



## **City Council Special Meeting Minutes Thursday, June 24, 2021 - 6:00 p.m. Council Chambers, City Hall**

**Council in attendance:** Interim Mayor Olivia Zink, Councilor Jo Brown, Councilor Scott Clarenbach, Councilor Bob Desrochers, Councilor Jay Chandler, Councilor Ted Starkweather, Councilor Paul Trudel, Councilor April Bunker **Arrived at 6:16 p.m.** Councilor Karen Testerman.

**Others in attendance:** City Manager Judie Milner and members of the public.

Interim Mayor Zink called the meeting to order in Council Chambers at 6:00 p.m.

Salute to the Flag was led by Councilor Chandler.

### **Agenda Item I.**

#### **Budget Presentation Wrap-up**

City Manager Milner summarized the budget review process to the City Council. She stated that the City FY22 Budget process began back in January and Department Heads proposed their budgets that came in under the tax cap. The City Manager then added their budgets as part of the City Manager's proposed budget during the month of May where department heads presented their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats during several sessions.

The School District's Principals presented their individual needs to the Council along with Superintendent Dan LeGallo who provided the overall School proposed budget on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

Milner reviewed the City's Mission and Vision Statement and reiterated the direction the department heads proceeded under this vision. She stated that the City's professional staff does more with less resources than many other communities.

Milner offered a solution to the City's revenue deficiency with the support of data and asked the Council to focus on the City's current needs and to fully support our dedicated staff. She thanked the Council, the citizens, the investors, the City Department Heads along with City staff, and the School District for their involvement in this budget process.

Councilor Brown stated that during the last City Council Meeting, the majority of the Council voted to move \$224,410 to the Capital Reserve Fund and not fund several department projects which the department heads brought forward. In doing so, some state funding was lost. She stated that it was difficult to move passed that there was no plan on where to spend that money when that vote was taken and would like the vote to be reconsidered.

Brown further stated that the Fire Department staff deserves enormous kudos for making some of the needed changes in their building themselves. They are converting spaces into more critically needed areas. She was more concerned with the air compression system which they really need at a cost of just

over \$6K. Their current one has stopped working. Brown continued to explain that this may seem small to many people but it could mean life or death for someone. She stated that leaving our Fire Department in a compromised situation does not sit well with her. Brown reviewed other items that the Fire Department and Parks and Recreation After School Program need. The Council voted to accept the grant money to fund projects for these departments back in December under Resolution #11-21. Now \$62,904 will need to be returned to the state.

Councilor Testerman joined the meeting at 6:16 p.m.

Brown further added that when the City turns down grant funds, it puts all future grant applications at risk. The City relies on grant money because we are under a tax cap. She also stated that the School is receiving funds that will hopefully make them whole for the next three years which is very helpful for the City. Those funds will be used to invest in the students and their future way of learning.

Brown concluded asking the Council to reconsider at least certain items in the department head's budget requests. Since this is a Capital Improvement year and the CIP Board will be meeting, she asked that the CIP Committee Chair look at a million dollar bond for next year.

Councilor Desrochers stated that he suggested the Council review the list of department head projects item by item. He further shared his thoughts on the vehicles the Fire Department has purchased over the past several years and offered suggestions on where an Emergency Operations Center could reside when a community-wide emergency happens. Desrochers believes that the City is not spending taxpayer's money wisely. Desrochers reviewed other items that he feels the City needs to address.

Councilor Chandler stated that the Department Heads and City Manager did everything the Council asked them to do and he thanked them for doing their jobs well. He then shook all the department head's hands.

The Council further discussed their views on how the leaders and teams should work together.

Councilor Brown highlighted the positive things that have been going on very recently with Winni River Days and how our Schools are offering the manufacturing program classes.

Councilor Testerman stated that she met with several of the department heads and was disheartened by the actions of the Council at the previous meeting. She added that Information is always provided when she asks for it. She also expressed deep disappointment that the City is in a position to return grant money that has already been planned to spend.

Testerman read a couple of letters sent in by concerned residents with regards to the decision to not use the money for proposed City projects, a couple of projects were previously approved by the City Council, but now the funds will be shelved in the Capital Reserve Fund. There was also mention of the School's top heavy budget and suggestions in another letter to be provided to the School Board.

Testerman also applauded the Department Heads and further stated that she hasn't seen a group work so diligently than this current group of leaders and staff. She also spoke of the cost effectiveness of a volunteer firefighter model versus career firefighters. Testerman concluded by asking the School to help

fund a few of the City projects that in turn benefit the School outside of the classroom.

Councilor Brown asked if the School's \$2M federal funds would cause their operations to halt if the City utilized it. School Administrator Jefferson Braman replied that these specific federal funds are targeted for education only and cannot be used for any other purpose. Brown then shared some thoughts about the possibility of some School funds being used toward dual-use spaces such as the use of the Opera House and the roof that is in dire need of replacement.

Councilor Testerman asked that the School take a closer look at performance and dropout rates. These issues must be addressed because the current program isn't working.

Councilor Chandler provided information on the School's results through actual data and noted that our students are working hard. He stated that the City is going to benefit from the program that Principal Blair has begun at Paul Smith. It will take a few more years to see those benefits but we will see them. Chandler also stated that the Council's job is not to micromanage the department heads.

Councilor Trudel, Desrochers, Clarenbach were not in support of bringing this vote back to the table and committing to the original capital project list but they would be open to a discussion on any specific funding request item that a department needs to bring back to the Council seeking approval.

**Motion – Councilor Trudel moved that the Franklin City Council set a public hearing on Monday July 12, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. regarding Resolution #01-22, a Resolution adopting the FY22 Budget. Seconded by Councilor Starkweather.**

Interim Mayor Zink asked if there was any discussion. There was none.

**All in favor. Motion PASSED.**

**City Manager Milner read Resolution #01-22 aloud.**

**Motion – Councilor Desrochers moved that the Franklin City Council set a public hearing on Monday, July 12, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. to increase the veterans' exemptions from \$200 to \$300. Seconded by Councilor Trudel.**

Interim Mayor asked if there was any discussion. There was none.

**All in favor. Motion PASSED.**

**Motion – Councilor Trudel moved that the Franklin City Council set a public hearing on Monday, July 12, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. regarding Ordinance #02-22, changes to Chapter 160, Fees for the fiscal year 2022 budget. Seconded by Councilor Starkweather.**

Councilor Zink stated that she was not in support of the Ordinance to help the water and sewer customers who cannot afford the increase. Councilor Trudel asked Zink if she would reconsider.

Councilor Desrochers stated that last year it was presented to the Council that there would be a 2%

increase every year not 3% and for that he was not in support of Ordinance #01-22 but would support a 2% increase.

**All in favor Motion PASSED.**

City Manager read Ordinance #01-22 aloud.

**Motion – Councilor Trudel moved that the Franklin City Council set a public hearing on Monday, July 12, 2021 at 6pm regarding Ordinance #01-22, setting the water and sewer rates for the FY2022 Budget. Seconded by Councilor Starkweather. No vote taken.**

**Motion – Councilor Trudel moved that the Franklin City Council set a public hearing on Monday, July 12, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. regarding Ordinance #02-22, changes to Chapter 160, Fees for the fiscal year 2022 budget. Seconded by Councilor Clarenbach.**

Interim Mayor Zink asked if there was any discussion. There was none.

**All in favor. Motion PASSED.**

City Manager Judie Milner read Ordinance #02-22 aloud.

There was no further discussion on the FY2022 Budget.

**Motion – Councilor Trudel moved that the Franklin City Council approve adding the Town of Northfield to enter the Municipal Agreement for the Cable Consortium and authorize the City Manager to execute the amended document. Seconded by Councilor Starkweather.**

Interim Mayor Zink asked if there was any discussion. There was none.

**All in favor. Motion PASSED.**

**Motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Starkweather. Seconded by Councilor Desrochers.**

Councilor Trudel stated that it will take the City and School Board to come together to help solve some of the issues that the City is facing. Trudel stated that when only 3% is going toward students' books and supplies, it doesn't seem right especially when 69% is going toward School administration costs (salaries and benefits). Trudel concluded by stating that he supports the School receiving the Federal ESSER Funds and would like to see that money being spent wisely.

**All in favor of adjournment. Motion PASSED.**

**Meeting adjourned at 7:20 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,

Audrey Lanzillo