TOWN OF ASTATULA
MAYOR AND COUNCIL
SUMMARY MINUTES

BUDGET WORKSHOP
THURSDAY JULY 25, 2023
2023-2024 BUDGET

Having been duly advertised as required by law, Mayor Mitchell Mack called the workshop to order at 5.40 pm. Mayor Mack led The Pledge of Allegiance.

Members Present:
Mitchell Mack, Mayor
Stephen Cross, Vice-Mayor
Gayle Sikkema
Orita Issartel
Zane Teeters

Also Present:
Graham Wells, Town Clerk
Wally Hoagland, Police Chief

Roll call was taken and there was one resident present.

The council members present had been sent the proposed budget for the General Fund prior to the meeting and the Clerk proceeded to go over the first draft. The clerk stated that the budget was fluid and subject to change as new data comes in particularly with revenues from the state.

He reminded Council that Ad Valorem taxes were in tablets of stone as they are provided by the department of revenue from the TRIM. The revenue in the budget is based on 95% of the projected revenue from the property appraiser and the Solid Waste revenue is based on the number of homes multiplied by the rate per home to cover the cost from GFL Environmental. The budget is based on the current millage rate of 7.5000 mills.

The Clerk stated that the version they were looking at mirrored the finance reports that they were used to seeing. He referred them to page two which showed a projected surplus of $200,460.00 but emphasized that the impact fees on line 1 of page 1 were restricted funds so the actual working spendable surplus is reduced by $46,839.00. He said that there would likely be commercial impact fees from development at County Materials, but the amount is not known at this time.

He added that he would go over the expenditures for each department but emphasized that there was no provision in the budget for salary increases which would have to be talked about. A potential increase in the Council stipends was raised and discussed and the consensus was to keep them as they are. The insurance premium from FMIT was the best estimate.

There was an amount in the budget to replace the administrative assistant with someone more qualified to take some of the burden on the financial side of the clerk's job. Opinions on the type of person, full time/part time and the salary were discussed. The Mayor stated that the person would still have to perform the existing duties of the administrative assistant. This position was discussed extensively. Councilman Teeters said that the clerk should have sole discretion on who he hires and how much they should be paid without having to come to council for approval. The Mayor gave a historical perspective on how the control of employees and their remuneration has rested with the council.

As significant hourly wages for this new position were being suggested, the Chief said that before the town looks at bringing in new people at higher stating rates of pay, the council should look to reward the current employees who have remained loyal to the town, through the difficult and hard time when the town could not afford pay increases at all.

Mr. Cross said that it was a balance and suggested that the position be budgeted as a full-time position at $25.00 per hour. The clerk responded that full time increases the cost of benefits and believed that thirty-two hours should be sufficient to carry out the duties when town hall was open. Additional hours could be budgeted as with Tracy who is working from 8am to 5pm giving her thirty-six hours.

He put an idea forward that was being considered at Leesburg where an increase in wages and salaries was based on the CPI which is around 4.6% plus an additional 1% for each year of employment capped at five years. This would give Tracy 6%, Natalie 7% and Tisdell 8% and everyone else would get 10% as a reward for their loyalty.

He added that Wally was the lowest paid Police Chief in the County, and the clerk did not even make the average of clerk's salaries, who do not have the level of responsibilities that he does. Councilman Teeters said that the chief and the clerk were handcuffed in running their departments and who and at what rate they can pay their employees. They should be given an overall budget and the latitude to pay what is necessary to maintain the proper level and quality of staff.

As the two-hour mark had been reached, the rules of order required that the council vote to extend the meeting. Councilwoman Sikkema said that we were not solving anything and made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Vice-Mayor Cross.

It was agreed to have a second workshop and to meet again on Wednesday 2nd of August at 5:30 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mitchell Mack, Mayor

ATTEST:

Graham Wells, CMC Town Clerk