

**TOWN OF ASTATULA  
MAYOR AND COUNCIL  
SUMMARY MINUTES**



**BUDGET WORKSHOP  
MONDAY AUGUST 2, 2023  
2023-2024 BUDGET**

Having been duly advertised as required by law, Mayor Mitchell Mack called the workshop to order at 5.36 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

The Mayor opened the meeting wishing to address the “elephant in the room” which was the level of wage increases to be incorporated into the budget. Prior to the meeting, the Clerk had submitted a proposal to council for a five percent increase across the board, with a tenure aspect of an additional one percent for each year of service, capped at five years.

This addresses the comments brought up by Chief Hoagland at the last budget workshop where the town should reward those that have been with the Town for a long time and supported it through the lean and difficult years. The report showed the existing rates of pay and what the effect of the increases would be. The Clerk also provided a comparison of police officer salaries from fourteen cities in central Florida and where available, the salaries of Corporals, Lieutenants and Police Chiefs at both the minimum and maximum levels.

Although Councilman Teeters disagreed with the comparison due to the variance in populations, the Mayor felt that it reflected the market and what our officers could be paid elsewhere. It was evident from the report that all our PD staff fell way short of the minimum average. This was the area that the Mayor wanted to address. He opened it for comment from the board.

Mr. Cross said that there was a substantial raise of nine percent last year, and that from what he was seeing in other cities, he was recommending four percent. The Clerk responded that at a recent meeting of Lake County City Clerks, most were looking to five percent with one city suggesting the tenure bonus which is why it was used in the report. It gave an increase in line with the CPI and also rewarded those people for staying at the town.

Councilwoman Issartel said that with the inflation as high as it is, people need to earn a respectable wage for the job they are doing. She added that when she started coming to the meeting five years ago, the town was in a mess and those people that were there then and have stuck it out should be rewarded for their loyalty.

Councilman Teeters said that he did not think that across-the-board raises were fair as 5% to the clerk was far more than 5% to Natalie. The two department heads are responsible to the council and their raises should be merit based.

Councilwoman Sikkema stated that government is not the same as private companies and typically raises were given across the board whether the employee is good or bad. She added that a good increase was given last year because we were so far behind and that 5% this year is fair, and the town can afford it. She had mixed feelings about the tenure element or whether it should be a bonus.

The Mayor said that he had done his own research on the police pay and that this was the first time that the town had the money to address the shortfall in pay. He put forward his own proposal of a 10% increase to the Chief and the Clerk. He then added a \$4.00 per hour increase for all police employees. Tracy had already received an increase and needed to be looked at separately.

He said that he was not ready to commit to a Public Works Director but wanted to promote Scott to a lead position and make his position full time which included additional benefits. His pay rate would remain the same at \$20.00 per hour. Heather would remain part time under public works and be given more hours.

He said that this proposal was bold but that the town could afford it. It doesn't solve every problem, but it does go a long way to reward the loyalty of the existing staff. Councilman Cross felt that he could not support the proposal unless an independent study was done on police pay. Councilman Teeters advocated a minimum wage of \$18.00 for any position. Heathers wage was discussed, and the Clerk said that based on the tenure bonus would it take her to \$16.50 per hour.

The Chief felt that increasing her hours to 32 hours per week with a 10% increase would be his suggestion. He went on to give an impassioned summary of what had gone on in the past with his department and the necessity to reward his officers properly for their service.

At 6:45 pm, the Mayor called a five minute recess.

When the meeting was resumed, Councilman Teeters said that he wanted a new sign for the police department, the town hall painting, and new carpeting put in the budget. Vice-Mayor Cross said that they had not finished the previous discussion and wanted an independent study done to identify each position with a scaled range of pay.

The clerk said that the report submitted was information provided by a cross section of municipalities and showed the minimum and maximum rates of pay. The Mayors proposal falls in line with the minimum. The Mayor called for a straw poll on his proposal and to increase Heathers work week to 32 hours. Councilwoman Sikkema thanked the Mayor for looking at the raises in a different way which had not been thought of before and supported his proposal.

Council members Teeters and Issartel also supported the proposal, however Vice-Mayor cross could not support it. Mayor Mack supported his own proposal, and the clerk was instructed to amend the budget accordingly. The Clerk then went over the changes that had been made to the revenues and expenditures in the budget since the last workshop.


An amount of \$5,000 was in the budget for membership of Lake Economic Area Development (LEAD). The program was explained by the Mayor and opened for discussion. It was decided to take it out of the budget; however, an invitation would be extended to the LEAD group to address council on their program in the future.

The Mayor asked the Clerk when the Transportation, Infrastructure and Enterprise funds budgets would be ready for discussion. The Clerk Responded that he would work on them and bring them back at a future workshop.

Councilman Teeter brought up that the Chief was doing the Public Works Directors job but was not being remunerated for doing it. He said that the position should be filled, or the chief be paid for doing it. The Mayor said that he was not ready to have a full time director at this time but with the increase in the new construction, the position should be affordable next year. He added that he couldn't fix everything at once and that the police pay was his priority.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Mitchell Mack, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Graham Wells, CMC Town Clerk