

SPECIAL SESSION

JULY 15, 2014

The City Council of the City of Athens met in Special Session on Tuesday, July 15, 2014, 2:00 p.m. in the City of Athens Training Center, 622 S. Prairieville St. with the following members present, to-wit:

Jerry D. Vaught, Mayor
Monte Montgomery
Tres Winn
Joe Whatley
Charles Elliott

Pam Burton, City Administrator
Pam Watson, City Secretary

others present: Glen Herriage, Gary Crecelius, Buddy Hill, John McQueary, David Hopkins, Haven Cox and Sherri Skeeters;

constituting a quorum at which time the following proceedings were enacted, to-wit:

The invocation was given by Councilmember Montgomery.

DISCUSS/CONSIDER PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014-2015

City Administrator Pam Burton reviewed the proposed budget calendar.

David Hopkins, Director of Finance, reviewed the budget process, projections and public notices. He informed the Council that .645143 is the City's current tax rate.

Councilmember Elliott stated that he expects to see the budget cut by at least ten percent (10%) minimum and he will not vote for a deficit budget of any kind. Mr. Hopkins explained unallocated reserves and the fact that there is not a deficit in cash at the end of the year, there is a current year budget deficit.

Mr. Hopkins explained that 1.4 million dollars would have to be cut to produce a 15% reduction in the budget, with 70.1% of the budget being allocated to the Police Department and Fire Department.

Mr. Hopkins reviewed the Utility Fund, explaining that a Utility Rate Study will need to be conducted in the first part of next year, as it was not conducted this fiscal year due to unknown future expenditures.

Councilmember Vaught reminded the Council that they will also need to consider funding requests from the Henderson County Humane Society and the Cain Center, with Councilmember Elliott suggesting a possible election in May regarding additional funding for the Cain Center. Mr. Hopkins recommended that the Council proceed with caution, due to being unsure if the tax base can totally support the Cain Center.

Councilmember Elliott expressed his feelings that taxes cannot be raised, as the current tax rate is too high compared to other cities around Athens. Councilmember Whatley expressed his feelings that the tax rate is preventing businesses from coming to Athens. Councilmember Montgomery expressed his feelings that businesses are not locating to Athens due to it not being located on a major interstate.

Councilmember Winn expressed his feelings that Departments should be able to present their requests to the City Council prior to items being cut, and if the Directors would like to appear before the Council they be allowed to do so.

After discussion, Councilmember Whatley and Councilmember Winn expressed their desire to review all capital and new programs that are being requested.

Ms. Burton provided the Council with the current Step & Grade Pay Scale. She explained that a consultant was hired in 1998 to create the Step & Grade Pay Scale due to the City's 28% job turnover rate. She explained that the Scale was updated in 2002 by a different Consultant and again in 2006, with the Scale including cost of living increases, as authorized by the City Council.

The Council discussed the Step & Grade Plan for the Police Department and Fire Department, with Councilmember Winn expressing his concerns with overlapping pay and Officers possibly making less than the employees they are supervising.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS THE 11TH DAY OF AUGUST, 2014.

Jerry D. Vaught, Mayor

ATTEST:

Pam Watson, City Secretary