



Presque Isle City Council Meeting

Monday, November 16, 2015

5:00 PM

Presque Isle Council Chambers

Call to Order - Roll Call

Present: Chairwoman Emily Smith, Vice-chairman Michael Chasse, Councilors Richard Engels, Craig Green (arrived at 5:07 PM), Peter Hallowell, Leigh Smith and Randy Smith

City Manager Martin Puckett and City Clerk Beverly A. Labbe were also present.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairwoman Emily Smith called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

WORKSHOP

Kim Guerrette Michaud and Lillian Rodriguez presented the Council with a \$35,000 request for Wintergreen Arts Center. This year, the City supported Wintergreen with a \$10,000 donation, which was used for summer/fall programing. Michaud stated for over a year, the Center has been operating without a full-time Executive Director. If the Council approves the request, the funds will be utilized to hire a full-time Executive Director. Michaud noted the Center could not operate without the volunteers.

Councilor Emily Smith asked how many of those who participate in the programs are Presque Isle residents. Michaud stated there are approximately 7,200 participants per year. Trying to determine where they are from would be difficult. For example, the Polar Express has families from as far north as Fort Kent and as far south as Houlton.

Councilor Emily Smith asked about fees assessed versus the actual cost. Michaud acknowledged the fees charged do not cover the cost of the programs. There is a \$50/student/activity fee, which represents 68% of the actual cost.

Councilor Hallowell stated when you take into consideration the funds allocated for recreation and school, the request from Wintergreen is small, and believes Wintergreen should be used as a model. The Center operates on a very lean budget; they also utilize and rely on their volunteers. Hallowell also noted the programs bring a lot of traffic into the downtown area. Even though the City is facing a difficult budget, Hallowell believes this program is worth supporting.

Theresa Fowler, Executive Director for the Central Aroostook Chamber of Commerce, presented the Chamber's 2016 outside request of \$22,500, and noted this request has not increased from 2015. Fowler stated they would like to request more, but know the budget is strained. Fowler stated the Chamber serves thirteen communities. All participating communities receive a request for membership dues; some pay, some don't. 85% of the membership pay their dues, and are Presque Isle businesses. Fowler noted all the events are held in Presque Isle.

Councilor Hallowell stated the fee businesses are assessed is based on the number of employees, and asked if the Chamber is tracking that information. Fowler stated businesses are self-reporting.

Floyd Rockholt addressed the City Council regarding the fees that are assessed by the City to the Presque Isle Development Fund (PIDF), and asked for those fees to be reduced in 2016. Rockholt, who is a trustee on the board, stated the administration fees assessed by the City are now more than what the fund is receiving in interest. In 2014, PIDF received \$23,000 in revenues, but paid \$28,000 in administration fees and \$7,500 for legal fees. Currently, PIDF has twelve loans, and one of those loans is with the City at no interest. If PIDF were to bid out the services, they could get someone to oversee the program for \$5,000. Rockholt believes staff support may spend 5 hours/month for financial prep and closure of loans. Rockholt noted the software used to track the loans was paid for with PIDF funds.

Councilor Hallowell asked if PIDF has considered increasing interest rates. Rockholt stated that they had a 5% maximum, but there were no applicants. They now lend at 1% under prime.

Judy Anderson, a representative of Aroostook Agency on Aging, presented their request for funding. Their request is for \$5,000, and Anderson stated these funds are utilized towards a local match for federal money. The money received assists only Presque Isle residents.

Scott Wardwell, Director of Northern Maine Regional Airport, presented his 2016 budget to the Council. Wardwell stated his budget is 13% over 2015. A small COLA has been added and overtime wages has been increased by \$12,000. As presented, the 2016 budget will not change how the Airport operates.

Wardwell stated he recently met with FAA regarding capital improvements and they have agreed to reconstruct Taxiway A for \$3,895,000. It was a competitive process, but Bill Garrish was very compelling.

Councilor Green inquired about enplanements. Wardwell stated PenAir is up 5-6%. The problem is the major airlines do not want to extend service to PenAir. PenAir has tried to make arrangements with the larger airlines, but "they are a small fish in a big pond". Wardwell stated the Essential Air Service will be up for bid again in three months.

Larry Clark, Executive Director of the Industrial Park, presented his 2016 budget. The budget is 2% higher than 2015. The budget is basically flat, with an increase for health insurance and wages.

Clark reminded the Council that the City received three grants in regards to the ACME Monaco expansion, and stated Northern Maine Development Commission was extremely helpful during the process. The next step in the process will be to advertise and select an architect, by drafting a "Request for Qualifications", which will be due December 8, 2015. Clark is hoping the building will be completed by spring of 2017, resulting in increased revenues in 2017.

Clark reminded the Council the Park oversees thirty plus buildings. He made a request for \$140,000 for capital reserves, and the City Manager has reduced this request to \$125,000. To demonstrate the need for capital reserve funds, Clark stated a new roof is needed on the Converse building's loading dock which is estimated at \$30,000.

Arnold Robinson, resident of Presque Isle, addressed the City Council. Robinson expressed his concern regarding the Amish horses which are defecating on City streets, and believes they should be required to clean up their messes.

City Manager Puckett stated he is not aware of any ordinances the City has that address this problem. Since this problem not only exists in Presque Isle, but surrounding communities as well, Puckett believes this problem needs to be addressed regionally.

City Manager Puckett stated there has been staffing changes to general government, which has resulted in a decrease of \$10,000.

Councilor Chasse asked about the City Hall renovations. Puckett stated he met with Seacoast Security last week. The City received a firm quote that was less than \$80,000. Puckett reminded the Council each floor of City Hall needs doors with electro-magnetic stops.

Councilor Hollowell asked about the grant writer, and whether that job description has been rewritten. Hollowell believes the position cannot be justified solely as a grant writer. Puckett stated the job description has not been rewritten, but that person has now assumed responsibility for all City press releases, is staff support to the Downtown Revitalization Committee and responsible for coordination of public comments during an emergency. Puckett stated this person is also assisting with human resources.

Councilor Hallowell asked about ICMA. Puckett stated those funds are for continuing education. There are two trainings/year, the regular meeting and educational credits needed for certification.

Councilor Hallowell expressed his concern regarding fees the City pays, particularly service members' fees, which do not seem to produce a lot of benefit. City Manager Puckett stated those fees are based on population. Puckett stated usually meetings for service centers are held four hours away in Augusta. Fees paid to Maine Municipal Association (MMA) allows the City to receive all the benefits that result from those meetings, without having to attend. Puckett stated the City is insured through MMA, which offers much better rates, and those fees include access to legal services.

Councilor Hallowell believes the reimbursement for Cunningham should be eliminated for 2016. Hallowell also asked for the contractual overtime at both the Fire and Police Departments for the next meeting.

Councilor Emily Smith and Engels stated they would like to have a summary of the potential cuts for the next meeting. Smith stated they are scheduled to hold the second public hearing, and the Council does not have a proposed budget for the public to view. The budget, as submitted in October, has a 3 mil increase. Councilors asked where the budget stood with the cuts that have been discussed. Puckett stated a potential of 1.84 mil increase, not including the pool.

Adjournment

BE IT RESOLVED by Councilor Chasse, seconded by Councilor Leigh Smith to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 PM.

Vote 7-0.

Attested by: _____
Beverly A Labbe, City Clerk