

**BUDGET WORK SESSION
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NASHVILLE
COUNTY OF BERRIEN
JULY 8, 2019**

ROLL CALL: Members of the City Council present included Mayor Michael Richbourg, Aldermen Eric Gaither, Billy Retterbush, Walt Steward and Alderwoman Mellisa Watson.

STAFF PRESENT: Mandy Luke, Jackie Jordan, Jill Wise, Chief Edwards, John Reynolds, Peter Schultz, Mitchell Moore

The Budget Workshop meeting for the Fiscal Year 2020 proposal was called to order at 6:35 p.m.

Mandy Luke, City Manager, presented budget information to the Mayor and Council including the previous year, current year, department requests and administrative recommendations with no increases but will explain options for increases as previously discussed. She explained the Water/Sewer and Gas Departments hold their own making them easier to balance but in the General Fund, they have had to use savings more over the past couple years for the new fire truck and police cars. She provided the Mayor and Council with current salary information including current DCA wage and salary survey averages highlighting those underpaid according to DCA averages and those that have been employed less than a year. She said there are a few small increases in the General Fund for the Police Department but the others are basically the same as compared to the past budget. She said there was a slight increase in Revenue due to slight increases in the franchise fee from Georgia Power and the insurance premium tax from the State. She said the department heads' input compared to her recommendation, which does not include increases, is approximately \$347,000 short. She also explained she was contacted by Fire Chief Buck Warren who explained ISO will be visiting soon and because of two buildings, the County Admin building and the First Baptist Church, that are three-story instead of two-story, the City will be required to purchase a ladder fire truck along with additional equipment or the ISO rating may increase three or four points causing an increase in insurance premiums so she asked the Fire Chief to research prices for used ladder fire trucks. She further explained this would also require somewhere to store the new truck and Chief Warren suggested they attach the County and City Fire Department buildings and make bays that

will face the road with the attachment tall enough for the ladder truck. She said this is not included in the budget.

Next, she discussed Police Chief Edwards' recommendations of what the Police Department (NPD) needs, which were presented in a Special Called meeting on May 22, 2019 upon request by the Mayor and Council and discussed in the Council meeting on June 24, 2019. She explained if there are no increases except for the NPD suggested increases, and they are not the only ones underpaid according to DCA wage and salary survey, the only option for Revenue at this point, unless there is an increase in sales taxes, would be an increase in property taxes (current millage rate is 8 mils and last increase was in 2007 from 7 to 8 mils) of approximately 0.254 mil; to give everyone up to 3%, and she has to include 3% for everyone in case everyone scores that amount, including NPD, not using the suggested increases, they would need to raise taxes by 0.50 mil; 3% for everyone except NPD, using the suggested increases for NPD would be 0.75 mil (1 mil is approximately \$90,000); 3% for everyone except NPD, using the suggested increases for NPD, adding four (4) additional officers and increasing expenditures for uniforms, vehicle maintenance, fuel costs and training (new cars funded from SPLOST or financed) would be 1.25 – 1.50 mils; for 3% for everyone except NPD, using the suggested increases for NPD, adding six (6) additional officers and increasing expenditures for uniforms, vehicle maintenance, fuel costs and training (new cars from SPLOST or financed) would be 2 mils. The suggested millage rate increases in these options only provide Revenue to cover increases for NPD, not Street Department or other Departments.

She said this does not include what will be needed for the Fire Department. She said we would only have to have the truck purchased by the time ISO comes but ISO does not require storage for the fire truck but that is done to keep them from outside elements and there is a possibility of using SPLOST funds for the ladder fire truck or financing it through GMA instead of the General Fund. She said the new fire truck that was purchased last year was \$250,000 which is not a ladder truck. She said none of these options include extra perks for NPD.

Mayor Richbourg asked the difference between the current FY budget and the FY2020 budget and Mrs. Luke said it is short approximately \$347,000.

She also mentioned this does not include BiLo rental income which is still in negotiation but when it commences, it could be added to Revenue.

Billy Retterbush asked when there was an increase in business license fees, etc. Mrs. Luke said it had been a while because the last thing increased was the water/sewer rates with the new treatment plant which has been a while

and they held off on increasing them anymore because they had a little in surplus due to collecting new increases as they were building the treatment plant because they had to collect a certain amount by that time. She said all those fees only account for about \$70,000/\$75,000 up to \$90,000 so a slight increase in those fees would not make a big difference. Mayor Richbourg asked about an increase in sales tax and Mrs. Luke said that would have to go before Referendum, which is a time consuming process, or increase local sales.

Mayor Richbourg asked Mrs. Luke which option is her suggestion and she said looking to start out with no more than four (4) new officers gradually adding two (2) more and what the Mayor and Council may want to look at for perks to retain officers would be up to them.

She again explained it would not automatically be 3% across the board but based on performance, length of time employed and the DCA averages. She said the average increases were between 2% and 3% last year. Mayor Richbourg mentioned the costs of training and the Police Academy stating with increases, they may attract new officers already trained which may save on some of those expenses, and Mrs. Luke explained she included the training based on approximately four new officers who would need to attend the Police Academy but used the suggested figure which is \$4,824. Chief Edwards said it is approximately \$1,206 per cadet to attend the Police Academy and there is field training after graduating the Academy but there is additional expense for training for existing officers that is also included in the budget. Chief Edwards said in regards to officers who have only been with NPD a year and a half, the suggested pay scale is to retain them, and Mrs. Luke also mentioned just because they may have only been with NPD a short time does not mean they do not have years of experience. Chief Edwards also mentioned a Chief's agreement that new officers sign to stay with the Department for two years or they will be responsible for any training and certification costs but they are finding, other agencies will pay the fees in recruitment. Walt Steward explained how difficult it is to find new officers and in order for the Chief to attract officers and keep them, the working conditions have to be better to make officers want to work here. Billy Retterbush asked about overtime and Chief Edwards said it is difficult to forecast but with six (6) officers, it would be substantially less because it allow for sickness and training at same time while still fulfilling the patrol schedule. Walt Steward mentioned that can be a double edge sword because some of them rely on overtime. Mrs. Luke reminded them having comparable pay and benefits would help. Mellisa Watson mentioned increasing business license fees. Mayor Richbourg and Mrs. Luke explained

the City is pro-business and does not want to hurt the economy but that still would not make up the difference. They also mentioned it has been more than ten (10) years since the millage rate has been increased and we are lower than many cities and town our size or smaller and other costs increase on a regular basis. Walt Steward said he hates raising taxes because it will also increase rents and a lot of people rent their homes but it is necessary. Mrs. Luke reminded them due to so many complaints, they had to increase the Street Department by four (4) people plus hire other people for other things that had not originally been accounted for in the current budget; there is nothing else to cut but services have to be provided; the funds between General Fund and Water/Sewer and Gas Departments cannot be intermingled and the employees in the administrative office are split between the funds so not everyone in the office is paid out of the General Fund; the other departments under General Fund are the Street/Sanitation Department, which had to hire more employees, the Volunteer Fire Department which has the amount needed currently, Police, Municipal Court, Animal Control which only has one employee and Fire Department has only one full time employee and Code Enforcement has only one employee which is part time. Chief Edwards mentioned part of the budget increase in officers for NPD is to allow for an officer to be moved to full time in Code Enforcement.

Mrs. Luke mentioned the Farmers Market, that it has not made enough Revenue to cover its Expenses for the past two (2) years, but they are looking at different solutions since the Grant money ran out and that is what kept it going without using the General Fund to subsidize it. Jill Wise said it has been up and down using the grant money (USDA) when needed but the grant money has now run out. Miss Wise also explained the community does not want to lose the Farmers Market and there have been donations for signage and advertisement and they are looking at other options as well. Mrs. Luke said the total budget for the Farmers Market is around \$70,000 but that would not fix the problem. Mayor Richbourg asked about the Community Center fees and Mrs. Luke said it does stay rented most of the time but the rental fees have not been increased in a few years. Mellisa Watson said when we have a full time Code Enforcement officer, we should have increased fees in Revenue. Walt Steward mentioned the number of complaints from the public within the last four (4) to five (5) years which would be helped by a healthy Police Department including Code Enforcement.

Janet Studstill said she agrees with Miss Watson about increased Revenue by fines and fees from proper Code Enforcement.

Mrs. Luke said there will be more fines but all the combined court fines and forfeitures now range from around \$130,000/\$140,000 to \$175,000/\$180,000 and there will not be enough of an increase from Code Enforcement fines to make up the difference.

Mrs. Luke said the Budget Adoption will need to be on the Agenda for July 22, 2019 and she will need a census from the Mayor and Council on the options presented to provide more definite numbers.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Mayor Michael Richbourg

Alderman Antonio Carter

Alderman Walter Steward

Alderman Billy Retterbush

Alderman Mellisa Watson

Alderman Scott Stalnaker

Alderman Eric Gaither

ATTEST

Jackie Jordan, City Clerk