

DeFuniak Springs City Council
Budget Workshop Minutes
Council Chambers
August 17, 2021
4:00 p.m.

The following members were present: Mayor Pro-Tempore Todd Bierbaum (Seat 1); Councilmember Robert McKnight (Seat 2); Councilmember Kevin Crystal (Seat 3); Councilmember Henry D. Ennis (Seat 4), and Councilmember Anthony Vallée (Seat 5). Also, present: City Manager Robert Thompson, City Clerk Maryanne Schrader, Finance Director Debra Gibson, and Finance Supervisor Morgan Hulion. Mayor Bob Campbell was excused.

Mayor Pro-Tempore Todd Bierbaum called the workshop to order at 4:01 p.m.

2. Present and finalize budget.

Finance Director Debra Gibson opened the meeting stating that she has presented the draft with the 5% COLA with no change in the bottom-line, but department heads had reduced their expenses across the budget. She added there was an increase in the budget because of the addition of the American Rescue Plan money. She briefed that the city is receiving \$3.5 million from the American Rescue Plan Act which she said is depicted in grants. She added there was an increase of \$296,000 in grants.

Discussion ensued on keeping the mill rate at 5.0 or using the tentative mill rate of 5.5 mills. Finance Director Debra Gibson said she would adjust the budget for \$133,911 with the .5 increase in mill rate. She explained that CRA is budgeted at \$169,000.

Councilmember R. McKnight announced he called and was informed we have the new Census information stating that the city grew over 40% from a year ago last April at a population count of a little over 7200. The growth issue is one of the components to validate an increase in rate to 5.5 mills, as we will have a need for more services.

Councilmember H. Ennis stated he also agreed to the increase now that he has heard the census numbers.

After further discussion, Council agreed to the increase to 5.5 mills.

Finance Director Debra Gibson said the Council will vote on the mill rate on September 17th at the final budget meeting. She asked to place the \$133,000 in reserve since we have a balanced budget, and City Manager R. Thompson agreed that would be the best place.

Councilmember R. McKnight requested consideration to an amendment to the budget and distributed information. The Council agreed to the discussion.

Councilmember R. McKnight mentioned we no longer have an Economic Development Committee, but we have an economic development opportunity and the economic impact to the city. He explained he had lobbied at the Department of Interior to upgrade parts of the Lakeyard Historic district to be designated as a National Historic Landmark. He explained Dr. Henderson received a letter from the National Park Service stating they would welcome an application from

the city. He added an historian would have to put together the application. He displayed two books that referenced the Chautauqua in DeFuniak Springs. The historian will cost about \$20,000. He mentioned the timing is right and business owners will welcome bringing people to town. The application is reviewed by a national panel adding the Chautauqua in New York and Colorado also have the Historic Landmark designation.

Councilmember R. McKnight stated the second item he has is transportation, stating he wants sidewalks, streetlights, and bicycle lanes added.

Councilmember Anthony Vallée agreed. He said the Comprehensive Plan has policies in it that includes safe sidewalks and multi-modal plans, so the policies that are already in place need to be implemented and enforced. He suggested adding a budget item for marketing for destination to the historic downtown area and for promoting our local businesses and community. He also added alternate routes and suggested funding studies on the routing congestion to see if it is worth the revenue.

Councilmember H. Ennis said we have just found out we have more population and will need to provide services for the extra people, but we cannot do everything in one year.

Councilmember R. McKnight said it was the will of the Council to work with Forward DeFuniak to get the material ready to get the project up and running. We need to get a qualified individual, as it will take about two years to get the designation.

Discussion ensued on the Request for Qualifications process for an historian, along with the scope of the terms. Council also discussed whether American Rescue Plan Act money can be used.

Councilmember K. Crystal requested a copy of the letter inviting the city to apply, and for our grants department to review and provide the oversight.

Mayor Pro-Tempore Todd Bierbaum suggested that the discussion should be an agenda item and wanted to know for sure that by getting the designation we would not be required to have a different building code designation. City Attorney Clay Adkinson said the designation itself does not require anything that would trump our building codes, as this designation is honorary and does not change the building code.

Mayor Pro-Tempore Todd Bierbaum mentioned that the sidewalk request is agreeable to him. He brought up the CIP on page 62 showing the budget lists sidewalk projects. He does not want to throw money for sidewalks without a clear plan.

Councilmember Anthony Vallée said we are missing annual building assessments. We cannot quantify the problem without the data and has spoken to Dewberry regarding this issue. We should follow the plan we have already adopted. He said we should budget for the assessment for the historic area to identify any additional cost.

In reply to the question from Mayor Pro-Tempore Todd Bierbaum regarding the last line about the Airport mower on page 68, Public Works Director C. Drake explained Public Works has a smaller batwing, but the Airport requires a larger one.

Mayor Pro-Tempore Todd Bierbaum opened the floor for public comment.

Dr. Henderson said she has a number of consultant names who may want to submit an RFP and has a draft formed. She said the estimate of the fee is \$25,000. She said we need to find someone who is willing to work with our local group. Forward DeFuniak needs the agreement with the city completed before they can go out for an RFP. She added they will fund professional Zoom at \$149 adding she is also seeking funding from other organizations.

Next, Marie Hinson, President of the Historical Society, came forward and stated they would also like the expertise of an historian. The Historical Society has had over 3,000 visitors in a year. She mentioned they provide service of directing visitors to local businesses.

Dr. Henderson mentioned she has also asked area businesses if they need the services of a local historian.

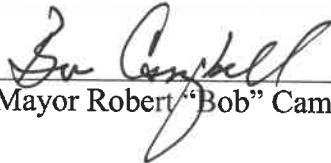
City Manager R. Thompson applauded the finance team and department heads who contributed to help put a balanced budget together.

Finance Director D. Gibson reminded Council that the first budget hearing is set for September 7th.

City Attorney Clay Adkinson said the agenda item should be presented at the next meeting to be included in the budget.


Mayor Campbell adjourned the meeting at 4:46 p.m.

Approved:



Mayor Robert "Bob" Campbell

Attest:



Minutes taken by Maryanne Schrader, City Clerk
Proper notice having been duly given

