

CITY COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP
March 31, 2018 - 8:30 A.M.

Councilors Pepin, Vincent, Dumont, McCallion, Messier, Witham, Sprague, Cameron, and Levasseur were present.

Mayor Hilliard opened the budget workshop at 8:33 am. He explained that each organization requesting community support has already submitted their request for funding and that the Councilors have all of the background information and that there will be no presentations today. No decisions will be made today. Councilors will, however, ask any questions they have, going line by line, down the list.

ELECTED LEADERSHIP (400)

111 COMMUNITY SUPPORT (C8)

- **COAST BUS SERVICE (#45472)**
Requested: \$92,574
Proposed: \$57,986

Rad Nichols, Executive Director, was in attendance.

Councilor Pepin asked about the Tri-City Volunteer Drivers program. Mr. Nichols explained that individuals, in their own vehicles, will volunteer to transport for non emergency medical based trips. They are looking to start next fall. This is not something that can be done without support.

Councilor Pepin asked about the timing of COAST bus pickup. Mr. Nichols said they have been assessing their on time performance. They have not been doing as well as they hoped. The goal is to be on time 95% of the time. It has been a long time since they retimed the system; there are now 60% more riders, more traffic lights, more development.

Councilor Witham asked, historically, how the city has done with previous funding.

Mr. Nichols stated that he has given information on the requests for years 2010 to the present. Funding has remained the same since 2013. In 2018, the board went through the process of revisiting the municipal funding formula. The formula is now based on demand response miles, demand response ridership, fixed route miles, and fixed route ridership. Request is based on the 4 factors which are adjusted based on the budget.

Councilor Witham said that the one thing their formula does not take in to account are the municipal tax rates and tax caps. In 2013 when they got to a level funding state, that is when the discussion of a tax cap was gaining momentum, then became reality.

Mayor Hilliard asked since 2013, have the services increased, decreased, or remained the same.

Mr. Nichols said there have been changes in terms of service miles, ADA transit; both of which have increased quite a bit. Insurance costs have increased. Fixed route side has been constant.

Mayor Hilliard asked what the request for funding was from the town of Newington.

Mr. Nichols responded, \$34,000.

Councilor Levasseur asked about the website and the impact on the services.

Mr. Nichols said they have a new website and they are seeing a bump in visits. Riders can get tickets and passes online.

Councilor Dumont asked what the competition in transportation for Somersworth is.

Mr. Nichols said the biggest competition is the personal automobile and Uber.

Councilor Witham asked, if our funding is zero, what happens to COAST.

Mr. Nichols said it would be very difficult to provide services.

Councilor Sprague asked about CTS.

Mr. Nichols said it is a Medicaid service that they provide; less than 10 trips a month.

Councilor Sprague asked about a real time app.

Mr. Nichols stated that the app could be on a smart phone, SMS text based. Riders could also call the office. Dispatch knows where the buses are at all times. The app is about a year out.

Councilor Cameron asked if we zero funded, would we would lose services, or if we half fund do we have half of the services.

Mr. Nichols said adding Sunday service is something they do not have funding for. The funding they ask for is for the services that are on the street today. All other communities are subsidizing Somersworth.

Mayor Hilliard asked how many years has Somersworth subsidized other communities, and why Coast only requires \$30,000 in funding from Newington and \$90,000 from Somersworth.

Mr. Nichols said the demand is higher in Somersworth.

Mayor Hilliard asked about the advertising; in the 2 years that it did well, did they decrease the rider surcharge.

Mr. Nichols said they did decrease the rate from .50cents to .25cents.

There was brief discussion about the surcharge for Somersworth.

Councilor Witham asked if the benefit to ridership the place where the person is picked up or the destination.

MR. Nichols said it is a combination of both.

Councilor Witham asked about destinations within Somersworth.

Mr. Nichols named a few, including Walmart, Goodwin Community Health, The Works, and Unemployment Office.

Councilor Witham stated that it is interesting that not all of those pay property taxes.

Councilor Vincent said he sees a high demand for Somersworth. The service is needed. What about a one time fee, \$10 per user.

Mr. Nichols said that is not something they have done in the past. They provide basic level services.

Councilor Dumont said in some of the studies that he has looked into, this is not a local problem. Looking at the future, the elderly and millennials' number one need is public transportation. We have level funded since 2013, apparently there is not a lot of competition. UBER from Somersworth to Newington is \$35. Coast is a good deal for services rendered. What will our future present if we do not provide public transportation.

Mr. Nichols said Somersworth has been doing great things; work in downtown to make it more pedestrian friendly, public transportation is another element toward that.

- **BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS (#45473)**

Requested: \$1,500

Proposed: \$1,500

Jan Williams, administrative manager was in attendance.

Mayor Hilliard asked how many services are provided.

Ms. Williams said there are 26 active participants.

11 are matched, and 7 are being assessed and in the enrollment process.

Mayor Hilliard asked about the age ranges.

Williams said the ages were 6-15 years of age.

Councilor Witham asked what happens if this was zero funded.

Ms. Williams said they will continue to service the children

Councilor Cameron asked if these children are from Somersworth.

Ms. Williams said that there are 26 active children from Somersworth.

- COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY (#45474)

Requested: \$2,500

Proposed: \$2,000

Pat Vachon, Exec Director, was in attendance.

Councilor Witham asked what if this was zero funded.

Ms. Vachon said the goal is to serve the people in need and they would do their best.

Councilor Dumont stated he serves on this board. He asked that she highlight the number of families who benefit from this.

There is a large base of 305 families a month, average.

Councilor Cameron asked if they anticipated the numbers to increase.

Ms. Vachon said she does, and attributes that to the Whitehouse leadership and the cuts that have been made. There was a large foodstamp cut.

- HAVEN (#45475)

Requested: \$2,500

Proposed: \$2,000

Annie Dowling, Volunteer coordinator, was in attendance.

Councilor Witham asked what would happen if this was zero funded.

Ms. Dowling said they would continue services.

- CORNERSTONE VNA (#45478)

Requested: \$9,500

Proposed: \$7,500

Julie Reynolds, CEO, was in attendance

Councilor Witham asked about the amount of the request.

Ms. Reynolds said it has been consistent over the past years.

Councilor Witham asked what would happen if this was zero funded.

Reynolds stated that they would continue. There are no free services in the towns with 0 funding.

Councilor Sprague asked if they receive any money from the county.

Ms. Reynolds said, no.

Councilor Cameron asked if they did not receive any funds, then where would the funding come from.

Ms. Reynolds stated that Medicare funds quite a bit.

- SOMERSWORTH YOUTH CONNECTION (#45479)

Requested: \$5,000

Proposed: \$3,000

Maureen Jackman was in attendance.

Councilor Witham said in recent years, the federal funding has been on the fence, depends a lot on what happens in Washington. Councilor Witham asked if the request has been \$5,000 for the past several years.

Ms. Jackman said it has.

- COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM (#45482)

Requested: \$5,250

Proposed: \$4,000

Kristin Welch, Director, was in attendance.

Councilor Witham asked what would happen if this was zero funded.

Ms. Welch said they would continue to service Somersworth.

Councilor Witham stated that the services that they provide help the Somersworth welfare office. People request help from them.

Councilor Messier asked about a merger.

Ms. Welch said they are in the fact finding process. Nothing has been decided.

Councilor Sprague asked about the funding from county, and the separation of the services.

Ms. Welch said they did not receive funding from county.

- FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION (#45483)

Requested: \$5,000

Proposed: \$5,000

Dina Gagnon was in attendance.

Councilor Cameron asked if programs were implemented because we increased funding last year.

Ms. Gagnon said, yes. Two scholarships have been issued at this point.

Councilor Witham said in addition to the funding request, there are a number of in-kind services provided by the City; with PW setting up and providing other services, as well as Police and Fire.

- HOMEMAKERS (#45484)
Requested: \$8,500
Proposed: \$7,200
 No representative was in attendance.

NEW REQUESTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2019 (C-8)

- AMERICAN RED CROSS
Requested: \$2,000
Proposed: \$0
 No representative was in attendance.

- CROSS ROADS HOUSE (#5492)
Requested: \$2,000
Proposed: \$0

Martha Stone, Exec Director, was in attendance.

Councilor Witham asked if there was a request last year.

MS. Stone said they have sent requests for several years. Over the last year, there have been 28 people for a total of 1,513 nights at the shelter from Somersworth. They are located in Portsmouth and even though they have yet to receive funding, they will not selectively say they will let people freeze on the street.

Councilor Dumont asked about the demand for beds; never enough beds available for the demand. What is the estimated shortage of beds?

MS. Stone said about 40% of the people are from Strafford county. They have just under 100 beds. They have historically used other spaces as dorm rooms. They are one of the largest in the state, and have flexibility.

Councilor McCallion said he has never seen this chart, Crossroads had a lot of donors, and it was a great thing. CDBG funds as a revenue source, they serve a lot more in our community than he realized.

Ms. Stone said they apply to all cities and towns that they serve. They have a large private donor base. They have a \$1.6 mil budget and 2/3 of that comes from private donations. She is glad the information highlights that. They provide for the whole state and have been over typical capacity 97% of the nights.

Councilor Witham said with the severe cold snap this winter, it puts an exclamation point to the need. The tri city area is looking for a holistic approach before this happens again.

Ms. Stone stated that she is on commissions and welcomes the opportunity to discuss how to meet the needs. People tend to see the need during the crisis, so

when the shelter closed she was wondering how many people would come to them.

Councilor Dumont asked about the \$50 a night fee; is that some thing that would be paid to you or what is charged.

Ms. Stone said they do not charge any fees. It is an illustration. Local welfare requirements require that people be put into hotels if they do not have housing. It is an expense that the city would incur.

- SOBER SISTERS

Requested: \$7,500

Proposed: \$0

Monique Hassier was in attendance.

Councilor Sprague asked if they pay property taxes.

Ms. Hassier stated that they do not.

Councilor Witham stated they have a long term lease.

Councilor Sprague asked how many people they have served.

Ms. Hassier stated that they have served 35 women, 10 are from Somersworth.

- AIDS RESPONSE

Requested: \$500

Proposed: \$0

No representative was in attendance.

- CASA

Requested: \$500

Proposed: \$0

Lora Grasso Dobson, Case Volunteer, was in attendance.

Councilor Witham asked about previous funding.

Ms. Dobson stated that they last received funding in 2014. They served 28 people last year, none in Somersworth. They are not able to take on all the requests.

Councilor Sprague stated that \$500 is a very modest request.

- LYDIA'S HOUSE OF HOPE

Requested: \$20,000

Proposed: \$0

Teresa Tozier, Executive Director, was in attendance.

Councilor Sprague asked if they pay property tax.
Ms. Tozier said, yes, \$11,000 annually.

Councilor Sprague asked about numbers.
Ms. Tozier stated that they have a \$350,000 operation budget. There are currently 9 families, and 3 are from Somersworth

Councilor Witham asked if they are like Crossroads.
Ms. Tozier said it is very similar. It is not a shelter or a transitional home. This is a program. There are rules, policies, and procedures. The goal is to empower them, give them life skills, and help build them.

Councilor Dumont ask about the maximum capacity.
Ms. Tozier said the maximum capacity is 25 people.

Councilor Sprague said the program offers case managers, how much do they receive from federal funding.
Ms. Tozier said they are not federally funded; they have private donors.

Councilor Sprague stated that 35 outside services have helped with the program.
Ms. Tozier, said the (Coast) bus system doesn't come through that area, so that doesn't help. They received a 12 passenger and a 7 passenger van, they now have 10 employees, the house if fully staffed.

Councilor Sprague asked if funding COAST would help her service.
Ms. Tozier stated, only if it is better service. Sometimes even .25cents is difficult. The organization buys the passes and pays for the extra fee.

Councilor Sprague asked about the after school programs; if they are involved with any of that.
Ms. Tozier said that the children are the casualty of this war. The employees and volunteers in the house are engaged with these kids. A volunteer is there for the afterschool hours. She helps with the homework. It is a family atmosphere.

Councilor Cameron asked about the common length of stay.
Ms. Tozier said the length of stay is up to 365 days, but as long as they are working hard to be independent, there are no guidelines or strings.

After a brief recess, CM introduced the staff members who were in attendance, and the meeting continued.

Councilor Witham asked Finance Director Smith, if they were to fully fund all of the Community Support requests, what that would do to the tax rate.
Director Smith said it would be a .09cent increase on the tax rate.

City Manager Belmore directed attention to page B1 for proposed tax rate (currently under the tax cap by \$27,818). City Manager Belmore also stated that the health insurance is approximately \$92,000 less.

ELECTED LEADERSHIP (400)

CITY MANAGEMENT (401)

Page C-12, Councilor Witham asked about the Legal fees, at \$40,000.
City Manager said this has been level funded for a number of years. We have gone over and this will be tight again this year.
Councilor Witham said although \$40,000 is a big number, this is a deal.

Page C-11, Councilor Sprague asked about the Account & Audit amount.
Director Smith stated that this is an estimated amount.
Councilor Sprague said it is usually \$10,000 less.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION (403)

Page C-14, Councilor Witham asked about the funding of the Finance Director salary; some of that is being paid through the enterprise fund.
City Manager Belmore stated it is partially funded through the enterprise fund.

Page C-23, Councilor Sprague asked why there was an increased budget for a total of \$47,700 books.
Director Smith said it is an estimate is on what they currently buy; approximately 57 books a month.

Page C-14, Councilor Vincent asked for the definition of “Longevity.”
Director Smith clarified that it is a typo and that line should be Health Insurance.

Page C-25, Councilor Cameron asked about the salary for the Librarian, and if it is expected go down since the position will be opening?
City Manager Belmore said that is a union position. It could go down depending on who is hired to replace the current, retiring Librarian.

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES (404)

Witham asked where the funding for third party reviews of developers...
CM said we receive a check and hold it in escrow, and return any difference.

Page C-27, Councilor Sprague asked about the Strafford County Regional Planning, is that for one seat.

City Manager Belmore said that is our annual dues, we have 3 members.

Councilor Witham said that our involvement in the Strafford County Regional Planning is something we leverage in terms of grants. This is viewed as an investment.

Page C-33, account 45706, Revaluation, Councilor Witham asked where we are at with the revaluation.

City Manager Belmore stated that this is funding the entire city revaluations.

Councilor Witham asked if the thought is that the valuation would go up? If valuations go up, the tax rate would go down?

City Manager Belmore said the expectation is that 1/3 will go up, 1/3 will go down, and 1/3 will remain the same.

Page C-36, 48107, Field maintenance, Councilor Witham asked about changing this to a capital reserve fund.

City Manager explained that they cannot have a capital reserve fund for maintenance.

Page C-35, 44202, Parks Repair, Councilor McCallion asked about the \$12,000.

Councilor Witham asked if this line could be adjusted with the other fund?

City Manager Belmore said it could, but it's not advised.

Page C-35, 41100, Councilor Sprague asked about the increase in Health/Dental Insurance.

City Manager Belmore stated that the employee got married.

Page C-41, 48202, Councilor McCallion asked if there is any revenue for the old city hall building?

City Manager Belmore said, no. It is being leased for \$1 a year, to the Summersworth Historical Society, but they are upkeeping the building.

Page C-41, 45600, Councilor Vincent asked about the cost of the telephones.

City Manager said this is for the City Hall phone system. It is all encompassing.

Director Smith said this is a static number. This is for the service.

PUBLIC SAFETY (405)

Page C-48, 49920 K9 Program, Councilor Witham said he fully supports this program. The increase in police patrol is just over 5%. Councilor Witham asked if this line in future years will likely be less than that because this includes start up costs.

City Manager Belmore said, yes, that is fair to say.

Page C-47, 40330, Overtime, Councilor Dumont, asked if the county or state reimburses or pays.

Chief Kretschmar said there is an overtime line item that is paid back to witnesses, it is not a penalty fee. It is a state fee that comes back to us.

Page C-47, 40300, Councilor Vincent asked if the anticipated overtime has decreased since there are less vacancies.

Councilor Witham asked about the replacement of the fleet with the Ford SUV, replacement of tires and other costs, do we have a good handle on the cost?
Chief Kretschmar said yes.

Councilor Dumont questioned that the overall health care cost will show a deduction, so as we approve the budget, will these have to be adjusted?
City Manager Belmore said there will need to be an approval of all of the deductions, across the board.

Page C-50, 47200, Councilor McCallion asked about the decoder for the cell phone.
Chief Kretschmar stated that they are able to retrieve the entire history of the cell phone, deleted items, texts, entire life of the cell. Finding evidence on phones helps with investigations.

C-53, 47600, Parking enforcements, Councilor Witham asked if the money for the parking tickets goes into the General Fund.
Chief Kretschmar said it does.
Councilor Witham stated that he would like to increase parking enforcement hours at some point.

C-57, 40430, Clothing Allowance, Councilor Dumont said he was interested in knowing what one uniform for the chief costs.
Chief Hoyle stated that it was approximately \$60 for pants and \$60 for a shirt. He doesn't replace his uniforms every year.

C-59, 40470, Councilor Vincent asked what this account was for.
Chief Hoyle said this is for contractual buyouts when a firefighter leaves.

PUBLIC WORKS AND UTILITIES (406)

Page C-63, 40450, Councilor Vincent asked what this line was for.
Director Bobinsky explained that it was for standby staff for after hour calls.

Page C-67, 49104, Road Resurfacing, Councilor Sprague asked why it is \$800,000.
City Manager Belmore said it was their best effort to stay under the tax cap.
Councilor Messier stated that the \$800,000 is really \$1.1mil.
City Manager Belmore said there is \$195,000 in a separate fund.
Councilor Sprague said that the \$1.1mil from last year is because we didn't do all the work last year. It is a carry over item. We are not doing over a millions dollars of work

every year. We used some general fund money that we know was going to be sustainable.

C-67, 44177, Painting of Roads, Councilor Pepin stated that they are adding some more roads that need to be painted.

City Manager Belmore said when all is said and done, we will need about \$6,000 more. Instead of having the City's highway crew to take extra time to do markings, it was decided to hire the company to do all of the painting at once.

Councilor Messier asked if we are going out to bid, or if the process has been started.

City Manager Belmore said about 3 years ago, they did a bid with Dover, and contracted with Highway Safety Markings. They are maintaining the cost from last year, and will get that going as soon as possible.

C- 68, 49104, Councilor Dumont stated that there has been an increase in oil cost, so we can expect an increase in road resurfacing costs. There will be an increase. The holdover work will cost us more money.

Councilor Sprague stated that fuel has actually gone down a bit, and hot top is actually less. He thinks they could probably get a better price.

Councilor Witham said they have received bids from Pike. The numbers were low based on their estimates. When we realized that the bids were accurate, we extended the roads and project scope.

Councilor Dumont said he appreciates the information.

C-70, 47301, Councilor Messier asked about the new sidewalk tractor.

City Manager Belmore stated that the city needed a new street sweeper, and will be looking at a new sidewalk tractor in the future.

C-67, 49102, Sidewalk project, Councilor Vincent asked which sidewalks will be repaired.

Director Bobinsky said a portion of Green Street, and some other temporary repairs.

C-71, 45433, Traffic Lights, maintenance and repairs, Councilor Messier asked about a grant.

City Manager Belmore said we have not received paperwork yet, so we need to continue with repairs.

Councilor Vincent stated that we just changed over to LED; the budget has been reduced.

C-73, 44401, Heavy Equipment Maintenance, Councilor McCallion said he thought that line would go down a bit with the new equipment. Are there warranties on these vehicles?

Director Bobinsky stated, yes, there are warranties. This is for the vehicles that have not been replaced. Staff looks at the most cost effective ways to make repairs.

C-75, Councilor Messier asked where we stand for a City Engineer.

City Manager Belmore said they have advertised a couple times. They have some good candidates on paper and will be interviewing in the next few weeks.

C-78, Councilor Witham stated that the contracted services for mowing are a tremendous bang for our buck.

C-81,82, 45446, Councilor Witham said he was pleased to see the modest adjustment upwards. In Finance Committee, he sees that people are recycling more and it cost more to take it away. He supports the modest increase.

OTHER EXPENSES (408)

C-92, 89089, Taser Replacement, Councilor Witham asked about this line.

City Manager Belmore said this is the first year of a 5 year plan.

Chief Kretschmar said the current Tasers are from 2013.

Councilor Witham asked if this cost includes holsters.

Chief Kretschmar said that it does.

C-92, 49088, Councilor Messier asked about the asphalt planer.

Director Bobinsky said it is an attachment for the skidsteer that was purchased this year. It will improve pot hole repair.

C-92, 49004, councilor McCallion asked about the audio/video system replacements.

Chief Kretschmar said the cameras are outdated and the audio system is antiquated. All of the interviews are recorded and stored for court and for cases. With the old systems, the quality is poor. They need to replace all of the internal and external cameras.

Councilor McCallion asked if they would be able to do some kind of wifi that enables monitoring in the schools.

Chief Kretschmar said they have the ability to watch cameras from the schools and from housing, but this is a separate system.

Councilor Sprague asked about the street sweeper.

City Manager Belmore stated that it is in line 49082.

SCHOOL DEPARTMENT (409)

Councilor McCallion made a comment that the school budget in the back of the book is the best and most detailed they have ever had. Thanks to all who were involved.

ENTERPRISE FUNDS (406)

Councilor Witham said, in regard to wastewater the overall amount of the enterprise fund is down over 15%. He finds that to be remarkable to keep that cost under control like that.

Councilor Messier commented that these are enterprise funds payed by the rate payer, not taxes.

City Manager Belmore said, for clarification, it is a little misleading because there was supplemental appropriation for the engineer last year for the wastewater treatment project. An additional person was also added in October.

C-105, 49393, Somersworth/Dover Interconnection Project, Councilor Sprague asked if this portion that has been completed.

Director Bobinsky stated that this line item reflects the potential for any cost over funds.

Councilor Sprague said he thought it was 100% funded, why this needs to be in here.

Director Bobinsky stated this is for ancillary cost.

C-112, 49601, Councilor Levasseur asked why we are charging less for recycling bins, City Manager Belmore explained that residents are required to purchase a bin from the city, but can use other bins.

C-14, Councilor McCallion asked about the revenue that is received from the franchise.

Director Smith said they collect approximately \$125,000 a year.

C-14, 45700, Councilor Levasseur asked about this item.

Director Smith stated it was for a backup generator to run the equipment.

CLOSING COMMENTS BY COUNCILORS.

Councilor Witham thanked all administration and department heads. He said this is not an easy process, but an important process. This is a detailed budget, and he know it doesn't happen by accident. This is the least favorite thing that he does.

The Mayor adjourned the workshop at 12:03pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Trish Harris, City Clerk