

June 10, 2005

The Benicia City Council meets the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers. Copies of Council Agendas are available in the City Clerk's office on the Friday afternoon before the Council meeting.

**MINUTES OF THE  
SPECIAL MEETING - CITY COUNCIL  
JUNE 10, 2005**

The budget workshop was called to order by Mayor Steve Messina at 5:35 p.m. on Friday, June 10, 2005 in the City Council Chambers at City Hall, 250 East L Street, complete proceedings of which are recorded on audiotape.

**ROLL CALL:**

**Present:** Council Member Whitney and Mayor Messina

**Absent:** Council Members Patterson, Campbell, and Smith

(Each of the absent council members did arrive subsequent to the roll call - all were present by 5:50 p.m.)

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:**

Mayor Messina led the pledge to the flag.

**BUDGET 2005-07 - WORKSHOP #2**

**Welcome:**

Mayor Messina welcomed Staff and the citizens in attendance. He explained how public comment would be handled and then handed the proceedings over to Jim Erickson, City Manager.

Mr. Erickson presented several slides (hard copy on file with agenda packet) regarding budget guidelines and current challenges.

Council Member Whitney inquired about the Seeno, or Discovery Builders, project and why it is not in any way represented in the budget. Mr. Erickson responded that he hopes that the project will involve a fiscal impact analysis. He noted that since currently the project is not approved, that staff is taking a conservative approach in terms of planning. Council Member Whitney responded that some projected numbers would be helpful in terms of weighing some of the budget-related decisions. Mr. Erickson noted that staff would see what, if anything, could be provided at this point.

Council Members Smith and Campbell both had questions regarding projected revenues and legal costs related to Valero. Finance Director, Rob Sousa, responded to their questions, noting that projected costs for legal fees appear to be adequate at this point. The City agreed to split the costs of the consultants equally with the County, up to a limit of \$200,000. The City has spent approximately \$151,000 to date.

Mr. Erickson completed his introductory presentation and noted that department presentations would follow. He suggested that each department attempt to cover their respective slides in 5-10 minutes, followed by approximately 15 minutes for questions.

**1. Parks & Community Services:**

Mike Alvarez, Parks & Community Services Director, reviewed a PowerPoint Presentation on the budget for the Parks & Community Services Department (hard copy on file in agenda packet).

Council Member Whitney inquired as to whether revenue would increase if there were more facilities available for programs. Mr. Alvarez responded that, yes, and commented that with limited facilities, the department had performed pretty well in terms of revenues.

Council Member Smith asked about the lighting for the tennis courts and timing. Mr. Alvarez responded that construction should start in August, and then it will take approximately 60-90 days to complete.

Council Member Campbell asked about the costs related to field maintenance for the schools. If the City does not start the work in July, what is the savings, i.e., what is the monthly amount the City is saving currently by not beginning work on the fields? Mr. Alvarez and Mr. Sousa agreed that the monthly amount is \$46,000 and that there are no plans for any potential savings as of yet.

Council Member Whitney asked about the Camel Barn roof and if the work required included installation, as well as whether historical aspects are being considered? Mr. Alvarez responded yes to both questions.

Council Member Campbell asked about the \$50,000 per year referenced in the budget narrative for cemetery maintenance. Mr. Alvarez noted that is proposed ongoing funding for cemetery, but unfortunately, it is not currently recommended by the City Manager to be funded. Council Member Campbell commented that the budget indicates it is funded. Mr. Erickson commented that a correction is required; that the cemetery maintenance is not funded.

Council Member Campbell also asked some questions regarding additional staffing and the upcoming work on the school fields. Mr. Alvarez indicated that projected staff for the school field maintenance would be dedicated to the work at the schools.

Vice Mayor Patterson asked about replacement of playground equipment and meeting existing state standards. What is the timing and cost of completing this work? Mr. Alvarez noted that additional incoming funds for the playground would allow the department to receive some new equipment very soon. Vice Mayor Patterson asked that, with summer arriving, would it be possible to speed up that process. Mr. Alvarez responded that the department could likely move pretty quickly on the Bridgeview and Southampton parks. Vice Mayor Patterson suggested that Mr. Alvarez notify the local paper as to which parks have new equipment, so the parents can take their children to the safer parks.

Council Member Campbell mentioned the costs of performing the school field work and asked about using contract work. Mr. Alvarez noted that he has some concerns regarding using contractors for that, but that it can be looked into.

Mayor Messina raised the issue of staff salaries across departments, noting that average cost per employee seems to be rising dramatically and is the City working toward what we want. He indicated that perhaps a smarter way to go is to consider using contractors more. Mr. Erickson noted that this would be a good topic to address at the wrap-up meeting, and perhaps consider making a policy decision. Vice Mayor Patterson commented that research has been done in this area, and that such information might be useful to review. She noted that Benicia is very unique and that the City needs to weigh the advantages of the skills and talents of employed staff vs. contracted staff. Mr. Alvarez added that currently the department's staff is very qualified, including three certified arborists, and that the level of training found in his department is not common across Parks Departments. He noted that for such levels of expertise, the City would likely pay more with contractors. He also referenced a previous study done in the 1990's showing that there was a savings with using full-time employees.

Council Member Campbell asked a question about benefits costs, as a percent of wages and salaries, why is the percent higher for the projected fields and maintenance staff. Mr. Erickson explained that the assumptions for the new employees assumed the higher benefits costs (i.e., family rate over single rate), while for existing employees, there are some employees with the single rate, thus lowering the percentage. This was followed by additional discussion of staffing costs and the need to better understand trends of cost per employee across departments.

Council Member Whitney asked about a capital cost noted for the pool. Mr. Alvarez indicated that they are putting in a new bathhouse at the pool.

Council Member Smith reminded his colleagues to reference which document they are referring to when asking questions.

Council Member Campbell asked Mr. Sousa about the facility maintenance fund and whether funds are set aside. Mr. Sousa indicated that yes, for some projects, such as the Camel Barn roof.

**Public Comment:**

1. Leann Taagepera - Ms. Taagepera spoke regarding the parks and playgrounds. She indicated her concerns regarding some of the deterioration of several of the local parks. She cited park equipment being removed, but not replaced yet, at Bridgeview and Southampton. She listed other concerns about broken equipment at the 9th Street Park, Community Park, Solano Park, as well as several others. She also noted that many parks do not have working drinking fountains, such as Channing Circle Park. She wondered if the proposed \$20,000 is enough and whether ?compliance? is really good enough.
2. Ann Hansen - Ms. Hansen is a member of the Benicia Historical Museum Board. She commented on the ongoing fundraising for the floor and the roof. She noted that the City will be very proud of the museum.

Council Member Whitney asked Mr. Alvarez about drinking fountains at the parks, are they checked regularly. Mr. Alvarez noted that all drinking fountains at all the parks would be operational within a couple of months.

Council Member Smith commented that, indeed, the plans for the Camel Barn are breathtaking, and encouraged his colleagues to see the plans if they have not already. He also noted his appreciation for the commentary on the parks. He went on to say that he does not agree with the comment that the parks are shabby; overall, the parks are not bad.

Vice Mayor Patterson suggested that Ms. Taagepera speak with Mr. Alvarez regarding the schedule of repairs and current standards; she expressed her appreciation of Ms. Taagepera's concerns.

Mayor Messina suggested a four-minute break at 7:01. At 7:05, the meeting reconvened.

## 2. Library

Diane Smikahl, Library Director reviewed a PowerPoint Presentation on the budget for the Library (hard copy on file in agenda packet).

Mayor Messina asked about the variability under Services and Supplies. Daveta Cooper, Interim Library Director, noted that there was a decrease in the cost of the security system and increase in costs for other services. Council Member Campbell noted expenditures under Services and Supplies are down 42%. Ms. Cooper noted that some costs for programs are allocated to the specific programs, instead of hitting Services and Supplies. She went on to explain some of the Library's special revenue funds further.

Mayor Messina asked about expanded hours at the Library. He wondered if there is any way to measure the benefit; to gain validation that expanding the hours was a good thing. Ms. Smikahl noted, that as an outsider recently coming in, the Library's hours seemed very good. She talked about some of the benefits of increased utilization and the importance of Sunday hours.

Council Member Campbell inquired about capital outlay costs; Ms. Cooper noted those would include costs such as carpeting, drapery, furniture, etc.

Council Member Smith noted he is looking forward to working with the new Library Director on the poet laureate program.

## 3. Fire Department

Ken Hanley, Fire Chief reviewed a PowerPoint Presentation on the budget for the Fire Department (hard copy on file in agenda packet).

Mayor Messina asked about the timing of the expansion of Station 12, and how that will occur in terms of additional equipment and staff. Chief Hanley replied that the expansion would not require new personnel or equipment. They went on to briefly address the Discovery Builders project in light of the expansion. Council Member Campbell referred to the budget narrative for the Fire Department,

and asked Rob about the funding of the expansion. Ms. Sousa noted that \$130,000 would be from Facility and Maintenance, while \$70,000 is to come from the General Fund. This was followed by a brief discussion on the various funds.

Council Member Whitney asked about the Department's ability to perform a water rescue. He noted that his understanding is that currently it would take at least 20 minutes to get help from Vallejo and/or the Coast Guard. Chief Hanley agreed, and noted that a fire rescue boat will cost around \$200,000-\$250,000. The department applied for Homeland Security funding for such a purchase, but did not get it, thus this is still an unfunded need. He indicated this is still a long-term goal for the department.

Council Member Whitney asked Mr. Sousa if this could be eventually funded by the Equipment Replacement Funds. Mr. Sousa noted that it could begin to be funded over a specified period.

Council Member Whitney also asked about any additional training occurring in response to potential terrorist activity, for example at Valero. Chief Hanley noted an upcoming training at Travis and local EOC exercises.

Council Member Whitney inquired about vehicles, whether the department sells them and when they are replaced. He also wondered whether it would be possible to re-use vehicles at a new station. Chief Hanley indicated that many old trucks are donated. For a new station, he would likely transfer a truck from the downtown station and then get a new one.

Council Member Whitney also referenced the recent letter from the Grand Jury regarding the County's emergency services, as well as local Benicia Emergency Response Team (BERT) classes. Chief Hanley briefly described the program and encouraged members of the public to participate in the program, available through the Fire Department.

Vice Mayor Patterson commented that perhaps it would be to Valero's advantage to partner with the City in pursuing a water rescue boat. She expressed concern regarding the current estimated response time for a water rescue. This was followed by further discussion of the recent Grand Jury report, and Vice Mayor Patterson requested a status report on a future council agenda regarding the response to the Grand Jury.

Council Member Campbell asked about estimated overtime expenditures if there was no additional firefighter. Chief Hanley estimated \$70,000-\$75,000 in overtime costs.

Mayor Messina asked how many personnel would be needed for a third station. Chief Hanley replied 6-12 probably, although it is a little early to say. Mayor Messina asked about equipment. Chief Hanley noted that the Department is close to having enough equipment; staff will be the challenge. Mayor Messina asked about potential cost and Chief Hanley estimated \$1.2 million, noting that is on the high side. Mayor Messina asked if there would be any new revenue streams. Mr. Erickson noted that, yes, likely one way or another, but there may not be enough to cover the entire cost. He again referenced the need for a fiscal impact study regarding the Discovery Builders project.

Mayor Messina asked if it would be necessary to hire in order to staff a fire rescue boat. Chief Hanley indicated that no, it would just be the cost of the boat. Mayor Messina asked Chief Hanley about discussing with Valero. Chief Hanley indicated he would.

Council Member Smith asked additional questions about potential staffing numbers for a new station. Chief Hanley indicated it would depend on the size of the new station.

Vice Mayor Patterson mentioned a forum by the Urban Land institute in Berkeley she had attended earlier in the day, noting that there was discussion of creative financing through impact fees. She suggested inviting an individual who spoke at the forum to speak to the Revenue Options Committee. She expressed the concern that the City needs to get educated on the latest impact fees for facilities as well as maintenance quickly in order to support a new station and its maintenance.

Council Member Campbell asked about differing PERS rates for staff and Mr. Sousa explained that such costs are being represented differently going forward.

### **3. Fire Department**

Dan Schiada, Public Works Director reviewed a PowerPoint Presentation on the budget for the Public Works Department (hard copy on file in agenda packet).

Council Member Whitney asked about the status of the West 7th Street sidewalk. Mr. Schiada responded that he is working with the City Attorney's Office to work as quickly as possible with the owner. Ms. McLaughlin, City Attorney, estimated that there should be a plan for how to move forward in approximately two weeks.

Council member Smith noted that the budgeted amount for the Routes to Schools seems low and that wondered if the amount for Investment in Downtown and alleys is sufficient to improve current conditions. Mr. Schiada noted that there are grant funds in addition to the budgeted funds of \$7,500 for the Routes to Schools; the budgeted amount is more so for the maps on the website, etc. Regarding the alleys, he noted that there is an increase in funding to \$20,000 the first year and then down to \$15,000 after that. He noted this basically doubles what the City has been allocating.

#### **ADJOURNMENT:**

Mayor Messina adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m. and noted that further questions regarding Public Works will be continued to the next workshop.

Lisa Wolfe, City Clerk