

Ralston City Council Budget Work Session
Tuesday, August 28, 2018

The Ralston City Council met in special session on Tuesday, August 28, 2018 at 5:30 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, Alberhasky, 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 Omaha Daily Record.

Council member Krause gave the invocation. Mayor Groesser welcomed the press and guests. 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 a budget work session. Krause commented that the Finance Committee, Forrest, Bohling and department heads have put a lot of work into the budget documents. There has been great cooperation from department heads in trying to balance the budget. There is a balanced budget at this point.

The City has received the valuation and there is an overall valuation decrease of approximately \$9 million, which is \$68,000 less money coming into the City. The City has to deal with the sewer improvements that the City of Omaha is doing and that is about a 5.5 percent payment, or another \$60,000 expense. The health insurance went up about 6 percent.

The property and casualty insurance proposal amounts came in better than anticipated so there may be some extra money to use for changes, if needed. When this meeting is over, Krause would like to have a budget that Bohling can finalize.

The proposed budget includes a 10 cent increase in the bond levy for the City. Lottery funds will be used again this year for a Street Department project as well as for the Arena. Some projects that will be funded with lottery funds include: cameras in the Library, HVAC work at the Library, and IT software improvements in the Police Department.

Council person Sanchez arrived at 5:37 PM.

Krause commented on efficiency improvements within the City. In 2012, it was anticipated that there would need to be more support at the arena, so a 14th police officer was hired. At this time, that extra support is not needed therefore, the vacancy left when a police officer recently resigned will not be filled. Leonardo has been innovative and will provide the same services to the City with 13 officers. In the Parks Department, one full time position has been eliminated, however, two part time positions have been

added so additional labor will be available in the summer. There were also some contingencies in the budget that were eliminated.

The Library Director has changed procedures at the Library. The employee working on the IT functions has been assigned other duties and the IT duties have been taken over by the IT Consultant. Library hours of operation can be reduced as well, if needed. Ralston is one of the few Library services in the Metro Area that provides late evening and Sunday hours. Even with the cuts that will be made, Krause is sure the City can continue to provide the needed services.

The proposed budget includes a 2 percent raise for employees. Forrest did an analysis of salaries in the area and discovered there are some employees that are not being properly compensated. Those employees that are low will be getting a larger raise. After the proposed increase in the bond levy and the sewer rates, there will be a 4.31 percent increase in the mill levy.

Freshman has requested 12 new two-way radios with proper bandwidth to allow Public Works to communicate between themselves and with the Fire and Police Departments. The radios will cost \$50,000.

Eischeid said the Fire Department is grateful for the consideration of the increase. The \$30,000 reimbursement is a big recruitment/retention hit for the Fire Department if they don't receive it. Eischeid feels it is a small token to all their volunteers. The volunteers receive \$7.00 per call and not receiving the \$30,000 reimbursement will be a huge hit to the department. Discussion was held on the number of call responses to receive the incentive pay. The Fire Department's attorney has informed them the Fire Department cannot legally pay their members to respond to call. The incentive would only be in place if the City offered it.

Bohling said the City has received proposals for property and casualty insurance and they are still being assessed. However, he felt there would be money available to add the Fire Department incentive reimbursement and there is also excess funds in the lottery. Discussion was held on the Fire Department billing for the supplies they use on their calls and Burbridge explained the procedure. After further discussion, it was the consensus was to add the \$30,000 incentive payment in the budget.

Discussion was held on paying rent to the American Legion for storage. Benis said there is no space at the arena for the items that are stored at the American Legion. Alberhasky said he would like to see the arena utilized for the storage instead of paying another entity.

Eischeid reiterated the public safety concern to the citizens because the Fire Department is running with 25 year old equipment. The standard governs that old apparatus should be removed from service and retired/replaced and Eischeid commented on the liability of using old equipment. Six years ago the Fire Department provided a plan to replace their old equipment and they were assured it would be budgeted. Eischeid would like

the council to consider budgeting \$500,000 for the new fire truck. Krause commented on the hours on the trucks and the trucks being in good shape. It had been recommended not to budget that equipment this year. However, Eischeid's comments about liability were noted.

Discussion was held on the cost of the fire truck. Eischeid said the Fire Department will try to take the burden off of the City as much as they can and commented on grants Eischeid said the equipment is what they need, not just what they want. Sanchez inquired about other purchase options besides paying \$500,000 outright and Eischeid said he doesn't know that there is a leasing option but can look into it. Discussion was held on mileage and hours and the maintenance. Eischeid said the Fire Department's newest truck is 16 years old.

Krause said there will be another budget work session on September 4th, so this matter is something the council members can think about. He asked Eischeid to check into other financing options. Krause thinks Ralston's fire trucks don't get the wear and tear as other entities trucks and commented on spending only \$4,000 a year on overall maintenance for the trucks.

Alberhasky commented on the raises being voted on and would like to have a resolution regarding the City Attorney's raise. Forrest said the City Attorney is an important service provider and has held his rates artificially low for a number of years.

There being no further business to come before the Council, the work session was adjourned at 6:20 PM.

Next regular meeting Tuesday, September 4, 2018 at 5:30 PM. Next budget work session Tuesday, September 4, 2018 immediately after the Council meeting.

Rosemarie D. Russell
City Clerk

Donald A. Groesser
Mayor