City of Freeport

BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES

July 15, 2021, 5:33 PM
Council Chambers, Freeport City Hall

Council Members Present: Mayor Russ Barley, Councilwoman Elizabeth Brannon, Councilman Eddie Farris, Councilman Mark Martin, Councilwoman Elizabeth Haffner

Staff Members Present: City Manager Charlie Simmons, City Clerk Malani Robinson, City Attorney Clay Adkinson, Finance Officer Sara Bowers, Parks Director Travis Digges

1. Meeting Called to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 PM by Mayor Barley in the Council Chambers of Freeport City Hall.

2. 2021 BUDGET WORKSHOP

Finance Officer Bowers informed the Council that she recommended that the City retain the same millage rate from last year which is 4.7302. Finance Officer Bowers continued by reminding Council that they needed to discuss possible dates for the 1st Public Hearing, siting the Florida statue that requires the meetings to occur after 5:00PM. Councilmembers discussed setting the 1st Public Hearing date to September 9, 2021 5:05PM.

Finance Officer Bowers notified Council that there will no longer be a North Bay Water System in the budget, noting it will be merged with the Freeport Water System and will maintain the inside of city limits and outside of city limits rates. Councilmembers discussed having Finance Officer Bowers discuss the legality of this action with City Attorney Adkinson. Councilwoman Brannon encouraged Finance Officer Bowers to investigate the North Bay account, noting that it was originally established to pay off a loan that was used to put a water line out to service the area.

Finance Officer Bowers informed the Council that she and City Manager Simmons had been in discussion regarding the federal increase in minimum wage. Finance Officer

Bowers with the assistance of City Manager Simmons decided that it would be best to move the minimum wage from $11.18 an hour to $12.50 with the ability to move up to $13 after the 90-day probationary period. Councilwoman Haffner expressed her concerns for the wage not being sufficient, as Councilman Farris noted the need to be competitive with the County. City Manager Simmons stated that the benefits that the City provided were attractive and advised the Council to gradually raise the wages. Councilwoman Brannon voiced her desire to see the City raise the pay scales of current employees out of longevity and respect. City Manager Simmons expressed that raises would be given on a merit based system, where based on performance they could get up to a 5% raise. Councilwoman Haffner expressed her approval of a merit-based system, noting that it would motivate employees to get to the higher percentage. Councilman Farris queried on how current employees felt about their salaries/wages. City Manager Simmons informed Council that current City employees were content with their wages, noting that he wants to pace the City through the lengthy process of wage increases.

City Manager Simmons informed the Council that the City created four positions that would be given to High School Students in an after school program, paying $10 an hour at 3 hours a day. City Manager Simmons stated that this was an attempt to get High School students interested in local government by giving them job skill training. Parks Director Digges encouraged City Manager Simmons to be flexible with student activity schedules. City Manager Simmons stated that the High School would be in charge of selecting the students, who would then work for a 3-4 month window.

Finance Officer Bowers discussed possible workshop dates for the Council to select, which led to August 2nd at 3PM and August 17th at 3:30PM being viable dates. Finance Officer Bowers informed the Council that she should have the findings from the rate study by nest week. Councilman Farris noted that he would like for the City to ensure that it maintains a good insurance company in any attempt to be frugal. Councilwoman Brannon concurred noting that many employees were experiencing difficulties with obtaining certain medications because of the drastic changes in the prescription drug plans. Councilwoman Brannon stressed the importance of being aware of the needs of employees and to keep in mind that going cheap may not be in the interest of the employees. Councilwoman Haffner mentioned her wish for the City to increase its Christmas budget and to obtain more Christmas décor for the Sports Complex. City Manager Simmons stated that with growth would come more funding, nothing that the City would be undertaking one road project a year.

4. Adjournment

Mayor Barley motioned to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 6:02 PM.

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk