

CITY OF MARINE ON ST. CROIX CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Thursday, December 2, 2021

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Nyenhuis at 6:00pm. Pardun, Ward, Roden and Anderson (Zoom) present.

Citizens Present: Jason Crotty, John Goodfellow,

Mayor Nyenhuis opened the meeting for the purpose of discussing the 2022 proposed budget. Clerk Peterson then reviewed the budget changes.

The Council began with the review of items in the operating budget.

Discussion was held regarding the need for consultants to assist the Planning Commission with several items the Council has asked them to look into. This includes solar and wireless 5g. Consensus was to increase this line item from \$5,000 to \$9,000.

Pardun mentioned the theft at the maintenance shop a few weeks ago, and believes the City needs a mechanical gate in order to prevent people from accessing the maintenance building grounds. The estimated cost would be approximately \$14,000. Due to the change in public works employees, there will be a surplus in the employee wages line item for 2021 and also 2022. Pardun suggested using a portion of the surplus for 2021 to purchase the gate and then reduce the 2022 budget by \$15,000. The Council was in agreement to these changes.

The City will be receiving approximately \$70,000 in American Rescue Plan funding. Pardun noted that the water system at the school needs to be updated prior to the charter school moving in next fall, along with the replacement of an HVAC computer. The total cost of these items will be almost \$70,000 and he would like to use the ARP funding to cover these costs. The Council agreed.

Clerk Peterson advised the City just received the total legal costs to date from the League of MN Cities, and it has just surpassed \$15,000. There will be additional fees added as the City will be going to trial in January. Currently there is only \$10,000 budgeted for 2022. Ward suggested increasing this line item to \$20,000.

Pardun noted that the Village Hall fund has lost an average of \$8400 each year since Marla took over for the Washington County library. This is due to the fact that Marla does not pay rent or utilities. He is not suggesting any changes at this time, however believes there needs to be a discussion in the near future for improvements to the hall and space allocation.

Discussion was held as to whether or not the annual fireworks display will take place in 2022. Anderson believes the event should be moved to July 4th to help ease the concerns of large crowds and additional cost for safety measures such as additional barriers and law enforcement. Roden noted that the City has reached out to Hollywood Pyrotechnics, and they are unsure if

they can even get the shells due to supply chain issues, increased costs and a decreased number of crew members. Anderson would rather see this money spent on events geared towards local residents, such as movies in the park, etc. The Council believes that any discussion of permanently discontinuing the fireworks should be with the residents and the decision of whether to hold them in 2022 will depend on the answers the City receives from the Pyrotechnics company. Further discussion was held on the amount to keep in the budget for 2022. The final consensus was to budget \$5,000 and any additional funding that may be needed come from the P&R community events fund.

Ward questioned the sand/salt line item for roads, and wondered if the City was going to test the salt brine option that was discussed at earlier budget meetings. Pardun stated they will work with either the City of Stillwater or Washington County to do that brine application and use that feedback when the issue is revisited during the 2022 budget discussions.

The Council then moved to the Capital fund items.

Pardun offered to reduce the Stormwater and Village Hall line items to \$10,000 each.

Anderson spoke with Chief Malmgren who suggested removing the \$10,000 allocated for a new fire truck. The committee currently does not have a solid plan, and the department has approximately \$500,000 put away in this fund currently. The Council agreed to this reduction with the stipulation that it be added back to the budget for 2023.

Mayor Nyenhuis reduced the pickleball line item to \$10,000. Anderson stated the City has many other assets that will require attention also, such as the ice rink, playground equipment and baseball fields. He would like to see the name of the fund changed to Recreational Infrastructure. Pardun agreed with that change and would like to see the bike trail added under that also. Ward stated she has not heard support for a pickleball court from the residents and believes this item should be a bigger discussion with residents to see what the priorities are. After further discussion, the line item name was changed to recreational infrastructure and reduced to \$5,000.

Ward reduced the trails and open space line item to \$2,000. The committee met and would like to build upon the current GIS trail mapping. They would also like to hold a few educational programming events. Pardun noted that previous Council members Chris Mowery and Bill Miller were able to get the initial GIS mapping done with volunteers at no cost to the City. Anderson suggested dropping to \$1,000 to which the Council agreed.

Discussion was also held regarding the requested funds for a Cultural Heritage Committee. Historically, any committee has been required to provide a budget prior to having funds approved. To date, this committee does not yet exist and therefore the Council was not in favor of allocating any funds at this time. Ward withdrew her request.

Roden eliminated the line item for an EV charger until further work was done on additional funding option.

Diane Mills, resident, commended Councilmember Roden for addressing the small number of households supporting such a large tax burden. Mrs. Mills stated she is troubled that important items like the fire truck and village hall have had their funds taken out of the budget in order to keep money in the budget for pickleball and trails and open space. Pardun thanked Mrs. Mills for her comments and believes that next year those smaller items should be addressed before the larger essential items.

Glen Mills, resident, would like to see the City employee wages increased to 3% and also believes they should be entitled to essential worker compensation for working through Covid, which could come from the ARP funds.

Mayor Nyenhuis stated it is too late in the budget process for the wage increase, however the essential worker compensation is worth a conversation.

Dave Saur, Oak Knoll resident, questioned the City portion of his property taxes and how it relates to his market value. Clerk Peterson advised this is a question better suited for the City Assessor and would be addressed at the Board of Review meeting in April.

Bob Benishek, new resident of Marine, thanked the Council for their hard work on getting the budget percentage down.

Councilmember Pardun believes the Council worked very hard on reducing this budget to a reasonable amount and that any increase over a no increase budget from the prior year is difficult to swallow. Moving forward, he would like to see the capital items addressed first followed by operating budget items to avoid cutting essential items and leaving nonessential items in the budget.

Mayor Nyenhuis thanked the Council for their hard work and the residents for participating in the process.

Clerk Peterson advised the actual levy amount will be approved at the December Council meeting.

Adjournment – *Nyenhuis moved and Roden seconded to adjourn at 8:17pm.*

Pardun yes

Roden yes

Anderson yes

Nyenhuis yes

Motion passed unanimously.

Minutes taken by Lynette Peterson, City Clerk (budget attached)