



October 14, 2014

CITY OF SARATOGA SPRINGS
Budget Workshop
City Council Room
1:00 PM

PRESENT: Joanne Yepsen, Mayor
Michele Madigan, Commissioner of Finance
John Franck, Commissioner of Accounts
Christian Mathiesen, Commissioner of DPS

STAFF PRESENT: Joe Ogden, Deputy Mayor
Lynn Bachner, Deputy Commissioner, Finance
Sharon Kellner-Byrnes, Deputy Commissioner, Accounts
Eileen Finneran, Deputy Commissioner, DPS

Peter Martin, Supervisor

EXCUSED: Anthony Scirocco, Commissioner of DPW
Tim Cogan, Deputy Commissioner, DPW

RECORDING OF PROCEEDING

The proceedings of this meeting were taped for the benefit of the secretary. Because the minutes are not a verbatim record of the proceedings, the minutes are not a word-for-word transcript.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Yepsen called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Yepsen opened the public comment period at 1:05 p.m.

No one spoke.

Mayor Yepsen closed the public comment period at 1:05 p.m.

BUDGET WORKSHOP

Commissioner Madigan advised this is the second budget workshop for the 2015 Comprehensive Budget. Time has been set aside for the Mayor's Department and the Recreation Department budgets. The Mayor's Department has requested expense increases totaling \$152,668.06; \$5,000 of this is for the Vietnam War Commemoration which was discussed last week. The mayor has requested 2 full time positions: administrator of parks, open land, and historic preservation ('POSH') and a zoning and building technician. Hires will increase the wage line, benefits, social security, vision, health insurance and retirement. No revenue increase or expense reductions are being offered to offset these positions. If these positions were added to the budget, the tax increase for the inside district would almost be half the property tax cap.

Mayor Yepsen asked Deputy Mayor Ogden to explain the 'POSH' position.

Joe Ogden advised the administrator of parks, open land, and historic preservation is required by the Charter. This position's responsibilities overlap in some ways with other positions. He believes it can help offset with the NYSERDA grant funding we will be receiving. We can use about \$35,000 of that funding for this position.

Mayor Yepsen stated it is a critical time to be looking at this. We need to weave in the sustainability policies that this Council has voted for over the past years.

Brad Birge explained the NYSERDA grant is \$200,000 over 2 years to make the zoning ordinance consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. This is the first step. The next step is to see what the fruit is of all of it is and how to make the City more sustainable. There is a lot of interest in solar and wind energies that would be encompassed within this position.

Commissioner Madigan asked if this position has gone before Civil Service. The budget suggests they were looking at changing the title.

Joe Ogden advised he hoped to have this to Civil Service for their meeting in November. They are looking at the job description. He doesn't know if that will change the title.

Commissioner Madigan stated there is another \$70,000 increase for another position in the department. They were asked to keep this in mind when asking for other positions.

Joe Ogden stated that was a full time job that was cut back to a part time job. They re-allocated money within their existing budget to bring it back to a full time status.

Commissioner Franck confirmed the only position being asked for is either in the Charter or a position cut with the 2009 budget. He hopes all the positions that were lost are filled before new positions are added.

Mayor Yepsen stated the 'POSH' position was a highly visible position within the community. A lot of people are watching what we are doing with sustainability and open space.

Brad Birge advised they absorbed this position's duties within his department to the extent possible.

Commissioner Madigan stated she likes the option in the NYSERDA grant to hire a consultant. She is not inclined to jump the budget by \$105,000 for this position. This position being proposed would increase the tax rate by half the property tax cap.

Commissioner Mathiesen asked if the 'POSH' position has to be full time.

Joe Ogden stated the Charter does not speak to that.

Mayor Yepsen stated her department is estimating the work load to be more than before in prior years.

Steve Shaw of the Building Department advised they are at 3 ½ inspectors. Now there is more building going on, their plates are full, and they have been getting more zoning complaints. They don't have the people to go after them. They are looking to get back to the pre-recession levels and cover more ground.

Commissioner Madigan stated she would like to get to pre-recession levels as well but we need to do this within our means and within the revenues that we have.

Mayor Yepsen stated they have looked at the lost revenue due to not having anyone out there taking care of these problems.

Commissioner Franck stated if they can come up with a reasonable number to show to the Council the revenues this position would bring in, that would be helpful.

Steve Shaw stated this position could also go after things being erected without a permit. Work being done without a permit carries a \$100 fee.

Commissioner Madigan stated she has been told they don't receive revenue from the Building Department through enforcement.

Steve Shaw stated it is a fee, not a fine. They are missing a lot of the people that fall under this category.

John Hirliman advised they have no changes to the Recreation Department budget. They proposed a new program coordinator especially to help with the ice rink.

Commissioner Madigan stated the August sales tax was lower this year than last year. She will continue to monitor it. She expects a decrease this year of \$100,000 - \$200,000.

The next budget meeting is scheduled for October 16, 2014 at 4:00 p.m. for the Accounts Department.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Yepsen adjourned the meeting at 2:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Ribis
Clerk

Approved:
Vote: