

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

City Commission Special Meeting
Thursday, August 24, 2023

The City Commission met in formal session Thursday, August 24, 2023, at 10:00 A.M. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Nancy Sikes-Kline, and the following were present:

1. Roll Call: Nancy Sikes-Kline, Mayor/City Commissioner
Roxanne Horvath, Vice Mayor/City Commissioner (left at 11:06 a.m.)
Barbara Blonder, City Commissioner
Cynthia Garris, City Commissioner
Jim Springfield, City Commissioner

Also Present: Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney
Darlene Galambos, City Clerk
Meredith Breidenstein, Assistant City Manager
Reuben Franklin, Assistant City Manager
Todd Grant, Director, Public Works
Stephen Slaughter, Director, Utilities
Amy Skinner, Director, Planning and Building
Donna Hayes, Director, Human Resources
Jennifer Michaux, Police Chief
Carlos Aviles, Fire Chief
Elyse Wiemann, Recording Secretary
Michele Fudo, Recording Secretary

2. General Public Comments

The Commissioners heard from the following members of the public:

- BJ Kalaidi

3. Presentation of Fiscal Year 2024 Proposed Budget.

3.A. Discussion of Budget (M. Simpson, Director Finance)

Mr. Simpson reviewed the proposed budget with the Commission and noted this could be amended as needed. He said the final budget would be adopted in September 2023. He highlighted the following items:

- Millage rate stayed at 7.5 mills. Resulting in \$3 million net additional ad valorem revenue
- Visitor Information Center (VIC) Fund increases transfer for Mobility & Historic Preservation (HP)
- Fire assessment fee added \$360,000 in revenue to help offset Fire Department expenses
- VIC parking fee increase adds \$1.5 million in revenue to assist with HP, Mobility, and potentially the homeless drop-in center.
- Utility rates and rental charges increase by 4.4% Consumer Price Index (CPI)
- Vacation rental fee increases helps offset cost of the program
- No increase in park now card rates
- Legislature to help with City Hall and Lightner building windows

- Paving increased by \$200,000 over prior year budget for total of \$800,000
- Twenty new personnel were added totaling \$1.25 million
- Personnel compensation includes CPI increase of \$1 per hour plus 2%. Also included a merit increase based on annual evaluations
- A transfer of \$1,000,000 from General Fund reserves could provide seed money for a Conservation Land Acquisition program

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked for clarification regarding what percentage of properties were off the tax roll.

Mr. Simpson said at this time he did not have that information; however, could obtain it from the Property Appraisers office. He said he wanted to collect data regarding how much was collected from businesses and would try to provide that information before the first budget hearing.

Mr. Simpson reviewed the total budget revenues and the total budget expenditures. He pointed out that the debt service was 5%, which was down last year at 9%.

Commissioner Garris asked for more explanation regarding Culture and Recreation.

Mr. Simpson replied, it included the grounds budget as well as Melissa Wissel Communication Directors budget.

Ms. Breidenstein commented that the Marina was a large part of that budget.

Mr. Simpson reviewed the Personnel Summary for FY2024 and discussed the need for the personnel requests.

Ms. Breidenstein commented that the two police officers were hired in FY23 as over strength positions, she said the request was to make those permanent positions. She said there would be one addition of a

Corporal for the contracts with the school board, Flagler College, the addition of St. Joes, and to assist with special events when needed.

At the request of Commissioner Blonder, Ms. Breidenstein clarified there was a position added last year in Building & Code Enforcement, and at this point that position had not been filled. She said the new request was for one additional personnel in that department.

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked if the assumptions were correct and if the Commission agreed with them particularly on the revenue side with the parking fee increases. She suggested considering an additional code enforcement officer in case there was a need for nighttime enforcement if the proposed nightlife ordinance passed.

Commissioner Springfield felt even if the nighttime ordinance passed or not, there was a need for code enforcement at night. He said most of the positions were paid for by fees. He said there were only six positions being added to the general fund. He asked how the building and code enforcement were funded. He noted that not all twenty positions were paid for by the Ad Valorem taxpayers.

Mr. Simpson stated the police and IT personnel were funded through Ad Valorem tax; however, the customer service representative was paid through fees. He said they were offset by building permit fees but not completely.

Commissioner Garris questioned why there was not additional personnel added to the facilities department.

Ms. Breidenstein replied every position was being replaced that had either retired or had been promoted. She said no positions were being eliminated.

At the request of Commissioner Blonder, Mr. Grant advised the Sustainability Officer Technician job description was being refined. He said it would focus on the "Race to Zero" campaign, city structures regarding carbon footprint, finding grant monies to help with solar installations, work within City departments with the sustainability program, and do outreach in the community to create programs or provide education for a more sustainable City.

Mr. Simpson continued to review the budget with the Commission as listed:

- General Fund Expenditures by Category and Budget Summary
- Utility Fund by Function and Expenses by Detail
- Stormwater Revenue by Function and by Detail
- Solid Waster Budget Summary
- Marina Revenue by Function and Budget Summary
- Visitor Information Center (VIC) Revenue and Budget Summary
- Historic Preservation Transfers from VIC
- Strategic Action Plan

Commissioner Blonder questioned the Fire Assessment fee and asked for clarification as she felt it was lower than it should be.

Ms. Breidenstein advised the \$360,000 was an increase. She said the total fire assessment fee was in the millions. She said this was a rate increase.

Mayor Sikes-Kline questioned the larger decreases in the various Operating Expenditures. She understood it all balanced but questioned why Historic Preservation was decreased by 37%.

Ms. Breidenstein said it was due to grants that were for Historic Preservation and one-time expenses. She noted she could provide specific information on those particular projects.

Commissioner Springfield suggested continuing to operate the City with a lean amount of personnel but an appropriate amount, as there could be a down year.

Commissioner Blonder expressed her excitement regarding the monies that were moved to the land acquisition fund, and thanked Commissioner Garris for the monetary suggestion.

Mr. Simpson noted the Utility Fund revenues were increasing by 4.4% to maintain the CPI; however, lowering the surcharge for outside the City from 19% to 18%.

Mayor Sikes-Kline understood the utilities collected outside the City were vast but did not know it was almost \$9 million, which was almost 50% of the revenue.

Ms. Breidenstein stated that was the reason for the extra utility crew to assist with the maintenance.

Mr. Simpson noted those clients helped offset the general fund with the administrative transfer.

Mayor Sikes-Kline questioned why the operating revenue at the Marine budget was down.

Mr. Simpson replied that the fuel cost last year was more expensive, but the cost was less this year, and that saving was passed on. He said the mooring field and docks were full most of the time.

Commissioner Blonder felt an additional Code Enforcement officer would be beneficial. She noted she received many emails regarding response time and felt this was a way to help with that request.

Mr. Simpson advised he could add an additional Code Enforcement Officer to the budget if that was the request of the Commission.

Commissioner Springfield, Commissioner Blonder and Commissioner Garris agreed to add the additional officer.

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked for Mr. Simpson to review it to find out what would work best as the police department had trained officers and equipment to help with the noise complaints.

Commissioner Garris said she spoke with the Police department, and it was costly for the training; however, Code Enforcement had the equipment and felt they were able to do it. She said the key was to train someone in Code Enforcement and have them work the hours that were conducive to the noise.

Commissioner Springfield said adding a Code Enforcement officer would free up a police officer for another task.

Mayor Sikes-Kline agreed; however, felt it should be left up to staff as there was equipment and training needed. She asked for a recommendation from staff that would work for everyone and accomplish the goals.

Mr. Simpson said this would not be a huge burden on any budget as there were monies in the City Managers budget to help with strategic items.

Commissioner Springfield stated there was a good amount of income from franchise fees or tour trains, which spoke about the history of the City. He suggested moving some of the franchise fees to help with Historic Preservation fund. He felt this was an appropriate use of franchise funds. He continued the CPI was 4.4% and suggested explaining exactly what the CPI was and how it was associated with inflation and cost.

Mr. Simpson pointed out page 41 which was how the budget was tied to the strategic plan and vision plan. He said a financial plan should achieve the goals.

Commissioner Blonder thanked Mr. Simpson for providing that information as she felt it was essential.

Mr. Simpson provided the dates for the next budget meetings:

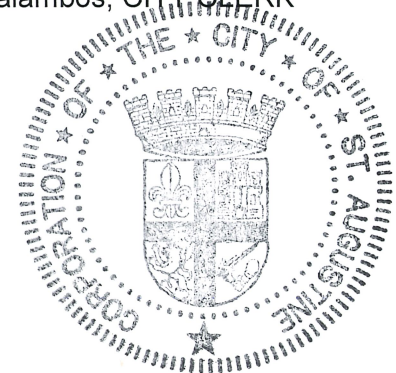
- September 14, 2023, 5:05p.m.
- September 14, 2023, CRA 4:30 p.m.
- September 28, 2023, at 5:05 p.m.

4. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:23 A.M.¹


Nancy Sikes-Kline, MAYOR


Darlene Galambos, CITY CLERK



¹ Transcribed by Elyse Wiemann