

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

PORTSMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM
DATE: MONDAY, MAY 9, 2011

PORTSMOUTH, NH
TIME: 7:00PM [or thereafter]

I. CALL TO ORDER [7:00 p.m. or thereafter]

Mayor Ferrini called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Ferrini, Assistant Mayor Novelline Clayburgh, Councilors Lister, Hejtmanek, Spear, Dwyer, Kennedy and Smith

Absent: Councilor Coviello

III. RECONVENED PUBLIC HEARING (*Recessed from April 11, 2011*)

A. PROPOSED FY JULY 1, 2011 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2012 BUDGET

Mayor Ferrini announced this is a reconvening of the Budget Public Hearing from April 11, 2011. He reviewed the rules of the public hearing process and that there is no time limit for speakers.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT/INPUT

Mayor Ferrini called for speakers to come forward and address the budget.

Jack Thorsen thanked the City Council for striving to keep the budget from increasing. He spoke opposed to Sunday hours for parking meters and said that most people are against this and urged the Council to reconsider their vote. Mr. Thorsen also requested that the City Council become more involved in getting money back from the Local Government Center (LGC). He said that LGC is a monopoly for the health insurance for the City and that is a high ticket item in the budget. He recommended that the City Council make a comparison study of another source for health insurance and go back to LGC to bring the information forward. Mr. Thorsen said that the residents are looking for a reduction in their tax bills and urged the City Council to consider that when adopting the budget.

Mark Brighton said that the City Council is responsible for the tax rate. He addressed various items within the School Department budget where savings could be made. He also informed the City Council that the class sizes are too small in the City and savings could be seen by increasing their size. Mr. Brighton said that the City could save \$1.6 million dollars by simply increasing class sizes.

Rick Condon, Portsmouth Fire fighter, said it is clear that the City Council is looking for employees to find ways to offset the budget. He said the fire fighters would be willing to look at changing their health insurance to save money for the City. He also indicated that it is important for the residents to know that the employees have no control over the actions taken by the legislature and LGC. Mr. Condon reported that 1.4% of LGC's budget is contributed by the City of Portsmouth and that there is over \$800,000.00 that could be returned by LGC to the City.

Bob Pollard said that finances have changed in the last 5-10 years and the State of New Hampshire cannot afford to pay retiree's pensions that they set up. The State is now passing the costs onto the cities and towns. He urged the Council to consider changes that are needed to the budget. He also stated that the youth is the most important asset in the City.

Rick Horowitz said that the economy is in shambles and is not getting better. He said the real estate market is going down and the United States has a large deficit which shows this is a larger issue facing more than local communities. He also spoke to test scores in the schools and said increase in spending in the schools has not resulted in an increase in student performance. Mr. Horowitz said that there needs to be another way to receive better achievement in the performance of students. He also said the residents are suffering and asked the City Council to reduce the taxes.

Norm Olsen said the City Council has to start undoing the damage that has been done over the years. He would like to see the budget reduced further.

Bob McDowell said Portsmouth Listens discussed reductions to the budget. He said when contracts come up everything needs to be on the table and addressed. He further stated that residents are being taxed out of their homes.

Paul Mandle said he does not want his remarks taken out of context and used by the City Council for their own agenda. He stated that there is more work to be done by the City Council on the budget. He said there needs to be a reallocation of funds and addressed various departments. Mr. Mandle spoke to collective bargaining costs that have been reserved and feels it is very excessive. He also addressed the State and how they're continuing to down shift costs to the municipalities. In addition, he stated that the City needs to fight back and stop being a cash cow to the State.

Bill St. Laurent, President of Association of Portsmouth Taxpayers, spoke in support of a zero percent budget. He said the Association feels the Council can make further reductions to the budget and residents need a reduction in their taxes. He further stated the Association has questioned Portsmouth Listens and their process. Mr. St. Laurent spoke to the City taxing State property within the City. He said the time has come for residents to see a reduction in their taxes.

Rick Horowitz spoke regarding the need for the Association of Portsmouth Taxpayers to receive the excel spreadsheets for the budget.


Tim Miles said he participated in Portsmouth Listens and found it very informative. He thanked the City Council, City Manager Bohenko and the Department Heads for their work with Portsmouth Listens. He expressed concern with the education of children in the City. He also stated his concern with the increase in taxes and his ability to continue to live in Portsmouth. Mr. Miles said he feels that City leaders are out of touch with what is going on in the City. He further stated that the number of employees have increased over the last 15 years with the population decreasing. He also indicated there should be a flat budget coming forward in the future.

With no further speakers, Mayor Ferrini declared the Public Hearing closed.

Councilor Spear said there have been two Council Public Hearings and the Portsmouth Listens process and finds generally people are happy with the City Manager's budget. He does not know how productive the final budget work session will be to the City Council and he would feel comfortable voting on the City Manager's budget at the next City Council meeting on May 16, 2011.

V. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:00 p.m., Councilor Spear moved to adjourn. Seconded and voted.



Kelli L. Barnaby, CMC/CNHMC
City Clerk