

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
A STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL

Time & Place: Wednesday, November 4, 2015 at 5:30 pm., Council Chambers
Members Present: Nagle, Wagner, Nutting, Neal, Gisselman, Winters, Kellbach, Oberbeck, Abitz, Mielke (C), Tipple
Members Excused: Rasmussen
Others Present: Groat, Jacobson, Giese, Hite, Klein, Duncanson, Hardel, Bliven, Lindman, Kujawa, Barnes, Goede, members of the public, and media

Council President Mielke noted a quorum and called the meeting to order. Roll call indicated 10 members present.

PUBLIC HEARING: Proposed 2016 City of Wausau Budget

Mielke opened the public hearing. Maryanne Groat, Finance Director, presented a PowerPoint summarizing the 2016 Budget. (*Copies of the presentation are available in the Clerk's Office.*)

Mielke opened the floor for public testimony:

- Linda Berna-Karger, representing the Humane Society of Marathon County, spoke regarding the proposed reduction in funding for non-dog strays. She provided data on the negative impact to the city of not impounding stray cats.
- Amy Leonoff, 1105 Jefferson St, spoke in opposition to the removal of funding for the care of stray cats at the Humane Society. She questioned where the money for license fees is going, if not to care for animals. She noted she is President of the Community Cat Action Team (CCAT).
- Ron Simm, commented on needing less complaining and more solutions and objected to negative and derogatory comments in an article in the paper regarding the budget. He stated we need positive talk and we need to educate and sell the city better.
- Daniel Tober, 4019 Briarwood Avenue, identified himself as a young professional and encouraged the Council to cut the fat, stop duplication, and get rid of the services we don't need. He felt the skywalk for the Dudley Tower was unnecessary.
- Kim Schoenberger, 702 S 21st St, stated the soccer fields cost more than double the estimated amount to operate; the 400 Block remains a sucking vortex of our tax dollars; she opposed the proposed Sylvan Hill bike park; CBL wants a \$4 million loan for the mall; TIDs should be closed; and felt they should support the housing of stray cats at the Humane Society. She suggested rescinding the cat license fee completely.
- Terry Murphy, 1809 N. 11th Ave, spoke regarding the care of stray cats and asked the funding be restored.
- Mark Tillman, 129 Weston Ave, commented we need to come up with more creative ways of doing things and he offered to serve the city of committees, if needed.

Being no further testimony, the public hearing was closed at 6:20pm.

Final Committee of the Whole Adjustments to the 2016 City Budget

Winters provided and reviewed a handout on "2014 Capital Budget Carryover Request Questions on Unfinished Projects." He did not feel we should levy taxes or borrow money for projects that are not going to be started or get done. He suggested compiling a list of all the 2015 capital projects, TIF projects, plus a list for all other projects proposed for 2016; include the name of the manager responsible for getting them done, the start date and projected end date, and sort and review it.

Winters stated he did not see the need for a \$1.5 million skywalk to the Dudley Building. The level between the ramp and the Dudley Building is such that you would really be coming into the front façade of the Dudley Building, which is an area where there is no floor. There is an alternate proposal to build a self-standing skywalk, so that you would go in one level, go up two flights of stairs, cross, come down to the other side. He felt people were more likely to just jaywalk across 1st Street than take four flights of stairs.

Tipple stated this skywalk was supposed be done seven or eight years ago and it was part of the development agreement that the city is obligated to. Neal stated although we are contractually obligated to build the skywalk, however, now we are looking at another ramp location so he did not see the project going ahead in 2016. Groat indicated an engineer has nearly completed the preliminary work and the drawings have been shared with Dudley. She explained it would connect to the Dudley Tower but there would be a pedestal on the McClellan side which would have a long life even if we reconstructed the ramp.

Lindman explained a proposal is being prepared to move the design forward to construction in 2016. Abitz questioned if it could be delayed for a year considering the construction over by the church. Tipple indicated the Dudley group has been asking this to be built the last three to five years and we kept putting them off. He did not feel they would want to wait any longer. Jacobson stated the Mayor was correct that we are obligated under the terms of the development agreement to complete the skywalk. Oberbeck commented we have amended other development agreements when things have changed and questioned if this was a priority considering the changes. He questioned if we could negotiate that it is in our best interests to put this off. Winters agreed we should talk to them about taking a rain check until there is a time when there is a ramp to the north.

Groat noted there are contractual obligations that the Dudley's have with their tenants to provide that skywalk access. She pointed out the pedestal will have break outs or access to each floor of the ramp.

Wagner pointed out this is TID money and pulling it out will not affect the levy, but he felt we should be able to talk to them about delaying to make the best use of that TID money right now.

Motion by Winters, second by Oberbeck to remove the Dudley skywalk from the 2016 TID #3 budget. Motion carried 7-3.

Oberbeck stated the Assessment Departmental budget stays the same every year whether it is a revaluation year or a maintenance year. Other cities reduce their values and he questioned why we keep the same \$600,000 budget every year and why is it not being reduced during maintenance years. He did not understand keeping staff levels that high when only doing maintenance type work.

Giese explained there are a lot of things her department does to help the rest of the city, such as the information they provide to GIS mapping. She reviewed all the information they gather and the inspections they do on properties. Oberbeck stated the same amount of dollars is being expended each year, so he questioned why we weren't doing a revaluation every year. He questioned who analyzes that workforce and if it was viable for assessment to be a contracted service. He felt it was something we should evaluate to find reductions. Oberbeck reiterated there should be a revaluation done every year to create fairness in values. Giese responded by explaining what they are required to do and why. Discussion followed.

Gisselman suggested the Coordinating Committee look at this and assign it to a committee of the City Council to address the issues.

Mielke questioned if the committee was comfortable with a 7.37% increase to property taxes; did they feel there were enough cuts made and/or did they want to move it forward to the Council for debate and discussion next week. Wagner stated they had options to go forward or to go through the department budgets line by line to make more cuts. Oberbeck commented he had wanted full closure of TID #5 and then we would have had about \$400,000 of excess increment to reduce our budget in 2016. We can accept it this year, but we are going to have to work harder for next year because revenue is not going up.

Winters stated he would be in favor of some limited data driven decision item making. He suggested meeting two weeks from now and use 6 to 8 peer cities to compare their assessment cost per capita and per property are to see where we fall. He also wanted to have the list of projects as suggested earlier to see what we can do without. He referred to suggestions that he and Bill Nagle made in the article in the City Pages that could be discussed, as well.

Abitz questioned in the budget why employees will be given a cost of living increase. Myla Hite, HR Director, explained the HR Committee did not vote to give any specific amount for a wage increase in 2016; what they are recommending is that we look at the budget situation in 2016 at some point in time and if finances permit then they could consider a general wage increase. None of that is known at this time and it was basically just a vote of support; there is no cost of living increase. She stated there is compensation plan pool of money that is critical for the city as the cost of doing business. This is to ensure that we maintain internal alignment, wage equity, comply with the equal pay act, and are able to attract and retain good workers. The other pool of money is to fund the Pay for Performance Program that the Council approved in 2014. She reiterated we are not giving a cost of living increase; it is up for favorable consideration in 2016 if circumstances permit.

Winters requested since several people spoke tonight regarding the cut of the cat contract, that it be put back on the floor for reconsideration. He indicated he could not make that motion because he was the dissenting vote regarding that cut.

Motion by Nagle, second by Oberbeck to reconsider the removal of funding for non-dog strays and put it back on the table for discussion. Motion carried 7-3.

Groat asked for clarification if they were reconsidering just the contract with the Humane Society because there were other related cuts to part-time staff bringing the cats in. She stated there was \$52,500 for the Humane Society contract; \$23,000 for the part-time animal control staffing, and two small budget items for supplies and expenses, which totals approximately \$79,000. This would amount to about .03 cents on the levy.

Motion by Winters, second by Nagle to restore \$50,000 for cat sheltering only.

Barnes stated our contract with HS specified a certain amount of cats per year at \$185 per cat, so a \$50,000 budget amount would be reducing that contract. He noted the Police Department has many hours outside the 40 hours that our Humane Officer works responding to calls on cats and other animals provided by our CSO's. That was a reduction propose by the Police Department and accepted, so if we put \$50,000 back into budget for this he would ask for half of the budget back for the CSO's or .6 FTEs.

Oberbeck felt if we were going to add this back in then we should evaluate the Trap-Neuter-Return Program that will assist in that process. He moved to amend Winters motion to incorporate the TNR program into the \$50,000. Following discussion, the amendment died for lack of a second.

Vote on the main motion to restore \$50,000 for cat sheltering. Failed 3-7.

Tipple stated back in the summer of 2014 he had asked the HR Committee to look at a City Administrator position and to look at efficiencies and hire an outside consultant. The efficiencies and operational study came back to HR and they directed Myla Hite to go seek some dollars. She brought back an amount of \$50,000 - \$100,000 to HR Committee which they decided not to spend. He suggested that Hite be tasked with an internal organizational study of the Assessment Department. Oberbeck stated he was not sure that the HR Committee actually took action on this and it should be looked at again.

Motion by Oberbeck, second by Wagner to send the operational efficiency study back to the Human Resources Committee and to look at RFPs. Motion carried 9-1.

Motion by Winters, second by Nagle to move the 2016 Budget forward to the Common Council. Motion carried 6-4.

Motion by Nagle, second by Winters to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.