

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

December 15, 2021

The meeting was called to order by President McGee at 6:08 PM.

President McGee stated that City Clerk Murphy McGee was not able to attend, adding that he would fill the role of Clerk for this meeting.

President McGee called the roll. Absent members: 2 (Hernandez, Lebron-Martinez)
Present Members: 11 (Anderson-Burgos, Bartley, Greaney, Leahy, Lisi, McGee, McGiverin, Murphy, Sullivan, Tallman, Vacon).

The name of Councilor Anderson-Burgos was drawn to head the roll call voting.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Motion was made and seconded to suspend the necessary rules to take up item 2 out of order.

MCGIVERIN -- Ordered, that there be and is hereby appropriated by transfer in the fiscal year 2022, FOUR THOUSAND TWENTY AND 00/100 Dollars (\$4,020.00) as follows:

FROM:

11521-51104 HEAD CLERK \$4,020.00

TOTAL: \$4,020.00

TO:

11521-51101 PERSONNEL DIRECTOR \$4,020.00

TOTAL: \$4,020.00

Councilor McGiverin expressed a desire to have the transfer adopted right away. He stated that the surplus funds in the Head Clerk line was due to a vacancy in the position. He then stated that the funds currently in the line item for the Personnel Director would not be enough to fund the salary for the rest of the fiscal year. He then noted that the city was working to fill the position. He also noted the due to the coming reorganization of the Council, it was unclear when the Finance Committee would next meet to discuss the transfer. He then emphasized the need to have the full amount of the salary in the line item.

Councilor Murphy asked what the balance would be in the Personnel Director line item if the transfer was to be approved.

Motion was made and seconded to suspend the necessary rules to allow City Auditor, Tanya Wdowiak, and City Assessor, Deb Brunelle, to address the Council.

T. Wdowiak stated that the transfer was based on her calculation of what would be needed to fill the cover the salary for the rest of the year, adding that it was based on paying the salary from January 1st to June 30th for an \$80,000 annual salary.

Councilor Murphy expressed his understanding that this would result in an increase of pay by \$11,000 annually.

T. Wdowiak confirmed that was accurate.

Councilor Bartley recalled that there had been a previous transfer just prior to the resignation of the former Personnel Director, Sheila Biermann. He then asked what her salary had been.

T. Wdowiak stated that it had been \$66,000.

Councilor Bartley asked what the range was for the Personnel Director. He also asked why the salary had to be prorated to \$80,000.

T. Wdowiak stated that the would need enough in the line to pay the next Director through the end of the year.

Councilor Bartley asked if someone had been hired.

T. Wdowiak stated there had not been.

Councilor Bartley made a motion to lay on the table. Councilor Anderson-Burgos seconded the motion.

---> Laid on the table on a call of the roll of the yeas and nays. Yeas 10--Nays 1 (McGiverin)--Absent 2 (Hernandez, Lebron-Martinez).

Councilor McGiverin made a motion to reconsider. Councilor Tallman seconded. Motion failed for lack of a majority.

Councilor Lisi asked to hear reasons why the order should not be tabled.

Councilor McGiverin stated that the salary range was set by ordinance through the City Council, and that the position was appointed by the Mayor. He emphasized the

importance of the position, noting that it had been difficult to keep someone in the position. He noted that the previous Director left for a higher salary. He then clarified that the transfer was to assure that the Mayor had flexibility in negotiating the salary with candidates for the position.

President McGee stated that there had been three interviews and expressed his understanding that one candidate was expected to receive an offer. Then then speculated that the intended offer may be above the salary of the previous person.

Councilor Murphy stated that the range was between \$64,500 to \$91,500.

Motion was made and seconded to suspend the necessary rules to allow Mayor Garcia to address the Council.

Mayor Garcia confirmed that three candidates had been interviewed. He then stated his intent to make an offer to one candidate, adding that the account did not have enough funds to secure the candidate. He noted that many HR matters required attention, and that they need to hire someone with the skills and qualifications to handle daily challenges and address work to be caught up on.

President McGee asked to confirm that approving the transfer would allow an offer to be made at the preferred salary.

Mayor Garcia confirmed that was accurate.

Motion to reconsider passed by majority voice vote.

Councilor Greaney asked if it was critical to adopt that evening, noting that there would be a Council meeting the following Tuesday, allowing everyone to have all of the information in front of them.

President McGee asked Mayor Garcia is he could support referring the order to the Finance Committee before the next City Council meeting.

Mayor Garcia asked if there was a committee meeting scheduled. He then reiterated that if the transfer was not addressed during the current term, it could be postponed until late January or early February.

Councilor Bartley clarified that he would seek to receive a communication from the Auditor so that the Council could review it. He further clarified that he had not sought to refer the order to committee but rather to lay it on the table.

President McGee clarified that the normal procedure would be to refer to committee for discussion before being referred back out for the full Council, adding that tabling was an acceptable alternative.

Councilor McGiverin stated that he would support laying it on the table.

---> Passed the first reading and Laid on the table.

MCGEE, MCGIVERIN -- That the City Council vote to set a MRF for (FY22) tax Classification.

President McGee clarified for councilors that the Assessor sent a communication with information on the shift earlier that afternoon and a second communication just prior to the opening of the meeting with more detailed shift options. He then clarified that each round would include motions for three options, with the third option being voted on first.

Councilor Greaney stated that he had made a promise to voters that he would not vote for any tax increase. He noted that sewer bills had just been received with substantial increases, emphasizing that taxpayers could not handle any new increases.

Councilor Bartley made a motion to set the CIP shift to 1.6675. Councilor Vacon seconded the motion.

President McGee clarified that the motion would result in a \$19.26 residential rate and a \$40.59 commercial rate.

Councilor Vacon made a motion to set the CIP shift to 1.6700. Councilor Bartley seconded the motion.

President McGee clarified that the motion would result in a \$19.24 residential rate and a \$40.66 commercial rate.

Councilor Tallman made a motion to set the CIP shift to 1.6650. Councilor Lisi seconded the motion.

President McGee clarified that the motion would result in a \$19.28 residential rate and a \$40.53 commercial rate.

Councilor Greaney asked how the proposed rate would impact the average tax bill.

President McGee asked what the current rates were.

D. Brunelle stated that the current residential rate was \$19.27 per \$1000 and the commercial rate was \$40.63 per \$1000.

Councilor Greaney asked for a calculation of the potential change to the tax bills to average single family homes.

President McGee clarified that the calculation would be based on the average single family home sale.

Councilor Vacon noted that general home values increased by 5% and the general commercial values without the mall, increased by 3%. She then suggested that all proposals would represent an increase in actual bills even with relatively stable rates.

Councilor Bartley noted that the two family home values increased around 13%. He then stated that he could support all three proposals and would intend on voting for them. He then clarified that they would need seven votes. He then reiterated that taxes would go with each proposal. He also emphasized that there was work to be done with the budget with the hope of having more financial flexibility in the coming fiscal year.

Councilor Murphy noted that the rate was to be based on a levy of \$58,991,000, adding that the levy limit was \$59,900,000. He then asked if the budget would be balanced with the \$58 million levy.

President McGee noted there had been a transfer from ARPA funds for revenue loss at the previous meeting which would have balanced the budget.

Councilor Murphy stated that local receipts appeared to have increased substantially from the expected revenue. He then asked to confirm that setting the levy at \$58.9 would not lead to any deficit.

T. Wdowiak stated that there was a surplus of \$920,071.

D. Brunelle stated that based on the average value of \$219,470 for a single family home, there would be a tax bill increase of between \$222 and \$231 based on the proposed

shifts. She then stated that if tax bills remained the same, the average bill would increase by a little over \$200.

Councilor Greaney asked if stabilization funds could be used to relieve taxpayers of the burden.

President McGee stated that using stabilization funds would be up to the mayor.

Mayor Garcia stated that while using stabilization funds was an option, it was not best practice to use those funds for operating expenses. He then that his focus going into the new fiscal year would be on getting the city a better rate. He suggested that using stabilization funds could create additional concerns in the future.

Councilor Bartley noted that ARPA funds had been passed to balance the budget. He then asked what that figure was.

Councilor Tallman stated it had been \$1.7 million.

T. Wdowiak clarified that those funds had been added to balance the budget. She then stated that the city would have been in deficit without those funds.

Councilor Bartley asked to clarify that the surplus subtracted from the \$1.7 million would have been a deficit.

T. Wdowiak confirmed that was correct.

Councilor Tallman emphasized the importance of setting the tax rate that evening, recalling that the city had to borrow money during a previous year because the bills had not gone out on time. He then stated his intent on proposing a \$19.28 residential rate was to keep the rate close to the previous year's rate. He also noted that this would correspond to a commercial rate of 10 cents less than the previous year.

Councilor McGiverin stated that the situation for the current year reflected the unfairness of raising revenue through property taxes. He noted that the increased value of homes would result in an unavoidable increase in tax bills. He then stated he would support two of the proposals, noting that they would raise the revenue necessary for level-funded service. He also noted that two of the proposals would mean an average of \$20 per month for level-funded services. He then suggested that a local sales or income tax would mean not needing a property tax.

Councilor Greaney suggested that the sales tax was the only fair rate, noting that everyone pays the same. He then stated that homeowners were continuing to face a growing burden with increasing property taxes, adding that he would not support any of the proposals.

Councilor Vacon expressed confidence that the rate would be set that night. She then emphasized that there continued to be an issue with deficits in the grant programs and other items totaling over a half million dollars. She then stated that addressing those issues would reduce the budget on taxpayers.

Councilor McGiverin clarified that most of the deficits in their documents that day had been from previous fiscal years. He then noted that Mayor Garcia planned to work with department heads to assure there would be no new deficits from grant programs.

Councilor Vacon clarified that her intent was not to initiate a debate on the topic, but just to point out an area with continued room for improvement.

---> Motion to set the CIP shift to 1.6650 was received and denied on a call of the roll of the yeas and nays Yeas 5 (Bartley, Lisi, McGiverin, Sullivan, Tallman)--Nays 6--Absent 2 (Hernandez, Lebron-Martinez).

---> Motion to set the CIP shift to 1.6700 was received and denied on a call of the roll of the yeas and nays --Yeas 5 (Bartley, McGiverin, Murphy, Tallman, Vacon)--Nays 6--Absent 2 (Hernandez, Lebron-Martinez).

---> Motion to set the CIP shift to 1.6675 was received and Adopted on a call of the roll of the yeas and nays 9--Yeas--Nays 2 (Greaney, Leahy)--Absent 2 (Hernandez, Lebron-Martinez).

Brenna Murphy McLee
Adjourned at 6:51 PM.

