Personnel and Finance

November 14, 2024

Council President King; Council Members Baltzell, Buxton, Clausen, Fleck, Gray, Sanford, and Wolfe; Mayor Hazel; Safety Service Director Hitchcock; Auditor Shinn

CM Clausen called the Personnel and Finance meeting to order at 5:00 pm to discuss a possible 2025 budget.

Mayor Hazel spoke about how Auditor Shinn was able to find a way to fully fund the staffing in both the police and fire departments with 18 and 19 personnel. Auditor Shinn explained that since the half percent income tax was able to fund streets that any amount from the full percent of general fund that went into streets can be reimbursed from the half percent to the general fund up to the amount used on streets since the ballot language change and passing of the temporary half percent fund. CM Baltzell and Gray confirmed that it was a temporary solution and confirmed the starting date for reimbursable funds is 2016. CM Baltzell noted that he believes this is the right choice and spoke about the renewal of the half percent. CM Gray asked if that can be used now instead of 2025, and Mayor Hazel confirmed that is now the case and money coming from the EMS Levy is also being factored in. Auditor Shinn noted they are expecting 2.5 million from the half percent in 2025.

Fire Chief Joel Lange spoke about the fire capital expense which included miscellaneous tools, drysuit for a new firefighter who is a diver, but they do not have a suit that fits him, rescue dummy which is falling apart, refurbish the 907 fire truck and spoke about how that will cost roughly $100,000 to fix it up to standard and how they would like to replace in in 2030 and should start saving now for it because a new one costs 1.2 million now and will probably go up before 2030. CM Baltzell noted he believes when you put about 10% of cost in a car it is about the limit, he believes should be put into it before buying a new one. Joel noted the replacements would put the truck out of commission for over a month. Joel noted the newer truck has required more maintenance than some of the older trucks. CM Gray asked about the standards and what is required and Joel noted where he is getting the standards from and how refurbishing will make it safer and better for the years, we are still using the truck. CM Baltzell asked how we are saving currently for one and Mayor Hazel noted there is a capital account they keep feeding for these expenses based on when they plan on replacing the vehicles. Joel spoke about thermal vision cameras that the lieutenants would use to help guide the firefighters and that these cameras would be hooked on their jackets and provide another way to ensure they safely rescue and find their way out of the building. Council Members agreed this is something that can and would be very helpful with rescue as well as helping other departments inspect items like the water tower. Joel spoke about the ballistic helmets and plates and that they have been buying a little at a time to have everyone geared up if and when needed while working with the police department. Joel spoke about the need for new desktops and laptops since their current ones are operating with 2010 hardware. Joel spoke about the battery PPV fan and how it is used and is a much-needed item for the fire department as well as the Insulation VAC or SCBA’s and noted either would be welcomed items to help the fire department do their job at a higher and more efficient level.

CM Clausen spoke about the equipment and line items compared to 2023 real expenses versus 2025 proposed budgets and that the biggest change was payroll and other categories being minor increases. CM Baltzell asked how many that funded, and it was confirmed that was for 19 personnel in the fire department which would be 6 per shift and a chief. Joel noted he would like an assistant at some point and CM Baltzell asked if that could happen mid-year even without the budget reflecting that position and Mayor Hazel noted they would have to look at how to fund it and there is a possible avenue if that is something council wanted to do. Joel noted that the fire equipment maintenance and the program they use will become obsolete and that they are currently shopping around to find exactly what they can afford and what is needed and that they are trying to stretch the money as far as possible and pick the right software. CM Gray spoke about training needs for the fire department and is this budget reflects those needs and Joel noted with all the new hires and short staffing it is hard send people to train but he is hoping 2025 will have more training that is needed on and off site. Joel spoke about the NTN and the civil service process it takes to hire firefighters and spoke about how the EMT test has changed people are struggling to pass it.

Police Chief Tom Wale thanked the council for providing a way to fully fund the police department. Tom spoke about the capital items in the proposed 2025 budget which includes computers, range maintenance, light weaponry, flooring, security camera for building, interview room video camera update, dispatch furniture, rifle plates, and ballistic helmets. Tom spoke about the need for these items and how they will benefit the department and how they are able to serve the public. Tom spoke about the adjustable standing desks for dispatchers since they will spend eight hours a day at their post.

Tom spoke about the operational expenses proposed for the 2025 budget which included staffing at 18 so there should be no major changes to the numbers and how other than payroll the numbers all resemble the full expenses of 2023. Tom spoke about the costs that come with hiring new police officers and noted he hopes to be able to find some for hiring and that transfers are ideally the best ones because they can hit the road sooner. CM Sanford confirmed that the previous staffing level was 18 and we are currently at 15. Tom spoke about the interest of some people in the open positions, and he will reengage with them tomorrow. CM Clausen confirmed the officers that are in training would be able to be on the road themselves around September of 2025 and would not provide immediate support. CM Wolfe spoke about the time frame being the same for potential officers through the state agency and Wright State. Tom spoke about the new Durango and how the officer likes the car but there is some maintenance upkeep that is different than their other vehicles.

CM Clausen scheduled a Personnel and Finance Committee meeting at 6:00 pm for November 25, 2024.

CM Clausen adjourned the meeting at 6:19 pm.

Submitted by Michael F. Didonato, Clerk of Council