

Ralston City Council Budget Work Session
Tuesday, August 20, 2019

The Ralston City Council met in special session on Tuesday, August 20, 2019 at 6:45 PM at Ralston City Hall. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Roll was called with the following present: Mayor Groesser, and Council members Konwinski, Fidelity, Kavanaugh, Krause, Sanchez, and Preis. The agenda was available at City Hall for public inspection and posted prior to the meeting. The legal notice for the meeting was published in the Ralston Recorder

Groesser said the meeting is subject to the Nebraska Open Meetings Act and a copy of the Act is posted at the rear of the Council Chambers.

Groesser said the purpose of this meeting is to conduct the 2019-2020 Fiscal Year Budget Review.

Bohling reviewed the arena budget summary. The City is making a change on how the arena budget is funding. Sales tax is no longer going to be used to support the arena, solely lottery funds. There is currently a \$300,000 loss budget for the arena which is towards capital items. No lottery funds will be used for debt service. Bohling indicated the promissory note will be refinanced and other options are being researched for refinancing. Some discussion was held on the arena budget summary.

Park Lane residents were in attendance to speak about the stop sign project. Groesser said to make it a permanent fixture would be a \$50,000 expenditure and it is not currently included in the budget. A resident indicated that there is a lot of traffic coming from Q Street and they would like to have stop sign. They need something to slow the traffic down. There are about 500 cars on their street. Freshman indicated it would need to be made into a "T" intersection and the resident said the stop sign would at least slow the traffic down. Groesser said it is an item that needs to be thought over.

Discussion was held on installing speed bumps and Freshman did not recommend speed bumps because of liability purposes. Leonardo said those streets do not meet the threshold required for speed bumps. Ficene commented on reworking the intersection into a "T" and inquired if stop signs could be installed without reworking the intersection. It was indicated that there is no place to put a stop sign with the original configuration and Ficene suggested installing a stop sign northbound 79th Street. Freshman said without the improvements it would be impossible to install a stop sign.

Krajewski continued the review of the arena budget. He commented on non-sustainable events; maximizing the food and beverage operation; and working to cut staff during off-hours. The budget for 2020 is aggressive but attainable. The largest improvements will be seen in cutting expenses operationally. Krajewski commented on sponsorships and doing the best they can to sell them. They have a plan in place and that is the way they are attacking it. Krajewski said the facility should not be losing \$1.3 million

annual. The recent audit revealed the facility is one of the best that they have ever seen and the building is in great shape.

Bohling reviewed the general fund. There is no increase in levies for last year and the total valuation is just under a 10 percent increase. There is a 2 percent raise budgeted for non-union employees. The changes to the health insurance is significant this year and shows a 9 percent savings.

A summary of general fund revenues: auto taxes reduced \$90,000 due to lower collections in 2018-2019; building inspection fees will be reduced \$30,000 due to the Interlocal agreement with Douglas County; the new gas franchise fee is projected to be \$92,000; adding a \$1.00 per month administrative fee for garbage collection for an estimated \$25,000 increase; and sales tax revenue of \$507,000 will be allocated to Streets.

A summary of general fund expenses: code enforcement software initial fee is \$36,000 plus enhanced software for the Police Department for \$7,000; professional fees increased this year; Police Department increased staffing to 14 officers; a new cruiser lease payment of \$15,000; the Fire Department contract will increase 3 percent over last year and the fire truck purchase will be included in the FY 2020/2021 budget year.

Three employees of the Parks Department are being redirected to the Street Department; seasonal staff has been eliminated; and discussion has taken place with regard to contracting out the mowing. Preis said he doesn't like the idea of contracting out the mowing and Fidelity agrees. Discussion was held on getting the drinking fountains in the parks in working order. Bohling indicated that City staff looked at the best use of the manpower and mowing was the lowest. If the contracting out the mowing doesn't work out within the next year, it can be changed. Preis said if the City is capable of providing a service in town, they should provide the service to the residents. Bohling said if it is not done, there will have to be cuts somewhere else. The City needs to choose where they want to spend their dollars more efficiently.

Fidelity commented on relying on two individuals to take care of the entire Douglas County for inspections and Preis agreed with him. Bohling said if the Hinge Project becomes what it is anticipated to become, the City needs to look at how to direct the staff and what is more cost effective. Forrest commented on the inspections for the Hinge Project and that the City doesn't have to use Douglas County for the inspections and can find someone else that can do the inspections. Krause said in the long-term there is going to be a lot of change. The City needs to think about what they are doing in the long-term. Krause said the City needs to look at efficiencies and when they get to the point where they don't have any extra money to spend, they have to reduce costs. Kavanaugh said that with the budget there is very little room to move.

There was further discussion on contracting out the inspections and the mowing. Fidelity reiterated that he would like to keep everything in-house. Groesser commented on the number of potholes in the City and the contracting out of the mowing will help

Freshman get the streets done. Freshman commented on the panel replacement not being done for nearly seven years.

The Library budget includes \$57,000 for roof replacement. Krause has approached the Wiebe Foundation to assist with that.

Discussion was held on the City taking over 84th Street. Forrest said there isn't a time frame for that and he expects the district engineer to come to a future council meeting. Freshman said the best benefit would be for the State.

Under the sewer fund, there will be a 5.5 percent increase to keep up with the City of Omaha increases. The bonds were fully paid off in FY 2018/2019.

Under the lottery fund, there is \$788,000 budgeted to the arena to help offset the arena loss and make necessary repairs.

There being no further business to come before the Council, the work session was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Next budget work session, if needed, Tuesday, August 27, 2019 at 5:30 PM. Next regular meeting Tuesday, September 3, 2019 at 5:30 PM.

Rosemarie D. Russell
City Clerk

Donald A. Groesser
Mayor