

CITY OF LACONIA - CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING
June 21, 2021
7:00 P.M.

6/21/2021 - Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hosmer called the meeting to order at the above date and time.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Councilor Hamel lead the Salute to the Flag.

3. RECORDING SECRETARY

Cheryl Hebert, City Clerk

4. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Hebert took a roll call vote with the following Councilors in attendance: Councilor Soucy, Councilor Lipman, Councilor Haynes, Councilor Hamel, and Councilor Felch.

Not present: Councilor Cheney

Mayor Hosmer noted five Councilors were in attendance and quorum has been established.

5. STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Scott Myers, City Manager

Glenn Smith, Finance Director

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

6.A. General budget discussion

Mayor Hosmer explained this is the meeting that the Council may ask any budgetary questions or make any recommendations or suggestions.

Councilor Soucy asked if there was an update on the State budget.

City Manager Myers explained the Committee of Conference met last week and agreed to the proposed budget and a full vote will take place this Thursday, June 24, 2021. The biggest impact for the City is they added some funds to the Rooms and Meals Tax distribution. This will increase line item Rooms & Meals on page 57 of the proposed budget book by an additional \$400,000. The line item COVID - Federal of \$429,000 will be reduced or zeroed out because of these additional funds. City Manager Myers thinks it will even itself out without using any of the American Care Act funds. City Manager Myers also explained that \$700,000 is being used from the Undesignated Fund Balance to reduce property taxes.

Councilor Felch asked how the School Voucher Program would affect Laconia if it passed.

City Manager Myers is not exactly sure how that would affect Laconia but there are some safety nets put into the bill so it would not impact the City all at once.

Councilor Haynes asked for the City Managers opinion in regards to staffing levels with the Parks and Recreation Department.

City Manager Myers explained staffing has been a challenge, not only with the Parks department but with all departments. The rates of pay were increased a few years ago. City Manager Myers also explained that beginning this week, Joyce Janitorial will be cleaning the bathrooms at some of the area parks. This will allow for staff to focus on the fields, parks, and gardens. On page 118 of the proposed budget book, there is an increase request of about \$40,000 to help with materials and/or outside contracted services.

Councilor Hamel thinks the Parks Department is under staffed and he would like to see another position added.

City Manager Myers explained that that department already has one vacant position and that needs to be filled before adding another position. But having said that, one of the seasonal positions could be turned into a full time position.

Councilor Lipman asked if there was any particular equipment that could be added to help with maintaining the fields and beaches.

City Manager Myers explained that could be looked into.

Councilor Soucy asked if any security cameras have been purchased for the parks and beaches.

City Manager Myers explained that cameras are slowly being added around the City.

A discussion about the 2020 Halloween event was had. There are plans to carry forward this event.

Also a discussion was had about Parks needing a boom truck. City Manager Myers stated that request was through CIP. The City does have one boom truck that DPW has. On the off hours the Fire Department has been using the boom truck for the replacement of the fire alarm wires. City Manager Myers stated at some point it would make sense to purchase another boom truck.

There will be three lifeguards at Bond Beach this year. Unfortunately there is not enough staff for all of the beaches.

Councilor Lipman asked if there is money in the budget to properly address any property issues?

City Manager Myers explained that about a year ago the Planning Department went from a part time position to a full time position. This will help the City be more pro-active rather than reactive. The new employee is being trained but because of the pandemic was staying close to the office. But now that things are opening back up, this new employee and a request for another City vehicle will help the City be more responsive.

Councilor Hamel asked for an update on the Air BnB's within the City.

Director Trefethen explained there are about 80 properties registered with the City. He stated about another 20 applications have been reviewed and denied for various reasons. Director Trefethen suspects there are at least 100 more properties that have not registered. A discussion was had about outsourcing to another company to find all of the properties that are being used for short-term rentals. The process was started right before the pandemic hit and then came to halt. The process has begun again and as of right now a preliminary price to outsource is roughly \$20,000 per year. Director Trefethen explained what a company would do to find these properties.

Director Trefethen stated that the penalty for not registering as a short term rental with the City is \$275 per day, with each day being a separate violation. The City would have to go to Court to levy those fines. For the past year, access to the Courts has been limited. The fee for the short term rental permit is \$250 for two years. There is a set criteria that must be met in order to receive a permit.

City Manager Myers stated that with each permit applied for, a building inspector and someone from the Fire Department goes out and inspects the property.

Director Trefethen stated that there have not been any complaints as of yet, until this past weekend. The complaint from this past weekend will be looked into. Director Trefethen also stated that there are a few words in the Ordinance that need to be changed and he will be bringing those changes to the Council soon.

Councilor Lipman asked if the funding for IT is adequate for this fiscal year?

Finance Director Smith stated for this upcoming fiscal year it is adequate. Part of the request in the FY 2022 budget is an in-depth review of the City's IT function and security. Most likely out of that study there may be additional recommendations for future years.

City Manager Myers stated that once the State budget is approved and signed, the Finance Revenue page will be modified to reflect what is now known. If the Council doesn't have any changes or if they do have changes a motion can be made to make those changes. City Manager Myers expects the earliest our budget could be adopted is the July 12, 2021 meeting, but has until the fourth Monday in July. If the Council does not take any action by the fourth Monday, the City Manager's budget goes into affect by default, but the Council could still vote to amend it with a 2/3 majority. This is a tax cap compliant budget.

Mayor Hosmer noted for the public that a copy of the proposed budget is available to view in the Clerks office, Library and on the City website. The public also had a chance to speak during the official public hearing portion of the June 14, 2021 Council Meeting and they can also comment during the citizen comment section at the next meeting. The proposed budget has been available to view since the end of April.

Councilor Lipman asked if there was any money to lay a coat of fresh asphalt downtown, especially with the opening of the Colonial.

City Manager Myers stated that drainage work needs to be done, so rather than wasting money right now, it will be put off until the drainage project is completed.

Councilor Hamel would like to see the American Flags be better displayed downtown.

City Manager Myers explained that Celebrate Laconia has done a great job with everything they have done over the past few years. There have been ads run in the Laconia Links requesting donations for flowers and planters and other things to spruce up the downtown area so as to not wear out one organization. That is all done by volunteers.

Mayor Hosmer asked Councilor Hamel to compose a list of things that need to be purchased and done to spruce up the downtown area as he would like to help with that and then also the City Manager could find the money somewhere in the budget to help.

Councilor Soucy asked what the Downtown TIF funds are being used for. City Manager Myers explained how the Downtown TIF works and what the funds are being used for.

7. Any other business that may come before the Council

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business to come before the Council and hearing no objection, Mayor Hosmer adjourned the meeting at 8:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Hebert, City Clerk

MINUTES OF THIS MEETING WERE APPROVED BY COUNCIL ON JUNE 28, 2021