

Meeting Minutes for Board of Estimates 9/7/21 1:00 PM

-Mayor Reynolds calls meeting to Order

-CM Happel motions to appoint Mayor the chair of the Board of Estimates, motion carries unanimously

-CM Happel motions to appoint CP Janssen as the Vice Chair of the Board of Estimates, motion carries unanimously

-CM Happel motions that any direction by the Board of Estimates be a draft direction until final approval made by Board of Estimates, motion carries unanimously

-Finance Director Valerie Fenske presents material on the department requested 2022 Operating Budget; explanation of variance analysis from 2021 vs 2022 for revenues and expenditures, new position requests, and mill rate and Expenditure Restraint Program calculations

-CM Happel asked what the additional \$50,000 in funding for Forest Hills would be used for. Parks Director Jay Odegaard explained this would be to used to help address financial concerns with operations of the course and also assist with course repairs and maintenance

-CM Richmond asked about moving the Senior Center to Myrick Park Center instead of leasing in the Rubber Mills building. Parks Director Jay Odegaard, explained that they are working on a lease with WisCorps for the Myrick Park Center and are happy with that direction. The revenue received from the WisCorps lease offsets the lease expense paid for the Senior Center. The lease revenue is currently being placed into the Myrick Park Improvement Fund and if the Council desires could be pulled into the General Fund to truly offset the cost of the Senior Center lease.

-CP Janssen asked what is the timeline for completion of the Myrick Park Center lease with WisCorps. Parks Director Jay Odegaard explained that the agreement should go before the Parks Board within a week or two and subsequently to the Council.

-CM Kahlow asked whether the City would be using ARPA funds to fill budget deficit with one-time revenues. Mayor Reynolds explained that if ARPA funds were used this would be another one-time revenue to plug the gap. There are many avenues being explored to balance the budget, freeze on new positions, cuts to department requested budgets, one-time revenue funds, and other options.

-CM Slezniow – Council should be judicious in their use of ARPA funds when necessary but not rely on them to try and balance the upcoming operating budget. Request to departments to review their submitted budgets and tighten their budgets.

-Mayor Reynolds asks the board what is an acceptable increase to the levy from 2021 as a target to work towards.

-CM Happel suggests that the City target the increase from 2020 to 2021 on a median household (\$36). CM Happel argues that the Federal and state funds should be leveraged to their greatest extent possible to offset the pandemic effects and protect the taxpayers of La Crosse.

-CP Janssen need to sharpen the pencils and get the budget below the ERP limit, can tolerate a small increase to the tax levy. Not in favor of using ARPA funds unless absolutely necessary, Council planning session should be held before any determination of ARPA funds use.

-Finance Director Fenske explains that ARPA funds eligible uses; bring back laid off positions, revenue replacement, etc. ARPA funds have many restrictions and cannot be used to balance a budget.

-CM Kahlow states that the City should be working towards a maximum of 25% of the proposed increase on a median household (\$211).

-CM Happel asks about other possible one-time revenues that could be utilized. Finance Director Valerie Fenske explains that one-time revenues are still being explored.

-City Clerk Nikki Elsen reminds the board that they are supposed to review the increase alcohol fees be reinstated back to their full amount

-CM Richmond motions to direct the staff to get the tax levy amount and mill rate as close to a result of \$36 increase on a \$150,000 home from 2021 to 2022, motion carries unanimously

-CM Schwarz requests that staff document and illustrate what the reduction from a \$211 to \$36 on a 150,000 home will do to city services and functionality

-CM Happel requests the Board of Estimates meeting tomorrow 9/8 be cancelled.

-CP Janssen motions to restore the alcohol license fees back to normal levels and direct staff to bring the resolution forward to the Council. Discussion- CM Kahlow City's alcohol fees are highest in the state and she does not support the immediate reinstatement of fees. CP Janssen supports reinstatement, the City has not reduced license fees for many other business types. **Motion carries 4-3**

-Motion to adjourn, motion carries unanimously