



City of Lambertville
WORK SESSION
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2019, 7:00 PM
PHILLIP L. PITTORE JUSTICE CENTER
25 SOUTH UNION STREET
MINUTES

Mayor Fahl informed the members of the public present that Council President Asaro would be arriving around 8 pm. She suggested we move forward with the presentation of the 2020 budget requests from the various boards and department heads and open the meeting when Council President Asaro arrives.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Fahl led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

The City Clerk led the public in a moment of silence in honor of those serving in the United States Armed Forces in Country and abroad.

NEW BUSINESS/CONSTITUENT CONCERNS

The Business Administrator and Department Heads/Board Chairpersons presented their requests for the 2020 budget to the Governing Body.

Mayor Fahl, informed the members of the public that the City has begun to totally reform the city's budget process that provides an opportunity to build out a transparent, long term, fiscally responsible budget, that is more accessible to residents, an opportunity to educate public and governing body on how the money is spent, to engage in well informed conversations and to attack significant budget issues over the next five years.

Challenges: we had no long-term capital plan, so this is an opportunity to begin a six-year capital plan which means from now through 2026 we will be forecasting how much we are going to borrow and what we are going to spend. Plans may change but it will be a road map. There were issues in previous years where operating expenses were charged to capital accounts, expensive way because you pay interested and makes less transparent. This will be moved into a true account of what it costs to run the city.

The Business Administrator addressed item numbers 3 and 4 of the power point presentation. He said at the end of every year, in theory we have a fund balance, money unexpended, and unanticipated revenues. Over the past five years, the savings account, the amount used to cover expenses has gone up and the savings account has gone down. If we continue to use it in the same way, money will run out. We have a number of expenses that we incurred every year but not budgeted for so we need to find a place to take it from. We charged things to accounts that were not for that item. It was hard to create finance reports because it isn't in the place we wanted it to be at.

Mayor Fahl commented that the next issue is that several accounts were never properly budgeted for expenses that happened every year. She gave the example of the elections funding, it happens every year, we have a fix cost and we would under budget for that fixed cost. She said the Business Administrator and the Deputy Treasurer have worked diligently in figuring out annual expenses and we will be able to budget for the things that happen every year.

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We are formalizing agreements with various payees, assigning MOUS, contracts, formalizing agreements so that those documents are there in perpetuity.

Finally, the highest goal, often our appropriations is tied to the expected revenue and we want to move away from revenue focus culture so that people don't feel like we are focusing on how much it cost but making good policy decisions.

Various part time and full-time employees will go over what their budget needs are. Long term this is a significant change. We will be able to, between now and April, deliberate on how we are spending money.

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR: a couple of challenges in starting from scratch. What we really want is for department heads to have ownership of their departments. They are the experts and we want them to have all of the ownership of their budget and operations. Respecting people's expertise and to let us know what they need from us. Having a Business Administrator, I am able to bring together these pieces to coordinate among areas that weren't always connected. Bringing bits of info together, putting it in one process, filling out the same forms, going through the same steps, and allows the Mayor to share incredible level of information. The PowerPoint presentation is using screen shots from accounting system, nothing you are looking at that we aren't looking at. It gives governing body information to make their decisions on. They are ultimately holding the purse string for the city. All of that comes down to the public and they feel they can access this information and to have useful information about what is happening in the city.

Mayor Fahl commented that we talked about redesigning process, right now we are in our discovery phase and between now and April when we adopt, is really deliberating on how we move forward. Budgets are moral documents, how you spend money is a decision, we have hefty decisions to make as we address a debt issue. Want to have conversation with public and governing body.

Capital improvement plan – Business Administrator informed the members of the public present that the PowerPoint presentations will be available on website.

We haven't had a ton of capital conversations in the community. What we have done already is a review of capital requests, DCCBs have submitted the bulk of capital requests, the next piece will take December through February, setting budget amount every year saying this is the amount of money we can borrow to stay flat with the tax increase going forward. We are trying to fix the capital process in budget. The State requires we create three-year capital plan. Their version is how much spending with bullet points of projects you might do. We are going to do a lot more, working with the City Architect, taking inventory of vehicles and understanding six years out and what are we committed to already and then if we need to borrow money for capital purchases we would do that in one bond ordinance instead of the multiple as one in the past. Capital is any piece of equipment or project that will last five years or more.

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Mayor Fahl commented that this is an opportunity for the first-time to address what our total bill for what we obligate ourselves to already, not what we have previously borrowed but deferred maintenance and assess what the true cost of that is moving forward. This will be presented on November 26th.

The Business Administrator reviewed the goals and stated that the Department Heads submitted requests for operating capital. This is an opportunity for the governing body and public to learn a little bit and ask questions. He has worked with the stake holders, feedback tonight. There will be many many more meetings before the adoption next year. This is not a final review or authorization, but just the proposed or requested, not discussion of statutory, not revenues, this isn't a prioritization and it's not a discussion of finance and budget programs that will come out of this. This is just the first steps.

Court Administrator – Patricia Wosniak greeted the public and introduced herself to the public.

The Court 2019 accomplishments were reviewed.

- Rated #1 in Hunterdon County as a full-time court with the lowest backlog of cases processed
- Successfully administered all aspects of court while Judgeship is in state of transition for 12 months.
- Provided quality of service with a noted increase of 35% in cases filed from previous year
- Restructured Park Mobile user error procedure that resulted in reduction of customer complaints.
- Full record destruction completed, including file cabinets and closets undergoing a reorganization in order to optimize space needed.
- Apply for grant money to keep operating costs low and assist with a limited operating budget
- Trained new Violations Clerk to support office in most critical functions.

The goals for 2020 were reviewed.

- To work collaboratively with the new Judge to continue to provide quality services that meet and exceed public expectations.
- To work with the Police Department to secure e-ticketing which will replace the current outdated manual procedure.
- To research collection of outstanding moneys due.
- To secure a credit card payment option.
- To provide continued training to the Violations Clerk in the Municipal Court Administrator's Certification Program (see insert #2 & 3).

Operating request for 2020

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The Court Administrator reviewed the Salary & Wage request, postage delivery charges, conferences and meetings and travel expenses with the members of the public. The increases requested are due to a 35% increase in compliant numbers.

Questions:

Mayor Fahl commented that it is a herculean feat with the transition for municipal judges was smooth because of your hard work. Was eticking in police capital? Yes.

The City has potential outstanding collections and she did some research to hire a collections facility. They receive a percentage of the collection. The Court Administrator said she needs to research it with the City Attorney to determine if it is worth the fee. There are other techniques we could use if we had more postage and lettering, we just don't have the time at this point.

Emily Goldman asked if the outstanding parking tickets accrue additional fees. Trish, out of state stops at \$45. NJ moves towards suspension of license. Business Administrator asked if it was disproportionate with PA? The Court Administrator responded yes; we have a huge amount from Pennsylvania for parking.

Councilman Sanders commented the first line talks about 35% increase in cases and talked about time constraints and the S&W line goes up to address that. Is there a reason? What's driving it? The Court Administrator responded that it is from the amount of complaints and parking tickets. She said she got that figure from Hunterdon County, went from 5300 to 7000 in one year. Councilman Sanders ask Lt. Brown if it was because of internet fraud? Lt. Brown responded moving violations from last year to this year are down, parking tickets up 1,000, the criminal complaints he needs to review, what doesn't get documents is the civilian complaints, the police don't get involved.

Councilman Sanders asked if this is a one-year blip or trending upwards? The Court Administrator responded it was July of 2018 to July 1=2019.

Councilman Sanders asked about Parkmobile. The Court Administrator responded that it was user error, putting in wrong zone or wrong license plate. In the past the police were requesting a dismissal for all of those tickets. We restructured it and have an ordinance that states you can collect \$17.50 for their error. Judge cuts ticket in half. People are happy, feel they are treated fairly, and we have less complaints. Mayor Fahl commented that she worked with Judge Cushing at beginning year on this because it was stopping productivity and effectiveness.

Public Works – Lester Myers, Director

2019 in review was discussed. Averaging 129 tons per month in garbage, recycling at 706 tons with an average of 70.62 tons per month. The Third Can/Food Waste is at 36 tons to date.

The Public Works Department helped with Shad Fest, the collection of leaves, and the City got a nice pile of mulch from high school for playground. They have experienced staffing issues at public works, which means significant challenges, and they wanted to

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reflect on the budget. Public Works is funded through two places: PW and Solid Waste Pick-up. The budget over the last five years had a decline of \$50,000 out of a \$200,000 budget. What is important to reflect on, is we have gotten, since 1990, 90 hours provided through Department of Corrections through halfway houses, per diem labor. We pick up in the am, drop off in the pm. We have a 30-minute drive to do each pick up and drop off. Those employees are per diem who assist with trash and recycling. It's been several months with inconsistency and as of a couple of weeks ago we go nothing. That is somewhere around 35-40% of the labor capacity at public works – gone. Mayor Fahl noted that those workers we used often changed and what is not reflected is the hours of training to make sure they were being picked up correctly by those workers and was almost 50% of our labor each day. We worked to revive the program, but the folks that run the program were not responsive in getting it fixed. We cost out hiring part time employees and so right now we are working on doing that reorganization. It would have been nice to have a heads up so we could prepare. We have successfully made one part-time hire, have a couple other candidates, goal is to have several part timers in public works to assist not just with the pick-up in other areas as well. Hiring part-time opens up to other areas increasing value with new skillset. Our public works department, 40 -50% has still maintained most of the programs we have now (garbage, sweeper, leaf pick-up). Thank public works before end of the week.

The Budget reviewed.

Request for 2020 reviewed. Business Administrator: rate we pay for recycling is based on a market rate. We have talked about the crazy things as far as recycling goes those fees have been going up. We anticipate those to go up.

Mayor Fahl: for the snow plowing and equipment, is that include extra overtime or labor cost if we have a heavy snow. The Business Administrator responded that it was just equipment.

Road repairs: Mayor Fahl said she was excited to see this line item, significant complaints from Washington street and throughout the city. She asked the Business Administrator; will we have more to address those pot hole issues because of the labor change? The Business Administrator responded, probably. This \$3,000 goes a pretty long way for asphalt. \$95 per ton. The Public Works Director added that it includes everything, the catch basin, concrete, asphalt. Business Administrator commented that we would expect if we get two others, we had four per diem positions from DOC, for the same amount of money, 3 part-time positions, hired 1, get 2 more, we should have the labor to do this next year.

Capital Items were reviewed.

Gasoline and fuel tanks at public works yard need to be improved. The Diesel trucks was here from 1989. The Business Administrator added that the cost of environmental remediation is a lot more than the cost of remediation. Looking at cost benefit in super simple fashion might not catch the risk of not buying replacement.

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Mayor Fahl asked about the annual repairs. She said that the City spent \$30-40,000 in prior years and asked how it was funded. The Business Administrator responded that it was individual or individual bonds. Mayor Fahl commented that for the general public the reason I asked because each time we proposed and accepted a bond ordinance it has significant cost, attorney to create, interest, new interest each time, looking forward to one bond each year.

The Public Works Director commented on the Snow Melter in his budget. He informed the members of the public that in prior years, the City would take our snow up under the toll bridge because the City doesn't have a place to put snow. He said he is crossing fingers; we don't get dumped on. The Snow Melter is a tow behind, can take snow, melts, filters and dumps into road. That's the future. The Mason dump is a 2006 and it is starting to show age. Also plow truck.

Mayor Fahl asked the Public Works Director to to put a slide together of the non-trash work that the department of public works handles including the change in unmanned convenience center which was in violation of department of health and now having a manned convenience center and the strain.

Tax Collector – Cynthia McBride

Not much changes in the tax office, guided by statutes, we introduced a new program for direct debit, applications available in city hall and on our website.

Mayor Fahl commented that this was when I first came into office, this was a suggestion, was a huge effort of paperwork, and she has heard good things.

In 2020 The Tax Collector plans to move on some city liens, small parcels that we hold liens on and see if we can get them assigned on the book. We have a large bankruptcy that she would like to move forward in some way to recoup the money owed to the city. This has to be done in steps and is a large under taking, outside of her scope, it is the Governing Body's decision to invest in that going forward.

Mayor Fahl asked what is our tax collection rate? The Tax Collector responded that it is 98%, and if we could move on the large bankruptcy, it could go up 99% or higher. Ms. McBride informed the members of the public that the city has a very good website for tax office, you can look up your taxes, from comfort of living room, print your own tax bill and project interest out.

Operating cost were reviewed. The Increases for 2020 include postage. The tax bills are required to be mailed out; delinquent notices are sometimes 6 times per year.

Mayor Fahl commented that the City is looking at the sale of paper streets which should put additional ratable on the tax list.

Construction Office – Ken Rogers –

Introduced himself. Mr. Rogers said he has been in Lambertville for 13 – 14-years, solid staff working together for a lot of years, provide nice benefit, provides for the safety of individuals, not tax based, not supported by taxes but supported by revenues.

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There has been a huge increase in Frenchtown. A couple buildings around the city that were removed for safety reasons.

Mayor Fahl commented that this is one of our star shared services, municipal buzz word, share with Frenchtown, looking for other ways to do shared services. She congratulated Ken and Crystal.

Operating budget request for 2020

UCC & S&W consistent with small change, electric sub code official recently retired.

Discussion about Crystal: She has worked in construction and has taken on the additional work from the Shared Services contract with Frenchtown without being financially compensated. Ken corrected the Mayor and said she has been compensated but as a gift to her. If we are doing it as a shared service and we know a steady increase, then the folks who work at the city should be paid for the increase in work load.

The Construction Office commented that he set salaries for everyone, however, in Frenchtown, it might be a floating salary because work load is unpredictable. May be at this level for a couple years could go back down to \$15,000.

Mayor Fahl asked what the inspection and code enforcement fee of \$5,600 was charged to that this, what is it? The Deputy Treasurer responded that it was inspections for board of health.

Councilman Sanders asked about the code book; that's the UCC code? Uniform Construction Code, states' book that spells out how we operate, when permits are required, modifies federal. Mr. Rogers said they don't need federal books. The Legal books, title 5 is all online. Councilman Sanders asked if they were not available? Mr. Rogers said some are available read only online. And to do it through DCA website is not practical.

Lambertville Public Library – Matt Larkin

Matt larkin introduced himself. President of the library board.

Why library exists – set by statute. 2019 year in review. The purpose, vision and mission reviewed.

Ongoing offerings reviewed.

2019 initiatives

Mayor Fahl asked if the staff capacity to run a library that is twice the size, is the constraint by size of the building.

Amy Connelly, board member, commented that she researches and 21st library initiative, typical of 4,000 square feet would do 1 1/2 square foot per resident, space is just over 2,000 sf, and 6,000 square feet is ideal for our size community.

Mayor Fahl commented that she is excited about visioning session, excited about the five-year plan. Good time to be planning in Lambertville,

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Capital request – Business Administrator responded not too in the weeds.

Member of public asked if this budget included the painting, lead abatement, the money budgeted last year? Mayor Fahl responded that we had an issue with our bid process, for the actual work for painting the building. That is good news and bad news. We will take a larger look to assess needs as a whole, bid open and we are in a holding pattern until we can address full needs of library. Issues with respondents.

City Clerk – Cynthia Ege

The City Clerk reviewed her budget proposal with the members of the public.

She informed the members of the public that the Clerk's Office is viewed as the HUB of the community and they provide customer service to the residents and businesses of the City of Lambertville as well as visitors. A review of 2019 included working with the Administration to add monthly work sessions to the schedule, assisting with the hire of the new Business Administrator, Amending the Lambertville City Code (Administrative Code, Meeting Agenda, Parking Meter Fees, Increase Construction Fees, Office Hours), working on the COAH Task Force, Arts Improvement District Task Force, the Parklet, Closing out two projects, and Shared Service Agreements with Frenchtown, the LMUA, and the LBFC, District 1 as well as the South Hunterdon Renewable Energy Cooperative.

In 2019, her office renewed 66 annual food licenses, 23 temporary food licenses, 5 vending machine, 13 Alcohol and Beverage Control Licenses, 267 landlord registrations, approximately 500 pet licenses, and issued raffle licenses and parking permits to the public. They also issue marriage licenses, birth certificates and death certificates for Lambertville residents and those being served by the local funeral homes. They responded to approximately 100 OPRA requests and provided customer service to all of the residents of our community and that includes issuance of garbage permits and leaf and brush.

She said the goals for 2020 included improving customer service, better use of technology, become paperless where possible, automate as many systems as possible and cross training of the staff. The biggest budget increase was the line for the Presidential Election in 2020. She informed the members of the public that the County is investing in new voting machines that will also print a paper ballot as a back-up.

Mayor Fahl commented that before we wrap for the evening, what to expect 11-26-19, asked public to come November 26th.

Business Administrator: admin and finance presentation. Long list of capital projects. All city wide that don't fall, facilities, road resurfacing, all in ad min side. A little more understanding or insight into operating cost that wasn't budgeted for property. That will be interesting and as well, we will talk about, this is only one piece of the pie. Expenses, appropriations, S&W, OE, professional service fees, cost related to capital projects, debt service, fixed cost, pension, health care, a lot of other pieces, and some we have no control over, some we have a lot of control over. Everything is in-between.

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Layout plans, everything put on table, whittle down to budget, responsible to services and tax impact side.

Mayor Fahl: to sum up in real human speech, finalize, the budget meeting is an opportunity to see full cost and plans between now and 2025, tough but real conversation about what we have obligated ourselves to, the gov body job and public to fight out what our priorities are, looking forward to meeting, and thank you for spending time tonight.

COMPLIANCE WITH THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT

Mayor Fahl called the meeting to order at 8:55 p.m. and asked the City Clerk to read the statement of compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act into the record.

The City Clerk read the following statement into the record:

Adequate notice of the regularly scheduled work session held on November 14, 2019, has been provided through the posting of the annual meeting schedule, by emailing notice to the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Trenton Times and to various individuals on the list serve in accordance with Section 13 of the Open Public Meetings Act."

ROLL CALL

The City Clerk called the roll as follows:

Present: Councilman Sanders, Council President Asaro, Mayor Fahl

Absent: Councilwoman Taylor

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Fahl led the public in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

The City Clerk led the public in a moment of silence in honor of those serving in the United States Armed Forces in Country and abroad.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFFICE CLOSURES:

THANKSGIVING: All City Offices will be closed for Thanksgiving Thursday, November 28 and Friday, November 29th. Garbage and Recycling scheduled for Thursday and Friday will be picked up on Friday, November 29th.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

ADJOURNMENT

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The meeting adjourned at 8:59 p.m. with a motion made by Councilman Sanders and seconded by Council President Asaro. An affirmative voice vote was taken in favor of the motion by all members present. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully submitted,



Cynthia L. Ege, CMR, RMC, City Clerk



The November 14, 2019 Work Session Minutes were approved at the November 26, 2019 Voting Session.