

## **Special Meeting 2018 Budget – June 7, 2017**

Law Enforcement Center, 320 S. Kansas Avenue, Topeka, Kansas, Wednesday, June 7, 2017.

The Governing Body members of the City of Topeka met in special session at 6:00 P.M., with the following Councilmembers present: Hiller, Clear, Emerson, Jensen, Schwartz and Coen -6.

Mayor Larry E. Wolgast presided -1. Absent: Councilmembers Ortiz, De La Isla and Harmon -3.

Mayor Wolgast announced the next budget meeting would be held June 14, 2017 at the Law Enforcement Center, Classroom A., at 6:00 p.m.

Councilmember Schwartz moved to approve the June 3, 2017, Special Meeting minutes. The motion seconded by Councilmember Clear carried unanimously. (7-0-0)

Councilmember Ortiz entered the room.

Doug Gerber, Interim City Manager, provided opening comments.

Councilmember De La Isla entered the room.

Nick Hawkins, Budget and Performance Manager, announced the agenda was slightly revised to continue department budget presentations for the Utilities Department and Topeka Zoo from the June 6, 2017 Council meeting. He provided a brief overview of Supplement No. 1: 2018 Budget Council Question and Answer document from the June 3, 2017 Budget Special Meeting.

Councilmember Clear requested clarification on the actual number of vehicle accidents that have occurred per department, not the total dollar amount in vehicle accident claims.

Bob Sample, Utilities Director, provided a presentation on the Utilities Department 2018 Operating Budget totaling \$70 million increasing 2.2% from 2017, consisting of 222 employees. He provided an overview of key performance measures and department highlights.

Governing Body members expressed concern with sufficient funding to maintain the current service level and if the diversion of resources may cause problems in other areas of utility operations.

Doug Gerber reported utility rates are artificially low and there will be difficult decisions that must be made in the near future to address the rising costs of utility infrastructure.

Councilmember Ortiz requested an automated call back feature be implemented in water customer service; a 24 hour pay option and electronic mail receipts.

Nicole Malott, Director of Business Services, stated they are working to re-implement the automatic callback feature and are currently testing the system.

Councilmember Emerson asked staff to comment on the meter replacement program.

Bob Sample reported they are in the process of implementing an Automated Meter Infrastructure (AMI) program that would enable the City to read meters instantly, detect leaks and provide instant feedback to the customer.

Councilmember Hiller suggested creating a bio-solids program that would generate revenue.

Bob Sample reported staff is currently researching new ways to create a bio-solids program that would help the City become more efficient. He provided an overview of Utility budget projections for 2018 totaling approximately \$26 million which is an amount that must be maintained to cover the annual debt service payment of \$17.6 million

Jason Peek, Public Works Director, provided a presentation of the Public Works Department 2018 Operating Budget totaling \$52 million increasing 32.6% from 2017, consisting of 173 full-time employees in six separate divisions. He provided an overview of key performance measures and department highlights.

Councilmember Jensen expressed concern with the proposed parking plan for downtown in

regards to the number of parking stalls (10%) for use by customers.

Councilmember Schwartz questioned if parking fees have increased in the downtown area in recent years and stated employees in the downtown area should pay for parking whereas customers should receive free parking.

Jason Peek stated he believes fees increased in 2013; however, he would confirm the information and report back to the Governing Body. He noted he would present some recommendations to the Governing Body when the parking study has been completed.

Doug Gerber stated staff is working to find a balance in charging market rates for parking spaces while continuing to encourage activities in the downtown area.

Councilmember Schwartz questioned why some parking meters remain hooded when construction has been completed in the downtown area.

Councilmember Coen questioned the status of the parking meters located east of Interstate 70 (I-70) from 10<sup>th</sup> Street to the Hallmark Building and if the parking meters could help solve the parking issues in the downtown area.

Jason Peek reported many local business owners have stressed the importance of keeping hoods on certain downtown parking meters while the City conducts the parking study; and the parking meters were installed east of I-70 with the hopes it would force people to park in the downtown corridor to generate revenue as opposed to parking free of charge outside the downtown corridor. He stated they must research and determine how to cover the cost of free on-street parking to encourage downtown growth as well as other options to solve the parking problems.

Councilmember Ortiz requested downtown residents receive parking free of charge.

Governing Body members stated they look forward to seeing the overall parking study.

Councilmember Hiller questioned if the City Forestry Division provides services to Shawnee County Parks & Recreation Department free of charge.

Councilmember Clear questioned adding one full-time position to the Forestry Division.

Doug Gerber stated he would report back to the Governing Body on the status of the position.

Jason Peek reported the Forestry Division is adequately staffed for the present workload; however, he questions if they are adequately staffed to provide maintenance and allow Forestry Division employees to perform the necessary duties associated with a sustainable Green Asset Maintenance Program for the city as a whole.

Mr. Peek continued discussion by providing an overview of the Parking Fund and the beginning stages of the parking study.

Councilmember Emerson referenced what other cities are doing in regards to creating parking zones that allow payment by debit/credit cards and eliminating parking meters. He questioned the cost to maintain a parking meter and if the current maintenance and machinery funds (approximately \$137,000) could possibly be used for the creation of parking zones in the city of Topeka or other alternative parking methods.

Jason Peek reported there are lots of technology options the City would consider as they move forward with the parking study. He stated the maintenance and machinery funds are used to support the replacement of batteries in parking meters as well as employee labor costs to monitor the parking meters.

Brendan Wiley, Topeka Zoo Director, provided a presentation of the Topeka Zoo 2018 Operating Budget totaling \$2.5 million increasing 3.8% from 2017, consisting of 24 full-time employees. He provided an overview of key performance measures and department highlights.

Councilmember Schwartz commended Mr. Wiley for working with Visit Topeka, Inc., to increase visitors to the Zoo.

Councilmember Hiller question if the costs associated with the newly proposed maintenance position assigned to the Zoo would be covered by increased revenue from the zoo; therefore, making the cost neutral to the General Fund.

Brendan Wiley reported the Zoo's facility fees as outlined in the 2018 Operating Budget were increased to cover the cost of the new position.

Mayor Wolgast left the meeting

Craig Duke, Topeka Fire Chief, provided an overview of the proposed Advanced Life Support (ALS) program that includes Advance Intubation, Advanced Cardiac Monitoring, Defibrillation, Intravenous Access and Drug Therapy. He discussed the proposed timeline of the ALS program beginning in 2018 and continuing through 2024, developing in two year phases.

Councilmember Clear expressed concern with the proposed budget of the ALS program.

Fire Chief Duke stated it is a workable budget that would get the program moving forward.

Doug Gerber reported staff has been evaluating the ALS program for some time and in 2017 the Governing Body approved the hiring of an EMS staff member to help with the study and implementation of the program.

Councilmember Emerson asked what the City pays AMR for their services and if the current command staff sport utility vehicles (SUVs) could be used as EMS vehicles.

Fire Chief Duke reported AMR has a service contract with Shawnee County and EMS associated costs are billed directly to an individual's insurance company. He also reported command staff vehicles (SUVs) are used by incident commanders and are basic in nature; therefore, they would have to be upgraded in order to be utilized as EMS vehicles.

Doug Gerber stated AMR pays a franchise fee to the City on an annual basis to operate within city limits and maintains a service contract with Shawnee County.

Councilmember Schwartz spoke in support of the ALS program. She asked if surrounding fire districts and townships would have any effect on the new program and if the City plans to partner with surrounding communities.

Fire Chief Duke stated the Fire Department would work on the program as it moves forward and custom build it to fit our community and this would include working with surrounding communities.

Councilmember Ortiz expressed the importance of educating the public on the duties of the Fire Department to help citizens better understand the services they provide.

Councilmember Jensen spoke in support of the proposed new ALS program, budget and plan.

Councilmember Hiller questioned the proposed reduction in the overall cost of the ALS program than what was initially proposed by staff and questioned if the reduction in costs would result in additional money in the budget. She asked a series of questions in terms of creating a master plan for the Fire Department relating to the cost of services by AMR to the County and City and if there is a need to utilize the AMR services when the program is implemented; and the management of Intravenous Access and Drug Therapy in partnership with AMR to insure the best use of tax dollars.

Nick Hawkins reported there would not be additional funds in the budget and the ALS program numbers were revised to better reflect actual amounts.

Craig Duke confirmed the need for AMR services for transport of the victim; however, the Fire Department would be able to provide ALS service much quicker; and the Fire Department would work in collaboration with AMR in the management of drug therapy.

Councilmember De La Isla spoke in support of implementing an ALS program for the Fire Department. She clarified the implementation of the service would not place an additional tax burden on the citizens of Topeka and Shawnee County and only confirm that the City plans to make a serious financial commitment to public safety.

Nick Hawkins asked Governing Body members to send any additional discussion requests for the June 14, 2017 Budget Special Meeting to him via email.

Councilmember Ortiz moved to adjourn the special meeting. The motion seconded by Councilmember Jensen carried unanimously. (8-0-0)

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

---

Brenda Younger  
City Clerk