

CITY COUNCIL MEETING - RECONVENED PUBLIC HEARING

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX
DATE: TUESDAY, MAY 27, 2014

PORTSMOUTH, NH
TIME: 6:30PM [thereafter]

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Lister called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. He stated that this provides individuals with another opportunity to speak to the FY15 Budget.

II. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor Lister, Assistant Mayor Splaine, Councilors Shaheen, Kennedy, Lown, Dwyer, Morgan, Spear and Thorsen

III. RECONVENE PUBLIC HEARING (RECESSED FROM MAY 12, 2014)

A. Proposed FY July 1, 2014 through June 30, 2015 Budget

Mayor Lister reopened the public hearing and called for speakers.

Cathy Baker said a 4% increase is double the rate of inflation and the City Council feels it is ok because it is only a single digit increase. Ms. Baker provided the City Council with a chart showing the increase is over the rate of inflation and said if the spending was held at the rate of inflation the budget since 1996 would be \$61.5 million versus the current proposed budget at \$96.7 million. She stated the continue increase is starting to hurt the residents and taking them out of the City. She said this is becoming the City of the rich with no middle class remaining. Ms. Baker asked the City Council to hold the line for every taxpayer at the rate or below inflation.

Dick Bagley echoed some the comments made by Ms. Baker relating to the increase in the budget. He also addressed the increase with Water/Sewer costs and the School Department Budget. He spoke to the CIP and stated that it is hard to meet everyone's needs. Mr. Bagley said the City Council needs to set priorities and decide what comes first, the senior services or the CIP improvements. He also indicated that parking is a major issue that needs to be looked at carefully.

Bill St. Laurent said the City increases it's spending every year and the residents can't continue to remain in the City due to the high cost of living here. He said the taxpayers need help and the taxes should be lowered. He had residents ask about the water and sewer billing. He said the City receive approximately \$12 million in revenues from water and sewer billing. He said we need to stop the bloated employee contracts and residents feel that they no longer matter.

Mark Brighton spoke to the increase in water and sewer billing and said the City Council is pricing people out of the City. He said it is never about the tax rate it is always about the revenues.

Arthur Clough asked Mayor Lister to require the City Council not to use electronic devices while people are speaking to the City Council. He stated the City is no longer for the working people that built this City. He reported that we are off the Forbes list of top 10 efficient places to live. He said the senior center was supposed to be multi-generational and now it is not and the water and sewer bills are excessive. He feels that the City has too many employees and we should not be the second largest employer in the City. He indicated that the City is losing its diversity.

Joe Caldarola said the cost of living is 1.6% but the budget is up 3% - 4%. He is concerned with the blue collar workers being able to afford to live here. He stated that the Police Department staff is top heavy and asked why there are new teachers when enrollment numbers are lower. He requested that the tax rate be at the rate of inflation, which is 1.6%.

Angela Pont asked about the new national standards for curriculum in the schools and what that will cost the City additionally. She said the new standards are an unfunded mandate and it will cost the City more money, which we should not be required to pay.

Eric Anderson feels the budget complexity continues to grow and the taxes continue to increase. He suggested lowering the CIP and addressed the various contracts in the City. He encouraged the City Council to set guidelines for contract negotiations and asked why the number of positions in the City continues to increase. Mr. Anderson asked the Council to bring down the budget to create a flat increase.

Cathy Baker addressed the Council a second time and spoke against providing the Chamber of Commerce with any funding. She feels that the City has too many tourists especially in the summer and we are now over discovered. She spoke regarding the staffing levels and overtime costs in the City. She also addressed the health coverage provided to employees and the need to re-evaluate what is provided. She also stated the City Council is responsible for the impact to the community and residents.

Mark Brighton addressed the Council a second time regarding the class size at schools. He said next year the Association of Portsmouth Taxpayers will seek to request the funds that the Chamber of Commerce is receiving for marketing the City.

Arthur Clough addressed the Council a second time and said the City needs to use the word affordable and not the word investment. He said the population rate is at a 1% increase where other communities have increased by 5%.


Bill St. Laurent addressed the Council a second time and spoke regarding unions. He also said that people are having a hard time making it in the City now. He suggested instead of providing employees with a percentage increase to provide a dollar amount, which will save the City money.

Joe Caldarola addressed the Council a second time saying the actual rate of inflation is 1.6%, which equates to \$1.5 million. He does not feel that the City Council needs to find places to cut the departments should. He requested that the budget be brought down to the rate of inflation.

Dick Bagley addressed the Council a second time and said he understands there are rules for contracts but there are suggestions to make changes to the contracts that the City Council should consider. He also said we need a vibrant architectural City and we should make better choices. Mr. Bagley asked why the City has so many consultants. He also said the budget this year did not go out with guidance from the Council. Mr. Bagley thanked Mayor Lister for taking us in a new direction and bringing people to the table.

After no further speakers, Mayor Lister closed the public hearing. He thanked the speakers and staff that are present this evening.

At 7:50 p.m., Mayor Lister closed the meeting.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kelli L. Barnaby". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelli L. Barnaby, CMC/CNHMC
City Clerk