April 5, 2022

Administration

The President of the Council opened the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

Mayor Willey gave opening remarks regarding the budget process.

Mayor Willey stated that the increase for the group health insurance is 17% to 34%. He stated that if the council adds anything back into the budget or changes the allocations, it will require a funding source. Mayor Willey stated that the Capital budget took a hard hit, especially projects in the Capital and Engineering Budget. He stated there are some carry forwards but Public Works projects cannot be eliminated.

Mayor Willey stated that 11 positions were asked for; 2 are in the budget.

Benefits are 60% of the budget and are not sustainable.

Town Manager, Mr. Richardson discussed salaries. He stated salaries are proposed to be increased 4.2%; with 75 additional staff positions increased by $5,000 to meet market demands. Benefits when compared to salaries are at 58% in the proposed 2023 Budget. Discussion occurred regarding exempt employees.

Town Manager Don Richardson discussed the revenue side. He stated the Town will see a decrease in taxes for households over 65.

Mr. Richardson stated that the schedule of fees has increased the MSW charge which will result in $372,000 additional dollars.

Easton Utilities PILOT was discussed. Mr. Richardson stated it may be adjusted.

Mr. Richardson discussed the transfers in. He stated that 2.7 million dollars will be transferred in from the Land Enterprise and the Airport fund. He stated that $285,000 impact fees were transferred into the General Fund.

Mr. Richardson stated that there will be discussion of an updated Impact Fee Study in the next few meetings with a representative from TischlerBise, Inc.

Mr. Richardson stated that the council has a balanced budget which is $36,434,294; the requests were $40,191,309 which caused an 8 million cut.

Mr. Richardson stated that there is an IT Network specialist which was cut but asked for due to Mr. Messick's pending retirement.

Mr. Silverstein asked for council room digital screens.

Rev. Davis asked that the side door be looked at for a more secure entry.

HR Department

Rick Farr, HR Generalist and Marketing Coordinator, asked for an employee for the HR Department which would work on making a robust website. He stated this person would go to recruiting events, help design recruiting materials and update information. He discussed payroll conversion software and career fairs. He discussed training and developing staff.

Mr. Farr stated that the Finance Department is looking at new software.

Mr. Farr discussed ADP software for the payroll and stated that the Edmunds software the Finance Department is looking at will marry well with ADP.

Planning and Zoning

Katie Reedy was present to discuss the budget. She discussed the position for an Administrative person and the request for an Environmental Planner.

Municipal Buildings

Trevor Newcomb stated his Operating Budget increased 2.8%. He stated that the most costly upkeep is for the HVAC repairs and maintenance in the town buildings. He stated that they are aging. Mr. Newcomb discussed the cut in the budget for a dump trailer and his justification for a trailer and a vehicle.

Police

Chief Lowery and Capt. Wright were present. Chief Lowery stated there are no issues with the Operating Budget. He discussed the Capital Outlay Budget. He stated all seven vehicles and enclosed trailer were omitted. Mr. Silverstein asked about leasing and questioned whether Tahoes cost are comparable and leasing versus buying new Explorers.

Chief Lowery stated there are three things officers are asking about; pay, take home vehicles, and retirement.. Chief Lowery stated he would like Easton to be considered an employee of choice, the first shot of the best people. He stated Kent and Queen Anne have the upper hand on Easton. Benefit packages were discussed. Chief Lowery stated he would like to step into a take home vehicle program with a phase program in three to four years. He stated that the additional overtime has been cut to $177,000. He asked that training not be considered when cutting the requests as hiring and training is where most departments are sued.

Fire Department

Mike Brophy, Vice President and Chris Hash, Treasurer were present.

The budget as presented is $30,000 less than what was requested and that was in the HVAC. Questions about the kitchen renovation and carry forward were addressed. Workmen's Compensation for the volunteers were discussed. If the numbers come in with an increase in May, the budget could be adjusted. The hose allotment was requested at $7,500 and was decreased to $5,000.

Building Inspection

Tom Diem, Building Official was present. He stated the department's Operating budget was intact. Mr. Diem stated the Building Department's budget was an increase of $11,000 from last year's budget and all the increases are driven by the work being done. He discussed the additional legal support, gas and oil.

Adjournment

The budget workshop was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kathy M. Ruf, Town Clerk