WATAUGA
TEXAS
"A GREAT PLACE TO LIVE"

MINUTES
WATAUGA CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MEETING
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBER,
7105 WHITLEY ROAD
MONDAY, AUGUST 14, 2023
5:30 PM

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Miner called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

The meeting convened with the following members present:

Arthur L. Miner	Mayor
Jan Hill	Mayor Pro Tem/Council Member Place 7
Pat Shelbourne	Council Member Place1
Tom Snyder	Council Member Place 2
Lovie Downey	Council Member Place 3(Absent w/notice)
Andrew Neal	Council Member Place 4
Malissa Minucci	Council Member Place 5
Mark Taylor	Council Member Place 6

and

Joshua Jones	City Manager
Linda Proskey	City Secretary
Lisa Benavidez	Assistant to the City Secretary
David Berman	City Attorney
Sandra Gibson	Director of Finance
Deby Woodard	Assistant Director of Finance
Timothy Hamilton	Director of Parks and Community Services
Randy Barkley	Assistant Fire Chief
Keith Hartman	Assistant Police Chief
Kim Rupkalvis	Finance Services Analyst

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No requests for public comment were received.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY FOR ACTION ITEMS

No requests for public testimony were received.

PRESENTATIONS

1. **FY 2023-2024 Budget Discussion**

Mayor Miner said everything has stayed the same since the last budget workshop, except that some council members have questions. So, he will open it up as a roundtable discussion.

Mayor Pro Tem Hill's questions and concerns are regarding some of the position reclassifications and changes to the personnel plan. She is concerned that there is too much manpower at the top of organizational charts. And the money should be going towards the salaries at the lower end. She likes horizontal organizational charts rather than vertical ones because vertical mean too many people are supervising and not enough people are working.

Mayor Miner asked Timothy Hamilton, Parks and Community Services, to comment on Mayor Pro Tem Hills's concern since this mainly concerns the Assistant Director Position with Parks and Community Services.

Timothy Hamilton stated at the time he started, ARPA had a position for a recreation superintendent, and he requested last year that instead of doing a recreation superintendent, they get a recreation attendant and two part-timers out of that because part of my focus was making sure that we had more help on the front lines of the Community Services division. So, with doing that and with the position that had been open as a park superintendent position and the candidate at that time having the experience he had. It had been an item in the PIP last year for there to be an Assistant Parks and Recreation Director. As it is currently, if approved by the council, the position would go to the current park superintendent, who would still be in charge of and responsible for the park side, and Mr. Hamilton would remain on the recreation side. Also, if Mr. Hamilton were absent, it would be clear that the assistant director would be in charge.

Mayor Miner thanked everyone for the time and effort put into the budget. He feels that the budget right now is a good one. Some things still need to be addressed, like police pay; the city is still losing officers to other cities, and we need to address the need for more officers. He also mentioned the homestead exemption and, in January, plans to appoint a council subcommittee to work with the City Manager and finance to look at the feasibility of a homestead exemption from top to bottom. Not just with the final numbers, he wants to know how many people it impacts. What percentage of the population? What percentage of the population will be exempt? He wants the subcommittee to run the whole gambit and look at everything.

Councilmember Taylor would like to see the personnel cost, how much overtime has been incurred by each department, and how much we anticipate. Also, he had a concern about the Police Department budget. The staffing in the PIP for 20/22/23 was projected for 11 supervisors; in this proposed budget, it is 16. Is that based on full staffing?

Councilmember Snyder agreed that it is a good budget proposal but was also concerned that the raise proposed for the PD will not be enough to sustain the personnel, and he agrees with Councilmember Taylors' point that overtime will not help.

Councilmember Neal said that he is looking at the 5% COLA and that it has, in the past, been below the inflationary rates. He thinks raising the COLA to 7.5% should be considered to relieve some of the pressure employees feel. They should look at what we can reduce elsewhere to increase the COLA.

Mayor Pro Tem Hill agreed with Councilmember Neal that the COLA should be higher. She thinks the COLA should be looked at mid-year to see where the income and sales tax income are.

Mayor Miner made a recommendation to move ahead with the proposed budget. He believes it is good for the city and its citizens.

Mr. Jones asked for clarification from Councilmember Neal on the COLA if he wants them to look at amending the budget to increase it or moving forward with this one and looking at increasing the COLA down the road.

Councilmember Neal said amending the proposed budget to increase the COLA.

Mr. Jones asked if they wanted to see what the current proposed budget would look like with the 7.5% or if they wanted to see if things could be cut to the current proposed budget to offset going to a 7.5% COLA. Last year, inflation rose 10%, so the 5% proposal was an attempt to help offset that.

Councilmember Taylor pointed out that there is a 5% COLA built into the proposed budget, but also people are receiving a merit increase.

Mr. Jones said that he views the COLA and merit as mutually exclusive. The COLA is a cost-of-living adjustment to offset inflation. The merit increase is not across the board. The average merit increase was less than 2% last year, and not everyone received one. It is based on their job description and productivity. It rewards them for their hard work, which goes a long way. He also stated that the employees were asked to contribute to the health insurance costs last year, so for some people, the COLA they were given was taken away with the contribution. This year, there has been an increase in health insurance, but we propose to absorb that additional increase and keep the employee contribution the same.

Councilmember Minucci agrees with increasing the COLA if we can find other offsets.

Mayor Pro Tem Hill asked if we could use the equipment replacement fund because it looks like it won't be used.

Sandra Gibson said they plan on making a budget adjustment for this year to use the savings mainly from salaries. However, there are additional revenues this year, and dollars are moved to the equipment replacement fund this fiscal year versus the proposed budget. So, it really wouldn't be possible to. Take it from there. And I wouldn't advise moving money from one of those funds more for a one-time purchase. Payroll costs are ongoing. Looking at ongoing expenditures would be better.

Councilmember Shelbourne commented that he would like to do the COLA but needs to be very plain and clear about where the money comes from in the current budget.

Councilmember Taylor said he is for a COLA, and it makes no sense to do a salary survey and immediately take a step back. But he would want to know how the healthcare cost the city is already absorbing impacts the COLA. He said that everything the city absorbed on behalf of the employee is part of the COLA.

Mayor Miner commented that raising a COLA should have been discussed in the prior meetings. He has serious concerns about other departments like the PD, and a 2 percent COLA increase is nice to look at, but it should have been discussed earlier.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Miner adjourned the meeting at 6:07 pm

Approved: this 8th day of Jan, 2024

Signed: this 10th day of Jan, 2024

APPROVED:

Arthur L. Miner /s/

Mayor

ATTEST:

Linda Proskey /s/

Linda Proskey, City Secretary

CITY OF WATAUGA, TEXAS

NOTE: Original Audio and Video Recording of this meeting is preserved and maintained by the City Secretary's Office