

City of Columbus
Special Budget Meeting
Alternative Meeting Format
MN Statute, Section 13D.021
09.28.2022

The 09.28.22 Special Budget meeting of the City of Columbus City Council was called to order at 5:31 p.m. by Mayor Jesse Preiner at the City Hall. Present were Councilmembers Robert Busch, Janet Hegland, Shelly Logren and Sue Wagamon; City Administrator Elizabeth Mursko, City Engineer Kevin Bittner, Public Communication Coordinator Connor Keith, Public Works Director Jim Windingstad and Senior Accountant Cheryl Jenkins.

Also in attendance were: Cindy Angel, Myron Angel, Forest Lake Times (via teleconference), Planning Commissioner Ron Hanegraaf, Barb Hearley, Fran Hearly, Sean Homa, Joe Peterson (via teleconference), Andrea Rasmussen and *Some Random Guy* (via teleconference)

- 1. Call to Order – 5:31 p.m.**
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance**
- 3. Approval of Agenda**

Motion by Preiner to approve the agenda. Seconded by Hegland. Roll call vote: Logren – aye; Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

- 4. City of Columbus – 2023 Budget**
 - Discussion – 2023 Proposed 2023 Budget & CIP**

Mursko recapped previous budget meetings and shared that all adjustments to the budget previously requested were incorporated into the information for this meeting. The City's tax capacity in 2016 was \$5.284 million and it has gradually increased to present, representing the growth in market value. Tax capacity increased from \$7.98 million in 2022 to \$9.517 million in 2023 as a result of the City's commercial development.

The goal of the budget was to avoid a tax increase, as well as to continue paying cash for expenditures instead of the City taking on loans. With a \$4.213 million levy, Columbus is currently projected for a 5.65 percent decrease in its municipal tax rate without decreasing the budget's expenditures.

General government expenditures are seeing an increase of \$62,500 for information technology, software support and mailed correspondence. Administrative expenses are seeing an increase of \$184,750, with most of it being due to the added wages and benefits of two roles. City Hall expenses increased by \$2,050 and the Community Center expenses decreased by \$220.

Preiner asked why the administrative expenses grew by \$184,750 and if the expenditure is worth the cost. Mursko said that the added personnel has been a major benefit to the City, as projects are reaching their conclusions faster, allowing new projects to move along quicker. The improved turn-around time has improved response times for residents and others making inquiries at City Hall. Mursko also feels the work is better distributed across roles. Logren says she's heard positive feedback from residents about minutes being posted in a timelier manner. Hegland has also noticed an increased capacity to pursue and complete projects.

Mursko shared that changes to the City Hall expenses are cost of living adjustments, increased costs of utilities, a decrease in the Community Center budget, and a reminder that the Building Department is self-funding, so increases in expenditures will be balanced by an increase in revenue. The Public Nuisance/Compliance service will be funded in part with the money that had been spent on Community Service Officer (CSO) through the Anoka County Sheriff's Department that the City is removing from the 2023 Law Enforcement Contract. The Public Works budget added \$2,500 for shop supplies, \$1,000 for small tools, \$5,000 for fuel, \$5,000 for salt and \$5,000 for dust control.

Hegland asked if the budget increase included additional speed signs around the City. Windingstad said he always budgets \$8,000 for street signs and was intending to use that fund for speed signs if that was the Council's decision.

The cost of the contract with the Anoka County Sheriff's Office increased by \$35,600. Windingstad asked about the decrease for natural gas budget for the Fire Hall given inflation and the prospect of a cold winter. Hegland asked how much Windingstad would recommend increasing the budget to. Windingstad said he would just add the \$400 taken out back in.

Turning to the Park Fund, Logren asked why the playground equipment needed its own insurance. Mursko said it was a charge from the League of Minnesota Cities and that this insurance protects against vandalism.

Within the bonds, the funding for the Public Works Building is no longer needed as the building is paid off, but the money has been collected. Due to that, Mursko asked how the Council wanted to allocate those funds. Wagamon and Hegland felt like the money should continue being collected towards a fund to replace City Hall, as it cannot be added in the future but it can be removed. Busch asked if these funds could also be rescheduled to use for repairs if the City decided not to replace City Hall. Mursko confirmed that these committed monies can be moved around.

The City's overall levy totaled to \$4.213 million, plus the Sunrise Watershed Management Organization (SRWMO) levy that the City collects on its behalf that is collected only from properties in that district. The City's budget increased \$507,494 with the added \$400 from the previous discussion. The City's tax rate is 45.81 percent, a 5.65 percent decrease from the previous year.

5. Adjournment

Motion by Preiner to adjourn. Seconded by Logren. Roll call vote: Logren – aye; Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 6:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Connor Keith, Public Communications Coordinator