



Council Worksession  
July 27, 2022  
5:00 pm

Present: Mayor Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas  
Councilmember Graeme Allen  
Councilmember Pam Axberg  
Councilmember Emily Dunsworth

Absent: Councilmember Abdullahi Abdulle

Staff in Attendance: Devin Massopust, Gina Foschi, Jennifer Fink, Craig Schlichting, Tony Paetznick, Nick Kriz

Guests in Attendance:

Budget Work Session

Massopust stated staff has been selective in what they wanted to see within the 2023 budget. He thanked Finance Director Foschi and her team for their efforts on the budget. He stated he was proud of the budget that was being presented to the Council this evening. He explained the goals for this meeting was to inform the Council on the preliminary budget with the understanding the Council had until December 13 to approve the levy. He encouraged the Council to think about what they were firm on and what could be amended. He then reviewed the preliminary budget book in further detail with the Council, along with the City's strategic priorities.

Councilmember Axberg asked when the compensation study would be completed. Massopust reported this study would be completed in December or January.

Councilmember Axberg requested further information on how the new Assistant City Manager position would be funded. Massopust described how this position would be funded through ARPA and Community Reinvestment funds.

Foschi reviewed the internal service fund budgets with the Council.

Nick Kriz, IT Manager, discussed the proposed IT budget with the Council.

Councilmember Allen inquired if the City would still be providing Commissioners with iPad's in 2023. Nick Kriz reported the City would continue with this process, but staff understood Commissioners were not always finding the iPad's necessary. He estimated the City had 63 iPad's at this time and 47 were being used by Council and Commission members.

Further discussion ensued regarding the testing and defense mechanisms that were done on the City's network.

Foschi commented on the Pavement Management purchases that were proposed for 2023.

Councilmember Allen asked how the City was budgeting for LGA. Foschi explained the City was not budgeting or accounting for LGA. She estimated the City would receive \$400,000 in LGA for 2023 and was used to help provide future financing for street projects.

Massopust reviewed the administrative budget with the Council.

Foschi discussed the budget projections for the license bureau. Discussion ensued regarding the benefits and positive feedback the City receives regarding the license bureau at City Hall, along with the issues from MNLARS.

Schlichting commented on the proposed engineering budget. The projected revenues from the single family rental program were discussed.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas asked if residents would be charged for organics recycling. Schlichting stated it looks like the County will not be charging for this service.

Fink reviewed the forestry, golf and parks and recreation budget with the Council. The cost recovery efforts for the parks and recreation programming was discussed. Staff explained the City's cost recovery for its programs was around 50%.

Councilmember Allen asked if the City was able to remain competitive with the part-time wages for parks department employees. Fink reported Baker Tilly would be reviewing the part-time wages within the compensation study. She believed that the City had a good healthy environment for its seasonal part time workers.

Councilmember Allen inquired if programming was available to all members of the community, regardless of their ability to pay. Fink discussed how donations had been on the rise since CivicRec was put in place, which was assisting with scholarships for residents in need of assistance. She commented on how unique the programming was in New Brighton, especially the City's aquatics programs.

Staff commented on the proposed cleaning plans for the Community Center over the next year which would assist with keeping the site open for visitors. It was noted the prices for the Eagles Nest would be increasing to \$8.

Paetznick reviewed the budget for the Public Safety Department, which included both police and fire services. He commented on how staffing has been impacted over the past two years noting it was difficult to find and retain officers at this time.

Councilmember Axberg asked how mental health was being incorporated into the public safety budget. Paetznick reported for the past five years all police patrol officers have been trained in the 40 hour CIT training. He explained more conversations were being held with the City's partners such as NYFS and Allina EMS. He indicated he has requested a social worker from Ramsey County and noted a mental health team was being considered within the department. He commented further on how the appropriate response team was impacting the police department.

Further discussion ensued regarding the staffing model that was in place between the City and the County for Long Lake Regional Park.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas questioned how staff was preparing for another outbreak, such as monkey pox.

Paetznick reported the department was following the data and noted public safety staffing would be in place at all times.

Foschi commented on the general fund revenues and expenditures proposed for 2023. The impact on the proposed levy for the median value homeowner was discussed. She reviewed the savings staff was able to realize within the preliminary budget.

Councilmember Allen asked what the historical increase was for the levy over the past few years. Foschi stated the average increase over the past five years was 7.8%.

Fink discussed how the Community Center would be educating staff and creating a composting program. She noted this involved getting bins within the facility.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas requested staff take another look at the fleet replacement schedule given the inflationary pressures the City would be feeling in 2023. Massopust explained staff had looked at delaying some purchases, but noted delays lead to increased expenses in the long run.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked the City staff team for all of their work on the preliminary budget. She explained she appreciated seeing where the budget started and where it was now. She indicated she was aware of inflation and how this was included in the budget. She asked if the City had set aside funding for DEI initiatives. Massopust reported \$80,000 had been set aside for DEI initiatives for 2023 and additional dollars were written into the budget for future years.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas questioned if commissioner stipends were included in the 2023 budget. Massopust stated this was not included in the budget.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas inquired if the fencing consortium was included in the budget. Foschi reported this was included in the risk management budget.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas asked if the City had additional earned revenue opportunities they could be pursuing with the school district. Fink commented on the joint powers agreement the City had in place with the school district.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas commended staff for pursuing grant opportunities for recent projects. She questioned if there were additional opportunities to pursue grants that would assist with reducing the pressuring on the 2023 levy. Massopust stated it was difficult to receive funding without having projects lined up. Schlichting commented further on the grants staff has been pursuing for the City. He explained staff was always looking for grant opportunities to assist with funding projects.

Councilmember Allen inquired if all of the ARPA dollars had been allocated. Massopust reported these dollars had been allocated between parks, infrastructure and public safety items.

Massopust discussed how the proposed budget maintains core assets and infrastructure without costing the City more in the future. He indicated the budget addresses inflationary pressures which led to 2% of the levy increase. He explained this budget also focuses on people stating a priority for him was to retain the City's current employees. He commented on the priority to fund the Council's and City's initiatives while maintaining the feasible tax levy. He then reviewed the future meeting schedule for the 2023 budget. It was noted the preliminary levy would be set on September 13 and the Truth in Taxation Hearing would be held on December 6.

Councilmember Allen stated he would like to see the COLA steps and increases maintained within the budget, along with the additional police officer and dollars proposed for DEI work. He suggested the City switch to iPad's by request for Commissioners going forward. He supported the City providing free swimming lessons for those that cannot afford them.

Councilmember Axberg indicated the levy was coming in higher than she expected given the fact inflation was at 9.1%. She stated she was surprised and she looked forward to discussing the budget/levy further at future meetings.

Councilmember Allen encouraged the City to coordinate with Ramsey County to assist seniors and others who may struggle to pay their property taxes in 2023.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas stated she knew the levy would be coming in double digit, but she was hopeful the Council and staff could this below 10%. She encouraged the Council to push for more development as this would assist with additional revenues and tax base for the City.

Massopust thanked the Council for all of their feedback.

Worksession adjourned at 8:04 pm

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Terri Spangrud".

Terri Spangrud  
City Clerk