

Finance & Judiciary Committee Meeting

MINUTES

March 8th, 2011

6:00 p.m.

Members: Ben Kessler, Chair, Richard Sharp, Rick Weber

Roll Call: All present.

Others Present: Mayor Brennan, Lou Chodosh, Beecher Hale, Bill Harvey, Bruce Langner, President McClelland, Mark Masser, Jed Morison, Mike Price, Chief Rinehart and Gary Qualmann.

Review of Minutes: February 22nd, 2011- **Approved**

Presentation and/or Special Guests: None.

Discussion of Charter Review Recommendations and the next step.

Mr. Kessler distributed a proposed timeline to discuss the Charter Review items. He said the information needs to be completed by June in order to get any issues to the ballot. Mr. Morison said any information must be filed by August 10th. Mr. Kessler said the language should be completed by early June at the latest.

Mr. Chodosh said it would appear to have one controversial suggestion on the list and he would suggest having that particular discussion last. Mr. Qualmann said he would prefer to discuss the Auditor/Finance Director issues as soon as possible. Mr. Kessler proposed they meet on April 6th for an additional meeting to discuss this topic. Mr. Masser suggested Council also reserve May 3rd for a Special Meeting as well.

Mr. Weber asked if the logic should be to approach the overall topic with the fact that it merits a ballot issue and then we are going to refine it. President McClelland said he believes each topic will be open for discussion. Mr. Sharp said after 20 some members have spent so much time on these topics, he feels it is Council's obligation to refine the language and let the voters decide. Mr. Weber said he certainly respects the Committee and their recommendations but thinks they can't blindly agree to put all the topics on the ballot.

Mr. Kessler said he thought Mr. Weber brought up a good question. Should we even discuss whether or not an item should be placed on the ballot? Mr. Chodosh said it was his opinion that the Committee assumed City Council would be making the decision as to whether or not a topic should go to the ballot. Mr. Morison said there are five or six other items that are strictly recommendations and not ballot issues. President McClelland said he thinks we more urgently need to discuss the ballot issues first. We can discuss the potential Ordinances after the ballot issues. Mr. Chodosh said some instances could be both or you could decide to rectify by means of an Ordinance.

Discussion of Revenue Enhancement and Cost Reduction Opportunities. Mr.

Kessler said the Governor is set to release the budget next Tuesday. He said they will

need to work with the Auditor, Finance Director and Administration to come up with three recommendations. Of these recommendations; he thinks it should include:

1. No tax increase at all to the residents.
2. A decrease in the current budget.

Mr. Kessler said he does not think a tax increase should be a foregone conclusion.

Mr. Qualmann said with or without the estate taxes, we are in serious need of an expense reduction. If there is no proposed changes in the estate tax system, we still need a 2 mil expense reduction. If there is a cut in estate taxes, we need a 4 mil expense reduction. Mr. Masser asked if these recommendations would be for this year or next year? Mr. Kessler said Council needs to move forward with the assumption there will be no tax increases. The cuts we need to begin will go into effect immediately. He said he realizes that it is an undesirable option and people will be concerned for their departments.

Mr. Qualmann said a 2 to 4 mil dollar decrease is approximately 20 – 40% reduction in city expenditures. These will be draconian cuts to the city. Mr. Kessler said the estate tax has been a wild card and to date a saving grace.

Mr. Morison said the Governor will present his budget; the State Representatives will review and amend it before it goes on to the Senate. The goal is to have a balanced budget by June 30th. Republicans are in control of the House and Senate and there are other issues which are influencing their time such as House Bill No. 5. There is retirement legislation which will be folded into the budget as well. There should be a better idea of what we will be dealing with in a week or so.

Mr. Masser asked if the Finance Director and Auditor could supply a copy of the figures for the current budget for the April 12th meeting. Mr. Qualmann said we are a little behind in the income tax but should be able to provide you with that information. Mayor Brennan asked Mr. Hale if he is checking weekly on the State tax fund. Mr. Hale said he would be able to start providing that information on a monthly basis. Mr. Kessler said the point is anything we are looking at here will be a fundamental change.

Mr. Chodosh said the second meeting in June will need to be the final decision in order for him to have time to get the information to the attorney, Tom Hart who is the specialist for wording on ballot issues. Mr. Kessler said it may go into July based on the Governor's budget.

Mr. Chodosh said they will need to go into Executive Session at the end of Council tonight.

Mr. Kessler said the proposed Ordinances below have already received committee approval.

Ordinances & Resolutions – Third Readings.

Ordinance 04-11 to appropriate \$645,266 from the ARRA Project Fund for the purpose of recording expenses of the ARRA Project for 2011, introduced by Mr. Kessler, (Introduced on February 8, 2011)

Ordinance 05-11 to certify special assessments for the various sites where the work was not done by the owner after being ordered by the City in accordance with Bexley Code Section 1490.15(b)(4) or Bexley Code Section 1492.04(b)(1), and it was necessary for the City to do the work and assess the owner, introduced by Mr. Kessler, (Introduced on February 8, 2011)

Second Readings.

None.

First Readings.

None.

New Business: None

Old Business: None

Adjourned 6:56 p.m.