

Meeting of: COLUMBIA HEIGHTS CITY COUNCIL
Date of Meeting: September 4, 2018
Time of Meeting: 7:00 PM
Location of Meeting: Conference Room #1
Purpose of Meeting: Work Session

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL - The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM

Present: Mayor Schmitt, Councilmembers Murzyn Jr, Novitsky and Buesgens

Absent: Councilmember Williams

Also present: Walt Fehst; City Manager, Lenny Austin; Police Chief, Keith Windschitl; Recreation Director, Gary Gorman; Fire Chief, John Larkin; Assistant Fire Chief, Joe Kloiber; Finance Director, Kelli Bourgeois, Human Resources Director/Assistant City Manager and Katie Bruno; City Clerk.

Request to purchase speed enforcement equipment

Police Chief Lenny Austin explained that the department is requesting to purchase a speed trailer, a traffic data collector, and a message trailer. The cost for the message trailer would be shared with the Public Works Department. The Police Department's total expenditure for the requested equipment would be \$17,040. Austin reported DWI forfeiture funds would be used for the purchase. Councilmember Buesgens asked if permanent speed reporting signs were considered. Austin stated that they may be appropriate for high traffic areas, otherwise they are not easily transported.

City of Peace Neighborhood Center Facility Use Policy

Recreation Director Keith Windschitl reported that staff has concerns with the recently adopted Facility Use Policy for the Neighborhood Center. The Park and Recreation Commission is recommending the policy be amended to only rent out the facility to civic groups within Columbia Heights to be used for community events. This recommendation is based on several concerns.

- Parking limitations and congestion concerns especially given all of the children in the immediate area.
- To keep the building, technology, & furnishings protected from damage that could occur from renters.
- The computerized access card, dog key, and alarm system.
- The original intent of the building was not intended for commercial or private use.
- To minimize the weekly maintenance, cleaning, and trash collection at the facility.
- The facility does not have a building custodian. Users will be required to pick up after usage.

The commission also recommended increasing the fees to \$100 per hour, a 3-hour minimum, and a refundable \$250 damage deposit.

Both Chief Austin and Windschitl agreed that the traffic congestion in the street is problematic; both for access issues as well as pedestrian and child safety issues.

The council had a lengthy discussion about multiple concerns with renting the facility. It was decided to place on moratorium on new rentals until an updated policy is established (up to six months.)

Summary presentation on 2019 City Manager's Proposed Budget

Finance Director, Joe Kloiber reported that the City Manager's proposed budget for 2019 is 5.5% above the 2018 budget. Kloiber noted that the City has not been made aware of their fiscal disparities amount yet, and this could cause that number to decrease.

In 2018 the City and the EDA began transitioning the use of the Housing and Redevelopment (special district) property tax levy from funding operating expenses, to funding redevelopment project costs.

In 2018, \$114,000 of the special district levy was repurposed in this manner. The remaining \$133,000 of the \$247,000 special district levy would also be repurposed for redevelopment project costs under the proposed 2019 budget. In order to fund the operating expenses paid in prior years by the special district levy, an increase in the City gross tax levy of \$133,000 is included within the 5.5% tax increase mentioned above. If not for this change, the proposed increase in the City's 2019 gross tax levy would have otherwise been 4.3%.

Kloiber stated that In 2019, the City will receive \$1,663,000 in state aid to local government (LGA). Under the five year financial plan, only \$450,000 of this LGA is allocated for use within the 2019 operating budget. \$550,000 is allocated to the governmental buildings fund, and \$500,000 is allocated to debt service on government buildings. The remaining \$173,000 is allocated to various other capital purposes. If not for this LGA, these items would otherwise be paid for with property taxes. Kloiber indicated that the proposed increase to tax-supported operating expenses of the governmental funds for 2019 is 3.6% for both personnel and non-personnel combined. The largest element in this expense budget is a 3.5% cost-of-living allowance for unsettled labor agreements, including wages, as well as both voluntary and mandatory fringe benefits.

Kloiber indicated there is a place holder in the budget to build a new City Hall connected to Murzyn Hall. Mayor Schmitt asked why this is being discussed at this time. It was explained that this place holder does not authorize construction of a new city hall; any further action will require council approval. Councilmember Novitsky asked if there has been an estimate done to make repairs to the current building. Manager Fehst reported that there are numerous expenses with updating the current buildings, in addition to the square footage being more than needed. Mayor Schmitt suggested discussing this as part of a five year plan, rather than have the place holder in 2019. Councilmember Buesgens was not opposed to having a place holder.

Fire Staffing Discussion

City Manager Walt Fehst announced the Fire Chief has requested additional staff, currently there are six full-time staff, in addition to the Chief and Assistant Chief. The workload has increased over the years, with inspections and property maintenance. The department responds to numerous medical calls as well. Kloiber indicated the two additional staff would cause an increase of about 2% to the proposed budget.

Fire Chief Gary Gorman reported that call volume continues to increase, as well as inspections. Gorman reported that paid on call Firefighters are difficult to attract and retain. This has contributed to overtime costs.

The council discussed various ways to fund the staffing request, including moving money from other departments. Mayor Schmitt suggested using LGA funds. Kloiber indicated this would only solve the problem for one year, not long term.

Councilmember Buesgens stated she thinks it is appropriate for the fire department services to be paid through taxes, just as the Police Department services are. Councilmember Novitsky asked how much money is lost in current TIF districts. Director Kloiber will get a report from the City's consultant.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:23 PM

Respectively Submitted,



Katie Bruno, Council Secretary/City Clerk