

The Claremont City Council held a meeting on Wednesday, May 21, 2015, in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Neilsen at 6:30 p.m.

Members of the Council present were:

Ward I Councilor Carolyn Towle (late)
Ward III Councilor Nicholas Koloski
Assistant Mayor Victor Bergeron
Mayor James Neilsen, IV
At-Large Councilor James Reed
Ward II Councilor Charlene Lovett
At-Large Councilor Kyle Messier
At-Large Councilor John Simonds

Absent:

At-Large Councilor Keith Raymond

Also present were:

Guy Santagate, City Manager
Mary Walter, Finance Director

BUDGET

Welfare – Public Hearing

Department Request \$364,247 City Manager Proposed \$364,247

Suzanne Carr, Welfare Director, said the budget is down. Numbers are looking good. She is waiting to hear if the state budget will affect Welfare (i.e. shelter cuts will mean more homelessness, putting people in hotels, trying to send them to out of town shelters).

Mayor Neilsen opened the public hearing. No one spoke. He closed it.

A motion was made by Mr. Koloski and seconded by Mr. Reed to tentatively approve the Welfare budget of \$364,247.

Voice vote: motion carried 7-0.

Assessing – Public Hearing

Department Request \$195,153 City Manager Proposed \$195,062

Ms. Walter said Assessing is down 9%. She said this is because we don't have all that money going to the revaluation. Each year we will assess a portion of the City instead of doing it all at once. In June we will encumber money to be placed in a capital reserve for the year 5 revaluation.

Mr. Santagate said Assessing is driven by state law. State law says we have to be at 100% valuation every 5 years. A full revaluation would cost about \$400,000. We were allowed to do a statistical update for 2015 because our files were up to date. That cost us \$350,000 less than a full reval. We will assess 20% of the properties each year and hope to be able to do a statistical update every 5 years. Normally, we get 400 abatement requests and this year there were only 62. He is pleased with how the Assessing office is getting its values. There are only 2 full-time staff in that department.

Mayor Neilsen opened the public hearing.

AJ Maranville, Ward 2, asked and received a line item clarification.

Mayor Neilsen closed the public hearing.

A motion was made by Mr. Simonds and seconded by Mr. Bergeron to tentatively approve the Assessing budget of \$195,062.

Voice vote: motion carried 7-0.

Library – Public Hearing

Department Request \$478,479 City Manager Proposed \$475,462

Mike Grace, Librarian, said he tries to hold the Library budget down. There is an average of 9,000 items taken in and out of the Library every month. Currently there are 8,000 cardholders.

Ms. Lovett said this was no reflection on the Library, but her preference would be to level fund this budget as it is not a priority and to move \$7,000 to Public Works for paving.

Ms. Walter said about the only place to take that from would be books.

Mr. Reed agreed with Ms. Lovett's suggestion to take small amounts from several budgets to give to Public Works for paving. Small amounts will add up.

Ms. Messier disagreed with taking the \$7,000 from books to give to paving. If you want to do something meaningful for Public Works, she suggested doing the bond.

Ms. Lovett said if you take small amounts from several departments and give it to Public Works, it would add up to a meaningful amount.

Mr. Koloski said the Library is a priority to him. He knows a lot of people who use this more than any other department in the City. He doesn't want the Library to fall into disrepair.

Ms. Lovett does not want to increase the tax rate, but we need to reallocate funds to priorities and Public Works is a priority for her.

Mayor Neilsen said that taking small amounts from each budget would hurt those departments and would not be a significant amount for paving and that is why he suggested considering doing a bond.

Mr. Simonds appreciates what is being done at the Library and he does not support cutting \$7,000 from this budget.

Mayor Neilsen opened the public hearing. No one spoke. He closed it.

Mr. Bergeron said if you continue to level fund the budget, eventually you will have to set priorities.

A motion was made by Mr. Simonds and seconded by Mr. Koloski to tentatively approve the Library budget of \$475,462.

Voice vote: motion carried 5-2 with Mr. Reed and Ms. Lovett voting no.

Parks – Public Hearing

Department Request \$461,875 City Manager Proposed \$388,849

Mark Brislin, Parks and Recreation Director, talked about what there is to do in the parks. He talked about the workload and that there is only one full-time person and one part-time person in parks maintenance. Possible future projects: replace aging tennis courts, update neighborhood parks, add outdoor splash pad and upgrade athletic fields.

Ms. Walter said this budget is up \$18,000.

Mr. Santagate said a request for proposal would go out for track maintenance. Mr. Brislin will get three bids, and then Mr. Santagate will take the information to the potential donor to see if he/she is interested in making a further donation.

There was some discussion about the fireworks and whether or not in the future the City should pay for them. Mr. Koloski suggested a large employer might be willing to contribute the

fireworks and to put their name on the event. He asked about talking to the school about using the building trade students to work on some of the buildings in the parks.

Mr. Koloski talked about people activating the lights on the basketball courts at Barnes Park after hours. Mr. Brislin will check it out.

Mayor Neilsen opened the public hearing.

AJ Maranville, Ward 2, asked for and received clarification on some of the pay line items.

Mayor Neilsen closed the public hearing.

Ms. Messier said the parks are a good economic development draw for Claremont.

Mr. Santagate said Monadnock Park is a show piece. Quality of life is important for economic development. Some expenses for the City are: current use, abatements, credits (seniors, veterans, etc.) and exempt properties. Property tax is the wrong tax.

A motion was made by Mr. Koloski and seconded by Mr. Simonds to tentatively approve the Parks budget of \$388,849.

Voice vote: motion carried 6-1 with Ms. Lovett voting no.

CSB – Recreation – Public Hearing

Department Request \$1,226,378 City Manager Proposed \$1,214,432

Mr. Santagate said the goal was to generate \$500,000 in fees. He talked about having money set aside in reserves to maintain the facility. There are no comparisons between the old and new programs. Budgeted \$60,000 for equipment replacement; \$30,000 for Building M&R to take care of the building. Ms. Walter said there is \$60,000 which is equipment lease.

At 7:53 p.m. Ms. Towle arrived.

There was a discussion about monthly expense and revenue reports and the numbers not matching up, so Mr. Brislin will take the financials from Munismart and the reports will be almost a month behind.

Ms. Lovett appreciates the value of the Community Center and understands the need to keep the facility up, but we cannot keep all the facilities up with the proposed level-funded budget. Without increasing the tax rate, the City can't maintain the inventory it has. People have talked about maintaining these facilities for economic development, but the roads are necessary for economic development and they are in terrible shape and are becoming a safety issue, so in her mind, she has to make priorities. This budget is not a priority just as Library and Parks are not.

Ms. Walter said the net for this budget was \$472,000 on the tax rate.

Mr. Koloski asked about selling the used equipment instead of trading it in. Ms. Walter said we don't have an established process for that and we don't want the City to have any liability after we are done with the equipment.

Ms. Lovett hopes to try to narrow the margin. The facility has the ability to create a lot of revenue.

Mr. Brislin said they are trying to be as efficient as possible

Mayor Neilsen opened the public hearing.

Jim Feleen, Ward 2, talked about the maintenance issues in the parks and at the Community Center. He urged the Council to figure out a way to get the maintenance done. He felt the Community Center was starting to look shabby.

AJ Maranville, Ward 2, talked about the increases in disability insurance. He agreed a full-time maintenance person is needed.

Ms. Walter said for short term disability, there is a two-year waiting period and a person just became eligible.

Mayor Neilsen closed the public hearing.

There was discussion about the appearance of employees not being busy.

Mr. Santagate talked about readiness to serve factor. In June the Jacobs Company will come in to talk about all of the non-union jobs in the City. This will come back to the Council before implementing recommendations.

Mr. Bergeron talked about putting in a camera system for security. Ms. Walter said the building has been wired for it and if there is money at the end of the year, we'll buy cameras. Ms. Towle suggested looking for donations.

Mr. Koloski reminded Council that he would like to see a CCTV cable drop over there. Mr. Santagate said it's on the list to request.

There were questions about combining the two budgets and Ms. Walter said once the Goodwin Community Center is dissolved, it would make sense to do that.

A motion was made by Mr. Koloski and seconded by Mr. Simonds to tentatively approve the CSB - Recreation budget of \$1,214,432.

Voice vote: motion carried 8-0.

CONSULTATION WITH LEGAL COUNSEL

None

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:47 p.m., a motion was made by Ms. Messier and seconded by Mr. Reed to adjourn.

Voice vote: motion carried 8-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dorée M. Russell
Clerk to the Council