

BUDGET, FINANCE, AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

September 8, 2009

3:00 P.M.

Councilwoman Berz, Chairman, called the meeting of the Budget, Finance, and Personnel Committee to order with Councilmen Murphy, Ladd, Scott, Gilbert, McGary, Rico and Benson present. Councilwoman Robinson joined the meeting later. City Attorney Phil Noblett and Shirley Crownover, Assistant Clerk to the Council, were also present.

Others present included Richard Beeland, Beverly Cosley, Mayor Littlefield, Bernadine Turner, Anthony Sammons, Gary Hilbert, Lee Norris, Steve Leach, Bob McGee, Fredia Forshee, Cristy Creel, Daisy Madison, Simone White, Dan Johnson, Chief Cooper, Randy Ray, Paul Page, Donna Kelley, Larry Zehnder, Ulystean Oates, Vickie Haley, Stan Sewell, Chief Parker, Chief Maffett, Beverly Johnson, David Johnson, and Chief Raulston. Mark Keil, Al Chapman, and Missy Crutchfield joined the meeting later.

FISCAL YEAR 2010 BUDGET

Chairman Berz outlined the reason for this meeting—information on the Budget had been received, and this was the time for responses. She noted one missing piece—Councilwoman Scott had asked for a response by e-mail concerning pay increases for Fire, Police, and all other areas. Ms. Madison stated that this information could be made available by the Council meeting tonight.

Copies of the Ledger, with much detail, that accompanies the Budget was requested by Chairman Berz, Councilwoman Scott and Councilman Gilbert, with one for the Council office for general uses.

Chairman Berz asked the Council's pleasure in procedures today—if there were questions or if a decision could be made today. Councilman Benson did not think the Council was ready for a vote tonight. Councilman Rico brought the \$1.4 million dollars required for the police to keep their cars to the forefront, with Chairman Berz suggesting that this meeting be conducted in an orderly fashion. Councilman Benson was interested in funding that requires City-County cooperation. Councilman Rico felt that a full day was needed for a budget discussion. Councilwoman Ladd felt that a structure was needed in order to proceed. Councilwoman Scott referred to one item that needed discussion—the Chattanooga History Center, which is jointly funded and is not operational. Councilman McGary suggested separate discussions regarding discretionary and non-discretionary funds. Councilman Benson noted that it would save \$1.4 million if the take-home cars policy was implemented. He asked for figures if this only involved those police cars that were out of the City, as visibility in neighborhoods seems to be an important factor.

It was the suggestion of Councilwoman Scott that the Council go over the Budget line by line to see what we could live with and live without and if there were any suggestions that could bring more money to the surface and then go about altering the Budget. Councilman Murphy noted that the Budget was already “painful” and questioned how much money the Council really needed to find, mentioning the need for one-time money for an Academy. He also mentioned the \$9 million dollars owed in city court fines—1200 people owing more than \$1,000 and 22 people more than \$5,000; that even a 10% collection would put us well down the road with the police take-home cars. He suggested vehicle boots and a Debt Service Law Firm, where a pay plan could be constructed to retrieve this money. He suggested talking to the Police Dept. and Judges to offer amnesty.

Councilwoman Scott noted that Parks and Recreation had already looked at their fee structure and suggested the potential of additional revenue from other departments, such as Land Development, looking at their fees in an effort to make fees more realistic to cover costs. She also made the suggestion that we lower the \$10,000 limit on what the Council looks at.

A discussion ensued regarding Allied Arts and the number of e-mails received by the Council from the art community and where these messages were coming from—many being from Signal Mountain and Georgia and other areas outside the city. Councilwoman Robinson pointed out that there are eleven municipalities in Hamilton County and Allied Arts does not stop at the city limits—that Allied Arts was eager to get other municipalities involved, but it would have to be next year’s budget because it is too late for this year. Councilwoman Ladd also expressed that she hated to see Allied Arts take the “hit”. It was the thought of Councilwoman Scott that municipalities are not the only funding source—that individuals could “dig deeper” and make it happen; that it did not have to be funded from the tax-base. Councilman Benson however felt that we should keep it to municipalities and get other governments to “ante up”.

It was decided that an all-day meeting is needed, which will be held on **Friday, September 11th at 9:00 a.m.** Councilman Benson suggested that since we have 14 annexation meetings and two or three appeals cases that it would be better if we have a Special Committee, including Chairman Berz and Councilwoman Scott, and work out an agenda so that we would be ready to go on Friday morning. Councilwoman Ladd agreed that we need a good structure when the 9:00 meeting begins. Chairman Berz suggested the special committee consist also of Councilwoman Ladd, Councilwoman Scott and Chairman Benson. No specific time was set for this Special Committee to meet, and Chairman Berz stated that she would announce the time at tonight’s Council meeting.

Councilman McGary asked about priorities as a Council, with Chairman Berz stating that Chairman Benson could answer that—that it was supposed to have been the first Tuesday of every month. Chairman Benson stated that he thought our priorities were already set. The meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

