

Work Session Minutes

August 14, 2023

@ 5:00 PM

The Purpose of the Work Session was to discuss Budget for 2023-2023 Year

The Mayor opened the Work Session indicating that Emily Edwards and Linda Holcomb were both present if anyone has questions about the budget that has been presented to Council for the upcoming year.

Before the talks on budget began Councilwomen, Cassandra Lee ask Mayor Weatherwax if employee Don Mitchell who was present could speak first. Mayor Weatherwax said it was fine for him to speak first.

Mr. Mitchell began by stating that his purpose in being there was to address the situation at the cemetery. He stated that it was getting to be a lot and that with only 2 workers and he had ask for help year after year and that a lot of the stuff that is coming up concerning the cemetery was coming down on him. He stated that some of the Council knew what was happening and he wanted to get it rectified so that the cemetery could be gotten and kept like it should be by getting it done in a more efficient way. He stated that there was no way that 2 people could do all that needed to be done. Mr. Mitchell referred to the other employee many times stating that the other employee was “half a person”, and that he couldn’t be held responsible for what wasn’t getting done by that employee. He was doing his sections and that the other employee was not and that he was getting spoken to about the issues and the other person was not. He stated that his input was not considered on the building that was built and that they didn’t have electricity and it was over 100 degrees in that building. Ms. Joyce Jeffreys stated that the Council had approved the electricity to be put in the building – why was it not put in... He felt like they were not being treated fairly and that he needed help. Part-time help is not enough – they get some summer help and they never leave and don’t come back. Ms. Joyce Jeffreys agreed with Mr. Mitchell about the need for more help and especially when he was doing the majority of the work. Ms. Cassandra Lee ask Mayor Weatherwax if the budget which they are looking at includes an additional employee for the cemetery.... his response to her was that there are no appropriations for an additional cemetery employee at this point. Ms. Lee stated she had gone out there today and there is no air, heat or fan and only a bathroom and it was probably over 100 degrees

outside so why would we expect him or others to work in those conditions. That based on Alabama Law – Duty of Care Act we are suppose to make sure that those needs are met. Safety – accommodations for heat and air – she doesn't know why we are not doing it, and do we plan on doing it. Mayor Weatherwax stated that yes, and he referred to Daniel Woodard and ask him about the contact he had been in with Joe Wheeler and he stated that he had and that he had prices and he had to be approved that he had given it about 3-4 months ago for approval. Ms. Lee said probably at the beginning of hot weather and she stated that as far as heat that it wasn't going to get any better and she looked at it as being inhuman and you had been given what was ask for and we are living in 2023 where we have laws to protect that. She stated that other areas had cool places for employees, so why hadn't this been taken care of since over a year ago it was approved. The Mayor said she could blame him for most of it but that it wasn't approved a year ago. The Mayor said that he would address Don Mitchell that he had talked to him earlier today and that his recommendation was to take bids for a landscaping company to do it that they could do it cheaper than the City can do it. He stated that he had told Don Mitchell that no one was going to lose their job and he had told him more than one time this. Mr. Mitchell said that this had been thought of before but once the pricing was gotten that the ideas of that changed. The Mayor stated that last year he had gotten pricing on the cemetery and compared to what the cost currently is and if another employee was hired the cost would be more. Ms. Lee and the Mayor conversated about what was to be done while the process of deciding if contracting would be the way to go in the future. Ms. Jeffreys stated someone needed to check on the power and also that doors could be on there that could be opened up for mowers and for air flow. Ms. Lee stated that she was glad that the Mayor was taking responsibility and that she hoped that it wouldn't take another 6-7 months to get that done and that she hoped that there would be no retaliation for Don or anyone else speaking up for mistreatment is what she called it and inhuman which is her words not Mr. Mitchell's and bringing things to the Council for things that they are entitled to.

Mr. Weatherwax ask Emily Edwards to speak on behalf of the Budget talks...she stated she had given to the Council items and that each department head would speak to Council on their departments request.

Administration: Deroma Pepper ask that appropriations for computers be set aside because the current ones are 5+ years old or approaching that and it is

recommended by the IT that is the life of computers in general and would be done at the advice of the IT company. Ms. Lee ask specifically when would they be replaced – Ms. Pepper stated at the advice of the IT company would be when they are replaced or should a computer fail as they had recently had 2 fail that were still under warranty so they were replaced.

Police Dept: Craig Knight ask for his department for a Grade Increase for his officers due to the problems trying to get open positions filled at the current rate it is a struggle and he is looking at in the next year and a half having 3 officers retire. He is need of minimum of 8 but preferable 11 bullet proof vests because the current ones only stop handgun rounds and, in the world, today it is probably not sufficient he is requesting at least \$20,000.00 for this and will continue to shop around for better pricing.

Brent White ask about an explanation of what a Grade Level is from the information that was given. Emily Edwards had given both Grade and 3% raise to the Council – Grade raise looks like it could be between 5% and 9% to answer question posed by Councilman Jason White, Councilwomen Ms. Lee ask if COVID monies could be used for raises or were they like one-time fee. Ms. Edwards answered Ms. Lee that the COVID monies was allotted to the centrifuge for the sewer treatment plant and then any remaining it will be used for the building.

Denise Lovett ask about the hazard duty rate - Police chief Knight replied that is was \$200.00 per month. It is included in the budget paperwork.

Fire Dept: Brian Phillips ask for a pay grade increase due to taking applications and not receiving qualified candidates for the open position. 4 Scene lights for squad truck that was purchased from Hillsboro in the amount of \$5,183.60. Line item for batteries, antennas and radio maintenance on handhelds. 2000 engine will be 24 years old pricing on new engine is around 800 -900 thousand dollars to replace so its about at the end of its life – will be looking for grants to help in purchasing a replacement. Delivery is 2 to 3 years out and usually takes about a year to get a grant. Other engines are 2006 and 2009 that the City currently owns.

Park and Rec: Deangelo McDaniel ask for nets for volleyball and tennis courts, travel fields garbage cans rather than the current way they are doing, \$15,000.00 for 4th of July show this is for the 3rd year due to issues that prevented having it, \$50,000.00(\$75,000.00 is in the Land) would like to repaint the remaining areas of the existing park in the color scheme that is at the new areas, repairs to the old park areas, purchase 2 pieces of equipment for dragging the new 10,000.00 fields, office chairs, chairs that are used to host events also need some replaced, new concession equipment(will come from concession stand money). Permission in current budget 60" Toro mower – and been waiting on part for 16 mths Myron Bohanon has a 60" mower that he has been waiting on a part for 2 yrs if you put the 2 mowers together you have one mower that works so they combined them and Myron Bohanon has that combination....Deangelo McDaniel is asking to purchase a mower around \$11,000.00 out of current budget they have line items in this budget that were not gotten and so all that will be used to purchase that mower. He also addressed the part-time people in the cemetery to Ms. Jeffreys by saying it's not that easy they do more than weed eat they are used in concession stands, recreation center and when they have a travel tournament. Ms. Jeffreys ask if they have enough work to do -- He stated if you have a travel tournament it takes everybody – to which Ms. Lee said it is all hands-on deck. Mr. McDaniel said they do send them to cemetery if they can't get their hours because they will leave because we pay \$12.00 McDonalds pays \$14.25 if he sends them to the cemetery they don't come back. Ms. Lee said that this was confirmation that we do need someone else at the cemetery because the Park can't always send their people to help because when needed they are needed there. Mr. McDainel stated he couldn't speak for the cemetery but they could use another employee at the park. Ms. Lee reiterated that from what was said tonight that the cemetery needed more help and that the Park couldn't always send their workers because of their needs. Mr. McDaniel tried to express to the Council that \$12.00 hr for part-time is not competitive for the work that is required and, in the environment, that they work at the Park. Part-time is hard to keep because of the pay, we have a lot of work that has to be done and we have lost 7 part-time just recently because its always the pay. In September with travel tournament they will not have a weekend off until mid-November.

Mayor Weatherwax said in the last 2 yrs the Park has went and helped in the cemetery and have also taken the entire staff.

Ms. Lee ask the Land is that McKelvey Park? on here you say refurbish the mini park pavilions, & press box and it doesn't have a press box so it can't be McKelvey there is no press box at McKelvey Park. Mr. McDaniel said that's at all Parks – at the McKelvey Park the bathrooms need doors and paint, so Ms. Lee said that request is to include that as well and Mr. McDaniel stated “Yes”.

Ms. Lovett ask Mr. McDaniel if he included any new employees in his budget and he said he did not but that they would like a Grade raise. He praised the employee's knowledge at the park and stated that they do most all maintenance. Ms. Lee said would Grade Level get them \$14.95 – Mr. McDaniel clarified that rate request was for the part-time.

Mayor Weatherwax stated that in the last 2 years for part-time from minimum wage to \$9.00 and now at \$12.00 and in the future, we will probably have to go to \$14.00 or \$15.00 and Mr. McDaniel stated that the market is what is driving the pay up and it is what it is.

Ms. Lee mentioned when would the McKelvey Park work be done – Mr. McDaniel stated that in the winter time when the bathrooms are closed.

Ms. Lovett ask about the mower the Park wanted to purchase would it be another Toro and Mr. McDaniel stated that it would be a John Deere because the Park System is going to those type due to the parts problems. Mayor Weatherwax stated that John Deere will bring a mower to use while they fix problems with our mowers and that Toro parts are hard to get.

Daniel Woodard with the Street Dept – thanked everyone for what they have already done this year. He ask like everyone else that his department be given a raise and if you increase the part-time pay to \$15.00 then you have to also increase the full-time rates. If you have a guy making \$16.00 who is full-time and a part-time person making \$15.00 in his opinion that is not right. He is requesting a CDL driver for his dept because currently he has a part-time CDL driver and one other CDL driver other than himself, so if there is issues with employee's it puts department in a crunch especially if it is regular garbage pick-up days. If is required to drive the garbage trucks and boom trucks. Ms. Lee ask if this was in what he had presented in his budget and he replied, yes.

Greg Flanagan – first of all thanked the Council for everything that is done for the employees and if it can be managed to give a Step or Grade raise. The system is

very old and in need of desperate repairs which he had given out information to Council. There is an area in the Courtland Mtn and Langtown area that is seeing a population growth and there is a tank which is running over due to pressure and the fix he has come up to render a solution for the 36.8 gallons of treated water a minute that is being wasted, it is gonna be expensive but it will be a long-term solution. Ms. Lovett said this has been going on for a long time to which Mr. Flanagan replied, "Yes". He stated that 36.8 gallons a minute correlates to 52,992 gallons in one day (24 hrs.) equivalent to 2 inground swimming pools in one day. In a year 19 million gallons almost 20 million money wise it is almost \$302.00 per day, in a year that's \$110,000.00, Ms. Lovett ask, "And that is treated Water." Mr. Flanagan stated it is treated water, which could be sold to customer rather than running it out on the ground and in a few short years it will pay for itself. Water loss in Moulton is still an issue and working on it every day. Ms. Lovett ask how long would this take? Working together with the Gas employees and others they can probably do it in house and save \$80,000.00 roughly in 3 days maybe a few more. This is what he is asking to put in budget. Ms. Lee ask how long would it take if approved? He said getting the supplies is going to be the waiting process and not sure until approved but it will work... if we can get supplies it can probably be up and running in 2-3 mths. Ms. Lee stated that it was all in getting what is needed. The day to day stuff will still have to be done and it might involve some overtime but they can get it done. Stanley Nichols said it has to run over because of the pressure problems on the back side of the lake so if booster pumps are cut off for limit the flow it causes customers to have low pressure, and by putting the booster pump on the other side of lake it will solve that also. Current booster pump will be left in place as a back-up, and new one would be installed at the Mountain Home Water Tank.

Stanley Nichols – thanked everyone for what they do and taking care of the Cities Business. Would like a Grade Raise for the employees like everyone else because it is hard to get employees with the certifications that are needed at the Plant, it would be greatly appreciated. One thing needed at the Treatment Plant is a small Pole barn which is needed to store a small pontoon boat that was purchased to spray the lake with for taste and odor. By purchasing boat about \$4,500.00 it is saving because it cost \$11,000.00 because that was the cost to spray the lake and pay for it to be done so long term it is going to payoff to do the spraying in house. Also need approval for \$9,000.00 for chemicals because it is for treating the lake and it has eliminated the taste and odor so far. Kelly Group is working on bids for

the clear well and painting on the inside of the pipe galleys. In future need to also do small upgrades to the plant. As things are decided in what order and quotes are gotten Mr. Nichols will bring that before Council.

Caleb Harville – 3.6 miles of natural gas main which will include 12 chicken houses and with the help of the Water Dept it could be done in house - \$64,635.00 cost for pipe. Waiting on engineers to give the best answer for running up under Highway 33 and if a regulator station is needed if so that will be extra cost. The worst case will be \$400,000.00 but Mr. Harville estimates it can be done \$200 - \$250 thousand dollars. Mr. Harville said if he could keep cost down he would like to use the money saved to put in gas extension on hwy 36. Ms. Lee ask if anyone is looking into grant money and Mr. Harville stated that yes it is being looked into and the Mayor added that it has not been applied for yet it would probably be in 2024 but running the numbers on the chicken houses and on 6 current chicken house the profit is approximately 25 to 30 thousand dollars so if we get the 12 house that would be 50 to 60 thousand in a couple of years and other houses are just down the road – the chicken house are operated by a father and son and also would pick up 10-20 households which you profit about \$500.00 per year. Mr. Harville also said his guys had impressed him this year and that he ask if the Council would approve for a Grade raise.

Brent White addressed the Hwy 36 being approved last year for an extension but for the money Hwy 33 currently looks like more of a profit – Mr. Harville stated but the City does want to extend as possible in all directions.

Mark Heflin – wasn't present but the ARC grant and hopefully he will be able to be at next meeting to explain this and other items in his request was stated by Emily Edwards.

Myron Bohanon – request 2 greens mowers again because he is having issues getting them and also a spreader to maintain the putting greens at about \$100,000.00 for these items – the mowers are on there again because they are 12-18 mths out and in the mean time he is still looking for good used equipment. He ask that his employees in thoughts when you consider raise.

Ms. Lee ask because the cemetery was not listed that she saw and are they included in the budget – Mayor said he didn't submit anything..and that Emily handles that. Ms. Edwards stated she just goes off of the previous year unless told there is a need by Mitch Mardis or Don Mitchell. Ms. Edwards pointed out that it is on the budget sheet it is account 35 – what page – Brent stated 3 or 4 pages from the end of the paperwork. Ms. Lee addressed the Mayor since he didn't submit anything for the cemetery – like a raise or anything is everything going alright at the cemetery – Ms. Edwards stated that a percentage raise would be across the board for everybody. Ms. Lee ask if we needed to include the need for a new employee...Ms. Edwards said whatever the Council decided – she was waiting until they discussed the contract labor or adding of employee. Ms. Lovett ask how much to add an employee and benefits package – Ms. Edwards said she could give a rough estimate would probably be about \$60 -\$70 thousand dollars there are a lot of factors. Ms. Lee ask can we afford that? Ms. Edwards said no the cemetery can't – Ms. Lee said can it come for somewhere else? General Fund would have to supply it. Ms. Lee said we have someone working out there in inhuman circumstances – Don Mitchell is already being paid out of General Fund because the cemetery couldn't afford him, so it would be an additional charge to the General Fund. Do we have money in the General Fund to pay for this? We already are having to fund the Golf and Sewer so if we did an additional cemetery expense it could probably handle it but we wouldn't be able to invest as much here lately – Ms. Lee said we would be investing in an employee and that to her it was more important than putting it somewhere else. Ms. Lee stated that the employee didn't have a place to come in to cool off. Ms. Lee also stated to the Mayor that it would be looked at strongly and that it has been said that it could be accommodated through the General Fund. Mr. Jason White said that so basically the Mayor is looking at contractors, so what is the cost? Mayor stated contract would be about \$80,000.00 a year and having the 2 employees and another employee would cost how much. Ms. Jeffreys stated she didn't want anyone to lose their job – the Mayor stated they would not lose their job. Jason White stated that they would just move to a different department, and Ms. Lovett stated you'd still have to have a grave digger etc – that is already contracted. Mayor Weatherwax stated that it is the Council's decision.

Brent White stated that some of the information was just received tonight and if they could give everybody \$100,000.00 a year they would. This year it appears that the revenues 11 million 225 was what we were expecting and it is ending up

12 million and he said he needs to look at it more and that we need to make sure to leave a cushion between expected revenues and looking at the new information the cushion will be smaller than last year. If they aren't able to do everything what they think they should everybody understands. Budget is getting tighter and tighter every year. We can't compete with bigger towns and that there are elephants in the room that we are going to have to have Gigantic Water Rate increases in the near future. He wants the Council to digest the information and have another meeting before deciding. It was decided to have a work session on August 28th.

Meeting ended with Council considering information for the next Council Meeting.

Roger Weatherwax, Mayor

Deroma Pepper, City Clerk

Brent White, Council Member

Jason White, Council Member

Denise Lovett, Council Member

Cassandra Lee, Council Member

Joyce Jeffreys, Council Member