

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX
DATE: MONDAY, MAY 14, 2012

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

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

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

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Spear, Assistant Mayor Lister, Councilors Coviello, Novelline Clayburgh, Kennedy, Lown, Dwyer, Smith and Thorsen

III. RECONVENED PUBLIC HEARING (*Recessed from April 18, 2012*)

A. PROPOSED FY JULY 1, 2012 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2013 BUDGET

City Manager Bohenko announced that there will be a further reduction to the estimated tax rate by an additional \$.19. He advised the City Council that at the next meeting he will be asking the Council to take action on the use of a bond premium we received. He further stated that the Capital Improvement Plan has been reduced by \$250,000.00. He reported that the proposed tax rate increase is estimated to be \$.38.

Mayor Spear reopened the public hearing on the Proposed FY July 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013 Budget. He announced that the first round of speakers will be limited to 3 minutes and there will be 2 opportunities for individuals to speak.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT/INPUT

Al Romano thanked the City Manager for the further reductions to the budget. He asked that upgrades to Coakley Road be made in the near future. He also asked for more patrols by the Police Department in the downtown.

Norm Olsen said there should be a zero increase in the budget and that the residents cannot continue to be burdened with the increase in taxes. He spoke to COLA increases for employees and also to the various benefits received by employees. He stated that the benefits are unsustainable.

Colleen Romano spoke in support of the project for Coakley Road improvements. She also asked for police patrols in the downtown.

Jim Lamont spoke in favor of the School Department budget, as presented. He said the City Council has no say over salaries and benefits for employees that are done during negotiations. He further stated that there is no room for the School Department to reduce their number of employees.

Paul Peterson stated that the reduction in patrols in the downtown created real problems and the patrols need to return. He also spoke to funding for the senior services needed in the budget. City Manager Bohenko stated that when the report comes forward the City needs to make provisions for funding of senior programs.

Cliff Lazenby thanked the City departments for their budgets and presentations that were provided at the last public hearing. He stated that he is not worried about the amount of money needed for the services and programs provided in the budget. He requested that the City Council look into the future and what will attract new growth.

Sue Polidura said there is a time of reckoning that will come soon. She spoke concern with the increases in taxes and spending and the need for further cuts.

Robert Padian – spoke on behalf of the senior center and the need for funding. He said he is supportive of public transportation and that the senior van is important. He further stated that the Parrott Avenue programs were important for getting people together.

Elizabeth McKenney spoke in support of the senior center and the need for funding. She said the programs are important and without the senior center there is no place for the seniors to go.

Joann Lamoreaux spoke concerned with the loss of the senior center and the need for funding.

Bill St. Laurent said we should be a level budget with no increases. He stated that there comes a point where some services may have to go and there maybe a need for layoffs. He said that the taxpayers need relief and stated that in some communities outside of NH, if you are over 65 years old they take out the cost of school funding from your taxes.

Andrea Ardito spoke in support of the School Department budget. She said the school employees work incredibly hard every day. She urged the City Council to support the budget and stated that no further cuts can be made to the School Department and the children of the community.

Robert Carpenter said with the closing of the Parrott Avenue Center, Ms. McKenney set up a bingo program for seniors on her own time. He expressed his thanks and appreciation on behalf of all seniors for Ms. McKenney taking the time to do this.

John Raganese said we need to support our children's future and the School Department's funding request.

Norm Olsen said that the funding requests for the School Department and for the senior center could be done without any increase in the budget. He thanked the department heads for their work in preparing the budget and said this needs to be a flat budget.

Marylou McElwain said that this is not a battle between the funding for schools and the senior center. She said she supports both needs for funding.

Arthur Clough addressed various services provided by the Public Works Department. He stated that the budget numbers should include COLA and step increases as well as how much of the salary is from overtime. Mr. Clough spoke regarding the \$150,000.00 in funding provided to the Fire Department earlier this year and that he did not feel that funding was justified.

Sage Clark thanked everyone for their service and said at the end of the day you need to see how much you get for the increase in taxes and how much you value it. She spoke in support of the School Department budget and the need for funding. She stated that schools provide encouragement and that a high quality of education is imperative. Ms. Clark advised the City Council that many of the field trips are not paid through the School Department budget but by the PTA and that many parents pay for other children that cannot afford the costs associated with field trips.

Sue Polidura said she served as a substitute teacher in other districts and stated that Portsmouth Christian Academy pay \$5,500.00 per pupil. She asked why the City of Portsmouth cannot do the same. She said this is the time for the City of Portsmouth to come forward with a new model for funding the School Department budget.

Roy Helse stated that employees do a good job but should not be able to build up sick and annual leave with large pay outs at the end.

Mark Brighton thanked the City Manager for the bond premium. He said at some point the City of Portsmouth will be responsible for the entire costs of school funding. He asked how a 4.73% budget is considered sustainable and that 8% of the resident are below the poverty line.

Bill St. Laurent spoke regarding Mr. Clough's comments. He said an education is extremely important, but some taxpayers cannot afford this budget. He said not all taxpayers should have to support the senior center funding. He further stated that the City should not be paying funding for Pro Portsmouth, which should support itself. He urged the City Council to consider the amount of funding the employee and their benefits cost. Mr. St. Laurent said that the seniors are not getting a COLA increase and their costs continue to increase.

Cliff Lazenby said that you will lose quality in the education provided to the children if the School Department budget is reduced. He addressed the importance of our public safety employees and asked that the City Council support the budget, as presented.

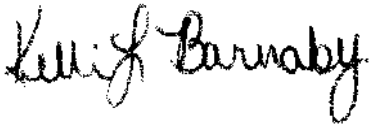
John Raganese said he has invested a great deal in his home and the schools. He said he chooses to live here because of the value of education provided and that he would leave the City if the quality of education is reduced. Mr. Raganese said he works for an independent power company and urged the City Council and those involved, to look at consolidating our electric bill because you would save hundreds of dollars.

Arthur Clough said on the Police Department web page there is a little brag about the City of Portsmouth being one of the top 10 cities to live in, in the United States but we are no longer among the top 100 because we are considered too expensive for people to live.

With no further speakers, Mayor Spear declared the public hearing closed.

V. ADJOURNMENT

At 8:20 p.m., Assistant Mayor Lister moved to adjourn. Seconded and voted.

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