CITY OF SOMERSWORTH
BUDGET WORKSHOP
APRIL 14, 2012
8:30 AM

The budget workshop was opened at 8:30 am by the Mayor. All Councilors were present.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- **COAST BUS SERVICE**- Ex. Dir. Rad Nichols requested $57,986. He offered many compelling statistics regarding heavy and increasing local usage of the Coast Bus Service in support of his request. Councilor Soldati said that she and the Sustainability Committee are grateful for the COAST Bus Service saying it helps fulfill its mission and the Master Plan. Councilor Sprague brought up and Councilor Witham expressed interest in the idea of a registration surcharge of up to $5.00 to be used to help support transportation endeavors for the City. (Per HB648.) The City Manager and Rad Nichols also talked about advertising on (bus shelters), etc, to help with transportation revenue; raising about $75,000/year.
- **BIG BROTHER BIG SISTER**-Ex. Dir. Jessie Dill requested level funding of $1,500 saying that there are 6 children in Somersworth waiting to be matched. There is a need to "beef up" recruitment for "bigs."
- **COMNMUNITY FOOD PANTRY**- Ex. Dir. Patricia Vachon requested $2,000 and provided information as to how they are trying to make the operation more efficient by constructing a storage shed, freezer and cooler on site.
  Finance Director Smith said that Somersworth would see a large increase in demand for Human Services support if it were not for referrals to the food pantry.
- **SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT SERVICES**- Kathy Beebe requested level funding of $1,000 and outlining the services that their program makes available to residents of Somersworth.
- **HOMELESS CENTER-COUNTY**- Ex. Dir. Susan Ford requested $4,500 in funding stressing the benefit of use of a rent free building and case management services over simply housing people in area motels.
- **YOUTH SAFE HAVEN**-Emily Sylvain requested $5,000 to cover operational costs now which are no longer funded by the grant that brought in the program. The increased support would cover two months salary for a 25 hour/week position where the employee actually works about 60 hours/week. She stressed the positive improvements for these kids who would not be served by other programs. Councilor Jarvis called this a positive community collaboration saying that it brings a lot of positive things to the City.
- **ROCHESTER VISITING NURSES**- Linda Hotchkiss, CEO, requested level funding of $9,500, seeing the funding as insurance for the town that Your VNA will continue to take clients from Somersworth, saying that their focus is skilled services, as opposed to the Homemakers who have a different focus. She said that merging the two organizations was considered some time ago but not

recommended. Councilor Sprague mentioned contingency funding at the County that Your VNA might access.

- **AIDS RESPONSE**-The request is for $500, there was not a representative present.
- **COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM-** Ex. Dir. Betsey Andrews Parker requested $5,000 and began by mentioning many ways their services help Somersworth, including their weatherization work, Head Start, fuel assistance, security deposit program, homeless outreach, commodity food distribution, etc. Councilors Tapscott and Soldati, as well as Mayor Spencer praised their program.
- **FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION-** David Roberge asked for increased support, citing the many events that bring thousands of visitors to the City and how it improves the perception of the City and helps businesses, etc. Councilors agreed, Soldati calling it a "best economic development" tool as far as the Chamber of Commerce is concerned and saying that they have her wholehearted support. Mr. Roberge said that he couldn't see the Festival Association taking on the Holiday parade.
- **HOMEMAKERS-** Community Relations Director, Renee Philpott, explained the Homemakers services vis-à-vis the Rochester District VNA and why the Homemakers are vital in offering home support services (which differ from the VNA.) She said she would send Councilor Sprague the Title 20 guidelines used for means testing used, as he has expressed concern with this during most of this workshop.
- **SOMERSWORTH YOUTH CONNECTION-** There was a letter from Maureen Jackman submitted asking for assistance in the amount of $1,500. No one was present to make the request in person.
- **CASA-** A letter was submitted by Marcia R Sink asking for support in the amount of $500.
- **GOODWIN COMMUNITY HEALTH-** Susan Fitzgerald Reichert was present to ask for support in the amount of $5,160. She said that her organization has been the community safety net for over 40 years, providing higher quality cost at less cost, regardless of the patient's ability to pay. GCH is asking for unreimbursed money, saying $150.00 is the average cost of a visit while $15.00 is the average payment. (The total unreimbursed cost of Somersworth patients listed on the letter of request is $73,710.) They project that they will serve 1150 Somersworth patients, about 9% of the population. This model is good for the economy, she said, every $1M invested puts $1.7M back into economy. Councilor Witham pointed out that GCH is on valuable property which, since the land is off the tax rolls, will shift the burden to taxpayers; he will struggle to (fund this request.) Mayor Spencer applauded the great service but said that when agencies don't pay taxes, other taxpayers pick up the cost, while the agency still receives Police, Fire, DPW, etc, services. Ms Reichert doesn't apologize for non-profits, she said; they fill a gap. Councilor Soldati thanked Susan, saying that she doesn't think there is a person in the room who doesn't understand (the value of GCH) but that she concurs with her colleagues. Councilor Sprague feels that the lost taxes are a contribution by Somersworth.

ELECTED LEADERSHIP

- **MAYOR-COUNCIL**
- **CIVIC PROMOTION**

CITY MANAGEMENT

- **CITY MANAGER AND ADMINISTRATION**- the City Managers car is in the second of a three year agreement.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

- **FINANCE DEPARTMENT**
- **CITY CLERK**
- **ELECTIONS**
- **TAX COLLECTOR-** E-Reg will begin next month in the Tax Collectors office
- **HUMAN SERVICES**- On track to stay within budget. Welfare Office is doing a good job with referrals and utilizing services, etc.
- **LIBRARY**

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

- **PLANNING**-Councilor McCallion questioned savings associated with Craig Wheeler leaving his position as Director of Economic Development.
- **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**
- **CODE ENFORCEMENT**- Councilor Witham asked if property maintenance enforcement should be made full time. CM Belmore doesn't see it and said that might slide to the Fire Department.
- **ASSESSING**-Councilor Sprague thinks we should consider charging for tax cards on line.
- **RECREATION**-Mayor Spencer asked about the decrease to $0 in contract services. David Sharples answered that it was a software program that was never used.
- **CITY HALL**- the schools help with stripping floors and doing carpets.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- **POLICE ADMINISTRATION**
- **PATROL**-Chief Crombie felt that if we fund the 2nd cruiser, then the vehicle maintenance line could be cut in half. They clarified how the School and Housing officers are funded. Chief Crombie said he has been holding off hiring a dispatcher until that was settled. Councilor Sprague joked, asking if it was feasible to have the patrol officers read the water meters. (Laughter.)

Councilor Sprague wondered how much it would add to the budget to add to patrol. The Chief said they are understaffed (on weekends) but they work within the budget. Councilor Witham said that could be articulated to Council for them to discuss.

- **INVESTIGATIONS-**There was talk about using proceeds from drug seizures to buy detectives cars, etc. Mayor Spencer asked if the Housing investigation is causing overtime, Chief Crombie answered that it is not, but it is forcing them to put other things on the burner. And there are no charges from other agencies.
- **POLICE SUPPORT-**There were comments about dispatch and animal control.
- **TRAFFIC**
- **PROSECUTION-** It is not viable to cut this, they are looking to go back to full funding. Councilor Sprague questioned whether fines could be paid at City Hall.

- **FIRE ADMINISTRATTION-**The Fire Administration budget is up about 9%
- **FIREFIGHTING-**There are 16 full time positions, they talked about keeping 3 on days, 4 on nights. They discussed the fact that they don't break up the crew, for instance if they need to go get something for lunch; they all go because if they separated, it could cause a big impact.

PUBLIC WORKS AND UTILITIES

- **PUBLIC WORKS ADMINISTRATION-**There is now a shift differential which had not been budgeted for before.
- **STREET MANTENANCE-**Councilor Witham would like to know which streets are included. Councilor Sprague wanted to know whether anything is budgeted for road reconstruction. CM Belmore said there will be a Public Hearing on a bond issue of the City and School combined and they are looking to complete High Street(from West High St to the bridge.) Councilor Sprague warned everyone about a drainage issue near the Salmon Falls River and manhole covers saying we are not prepared and that could be a significant cost if they don't set up, for instance, an Enterprise Fund. They need to address that. Councilor Witham said we need to take care of what we have. He is looking for a good level of detail.
- **SNOW REMOVAL**
- **STREET LIGHTING-**The CM asked Mr. Smith to make a note of this increase to look at during deliberations later.
- **EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE-**There is a full-time equipment maintenance person.
- **CITY ENGINEER-**CM Belmore said that the contracted engineer seems to be working out. Councilor Witham agreed, saying that if the economy spikes, we can reconsider. He asked if we have enough staff to have oversight of road resurfacing. The City Manager said that would be part of the overall project cost.
- **BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS-**Mowing parks etc has been contracted out.

- **CEMETERY-**The CM said there are more pressing needs than grub control at the cemeteries.
- **SOLID WASTE COLLECTION-**Recycling and curbside is supported by the General Fund, the bag program is an Enterprise Fund supported by the purchase of bags. There is a small component for Hazardous Waste Day and the Lamprey Closure Fund. They do not pick up bags that are not Somersworth bags.

OTHER EXPENSES

- **TRANSFER TO DEBT SERVICE-**There was discussion regarding our ownership of the façade and parking lot of Plaza Terrace. Councilor Tapscott thinks we do a lot for those businesses.
  They will be talking about the possibility of a new bond.
- **CAPITAL LEASES**
- **TRANSFER TO OTHER CAPITAL FUNDS-**Finance Director Smith will make copies of total amounts in all funds.
- **CONTINGENCY**
- **CAPITAL OUTLAY-**Councilor Witham asked whether the cost of fire equipment increases a lot each year. Interim Fire Chief Bliss said that there is good news there, that we belong to a consortium which costs $90 to join but has a group purchasing plan. Councilor McCallion asked about debt and Finance Director Smith answered that none is expiring for another year.
- **INTERGOVERNMENT ASSESSMENTS**

Councilor Witham thanked the City Manager for a tight, well-prepared budget which, in his view, is very tolerable. He thanks City staff for being here.

ENTERPRISE FUNDS

They are not recommending any increases.

- **WASTEWATER-**
- **WATER DEPARTMENT**
- **SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL**

Councilor Sprague asked about generators for City Hall and Public Works. Finance Director Smith said that they are looking into a grant for City Hall and something similar for PW in the future.

Councilor Sprague asked about hydrant markers.

The Workshop was adjourned at 2 pm.