

The Town of Warsaw Board of Commissioners held a budget workshop on Thursday, April 28, 2022 at 6:00pm at the Warsaw Town Hall.

Present:

Mayor A.J. Connors
Commissioner Scotty Smith
Commissioner Russell Eason
Commissioner Jack Hawes
Commissioner Ebony Wills-Wells

Also Present:

Town Manager, Scotty Summerlin
Town Clerk, Lea Turner
Police Chief, Patrick Giddeons
Police Captain, Jeremy Mozingo

Mayor Connors opened the meeting and turned it over to Manager Summerlin. Summerlin briefly reviewed the agenda for tonight's meeting.

Chief Giddeons advised he wanted to be clear on his previous comments at the budget meeting #2 and the activities of the police department. He stated they are a very busy department. They had 8,108 calls for service between July and April. Giddeons noted this averages to about 810 calls per officer. He noted the department was short staffed at this time. This puts 30 calls per officer per day. He said with this call volume requires the Chief, Captain and investigators put their work down to help answer calls. Chief Giddeons stated his guys are not overpaid and that they could leave today and go to eight (8) other close departments for more money. Commissioner Ebony Wills-Wells mentioned how the officers are doing more than just law enforcement and how they are now being asked to do mental health work as well. Commissioner Jack Hawes asked about the cost to hire new officers. Chief Giddeons advised that with background checks, evaluations, drug screens and uniforms there is a cost of approximately \$2,500 and that does not include the time in training which is another three (3) months.

Manager Summerlin reviewed the draft budget message. He stated that the cost of doing business is going up, but it is his desire to continue to take care of the employees, the most valued asset. He stated his proposal for a 4% cost of living adjustment (COLA). He mentioned that the consumer price index had gone up 7.9% and according to census numbers our population had dropped 11.6%. The Census results are under dispute by Duplin County and the town manager. He also mentioned a request for a two (2) cent tax increase. The tax rate for the town has not changed in 13 years. Commissioner Wills-Wells stated that she is not all for a tax increase, but with it only being a minimal amount and since it has not been done for so long, she agrees that it should be done as a last resort. Commissioner Hawes asked if the tax increase was just to cover the COLA. Manager Summerlin advised that the tax increase would cover other items as well.

Manager Summerlin mentioned that we are still waiting for workers' compensation and property and liability insurance rates. It is estimated at a 10% increase, but it could be much more. Manager Summerlin mentioned that claims this year have been above average. Commissioner Russell Eason asked about safety classes for employees. Manager

Summerlin advised that Public Works Director, Craig Armstrong, does routinely hold safety meetings, but he was not sure of the frequency. Captain Mazingo stated that due to the number of accidents this year, they were implementing a driver training program that even he and he chief would attend.

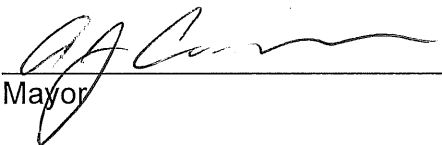
Commissioner Wills-Wells added that she had been thinking of other festivals and events to help bring additional revenue to the Town. Commissioner Hawes added that we need to be looking to recruit bigger businesses to add to the Warsaw tax base. Citizen Wesley Boykin was recognized to speak. Mr. Boykin added that a committee to oversee special events would be helpful for the town as there are many multicultural events that the town could benefit from. He also mentioned different fees the town could consider, such as a security system fee, which he pays at another home location in another state.

Manager Summerlin brought up the American Rescue Plan Act monies. He reviewed a special grant project ordinance that needed updating to include the full amount of the grant as well as how the fund would be spent. The ordinance lays out that there will be a grant amount of \$984,456.40 which will be spent through revenue replacement. With the revenue replacement option, it is recommended to spend the funds on paving, stormwater projects, and recreation repairs and expansion. Commissioner Scotty Smith made a motion to approve the resolution. Commissioner Russell Eason seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to approve the amended grant ordinance.

Manager Summerlin revisited the subject of retiree benefits. He stated that it was his recommendation to do a set dollar amount so that the Board would know how much would need to be budgeted from year to year. A suggestion of \$500 per month was put forth. With the concept of paying the insurance premiums for a set period, there was no way to know how much would be spent as insurance premiums are always changing. There was discussion on this matter, but a final recommendation was not reached.

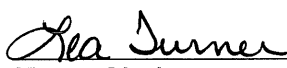
The last items discussed was the need for a budget public hearing as well as another budget work session. Commissioner Jack Hawes made a motion to hold the public hearing on May 23rd. Commissioner Russell Eason seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to hold the budget public hearing on May 23, 2022 @ 6pm. The public hearing will take place at the Warsaw Town Hall. Notice will be published in the Duplin Times and on the town website. The next budget work session will be held June 7, 2022 at 6pm.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.



Mayor

Attest:



Town Clerk