

CITY OF HARAHAH
6437 JEFFERSON HIGHWAY, HARAHAH, LOUISIANA
MAYOR AND HARAHAH CITY COUNCIL
BUDGET HEARING
November 11, 2013

The Mayor and the Council met on the above date for a budget hearing.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Following the Pledge of Allegiance, the Mayor called the Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Provino Mosca, Councilman Baudier, Councilman Chatelain, Councilman Huete, Councilman Landry, Councilman Murray, Municipal Clerk Nicole Lee

ADDRESS THE COUNCIL

None

Councilman Murray thanked Mr. Johnston for his email.

BUDGET HEARING

1. RECREATION – \$236,250 - \$263,0000 last year

No money for balls or equipment – may have to give the dept. to the Parish.

The Mayor is against it – Mr. Baudier asked what's so bad about it.

A motion was made by Councilman Murray and seconded by Councilman Huete to take up the millage election.

Mr. Hugh Martin addressed the council concerning the election for the sale of the bonds. Must be advertised 4 times, it has been advertised once already.

Councilman Huete asked about the new law.

Mr. Martin said he would email it to her. To call the election for April of 2014, it must be called at the meeting on the 21st of this month. Mr. Martin said that the fire department's millage runs till next year. 4.94 mills for fire dept. expires 2014. You must have election by next May in order not to lapse. Millage must be filed by November, 2014 to get the taxes out. April 5 & May 3 are the election dates. Legally to meet, announcement must be done again and republish. Resolution calling the election must be done on Jan. 16, 2014. His opinion is that moving it to May is not a good idea. If the police chief is elected outright there would be no election in May. There is a statewide movement to limit the amount of elections. New laws require prior announcement and advertising before calling the election.

The number of mills for each department must be decided upon for the call of the election.

Councilman Huete wants to appoint a finance committee with citizens to advise them about the millage needed.

Mayor Mosca asked Mr. Martin how long has he been doing this work for the city and parish.

Mr. Martin said his first millage election for Harahan was for the sewerage plant in 1963. His firm is the only firm that does tax and bond law in Louisiana. he has been a resident of Harahan since 1958.

Mayor Mosca said he understands that November would be too late.

Mr. Martin - arriving at the millage is critical. Look at budget and then come up with a best estimate of what the budget should be. If everyone agreed, it could be done in 24 hours.

Councilman Huete suggested appointing a finance committee.

Councilman Baudier said that from what fire chief said he concluded; 10 mills for fire department; then take up police in November. This would alleviate a lot of pressure on the city. Fire has won before and he feels they could do it again.

Councilman Huete said the property tax bill shows each mill and what they are for. She would like to send them to the citizens - \$77,000,000 assessed property tax but collected only \$1.6 million. Budget is down this year with a huge shortfall. Use dollars instead of millage so people will understand it.

Mr. Martin suggested they make a chart with incremental of valuation and the results of an increase. Use the local organizations to promote the issue.

Councilman Murray said the election should be advertised properly and the public

educated.

Councilman Huete said that the Fire Dept.'s budget is \$900,000 with 5 mills – what would 10 mills bring in.

Councilman Murray asked what happens if the public turns the millage down, do we have enough time to see if it could be placed on the ballot in November while meeting the requirements for the law. Nov. 4, 2014 or Dec. 6, 2014 – two elections scheduled.

Mr. Martin said there must be a 6 month interval if it is turned down in April.

Councilman Murray said the money from the millage would not come in until 2016 but we need a backup plan if the millage fails.

Councilman Landry said we need a finance committee to help determine the figures and help advertise and push the election.

Councilman Murray said that education of the public is a must if it is to pass.

Mayor Mosca said there is a new sewer fee on water bill – to pay back the bond fees.

Councilman Murray asked what is the payment of the loan?

Mayor Mosca said that hasn't been determined yet, but we couldn't have gotten a loan without a method to pay back.

Mr. Martin said the loan will cover the actual cost of the project and the state won't lend more money than needed for capital improvement and will look at the method of pay back and may have to adjust monthly charge to cover it.

Councilman Murray repeated that she wants to see the figures.

Mr. Martin said that is unknown at this time.

Mayor Mosca said he is optimistic that the FEMA loan will be forgiven and the state will work with municipalities instead of taking over the city.

Councilman Murray said we need to make sure we can pay for the loan and that the city is in a good financial state.

Mr. Martin said the figures will be available in Feb. and estimates could be forthcoming. Interest is .095% for 30 years. \$11,000 a month or \$132,000 a year needed to pay back loan.

Mr. Courcelle said the new fee on the water bill brings in a \$240,000 increase a year – it doubled the bill.

Councilman Murray said that \$115,000 is left from the increase and loan fees and that can be used for total operation and maintenance.

Councilman Chatelain – no one knows what we will be doing.

Councilman Murray - \$115,000 left to operate – to make up for millage lost. This keeps us at status quo.

Mayor Mosca said it is better to do the sewerage millage later in time.

Councilman Chatelain - this is a tough decision, if we use a menu – they will vote them all down – how do you educate the public – it could be done individually. Everybody likes me, he joked.

Councilman Baudier said that doing the millage individually could hurt them in an election.

Councilman Chatelain said that he feels they could get a committee together to do this. He has 2 people in mind.

Councilman Huete asked that everyone to bring their nominees to the next meeting.

Mayor Mosca said that millages are more likely to be approved with larger number of voters.

Mr. Martin said that when the millage is for basic services, the public is more in favor.

Councilman Huete would like to set millage in January to give more time to advertise and get the public involved. She disagrees with the 4 – 3 from the early memo. We have 9 days to determine what the city needs and the citizens will accept.

Councilman Chatelain needs to know when the meetings are to determine if his nominees for the committee can attend.

Councilman Murray would like to open a budget meeting with the committee to determine the millage needed. Wed., Thurs. – Nov. 13 & 14 & Mon. & Tues. Nov. 18 & 19th are the dates for the meeting with a 24 hr. notice posted on door. 6:30 – 8:30 pm will be the time except for the 13 which will start at 5:30 pm. Wrap up on 20th.

Council waived notice and notice will be posted on door.

Councilman Chatelain suggested that if Mr. Courcelle can't come, that the meeting be cancelled.

Councilman Murray asked for a computer run comparing budget and actual audit figures. Also, outstanding debts, such as FEMA loan.

Mr. Courcelle also noted that franchise fees and sales taxes are going down.

Mayor Mosca - if current repairs meet formula for repayment - it may be paid from \$4 million loan.

Councilman Huete - looking at each dept.'s budget with mills for each department and what was collected. Show what millage would do to the tax bill.

Mayor Mosca suggested that the councilmen get the names of their appointees to Nicole by 4 pm on Tuesday so they can be notified of the meetings.

Budget Hearing

2. MAINTENANCE - \$215,700 - last year \$233

Mr. Lauricella - thanks to Paul for the new dump truck.

Mayor Mosca - \$500,000 for street repair next year from parish (we hope) Grove - curbs done. The dept. has the same amount of employees 4 + Edwin.

3. SENIOR CENTER - \$13,000 - was \$23,000

Mayor Mosca said that the Jefferson Council on Aging took the center's money - but we are getting some back.

4. LIGHTS - \$125,000 - was \$151,370

Street lights are out - one solar light is out.

Carlo - problem is the old lights are flood lights - and the solar lights are spot lights.

5. CIVIL SERVICE - \$2,500 - same as last year

6. REGULATORY - \$124,815 - a little lower \$125,115

3 in Regulatory - Charlet, Boudreaux & Maddie.

Councilman Murray asked if the city can we get rid of picture taker at \$250 a month.

Mayor Mosca said no, he won't terminate that position. I can justify this position.

Councilman Chatelain agreed with Councilman Murray that we need to eliminate this position.

Councilman Murray pointed out that the Mayor just hired a third person for the regulatory department who could do it.

Mayor Mosca said he will think about it. He would like to take the money from Asst. Chief's salary. He will talk to the chief about that. I will come up with a budget and ya'll can either take it or leave it.

Councilman Murray said that someone is turning in a request for fuel reimbursement for \$200 without any gas tickets being turned in from the regulatory dept. She asked why Mr. Charlet has a \$50,000 salary while working 10-12 hours a week plus the \$200 a month in gas while using the city vehicle.

Councilman Huete asked why the fines for regulatory are not being put in regulatory line item.

Former Mayor Carlo Ferrara said that tickets for gas usage are being turned in by Mr. Schwall and Mr. Smith because they are using their personal vehicles.

Councilman Murray pointed out that the line item is \$1294 over budget for gas & oil. She asked if the check for \$200 a month was in addition to Mr. Charlet's salary. She would like the newly hired part time person to take pictures. That could save \$5400 a year from pictures and fuel.

Mayor Mosca said the \$200 is part of Mr. Charlet's salary and was negotiated as part of his salary.

Phil Ramon in the audience asked if this was a reimbursement for actual expense or was just a flat fee of \$200 a month. He said that receipts and mileage should be recorded to justify the expense.

Mayor Mosca said again that this is part of his salary package.

Phil Ramon asked if this information was sent to the auditor.

Mr. Courcelle said that reimbursement of expenses are legal and are non taxable.

Councilman Murray asked why he is getting reimbursement for gasoline if he is using the city vehicle.

Phil Ramon - asked Mayor to look into this and get a legislative auditor or city attorney to give an opinion.

Councilman Chatelain said he will look into it with the Mayor and auditor.
Mayor - if we screwed up we will do it a different way.

7. SEWERAGE - \$583,000 -

Mr. Courcelle said the city spent \$400,000 this year on sink holes - and there is another one on West and Marquette that will cost approx. \$50,000.

Councilman Murray said the Mayor is spending too much. If he has a penny - he's spending 5 cents.

8. COURT - \$92,860 - \$92,860

Councilman Huete said this court is for traffic violations. She heard that there is a lot of plea bargaining going on.

Councilman Chatelain said officers are writing tickets to 1st parish court instead of the Harahan.

Councilman Huete said that no officer from Harahan has been subpoenaed to testify for 2 years.

Mary Helen Koscho said this is not true. The offender can pay before court date and then officer is not subpoenaed. Most pay their fines or don't show up at all.

Councilman Murray asked about the decline in fees; she suggested it was because the officers are not writing tickets.

Mary Helen said they are not arresting people for attachments

Councilman Murray asked about the outstanding fees. She asked if they are aggressively searching for these people who don't pay.

Mary Helen said the officers are only doing that Harahan.

Mayor Mosca said they only doing that on overtime - costs more to collect than what we collect - must have two officers to serve them.

Councilman Baudier brought up the traffic cameras. He said Westwego is making a killing on them and accidents and speeding are way down.

Mary Helen - uptick in tickets in the last two weeks. There are 2 employees in the court dept. and 1 more on sick leave.

9. GENERAL OPERATING FUND - Administration - \$170,770 -

No discussion.

A motion was made by Councilman Murray and seconded by

Councilman Baudier to amend the agenda to add the category Sanitation.

The Mayor called for the vote, it was as follows:

YEAS: Baudier, Chatelain, Huete, Landry, Murray

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

MOTION PASSED

10. SANITATION - \$675,000

Mayor Mosca said the price is going up because of cost of living 3 or 5%

Councilman Huete said that dumping fees are down because of recycling.

Councilman Chatelain asked that Progressive break down fees so they can determine how much the city is saving. He said he thinks it is about \$40,000 in savings, but he would like to make sure.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Finance Committee - get names to Nicole

Get CPA's if possible.

2. Millage - Finance committee will help determine millage

ADDRESS THE COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE SESSION

ADJOURN

A motion was offered by Councilman Murray and seconded by Councilman Chatelain to adjourn at 9:00 pm.

The Mayor called for a vote. The vote was:

YEAS: Baudier, Chatelain, Huete, Landry, Murray

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Landry

MOTION APPROVED

Provino Mosca, Mayor

Nicole Lee, Municipal Clerk

- A. The following matter involving pending litigation may be considered (Court, Case, Number, Parties):**
- 1. D Stop Prop LLC vs. Harahan City of, Board of Adjustments and Appeal of the City of Harahan, Case: 729-152 Div: "N".**
- B. The following matter involving prospective litigation for which formal written demand has been made may be considered.**
- C. The following matters involving discussion of the character, professional competence, or physical or mental health of:**
- Name:**