

## **SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX  
DATE: MONDAY, MAY 13, 2024

PORTSMOUTH, NH  
TIME: 6:00PM

### **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor McEachern called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

### **II. ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Mayor McEachern, Assistant Mayor Kelley, Councilors Tabor, Cook, Denton, Blalock, Bagley, Moreau and Lombardi

### **III. PRESENTATION OF FY25 BUDGET – KAREN CONARD, CITY MANAGER AND ANDREW PURGIEL, DEPUTY FINANCE DIRECTOR**

### **IV. PUBLIC HEARING**

#### **A. PROPOSED FY JULY 1, 2024 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2025 BUDGET**

Mayor McEachern read the legal notice, declared the public hearing open and called for speakers.

Esther Kennedy – first spoke on behalf of Christine Luskey who could not attend, stating that she has concerns with the budget as presented. Secondly, she addressed affordable housing stating that we need affordable taxes to achieve affordable housing as any increases are passed on to tenants. She stated that there are increases in positions, water and sewer rates which all have an impact on rents. Next, she addresses the discussion regarding the modular classrooms being proposed at Dondero School stating that these are not a good resolution as they are hot and also can divide the students from other services such as the cafeteria, library, etc. She addressed the health insurance for the Fire Department stating she is concerned that this went down but doesn't know why when every other one is going up. She continued with why we have the increase of contracted services even though we have added employees and feels that we need to evaluate needs versus wants.

Petra Huda – addressed various sections of the budget document with specific questions that she would like answered. She concluded stating that the property tax increase from FY23 to present is an increase of \$14 million and understands that we expect certain services but questions if we have received these for that amount of money.

Charlie Griffin – commended the city staff on the budget document stating it is very informative. He then discussed increases in various areas such as electrical, water and sewer stating that the community power should be lowering amounts of electricity and in past years the increases for water and sewer were alternated. He then addressed an increase to school board members' salaries, stating that this amount is in the Charter so isn't sure how that is able to be different. He stated that he is glad that the contracts have been settled but we are locked into the Boston rates and feels this does not reflect our population which is 20% 65 and over. He addressed several other areas of concern and concluded stating that the key to speaking at a meeting is "Stand up, Speak up, Shut up".

Erik Anderson – stated that the budget is the most important subject the Council will deal with and feels that they are not creating equal standards for people to pay their portions. He feels the trend is that budgets are overestimated to what is actually spent and the difference then goes to the general fund instead of back to the taxpayers. He stated that ARPA funds are a one-time off-set in the budget and

will not be there next year and he is concerned with the impact the revaluation will have on the tax rate and feels that the excess funds in the Water and Sewer Funds should be put towards the tax rate. Mayor McEachern recessed the public hearing until the June 3, 2024 City Council meeting.

## **V. REVIEW OF BUDGET WORK SESSION MEETING SCHEDULE**

Mayor McEachern outlined the Budget Work Session Scheduled:

- *Thursday, May 23<sup>rd</sup> at 6:00 p.m. – Council Budget Review*

## **VI. ADJOURNMENT**

**At 6:55 p.m., Assistant Mayor Kelley moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Councilor Tabor and voted.**

Valerie A. French  
Deputy City Clerk