

**CITY OF MONROE
COUNCIL WORK SESSION
MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2008**

Work Session of the City Council of the City of Monroe, Michigan held on Monday, March 24, 2008 at 6:30 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Present: Council Members Beneteau, Clark, Conner, McGhee, Molenda, Paisley and Mayor Worrell.

Also Present: George Brown, City Manager
Ed Sell, Finance Director
Tim Laitur, Attorney
Sam Guich, Assessor
Peggy Howard, Human Resources Director
Charles Evans, Clerk-Treasurer
Patrick Lewis, Director of Engineering and Planning
Joe Lehmann, Building Official
John Michrina, Police Chief

Timothy Laitur, Attorney, presented the Attorney's Office budget stating that he is willing to look at cost cutting means; traffic fines have already been increased and he has made a diligent effort for OWI cost recovery. Discussion was held regarding costs associated with trial cases.

Sam Guich, Assessor, stated that his budget is fairly straightforward and that his narrative provides detail on how assessed values are arrived at. He stated they are implementing a mass appraisal process for about 7,500 parcels in the city of Monroe; for income producing properties the income approach is utilized as a check against the cost approach; and a straightforward sales comparison approach is utilized as a check on the other two approaches. He explained that the city is divided into 57 different residential neighborhoods and 15 commercial/industrial neighborhoods. He stated they are experiencing a 6/10 of a position loss in his office but will be able to handle it. He also commented that contrary to the assumption that work has decreased in his office due to a slow down in economy, they are extremely busy; especially with the increase in foreclosures.

Peggy Howard, Director of Human Resources, presented her budget stating that department responsibilities include recruitment and testing, screening, orientation, administering the compensation of benefits, labor relations, discipline, grievance handling, safety and health. She has requested to increase her budget to \$309,157.

George Brown, City Manager explained that the increase has to do with the increase in salary for the Human Resources Director compared to what the previous one was making and costs associated with collective bargaining/labor attorney. He addressed concerns regarding their somewhat extensive use of a labor attorney, stating with the upcoming contracts he would not advise to negotiate often without having a labor attorney. He stated that the results of the contract settlements eventually will affect the bottom line in service levels for the long term.

Charles Evans, Clerk-Treasurer, discussed the elimination of staff in the Treasurer's Office, stating that he cannot run the office with two people and feels that the cuts went too deep. Discussion was held regarding mail processing, parking ticket collection, water bill collection, lock box option, sharing staff and the hiring of part time staff.

Council took a break at 7:48 p.m. and reconvened at 8:01 p.m.

Patrick Lewis, Director of Engineering and Planning, presented the Planning department budget, stating that the Citizens Planning Commission is a statutory requirement and the Historic Preservation activities are required by City Ordinance. He stated that the City's Community Development Block Grant annual entitlement has been administered since 2004. He stated the department also assists in economic development in conjunction with the port; they are the city liaison to the Downtown Development Authority; and assist the BRA with clerical tasks. He stated that 91% of the Community Development operating total budget is in personnel costs and the largest non-personnel cost is for a vehicle. He stated the department has lost one staff position that has not been filled. He also discussed action strategies for the department.

He also presented the Engineering department budget stating, if it is city infrastructure; they do it. He talked about staffing levels, stating that two project engineers and a cad operator inspector position are vacant. He stated that project mode is actually higher now because of an aggressive water main replacement program. Mayor Worrell asked if there was money to hire staff and do the work internally or if it should be farmed out. Mr. Lewis responded stating if they were going to keep the same level of work, one of the positions should probably be filled. George Brown, City Manager, explained that any filling of positions will be delayed until after contracts are settled and stated that they need to make sure they have strong management rights to use seasonal help. Mr. Lewis also discussed goals and objectives for the department.

Joe Lehmann, Building Official, presented his budget stating that it includes three funds; building safety, zoning/ordinance enforcement, and the city hall/grounds budget. He stated 90% of the budget is personnel costs. He explained that the building safety fund is created through permits, any fees generated through the inspection process or enforcement of the building code. He stated that a building zoning inspector has left and the position will not be filled until after collective bargaining is resolved. He also explained that the zoning/ordinance enforcement is funded through the general fund. He is looking at alternatives to handle the blight work load and has put inspectors in different parts of the city to help keep the neighborhoods looking better. He stated that a custodian position has been eliminated from the city hall/grounds budget resulting in one afternoon shift custodian at city hall. George Brown, City Manager, stated that this will leave the Police department short in custodial help, therefore, clerical staff will have to help with those tasks. Discussion was held regarding moving blight to the police department and Mr. Lehmann stated he is working on a manual to assist staff in obtaining more consistent code enforcement.

John Michrina, Police Chief addressed talk of moving the LETC bus stop stating that the LETC staff ensures him that with the way the structure is designed, they have to have seven buses downtown and seven buses at their new station. He explained he has looked at several locations downtown that would be geographically ideal, but the problem is that nobody wants it.

It was moved by Councilwoman Conner and seconded by Councilman Paisley that the meeting adjourn at 9:23 p.m.

Ayes: 7 Nays: 0

Motion carried.

Charles D. Evans
City Clerk-Treasurer

Mark G. Worrell
Mayor