

## FINANCE

Tuesday, March 17, 2020 – 6:15 p.m.

Police Training Room – Olean Municipal Building

Present: Members: Chairman Gonzalez, Vice Chairman Crawford, Alderman Witte, Alderman Dougherty, Alderman Smith, and Alderman Anastasia. Others: Mayor William Aiello; Nicholas DiCerbo, Jr., City Attorney; Fred Saradin, City Auditor; Bob Ring, Director of Public Works; Tim Richardson, Fire Chief; Jeff Rowley, Police Chief; and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

### 1. Roll Call

Alderman Gonzalez called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committeemembers were present except Alderman Panus, who was excused.

### 2. Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Committee Meetings (Tuesday, January 21, 2020)

A motion to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2020 meeting was made by Alderman Gonzalez, seconded by Alderman Witte. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

### 3. Monthly Finance & Bills Review

Alderman Witte explained that she sees that handicapped accessible doors were installed at the Senior Center, and she asked if this is from their budget or ours. Mayor Aiello responded that this came out of the budget for the Community Center. Alderman Witte noted that she has gotten mixed reviews about the new doors.

### 4. Unfinished Business

None

### 5. New Referrals for Consideration

#### a. 2020-2021 Budget Discussion

Alderman Gonzalez explained that he wanted to put this item on the agenda to see if there were any initial questions regarding the budget. He explained that all of the Aldermen have received a hard copy and PDF of the tentative budget and he would like to take this opportunity to discuss how the Council wanted to go about the budget analysis process. He explained that in years past, marathon meetings occurred on multiple nights, and he doesn't see the value of going through every single budget with every single department head. Larger budgets, such as Department of Public Works, the Police Department and the Fire Department are more

beneficial to go through, while smaller budgets such as the Clerk's aren't. He explained that he would like feedback from the rest of the Council as to what everyone would like to do, so the Mayor can have a conversation with department heads and future meetings can be set up.

Alderman Anastasia explained that in the past, department heads would come in to explain what they were asking for and what is new in the budget, as well as to justify why they are asking for these changes. He explained that he feels that for himself and Alderman Panus that it may be beneficial to do this in order to get an idea as to what each department and each budget is like. He noted that he does not think that the Council needs to go line by line through the entire budget.

Alderman Gonzalez responded that he feels that is a great idea, but that a lot of times the department heads end up going line by line through their budgets, and he does not see a lot of productivity in that. Alderman Anastasia suggested that the Alderman go through the budget, and then have the department heads come in to explain the larger "asks" in their budgets and to answer any questions that the Aldermen may have. Mayor Aiello noted that there is not a lot of new things in this year's budget.

Alderman Witte explained that she has gone through the budget, and she feels that there is a lot of money in travel and training. She feels that with the situation right now, this is an area that can be cut out because City employees won't be traveling much, and she feels that we need to tighten our belts because we don't know how the City will be hit financially moving forward. She feels that we need to dial it back a little. Alderman Witte explained that senior citizens are on fixed incomes and can't pay higher property taxes, and young people who are looking to buy homes feel that the taxes in the City are too high. She wonders if it is worth setting aside money for the tree and sidewalk programs or not this year.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that Alderman Witte makes a valid point that sales tax could greatly decrease, and that it is a scary prospect. He feels that the Council needs to approach this budget like they do every budget, with a prudent eye and a reasonable expectation. He explained that he doesn't want to make rank and file cuts because of the Coronavirus pandemic, and that the Council should not go too crazy but take a conservative approach.

Alderman Crawford explained that he feels that the Council needs to take a realistic approach. He explained that he does not feel that the sales tax revenue will be there, and that this pandemic will obliterate that. He explained that the Council still needs to present a balanced budget, and he does not know what sales tax revenue is expected. Mr. Saradin explained that he did not increase the figure from last year, and that after ten months, if the City receives in April and May what we did last year, we will exceed the budgeted amount. He explained that

he does not know what will happen from June on. Alderman Gonzalez explained that this could be over by June.

Alderman Dougherty explained that he does not want to cut travel and training, and Alderman Witte explained that costs could always be taken out of contingency if needed. Alderman Dougherty explained that Contingency has always been the Council's rainy day fund, and if this becomes an emergency situation there is \$200,000 for the pandemic.

Alderman Witte explained that the County also has a huge surplus to help communities through this pandemic. She explained that her concern going forward is that we don't know what is going to happen with sales tax. She explained that we can't 100% count on it for income. She asked what the City will do if this goes on into August and September. This will affect companies and small businesses across town, and realistically the Council needs to tighten their belts. She explained that we need to look at needs versus wants. Alderman Dougherty explained that needs versus wants is a very grey area sometimes.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that these are all great points, and this is a good discussion. We now need to figure out how to approach the future discussions. He explained that the budget needs to be passed by April 15<sup>th</sup>, and so it makes sense to have a resolution to pass the budget at the regular meeting on April 14<sup>th</sup>. He asked if the Council wants to have meetings next week on the 31<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> since it is the fifth Tuesday of the month, and then wrap up discussions on the 7<sup>th</sup>, if possible.

Alderman Crawford explained that he wants to go back to the original question, and he is in favor of bringing forward what would be considered material changes from last year and not worrying about immaterial changes. Mayor Aiello noted that most of the immaterial changes in the smaller budgets are for contractual personnel services.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that this is exactly his point. He explained that he does not want to bring department heads in for meetings when they only have immaterial changes, that we should skip those departments or just have them come in if the Council has questions. The discussion should stick to the heavy hitters like the Police Department, Fire Department, and Department of Public Works. He explained that he is not trying to fast track this, but that the Council should work smarter, not harder.

Alderman Gonzalez outlined the budget discussions for 3/31, 4/2, and 4/7, if necessary. He explained that the planned vote date for the budget resolution is 4/14. HE explained that he would also encourage the Council, especially new members, to dive into the budget beforehand, to have questions prepared and possibly even submitted in advance. He explained that he wants these meetings to be as productive as possible. He explained that the Council should feel free to fire off questions via email so that department heads can have answers and

follow ups don't need to occur after the meetings. Alderman Witte noted that everything will go faster if everyone is on the same page.

Mayor Aiello explained that he has been going over this in his mind over and over through the last several budgets and that we all have been good stewards about using taxpayer money wisely. He feels that the department heads have done a good job doing that, and putting forth what is needed versus what is a want. He feels that the Council can go through the budget and take a little out here and a little out here, but that we still need to operate as a City and still need to take care of things and pay the workforce. He explained that he thinks that everyone has been doing a good job at that and will continue to do that.

Alderman Crawford explained that he wants to focus on material things, as long as there is a mutual understanding regarding what is important. He explained that if the Council has the right kind of eye for things that everything will be painless and will go well. He explained that the City only had a .25% increase in spending over the last year.

A motion to enter into executive session to discuss personnel issues was made by Alderman Gonzalez, seconded by Alderman Witte. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Executive session entered at approximately 6:35 p.m.

A motion to adjourn from executive session was made by Alderman Dougherty, seconded by Alderman Witte. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Executive session adjourned at approximately 7:10 p.m.

#### 6. Committee Reports

None

#### 7. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Gonzalez, seconded by Alderman Witte. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 7:10 p.m.