

CITY OF TRENTON
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
March 9th, 2023 - 6:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Calvin Woodrey called the March 9th Special Council meeting to order at 6:07pm.

PRAYER

Councilwoman Montgomery led us in prayer, followed by the pledge of allegiance to our flag.

ROLL CALL

Council Clerk Laura Daley took Roll call, all members of Council were present.

PRESENTATIONS

***Power point presentations attached.**

1. Fire Chief Darrell Yater - Fire Department Staffing Presentation.

Chief Yater began by explaining that a year ago we hired a firm to do a study regarding our Fire Department and the staffing needs to continue to support the City. The study suggested to properly staff and support the Cities needs we should have 3 full time and 2 part time employees on shift around the clock. He explained that all departments nationwide are experiencing staffing shortage. Less people are becoming firefighters and or EMS. There are multiple reasons for these shortages. The reasons for these shortages are explained within the power point presentation, as well as many other scenarios. The chief reviewed many topics such as our run volume, why fire personnel prefer full-time or part-time, as well as other staffing challenges. Currently the department is supposed to be running with 4 part-time employees, included in the four is supposed to be an officer to serve as a supervisor. We have hired new members but some lack experience and need supervision and they are without an officer on duty 56% of the time. Other situations include not having a four-man crew and then there's the issue of commitment due to only being a part-time department. The current levy funds were only meant to support three staff members per shift and at the current four man staffing the department will not be able to fund the department staffing past year end of 2028. He discussed remedies that may help. The department received a \$555,340 grant that must be used by 2024 that have certain restrictions and requirements to employ more part-time firefighter's and emts. If the requirements are not met than that grant money will not be received as this is a reimbursement type of grant. The chief stated that if something is not done, the bottom will fall out of the department within two years.

Councilman Perry wanted to clarify a statement made by the chief regarding the younger voters, stating that he didn't feel they were supportive of passing an additional levy after speaking to over 200 residents, explaining to the Chief that he felt this was going to be a difficult task to get everyone on board for.

Councilwoman Harris stated she understood that we needed a levy, that's not a question, yet after hearing the Chief's presentation, it doesn't sound like money is the only issue. She stated that staffing seems to be more of an issue than just the money, the issue will still be present as we cannot compete with the areas that have more money to offer to their staff. The Chief stated that was true, everyone is struggling with staffing. Councilwoman Harris

explained that she didn't think the hard part was going to be getting the money. The hard part was going to be the hiring and retaining staff if the chief truly felt commitment was the issue. Vice Mayor Perry asked if we could get a least 3 to 4 more new hires even part-time to make sure we weren't losing the grant money already in place.

Councilman Agee stated we are aware of the issues with staffing, but as Councilmembers they need to know the hard numbers. He explained he had to be able to tell people what it would cost them. He explained that the department needed to feel like a team, whether supervision is available or not. The chief stated that when there is a crew, they are excellent, as of now, keeping a full crew is not always possible as some of our members have other obligations. Mr. Agee stated again that Council needed to know the numbers.

2. City Finance Director Matthew Mesisklis – Fire Department Levy Presentation.

Finance Director Mesisklis explained the formula for how millage is calculated. He reviewed Ohio tax limitations, valuation vs. appraised value vs. like a Zillow estimate. He explained the county Auditors do valuations every three years and when this is done, home-owners have the right to dispute that value. He then went into the explanation of levy effective rates, explaining that levies lose their effective rates as time passes and home values increase. This keeps homeowners from having to pay increased levy amounts when their homes gain value. Not all Counties have this effective rate but Butler County does. With that he began to explain what would need to be presented to the residents. He stated what the revenues looked like vs. the expenses on two different levy amounts. At a millage of 6.5, we would be able to staff 3 full-time and 2 part-time members 24/7 with all expenses to do so and this would support this through several years but not indefinitely. He explained that is the issue with levies, they will only be sustainable for 8-10 years and then will need to be revisited and most likely increased to keep up with the increasing costs of what that levy is funding. The next option is a 4.75 mill levy which would support 2 full-time employees and 3 part-time employees 24/7. This new levy would need to be passed in addition to the 4.5 mill levy currently in effect and would cost homeowners an additional \$227.50 annually for a \$100,000 home for the 6.5 mill levy, or \$166.00 annually per \$100,000 home valuation for the 4.75 millage. He reiterated that the current 4.5 mill levy will only be able to support the staffing at four members for another 5 years as it was only intended to support 3 three part-time employees 24/7. This original levy was passed in 2012 and currently has an effective rate of 3.45 mills.

City Manager Marcos Nichols stated this presentation is to determine whether or not Council would like to move forward as a decision by Council will be needed in order to move forward with placing a levy on the ballot and at what millage they would like to see to begin preparing legislation to begin that process.

Continued discussion was held.

Vice Mayor Perry asked what were all of our options, is the general fund able to help support the Fire Department fund. For instance with the increased income tax coming in, could dollars from that or just the general fund help support this so that we could for instance try to pass the 4.75 mill increase and pitch in for instance \$250,000 from the general fund and be able to still have the same results as if we passed the 6.5 millage levy. He explained that he is a huge advocate for the parks, and he would hate to see the Parks master plan be put on a back burner, but Emergency services are absolutely a necessity to the city and will have to take priority and we will have to have a back up plan if the people choose not to pass it.

It was asked when a decision needed to be made. The answer was we have some time as there is two pieces of legislation that will be needed to be presented and passed by Council within 90 days prior to the election.

REPORTS

City Attorney Nick Ziepfel had no reports.

City Finance Director reminded residents that the city is accepting small electronics they would like to recycle in a bin in the finance department.

Council Clerk Laura Daley had no reports.

City Manager Marcos Nichols had no reports.

AUDIENCE OF COUNCIL

Councilwoman Harris congratulated the Choraliers for being Grand Champions and asked if we could possibly place something on the sign board for them. She then thanked Fire Chief Yater and Finance Director Mesisklis for their presentations.

Councilwoman Combs thanked Chief Yater and the Finance director for their time and effort that they put into their presentations.

Councilman Perry also thanked them for the presentations and thanked all the Fire staff that was present for their on-going service.

Councilman Agee thanked the Chief and Finance director for their presentations, stating he felt both were very informational. Then he reminded everyone that this Sunday was daylight savings. On the 12th at 2:00am move your clocks ahead one hour.

Councilwoman Montgomery stated she appreciated everyone in the audience as a lot of the fire department come out to support the chief in his presentation. She then thanked both the Chief and Finance director for their presentations. She stated that she takes a lot of pride in living here in Trenton. She explained that she felt like they received a lot of information, and felt it was serious and very important information that needed to be considered carefully.

Vice Mayor Perry thanked those that presented, saying they did a very good. He then thanked the fire staff that came to support the cause.

Mayor Woodrey thanked everyone for coming, then stated both presentations were very informative.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Vice Mayor Perry, followed by a second motion by Councilwoman Montgomery. Roll call was taken; 7 ayes, 0 nays, 0 absent. The special Council meeting was adjourned at 8:08pm.