

CITY OF BRADENTON
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
9 a.m. Wednesday, July 22
MINUTES

The City of Bradenton City Council met in special session in the City Hall Council Chambers, 101 Old Main St., Bradenton, FL, at 9 a.m. Wednesday, July 22, 2015.

Present: Mayor Wayne Poston; Vice Mayor Ward II Gene Brown; Councilmen Ward I Gene Gallo, Ward 3 Patrick Roff, Ward 4 Bemis Smith and Ward 5 Harold Byrd; Police Chief Michael Radzilowski; Public Works & Utilities Director Claude Tankersley; Planning & Community Development Director Tim Polk; Fire Chief Chuck Edwards and City Administrator Carl Callahan.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Wayne Poston at 9:05 a.m.

The special meet was called to take action on the Fire Fighters contract and to set a tentative millage rate for Fiscal Year 2015-16 and name the dates of the first and second budget hearings that are open to the public.

Fire Fighters contract

City Administrator Carl Callahan said this contract is for managers in the Fire Department's bargaining unit and is effective through the end of the year. Negotiations will begin again next year and they will line up with other bargaining units at the Fire Department. He added that the contract was ratified by its members the night before this meeting. It provides for 5.5% raises; a "reasonable position" he said, but not close to the average.

MOTION TO APPROVE the contract was made by Councilman Harold Byrd, seconded by Councilman Patrick Roff and approved 5-0.

Millage rate and budget talk

A tentative millage (property tax) rate must be in place by the end of August so meeting notices can be sent out to the public, City Administrator Carl Callahan said. He recommended keeping the millage rate at 5.8976 recommended, which is the same as this year. It will provide a 6.7% increase in taxes because taxable values of City property has increased. This provides the City with about \$1 million more than last budget season.

- Administrator Callahan said key items in the budget include
- Employee raises, although City officials are still in negotiations with public safety unions
- There is \$800,000 of road paving currently in budget but the City is looking at increasing it to \$1 million of work; \$50,000 of projected gas tax funds will contribute.
- There is \$878,000 in the budget for the Sidewalks to Schools Program that helps build sidewalks in neighborhoods that are in and around schools. Construction could start in a couple months in some areas. The funds for this program originate at the federal level and trickle down to us, Public Works Director Tankersley said, but the money is specifically designated for sidewalks.
- The budget also sets aside money for comprehensive updates that could be used for consultants or maybe temporary, additional staff.
- \$1.7 million goes to the Community Redevelopment Agencies.
- The City has received the payoff for the Manatee Players Theater loan and \$1.4 million will be used to pay off the 3rd Avenue West extension.
- On the Utilities side of Public Works, \$4.4 million is earmarked for capital projects to keep the City on track with its long-term goals such as water main replacements and reservoir improvements. The City has not had to borrow any money for these projects. Southwest Florida Water Management District will contribute at least half of the cost for anything having to do with Aquifer Storage Recovery wells.

In response to questions from Councilman Bemis Smith, Director Tankersley described some of the plans for the ASR wells. He said in the future the City will probably need three, which is more than adequate to build a nice cushion of

drinking water for a City this size. Mayor Poston said it's also a better alternative to expanding the reservoir, which would have cost around \$22 million.

Administrator Callahan added that \$1 million of Water and Sewer Impact Fees will help with reservoir projects - 1 mil. He said the City accumulates these funds every year and hangs on to them until a project like building the ASR wells arrives.

Administrator Callahan also said the City's Solid Waste Division will need three major trucks for residential areas and one recycling truck. He said 2016 will be a big year for trucks and that the City has been saving up for it to keep the fleet current.

In response to a question from Mayor Wayne Poston, Director Tankersley said he's working with Realize Bradenton to make the trucks more attractive.

Councilman Smith asked if the City could get any revenue from the trucks it is replacing. Possibly at an auction, Administrator Callahan said. It would be classified as "other revenue."

Administrator Callahan said the biggest challenge this year is the replacing of two, longtime department heads. Police Chief Michael Radzilowski and Planning Director Tim Polk are both retiring around the New Year. Another challenge is the introduction of the new Economic Development Department, along with its new department head. Councilman Roff asked how we budget for the Economic Development Director. Administrator Callahan said there are contingency funds and \$50,000 set aside, but it's too early to really know.

He said the proposed budget that council is seeing today is not a final budget and there will be tweaking here and there through August, all the way up to the public hearings in September. But it's a complete budget for the "big picture" and it works with the current millage rate, he said.

Councilman Gene Gallo said there are a few employees making less than \$12 an hour and he said he'd like to consider a minimum wage for City employees. He also said he's alarmed by vacancies in the police department and is worried that salaries are not comparable with other agencies.

In response to the minimum wage, Administrator Callahan said it is under discussion with staff. He said some are making between \$10.50-\$11 an hour, most of them in Public Works or new employees in Utility Billing. He said those are difficult jobs and a minimum wage of \$12 an hour would send the message that the City looks out for its employees.

Councilman Smith didn't like the idea of establishing a minimum wage. He said it boils down to asking citizens in the private sector, many of whom are making less than \$12 an hour, to pay for it. He said he's not opposed to raises to retain employees but doesn't like the across-the-board minimum raise.

Councilman Harold Byrd said it only affects a handful of employees in areas the City would like some retention. He said the City owes it to the taxpayers to put forth the best workforce possible and if a small raise can help keep trained employees around then it makes sense. Vice Mayor Gene Brown agreed and added that the City needs to look to the future by retaining quality employees, and he thinks the citizens of Bradenton would agree with that, too.

In response to Councilman Gallo's earlier concerns about police vacancies, Chief Radzilowski said the force recently added five officers which will bring it to full capacity of 120 sworn officers. Administrator Callahan acknowledged it's a revolving door and the City hopefully addressed it in the last contract with the police union.

Several council members said they are in favor of keeping training police officers in Bradenton, although acknowledged that isn't easy because bigger police departments in the area pay more. Councilman Gallo believes a public referendum seeking a tax increase for police department salaries would overwhelmingly pass.

Administrator Callahan, acknowledging the opposing views brought up today, said this is how budget-related discussions should be, because the budget approval isn't supposed to be a rubber stamp. He said not every department head will get everything asked for, but that's how it goes. He asked for a motion to set the tentative millage rate.

MOTION TO APPROVE setting the tentative millage rate at 5.8976 (same as this year) was made by Councilman Gene Gallo, seconded by Councilman Patrick Roff and approved 5-0.

Council then discussed potential dates for the budget hearings. They discussed the possibility of the final budget hearing on Sept. 23 but the majority of council wanted it on Sept. 16.

MOTION TO APPROVE setting the first budget hearing for 5:01 p.m. Sept. 9 and the final hearing at 5:01 p.m. Sept. 16 was made by Councilman Harold Byrd, seconded by Councilman Patrick Roff and approved 5-0.

The special meeting adjourned at 10:18 a.m. There was not a workshop.