

MINUTES OF THE
SPECIAL MEETING – CITY COUNCIL
MAY 30, 2007

The special meeting of the City Council of the City of Benicia was called to order by Mayor Steve Messina at 6:02 p.m. on Wednesday, May 30, 2007, in the Dona Benicia Room, Benicia Public Library, 150 East L Street, complete proceedings of which are recorded on tape.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Council Members Hughes, Patterson, Schwartzman, Whitney, and Mayor Messina

Absent: None

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Messina led the pledge to the flag.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS:

A plaque stating the Fundamental Rights of each member of the public is posted at the entrance to the room per Section 4.04.030 of City of Benicia Ordinance No. 05-6 (Open Government Ordinance).

INFORMATIONAL ITEM:

Council Member Whitney discussed the importance of having a balanced budget. He would like the reserve broken down into allocated and unallocated accounts (unallocated \$1.5 million). He proposed returning to a one-year budget cycle as opposed to a 2-year budget cycle. He was concerned about the Marina Enterprise Fund. He would like to look at the footprint of the Marina and putting property taxes into the Marina Enterprise Fund. Those monies would be able to address the issue of a Marina park, as well as other important things. He would like the Code Enforcement position to be a full-time position. He would like to create a permanent line item for the City Cemetery.

2007-09 Budget Workshop #1:

Jim Erickson, City Manager, reviewed the staff report. Mr. Erickson and Mr. Sousa reviewed a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed 07-08 and 08-09 budgets (hard copy on file).

Mr. Sousa indicated that Staff was working on putting the complete PowerPoint presentation on the City's website in pdf format. Council Member Patterson requested the presentation be sent to all Council Members via email.

Mr. Erickson then reviewed a PowerPoint presentation on the departmental budgets (hard copy on file).

City Clerk:

Minutes - Council Member Patterson indicated that until video streaming was available, she would prefer the minutes remained in detailed format.

Council Members Hughes, Schwartzman, Whitney, and Mayor Messina indicated they were comfortable with streamlining the process and moving towards action minutes.

Community Service Grants:

Mayor Messina stated that it needed to come to a consensus on the size of the pots for the Human Services and Arts Fund.

Council Member Patterson stated that the fund balance had declined over the past few years. One of the policy issues Council needed to wrestle with was how to get it back to where it was a few years ago.

Public Comment:

1. Spence Rundberg – Mr. Rundberg stated that this was Council’s opportunity to keep Benicia unique in what it offers. This is not an area where he would like to see cutbacks.
2. Citizen – The citizen stated that regarding Arts Benicia, it is an intangible thing to quantify. He supports continued funding and possible increase in funding.
3. Citizen – The citizen stated that Arts Benicia was a special aspect of this community. It is a rare and fragile. Considering all programs offered by arts groups, and the operating costs, the current budget is just a part of what is spent on the arts in Benicia.
4. Cecile Kazemi – Ms. Kazemi stated that this was a new task for the Human Services and Arts Fund Board. The process was long and arduous. The recommendations the Board made to Council are valid. She encouraged Council to consider the recommended \$20,000.
5. Citizen – The citizen stated that she would like Council to support the Community Action Council.
6. Citizen – The citizen discussed the issue of funding.
7. Citizen – The citizen discussed the budget process. Council simply asked what the different groups needed. If it had been asked more clearly, ‘what they wanted’ would have been easier to identify.
8. Mike Ioakimedes – Mr. Iokimedes discussed how important it was for the City to look at the economic impact of the artists in the community and the impact on tourism.
9. Marilyn Bardet – Ms. Bardet stated that the Benicia Community Gardens submitted the lowest request for funding. They are trying to be a model for what else could happen in the community. They are education oriented. The City is getting a lot of benefit from the time and energy the local groups are spending.
10. Lee Wilder-Snyder – Ms. Wilder-Snyder thanked the Human Services and Arts Fund Board for its efforts.

11. Maria Theresa Matthews – Ms. Matthews discussed Families in Transition. She would like to see the Human Services Fund increased to what was originally requested.

Mr. Sousa stated that during deliberations, Families in Transition was asked to clarify their grant amount. They were requesting \$20,000. Staff would like to go back and rework this to take that amount into consideration.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that he was comfortable with the additional \$20,000. He could see boosting Human Services up to \$150,000.

Council Member Hughes stated that he was open to the recommendations, but wanted to continue with the budget process to see where the money would come from.

Council Member Whitney stated that he was okay with exploring the increases, but also being mindful that it is the citizen's money. He inquired about the issue of tracking the money the board spends. Staff confirmed that Council receives an annual report detailing expenditures. Staff confirmed they were satisfied with the accountability issue.

Mayor Messina asked Ms. Kazemi what the totals would be if Council went with the HSFB preferred level. It would be roughly \$150,000 per year (\$295,000 for a two year period). Mayor Messina suggested Mr. Sousa come back with the current options, plus the two increased dollar options, as well as where the money would come from.

Finance Department:

Council Member Whitney discussed the park on First Street. He feels obligated to make sure the Enterprise Fund is whole and accounted for. Putting the funds into the Enterprise Fund ensures proper accounting and that the money is accounted for. The docks at the Marina are coming to the end of their lifespan. If the City wants to get the park funded at the foot of First Street – this would be a way to do it.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman discussed leaving the funds the way they are. There might be other mechanisms to fill the gap. It is the Marina's responsibility to take care of the docks under the current agreement. It should be left the way it is.

Council Member Hughes stated he was on the same page as Vice Mayor Schwartzman. However, he likes the idea of earmarking the money for the Marina.

Council Member Patterson stated that she too agreed with Vice Mayor Schwartzman. The City has funds in the Enterprise Fund that are used for replacement of the sheet-piling wall.

Mayor Messina stated that the City was responsible for replacing the floats, sheet piling, etc. on the docks. Some money should be set aside to cover those costs. Mr. Sousa stated that the Marina is currently upgrading the floats and extending the length of the docks. Mayor Messina would like clarification on who is responsible for what at the Marina.

Council Member Whitney discussed the issue of an assessment district at the Marina. Council should give this some serious consideration. Council previously agreed not to take money out of the General Fund, but it is doing just that.

Mayor Messina stated that he wanted clarification on how the City would deal with major equipment replacement/dock replacement in the future.

Council Member Whitney discussed the issue of taking property tax dollars and putting the money into the Enterprise Fund to pay for the docks.

Mr. Erickson stated that various city managers would be getting together to discuss the issues the cities face with marinas. He would report back to Council on any pertinent information.

Library:

No questions or comments.

Community Development:

Mayor Messina discussed the issue of whether or not a full-time code enforcement officer could be justified.

Council Member Patterson suggested the City designate the position as full-time temporary for two years. If justified, it could be made full-time after that period.

Mayor Messina stated that the responsibility of weed abatement and code enforcement should be separated. Weed abatement should be the responsibility of the Fire Department, and code enforcement should be under Community Development. He would like staff to come back with a strategy to deal with this. Mr. Knox stated that they had some dollars in the storm water funds that could be used to deal with code enforcement.

Council Members Hughes, Patterson, Schwartzman, and Whitney each indicated they would support a full-time code enforcement officer. The position could be ratcheted back if it was found to be unjustified.

Council Member Patterson asked about pg. 52 – number of permits – remodeling and additions to existing dwellings have increased – how does the City deal with that? Mr. Knox stated that it gets at the Planning Commission's recommendation to notify neighbors when dwellings would be increased in size, such as the story poles.

Parks and Community Services:

Council Member Hughes stated that he was concerned about the Mills site – mold, termites, etc. Staff will come back to Council with more information as it becomes available. They are just now identifying the issues. Staff will most likely report back in two or three weeks. There is more damage than was reported by the District.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman asked if Staff knew the minimum cost at this point. Mr. Alvarez stated that Staff has done some things to save some money – staff is managing the project in-house. Staff does not have a cost estimate at this point. Vice Mayor Schwartzman asked about the Landscaping and Lighting District. Mr. Sousa indicated that the Fleetside District could make it through this cycle. The others are a few years away. They have been able to carry over funding from previous years.

Council Member Whitney asked about Mills. On the HVAC, could it be used in another facility such as the Historical Museum? Mr. Alvarez indicated that he would look into that. Council Member Whitney asked about the recreation cost recovery. Has staff done estimates on what additional revenues could come out of the Mills site? Mr. Alvarez stated that it would generate additional revenues. Programs could be expanded which would increase revenue.

Council Member Patterson asked if it would be possible to install windows that opened at the Clocktower. Mr. Alvarez stated that he would look into that and report back to Council. Council Member Patterson asked how Staff was integrating the master planning of the community center and the architecture. Mr. Alvarez indicated that would be started in July or August. Staff wants to have some community meetings with the architect present. Regarding the cap on the playground and the hazardous materials? Mr. Alvarez did not have information on that. The material that created the Marina basin was landlocked. The material was moved into the mills playground area and capped off. He was not sure about specific details. He could research it if she wanted. Council Member Patterson inquired about the noise issue. Mr. Alvarez indicated that the majority of the programs that generate noise would be moved to the Mills site.

Council Member Whitney asked about the line item for maintenance of cemeteries – was that a line item? Mr. Alvarez indicated it would be a two-year budget item.

Fire Department:

Council Member Hughes asked about the response times for fire rescue boat. For outside agencies to respond it would take 20-30 minute response time. If Staff responded, the boat could be operational in 8-10 minutes.

Chief Hanley confirmed that the Coast Guard and the City of Vallejo had offered to train the City's firefighters at no charge. All fire personnel would receive training. The majority of calls would be for water rescue.

Council Member Patterson discussed the high-speed rescue boats the Suisun Maritime Administration had. She indicated that they were open to discussing mutual aid. Chief Hanley clarified that the Maritime Reserve Fleet had a tugboat with firefighting capability, but the crew had limited fire training. Council Member Patterson indicated she would like more answers on that issue. She inquired about the issue of Valero receiving grant money for Homeland Security and asked if they be willing to put money towards a boat. Chief Hanley stated that the grant Valero received was for security purposes. Valero has not yet responded as to how much it would donate towards a boat.

Mayor Messina asked about the Benicia Business Park. How long would it take to provide staff for that fire station? Chief Hanley stated that they needed one-year notice to be up and running. The fire station would need to be at the front end of the project.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:
WRITTEN:

PUBLIC COMMENT:

1. Maria Theresa Matthews – Ms. Matthews indicated that she would like to see a full-time code enforcement officer.
2. Ann Hansen – Ms. Hansen stated that she was concerned that everyone needed to realize the work that the Benicia Historical Museum had to do. They just broke ground on their garden. They are pretty sure there are plumbing problems with the bathrooms. She does not want the museum to get short sided. That needs to be looked at. They might also need to deal with kitchen issues. They have to keep moving forward. They want to be a part of the tourism that is being talked about. The money they are asking for is desperately needed. They can't hire an executive director with the money they can afford to pay.
3. Citizen – The Citizen discussed Arts Benicia. She reinforced the fact that the Arts Community is very important to the economic development and branding of Benicia. Arts Benicia is a vital force in the community.
4. Spence Rundberg – Mr. Rundberg thanked Council for considering the Special Friends Program. It has been in existence in Benicia for over 20 years. Last year, they served 155 kids. This year, they served over 166 kids.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Messina adjourned the meeting at 8:58 p.m.

Lisa Wolfe, City Clerk