



Minutes of City Council Budget Workshop
Saturday, April 8, 2023
8:30 a.m.

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS

The City Council Workshop was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Mayor Dana S. Hilliard. The following Council members were present: Pepin, Vincent, Gibson, Austin, Michaud, , Gerding, Cameron and Messier.

Absent: Councilor Witham

CITY COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP

Mayor Hilliard explained that the meeting will begin with review of Elective Leadership, Community Support section of the budget where each organization will be recognized and if a representative is present, ask that they come up and introduce themselves and answer questions that the Councilors may have.

Mayor Hilliard stated that because there are a couple of School items on the list of Community Support organizations, he will be handing the gavel over to Councilor Austin and will return as Chair at the conclusion of this section.

Councilor Austin took the seat as Council Chair.

City Manager Belmore informed the Council that page C-8 of the budget book shows the amount requested by each of the organizations as well as the proposed amount which is a carryover from what the Council approved in last year's budget. Manager Belmore provided the Council with a packet that includes letters from each of the organizations and their requests for funding.

COAST Bus Service – Rad Nichols introduced himself as the Executive Director of COAST.

Councilor Pepin mentioned serving on the COAST board for many years. He asked that Mr. Nichols explain the board's request for an increase of funds in the amount of \$21,010.

Mr. Nichols explained that any Community request for funds is based on a formula which is based on services provided and demand for those services. For the City of Somersworth, they saw an increase in demand for services for ADA paratransit, an increase in ridership, and an increase their fixed route services and the impact of service reductions COAST has had to implement over the last year. Mr. Nichols added that the routes within the City are operating well and that too impacts the request.

Councilor Vincent asked what a rider pays for COAST transportation. Mr. Nichols stated that a basic rider pays \$1.50 and seniors or disabled individuals pay \$0.75 per one-way trip. Within the last year and a half, COAST implemented a free transfer program which has since been extended, adding that for ADA paratransit, the rider would pay double the basic fare fees. Councilor Vincent questioned if

COAST anticipates increasing costs for the rider. Mr. Nichols explained that they are currently looking at the potential of increasing rider's fare and are in the process of surveying riders.

Councilor Gerding asked when the last time rates were increased and from what. Mr. Nichols stated that rates haven't changed since around 2013 and they have been fairly sensitive with raising rates for riders because of what their surveys have told them and experience from past fare increases which did not help ridership or the fares collected. They do their best to keep rates affordable for riders. Councilor Gerding asked how ridership has changed since COVID. Mr. Nichols stated that COVID caused them to shut down for a period of time and dramatically impacted their services and riders. Ridership is coming back in different way on different routes and stated being within 60-65% of their pre-pandemic ridership. Mr. Nichols noted that with the workforce shortage, COAST had to temporarily suspend services and was operating at 60% of their fixed routes running during their lowest staffing levels. He noted that they expect to bring back all Saturday services that had previously been suspended and be operating at roughly 80% of their fixed routes by May.

Councilor Pepin recalled a time when the City did not fully fund COAST Bus Services in the past and people had to pay an extra \$0.50 to ride on top of the COAST fare. He shared a story from the past about a mother and her children having to ride the bus to get groceries and paying approximately \$16 for the trip, he acknowledged that there can be repercussions for those that rely on the public transportation system if rider fares are increased.

Councilor Cameron questioned if COAST is working to add more staff. Mr. Nichols stated that they have increased pay and improved their benefits package which has allowed them to bring back services that had been temporarily suspended. He added that they are looking at a daunting fiscal cliff starting in fiscal year 2025, he added that they are pushing hard for increased State funding.

Big Brothers Big Sisters – Jan Williams introduced herself as the Big Brothers Big Sisters representative and a Somersworth resident.

Councilor Pepin questioned the request increase of \$3,500. Ms. Williams explained that over the last many years they have not requested an increase in City funding, she added that 4-5 years ago, they had six or seven matches in Somersworth and now they serve 20 with five children on their waiting list. Ms. Williams stated that COVID made it so they had to pivot towards electronic meetings and they are dealing with increased costs along with everyone else.

Community Food Pantry – Patricia Vachon introduced herself as the Executive Director of the Community Food Pantry.

Councilor Pepin thanks Ms. Vachon for all of the work that they do. Ms. Vachon thanked Councilor Pepin and commented that the recent reduction in the temporary COVID Food Stamp benefits has increased the demand for their food pantry.

Haven – Karen Prior introduced herself as the Development Director at Haven.

There were no questions from Council.

Cornerstone VNA – Julie Reynolds introduced herself as the Chief Executive Officer of Cornerstone VNA.

There were no questions from Council.

Somersworth Youth Connection – Cody Donahue introduced himself as the Director of Somersworth Youth Connection (SYC).

Councilor Vincent questioned the reasoning for N/A being listed at the request from SYC. City Manager Belmore explained that when the decision was made to come off of the grant funding mechanism that was in place due to restrictions that were placed on the program, the Council voted to fund the SYC program at this level each year.

Councilor Gerding recused himself from the discussion of this line item as well as any future votes to this item due to a conflict.

Councilor Austin asked if there was information on the revenues received by SYC over the last year. Mr. Donahue didn't have the information readily available but did comment that the program is on track to break even. He stated that he has noticed many parents facing challenges with paying the SYC fees, he added that he has been outreaching to parents in an effort to work with them on payment plans. Mr. Donahue mentioned that there has been a difficult adjustment for parents because during COVID, there were child care assistance funds available as well as scholarships when they were grant funded. Additionally, the Middle School SYS program was free for the last six or seven years and parents are not responsible for paying fees for the first time. Mr. Donahue noted that the Elementary School fees went up by about \$100 per week and they don't have the flexibility to provide scholarships at this time.

Mr. Donahue stated that the revenue is \$190,000 with \$50,000 coming from the City and the remaining \$140,000 coming from the families' payments. Councilor Austin asked if he expected that the upcoming fiscal year would remain the same. Mr. Donahue does expect it to be the same as the current budget that has passed through the School Board has kept those numbers the same.

Councilor Gibson questioned if the School department provides funding for the SYC program. Mr. Donahue stated that he believes it is around \$70,000.

Community Action Program – Melissa Spil introduced herself as the Head of Advancement for Community Action Partnership (CAP) of Strafford County.

Councilor Vincent requested a quick overview of the organization. Ms. Spil stated that CAP services all of Strafford County and provides over 60 programs to residents. She listed the Fuel and Electric Assistance Program, Head Start, family support programs, NH Emergency Rental Assistance Program, Homeless Outreach programs and the food pantry.

Councilor Gibson questioned how CAP determines how much to request from each community. Ms. Spil stated that they look at the historical requests and because they have had so much funding coming

from the NH Emergency Rental Assistance Program due to COVID, they have not had to increase their requests but does expect that to change in the future because of the increase in demand for their programs. She added that they do receive some Federal funding but that comes with restrictions on their spending; the funding received from the City of Somersworth allows them to use that money with more flexibility for client needs.

Councilor Pepin requested that the organizations provide a brief description as to what services they provide to the City, many individuals do know what the organizations have to offer but would be helpful for those that do not. There were no objections.

Festival Association – Donald Houde introduced himself as the President of the Somersworth Festival Association. He stated that his group is setup to provide festivals and entertainment for the children of the City of Somersworth with several programs including the Kids Concert Series and Pumpkin Festival. Mr. Houde explained that they are funded by the City of Somersworth as well as fundraising events including craft fairs and penny sales. He thanked the City for their financial support and also the Public Works Department as they provide barricades, trucks to help move staging and more. He added a thanks to the Police Department for also providing police detail when it is needed and stated they couldn't do it without their support as well.

Councilor Vincent thanked the Somersworth Festival organization for all that they do and transforming it over the years and for what it has evolved into today and for bringing the Community together. Mr. Houde noted that they are always looking for volunteers.

Councilor Pepin asked that Mr. Houde share some insight on the Festival Associations expenses. Mr. Houde explained that entertainment is expensive, he gave an example of the Pumpkin Festival with spending over \$3,000 in pumpkins, the cost of hay and hay rides, utilities, fireworks, insurance.

Cross Roads House – Will Arvel introduced himself as the Executive Director of Cross Roads House. Mr. Arvel noted that Cross Roads House is the second largest shelter in the State. The shelter served 429 individuals last year which included female, males and families. The shelter can house up to 12 families at any given time. Mr. Arvel mentioned that they served 29 Somersworth residents last year at a cost of approximately \$188,000.

Councilor Gerding requested an explanation of the \$1,000 request increase. Mr. Arvel explained that their costs are so high and the request is but a fraction of the \$188,000 that the organization spent to shelter the 29 residents from Somersworth. He added that they are 70% dependent on fundraising, they receive a small amount from the State as well as some Federal Funds and other municipal funds from other communities. Mr. Arvel stated that they are an essential service and save the City money because if the City had to house those individuals that stay at the shelter, it would be much costlier to the City.

Lydia's House of Hope – There was not representative present and no request for the City.

AIDS Response – There was no representative present.

Somersworth Farm to School – Wendy Berkeley introduced herself as the Coordinator of the Somersworth Farm to School Program. The mission for the organization is to increase local food access within the School District and Community to increase the number of school gardens and sustainability efforts. They weave the program into the educational curriculum by inviting students to grow their own plants and watch them grow over time.

Councilor Gerding noted that within the budget book the request is listed as a zero-dollar amount, however, the letter from the Somersworth Farm to School Program does have a request amount of \$3,000. He commented working with Ms. Berkeley in the past and appreciates the program and her work. He asked if she could explain how the funds could assist her within her program. Ms. Berkeley explained that the program has been grant funded since 2016 and that grant ends in June, additionally, due to the current grant restrictions, they are unable to apply for other Federal grants so the \$3,000 would help to continue some of the efforts such as composting which has saved the School's \$12,000 in expenses.

Councilor Gibson asked if the Somersworth Farm to School Program receives any funds from the Schools. Ms. Berkeley stated that they are not.

Councilor Vincent questioned if there needs to be a change cue to the request that is not in the budget book. City Manager Belmore stated that the request came in after he presented the budget to the Council but the request is in fact for \$3,000.

Strafford Meals on Wheels – Jaymie Chagnon introduced herself as the Director of the Strafford Nutrition Meals on Wheels program. Last year the program served 305 senior or disabled adult Somersworth residents, which totaled over 20,000 meals. The goal of the program is to assist individuals in maintaining their independence and to keep them out of care facilities for as long as they can.

Councilor Vincent commented that from the State level he recalls there being a bill introduced that would cut the Meals on Wheels program and asked for the status on that. Ms. Chagnon stated that the request has been approved by the House and would need to be approved by the Senate. She added that another unknown factor is what the Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services would allocate to Strafford County if approved by the Senate.

Councilor Vincent stated that the program not only delivers food but it also gives the recipients of the meals a real person to talk to. He commented that he has received calls from his constituents that were worried that the program would be cut and they shared their experiences with the program staff coming to see them and talk to them being great. Ms. Chagnon commented on a recent survey her organization did and roughly 49% of the individuals stated that the driver that delivers the meals, is the only person they see all week.

Lions Club – Peter Houde introduced himself as the President of the Somersworth Lions Club.

Councilor Vincent recused himself from the discussion due to conflict.

Mr. Houde stated that the skating rink at the Lions Club has been in the City since 1963 with the Club being Chartered approximately 10 years prior to that. The Lions Club is known for free public ice skating rink and rentals and a youth hockey program serves 50-55 kids each year. Mr. Houde stated that they offer fishing and have a derby each year, he stated that 2 years ago they were able to install a handicap accessible fishing dock on their pond. The Lions Club offers vision screenings at the elementary schools as well as partnering with other Lions Clubs to offer financial assistance for eye exams, glasses and hearing aids. They partner with LaFreniere Eyecare of Somersworth who helps them to get individuals in need to local care.

Councilor Gibson questioned if the Lions Club accepts donations of eyeglasses. Mr. Houde confirmed that they do still collect and short donated eyeglasses and the explained the process.

Sober Sisters – Moné Cassier introduced herself as the Co-Founder and Executive Director of Sober Sisters Recovery. The program services women with substance use disorder, trauma, and domestic violence that operates as a level 3 sober home and is certified with the State and Nationally.

Councilor Gibson questioned how many people are being served from the City of Somersworth. Ms. Cassier stated that they serve roughly 3-5 Somersworth residents in a year, she added that they only take 4 women at a time due to the high level of case management that is needed.

Councilor Austin stated that mentioned that in the past, Ms. Cassier shared the list of repairs that the facility needed or has, he asked that she brief the Council on the history and current status of the repairs. Ms. Cassier stated that when they got the building, it was uninhabitable. They raised approximately \$300,000 to put into the building, Ms. Cassier stated that the interior is completed with the exception of the electrical work and they are now working on the exterior. She listed items that still need to be replaced or repaired. Ms. Cassier asked that all save the date, on June 25th they are inviting people to join to show appreciation with a cookout. Councilor Austin stated his reasoning for asking the question is because he felt that it was important that everyone had an understanding of all the work that has been done.

Share Fund – Dierdre Watson introduced herself as the representative for the Share Fund. She mentioned their location at the Community Center in Rochester where they have a large food pantry, a thrift store and a financial assistance program which she volunteers for. Ms. Watson commented on the history of the program stating that the Share Fund had a small office in Somersworth based at the Queensbury Mill where they still keep an office just in case Somersworth residents aren't able to make it to the Rochester location. She explained that the financial component that is offered services families with expenses that other agencies do not cover and works very closely with many other organizations and welfare departments in the cities and towns that they service. Ms. Watson added that last year with all the State and County funds through COVID relief, they still assisted households with around \$40,000, and \$4,000 of those funds assisted Somersworth residents. She added that already within the first 3 months of the year, they are seeing an increase in requests for assistance as the State and Federal funds go away or are being reduced.

Councilor Gerding commented that the requested amount is strictly for the financial piece and wonders what other ways the City could help. Ms. Watson mentioned the thrift store noting that anyone receiving SNAP or Medicare can come in and get some items. She acknowledged the coordination in working with the City's Welfare Department to meet the needs of the residents.

Mayor Hilliard returned as the Chair and gave a briefing of how he would like to proceed with the process of reviewing the budget, he would like to review the budget section by section and asked that if there were any questions, that the Councilors name the page number and line-item number and allow a moment for others to follow along. There was no objection from Council.

Mayor Hilliard called a brief recess to allow Councilors a break.

The City Council returned from recess and Mayor Hilliard reiterated this meeting's budget review process adding that the meeting is for questions and to gather information. He noted Monday's Special Budget Meeting scheduled at 6:00 p.m. and hopes that the Council will be able to review the budget over the weekend making notes of additions or cuts to discuss at that time. Mayor Hilliard stated that if there is no conclusion met by the end of Monday's meeting, the Council will continue to discuss and debate it. If no conclusion is made by the end of June, the proposed budget as presented by the City Manager goes into effect.

Councilor Gibson stated he is aware that the Council only has a say over the bottom number of the School's budget but questioned if the Council is allowed to discuss School budget lines specifically. Mayor Hilliard stated that nothing prohibits the Council from discussing anything within the budget and providing suggestions, but cautioned him that there is no authority to move on specific line-items. Furthermore, he explained that if there was a wish to add funds or reduce funds, it would only be to the bottom line and not any specific line-item as that would be under the authority of the School Board and School Departments to determine where the addition or reduction is placed.

General Fund Revenue Estimates

Finance Director Smith pointed out changes for the Council's information. On page C-1 of the General Fund Revenue Estimates, the City is recommending an increase to the Payment in Lieu of Taxes which is based solely on the Somersworth Housing Authority and the pilot being received from them. He added that when they started their RAD project, they mentioned that as they progressed and built out, the amount they pay in lieu of taxes would increase and the City has begun to see that increase in payments. Director Smith brought the attention to the Intergovernmental revenues that are amounts determined by the State and noted that the amounts are carried over from last year's budget as the City will not be notified until usually sometime in September.

Director Smith stated that on page C-2, another increase in revenue is in Interest on Investments. He noted that the City has been seeing larger increases in what they have been able to receive on interest that the City garners on their investments. Generally, the City sees roughly 1% interest

returned but have been seeing between 4-5%. Director Smith commented that the City's investments are safe, secure and short-term.

Director Smith spoke on the Use of Fund Balance, when the City developed the budget, they were using a net assessed valuation of \$1,135,000,000 and the City's assessor was able to come back to the City with an updated valuation that came in at \$1,143,000,000 which is an increase of \$8,000,000. Based on the new estimated net assessed valuation, the estimated tax rate impact went from \$1.65 to \$1.47. City Manager Belmore mentioned that the one caveat regarding the estimated net assessed valuation is that the utilities assessments aren't finalized at this point so there may be some change up or down. Director Smith agreed and stated that the utilities assessment only affects the Statewide School property tax and does not affect the Local or County property tax.

Councilor Vincent questioned the current estimated tax impact amount of \$1.47 and wondered if that amount is without any anticipated State revenues. Director Smith stated that is incorrect and what they have down when it comes to any revenue from the State, is level funded those amounts and the figures recognize what the City received last year. He added that the estimated tax impact could change depending on what the State appropriates in Meals & Rooms Tax and Highway Block Grant.

Councilor Gibson asked if the investments and accounts of the City are fully insured. Director Smith confirmed that they are either fully backed by 102% of collateral or FDIC. Councilor Gibson also asked about the Payments in Lieu of Taxes, questioning where that amount comes from. Director Smith explained they received payments from only property owners that the City has agreements with. Councilor Gibson questioned if agreements are reviewed and is the City's Assessor revisits those properties to see about any changes in their status with the City. Director Smith stated that pertaining to the agreements, it depends on how each of the agreements are written; he also stated that the City's Assessor would annually review the list of agreements and status of the properties that have an agreement with the City in regards to payments in lieu of taxes.

Councilor Gerding commented on the Use of Fund Balance, he questioned what the percentage of the fund balance should be to remain healthy in regards to the City's Budget. Director Smith confirmed between 5-17% and it currently is between 10-11%. Councilor Gerding also asked about the carryover balance of \$1,300,000 reported on the Use of Fund Balance line and questioned what went into the determination of that number. City Manager Belmore responded, stating that the amount is discussed between him and Director Smith of what they feel a good figure is to keep the fund status healthy. He added that City Council has in the past voted to increase that line-item. Councilor Gerding explained his reason for questions, and his hope to increase the use of fund balance by \$200,000 for a total of \$1,500,000.

Councilor Messier thanked the City for adjusting the assessed valuation this year. He asked where the money comes from that goes into the Fund Balance. City Manager Belmore stated that it could be unanticipated revenues or money that was turned back over to the City that wasn't used where appropriated, unless it is a Capital item which is carried over year to year. Councilor Messier is in favor of using some or more of that left over money to return it to the taxpayers.

Councilor Austin and Councilor Pepin both mentioned exercising caution with the Use of Fund Balance for reasons of unanticipated natural disasters or other emergency needs. Also, if deciding to use additional funds this fiscal year and those funds are not available in a future budget, it will need to be made up somewhere and could potentially increase tax rates.

Elected Leadership

Councilor Messier questioned, on page C-4 under Elected Leadership, what Association Dues have been used for in the past. Mayor Hilliard stated that the line item hasn't been used in the last decade. Councilor Vincent questioned if a line item is not used, it gets rolled into another line item within this section. Mayor Hilliard stated that some items such as the election and inauguration is not budget for and at the City Manager's discretion, he can move funds to accommodate the needs. City Manager Belmore agreed adding that he reviews this section of the budget with the Mayor for his input and approval.

City Management

There was discussion of Association Dues, what are the dues and are they contractual. City Manager Belmore listed a few Associations that he and his staff are members of. He added that pertaining to contracts, it depends on the Association whether they are contractual or not. The dues allow for networking with other Municipalities' staff, ongoing trainings, and conferences. Also, as a member of an Association, when a staff member attends a conference or webinar, the costs are less as opposed to not being a member. Councilor Vincent expressed frustration with what seems like an annual increase with Primex insurance.

Councilor Messier directed the Council to page C-11, line-item Internet /Web Site. He questioned the increase in costs. Director Smith explained that \$2,310 is what was actually spent and that the City uses a flat line rate of \$4,500.

Finance and Administration

Councilor Gerding directed the Council to page C-28, line item Assessing – Reval/Cycled Insp. and questioned if the City knows how much the expenses was 5 years ago. City Manager Belmore commented that the Finance Director can pull up years of history to gather estimates that assist with creating the budget. Director Smith confirmed that \$60,000 was budgeted for Assessing – Reval/Cycled Insp.

Councilor Gerding directed the Council to pages C-17, noting that these line-items are questions he has across the board, Electricity and Sewer and Waste Water. He noticed that electricity proposed budget costs are much higher, adding that he is aware of the increase costs nationally, but wonders if and when the solar panel project is complete when the City will start to see a decrease in their costs. Director Smith responded stating that he feels it is not something the City should consider in its budget for this fiscal year as it will not be completed and online in time. He stated that when it is complete, the City can expect a decrease to their expenses as the agreement states that the City gets 10% of the net metering credit that is received. Director Smith provided further explanation of the

contracted electricity that both the School and City are locked into for 12-24 month terms at a time which is similar to their natural gas contract as well.

Councilor Gerding asked if the City is essentially paying themselves with regards to the water and sewer expenses. City Manager Belmore explained that it was something that was corrected about 10 years ago, we are customers like everyone else and the City needs to pay into these Enterprise funds .

Development Services

Councilor Gerding directed the Council to page C-38, line-item Office Machine/Software. He questioned the increase in costs and requesting more details. Director Smith explained that they are launching a new software program called RecDesk which will allow the Recreation Division to process online registrations and many other things that they have done manually for years. The annual user fee is approximately \$4,800.

Councilor Vincent asked if the new Recreation software will reduce costs for registrations. Director Smith doesn't expect that it would reduce costs but that it would increase efficiency for the staff as well as accessibility and convenience for residents of applying and paying online. In-person applications will continue to be accepted.

Public Safety – Police Department

Councilor Pepin directed the Council to page C-44, line-item Association Dues, and questioned the \$2,000 increase. City Manager Belmore explained that previous Police Chiefs were not members of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) which Chief McLin attended this year and felt it was important and brought back a lot of great information. Chief McLin stated that the IACP and the FBI Leader program being valuable to him and his staff. He listed other associations that his staff are members of and have annual dues as well as training which they attend.

Councilor Pepin directed the Council to page C-44, line-item Physicals. He asked if the \$4,500 increase is from things that haven't been done in the past or what the reasoning is. Chief McLin stated that he learned of a wellness check-in program that is viewed as stress management assessment and provided an overview to the Council.

Councilor Vincent directed the Council to page C-44, line-item Clothing. He asked if some items are able to be reused when there is staff turnover. Chief McLin explained that the cost covers new uniforms and a set of Class A uniforms for formal events. He added that some items can be reused but not all and the cost of clothing and boots have increased as well.

Councilor Gibson commented that the City offers health insurance to all staff and wonders if the wellness check-in program mentioned is similar to anything offered within the City's insurance package. Chief McLin explained that there is something similar offered to a different degree under the Employment Assistance Program offered, however, the wellness program is specifically viewed as training and documented as so.

Councilor Gerding directed the Council to page C-56, line-item Contract Services and questioned the \$15,000 increase. Chief McLin stated that the current attorney has been with the City for about 18 years and operated under the same contract expense for a good portion of that time. The attorney has plans to retire at the end of June and therefore the City has been seeking a new addition and the cost falls in line with what they have been seeing.

Public Safety – Fire Department

Councilor Pepin thanked the City Manager for adding the Deputy Fire Chief position into the budget as it has been discussed for many years. He asked what the City can expect from the Deputy Fire Chief position as well as any benefits. Chief Kramlinger stated that he feels that the City of Somersworth has the best smallest Fire Department in the State explaining that it is largely due to the function of people, equipment and support but that it cannot sustain itself. The Department requires a staff level of input that requires a lot of time, he added that he is the only staff continuity that there is and he is working 50-60 hours a week.. The Deputy Chief position would take some of the load that the Chief is currently doing. Chief Kramlinger explained working with many City Departments and developers for fire safety inspections, training, day-to-day operations.

City Manager Belmore stated that when the Chief Kramlinger takes vacations or attends training, it allows for continuity when he is away and a level of comfort in command continuity. He added that it also allows for succession planning and future staff transitions.

Councilor Pepin directed Councilor to page C-59, line-item Telephones and questioned the increase and meaning of VOIP. Chief Kramlinger explained the VOIP is Voice Over IP which means that there is a connect through the internet and is much more reliable than old style phone system which also comes with a cost. City Manager Belmore noted that with the VOIP switch, page C-58 under Internet Services has decreased as a result.

Councilor Vincent stated that with the construction of a new Fire Station that is larger than the previous one, it must be difficult to estimate electricity. He directed the Council back to page C-58, line item, Telephones and asked if any of the amount could be absorbed as construction soft costs or if the amount reflects monthly usage. Chief Kramlinger explained that they covered some costs such as initial startup fees and setup but the budget is their best estimate of monthly costs.

Councilor Vincent asked for an explanation of the estimated electricity costs and wondered how they came up with that dollar amount. Chief Kramlinger explained that it was based on current electric bills while understanding that it may be more costly during the construction phase. He added that there is built-in smart lighting and auto lights that have sensors and will dim during certain hours of the day.

Councilor Gerding asked how the Department currently operates when the Chief Kramlinger is not available due to trainings or vacation. Chief Kramlinger commented that the station functions as normal except that the Lieutenant is responsible in his absence but that he does maintain a level of engagement while he is away by phone and email. He added that the operational issue is that the Lieutenant would be in charge of a fire scene. Chief Kramlinger shared that reports show that the vast majority of line-of-duty deaths of firefighters are due to lack of command engagement or improper command and he is therefore, uncomfortable going too far away. Chief Kramlinger continued with other important reasons a Deputy Fire Chief would be of value to the City and Fire Department.

Councilor Gerding stated that he is not, at this time, fully ready to support the addition of a Deputy Fire Chief position at this time. He commented that in his research of looking at similar size Cities and Towns, there were some that did not have a Deputy Chief and wondered if Chief Kramlinger was aware of any. Chief Kramlinger stated that they surveyed multiple Cities and Towns and are aware that many of similar size to the City of Somersworth do in fact of Deputy Chiefs.

Councilor Messier directed the Council to page C-63, line-item Other Petroleum & Chemicals. He questioned the firefighting foam and wondered if it still has PFOA and wonders if it is without PFOA now. Chief Kramlinger stated they no longer use foam with PFOA and rarely use form today. There was continued discussion regarding electric vehicle with the issue of standard foam not working to put out vehicle fires, as well as needing a significantly larger amount of water. Chief Kramlinger explained what the Department is doing including training and procedures in place.

Councilor Gerding questioned if the City budgeted for the contaminated soil that was discovered at the new Fire Station property. City Manager Belmore stated that he is unsure how to budget for it yet, he is awaiting more information and direction from the State. He is currently focused on the Fire Station property and will need to budget for site investigation that is being required by the State and then will move his focus to the pile of contaminated soil. The City has received a quote and anticipates to receive another on Monday in regards to the Fire Station site.

Public Works and Utilities

Councilor Gibson would like to see budgeted, a more robust sidewalk plowing budget. He stated receiving complaints from residents on the hill and wants to ensure that one or two of the downhill streets have plowed sidewalks.

Councilor Gerding directed the Council to page C-69, line-item Catch Basin Cleaning noting that the cost went up over \$8,000 from last year's budget. Public Works and Utilities Director Michael Bobinsky stated that the catch basin cleaning unit price has increased over the last couple of years. He added that the City has roughly 1,200 catch basin and they try to do 200 each year. City Manager Belmore added that it is also part of the MS4 requirements.

Councilor Vincent directed the Council to page C-69, line-item Paint for Roads and questioned the difference of roughly \$30,000 and thought that the painting of the roads was outside of the Public Works budget. Director Bobinsky stated that it is associated with the City-wide markings which they have contracted out for years.

Councilor Messier directed the Council to page C-74, line-item Traffic lights-Maint & Repairs and asked if that was for High Street or others. Director Bobinsky stated that the charges are associated with all utility's costs. Councilor Messier asked if the City was in line to upgrade High Street lighting, Director Bobinsky confirmed yes.

Councilor Messier directed the Council to page C- 79, line-item Field Maintenance and asked if this covers all of the fields throughout the City. Director Bobinsky stated that it does cover all City parks. There was discussion regarding additional repairs to the Millennium Park pavilion as well as the repairs to the dog park fence.

Councilor Austin directed the Council to page C-70, line-item Sidewalk Project and noted that he would like to see that line item increase in an order to meet the increase costs in bids received. Director

Bobinsky provided a briefing on plans and the cost of repairing sidewalks throughout the City. City Manager Belmore talked about the steps the Council has taken so far to increase the budget for sidewalk repairs.

Other Expenses

City Manager Belmore directed the Council to page C-90 regarding Superfund Landfill Monitoring expenses that are shared with GE, he stated that he will be asking that Council consider some increases. There is additional testing that is being required by the State and he will provide more definitive numbers on Monday. Additionally, within the Solid Waste Collections within page C-84, Manager Belmore will be looking for City consideration to add a line-item regarding Fire Department PFAS site investigation. .

Councilor Gibson directed the Council to page C-88, line-item Police Taser Lease and wondered why the City leases as opposed to purchasing outright. Director Smith explained that the cost to purchase is approximately \$125,000 and the lasers needs to be replaced every five years, therefore, it is cheaper to lease the equipment.

Other Expenses

Councilor Gerding directed the Council to page C-95, line-item DPW barricades and wondered what is used now. City Manager Belmore explained what is current used, known as wooden saw horses and during an event last year, the City borrowed barricades from Portsmouth and he feels that they are a safe and more effective barricade than what the City currently owns.

Councilor Messier directed the Council to page C-95, line-item Fire SCBA Replacement and wondered how many could be purchased at that price. Chief Kramlinger stated that the current cost is roughly \$12,500-\$13,000.

County and School

There was no discussion

Enterprise Funds

Councilor Gerding directed the Council to page C-99, he noticed that the cost of the bag prices reflect the previous costs. Director Smith commented that it is a typo, however, the formulas do reflect the increase amount voted on my Council. There was additional discussion on cost of bags and what the funds are applied to.

Cable/Community Outreach

There was no discussion.

School Budget

There was no discussion.

Mayor Hilliard asked if there were any questions regarding the budget as a whole or in general. There were no additional questions by the Council.

The meeting adjourned at 11:19 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen LaPanne, City Clerk