bowlen stated that this is a City-wide effort and the staff would continue to try and reach this goal soon.

Councilor Varney asked when the Common would be utilized to its full potential. Mr. Bowlen stated that this would be further addressed at the June 11, 2013, meeting. He gave a few examples of what could be done to utilize the grounds at the Common; however, additional picnic tables and swings would fall under the purview of the Buildings and Grounds Operating Budget.

Councilor Keans questioned the status of the Master Plan. Mr. Bowlen said this would also be addressed further at the June 11, 2013, City Council meeting.

Councilor Keans asked if the first goal outlined in the master plan has been accomplished, which is to clarify the responsibilities of the director and assistant director and delineate the job functions. Mr. Bowlen said the job descriptions, which have been adopted by the City Council, are in currently in place. Councilor Keans stated that the job descriptions were out-of-date and were supposed to be updated.

Councilor Keans wished to see the master plan being implemented and wanted to see more programs for senior citizens. Mayor Jean thanked Mr. Bowlen and the Disc Golf advocates for their time.

Mayor Jean asked if any member of the City Council objected to taking a Sense of Council in order to secure the summer positions to be filled by the Recreation Department this summer. The **Sense of Council** is to secure the summer positions to be filled by the Recreation Department for budgetary purposes.

Councilor Keans briefly discussed a decline in the summer programs and the new neighborhood programs.

Mayor Jean encouraged Mr. Bowlen to submit a formal calendar of events to be included in the City Council Workshop packet along with the routine Recreation and Arena Department Report. This would be a way to increase awareness of upcoming programs and events. He added that Mr. Bowlen should inform the Mayor of any new or big events and it could also be covered under "Communications from the Mayor."

4] Adjournment

Councilor Lachapelle **MOVED** to **ADJOURN** the City Council Workshop at 8:53 PM. Councilor LaBranche seconded the motion. The **MOTION CARRIED** by a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Walters, CDCCNH
City Clerk