Finance & Judiciary Committee
MINUTES
December 8, 2009
5:15 p.m.

Members: Robyn Jones, Chairwoman, Jeff McClelland, Mark Masser

Roll Call: Robyn Jones, Chairwoman and Jeff McClelland.

Others Present: Mayor Brennan, Lou Chodosh, Beecher Hale, Bill Harvey, Larry Heiser, Mike Price, Chief Rinehart.

Review of Minutes: November 17, 2009 - **Approved**

Presentation and/or Special Guests: None.

Ordinances & Resolutions –

a. **Finance Committee Report– Robyn Jones, Chair**

Third Readings.

Ordinance 58-09 to amend Sections 1060.10 and 1060.105 of the Codified Ordinances of the City of the Bexley to increase the rate for the collection and disposal of garbage, trash and brush within the City, and to declare an emergency, introduced by Ms. Jones (Introduced on November 10, 2009) **Ms. Jones made a motion to table the Ordinance, Mr. McClelland seconded. Vote was 2-0 to recommend to Council to Table the Ordinance.**

Ms. Jones stated that in the previous discussion held by the Finance Committee, they were in favor of a "phased in increase" for the seniors increase. Mr. Weber distributed copies of a previous email expressing his concerns for the increase for the seniors. He stated he is definitely in favor of phasing this increase in over time.

Mr. Harvey presented two options for Council to consider. The first option showed the new current rates being passed on to all residents, including seniors and lowering the age for the senior discount to include age 60 plus.

The second option showed the increases to the seniors being down in phases.

Ms. Jones asked if the 2010 rates, could be revisited in January. Mr. Harvey said the figures are reasonable for the future years projected because those were locked in. The only variable would be the cost of fuel charges.

Another issue Mr. Harvey discussed was the recycling bins. He plans on continuing to use all of the blue "Bexley" recycling bins which are currently sold to the residents for $8.00 each. Once that supply is exhausted, he would like to transfer to the red "Rumpke" marked bins and provide those at no charge to the residents.

Mr. Morison asked if it was possible to consider a "hardship" clause in the trash and water rates. Mr. Harvey said he did research that and unfortunately it is not a possible option at this time. Mr. Harvey explained that Rumpke allows the City a discount for seniors at 60 plus versus 65 years old. He can see no reason for this not having been offered to the residents before and said he would like to make it available since there is no cost to the City. The City informs them of the number of residents. His suggestion was to provide the 60 – 64 year old the Rumpke discount and only the residents age 65 and older would receive the subsidized phase in rate. He said the 65 and older individuals who are already receiving the senior rate could be grandfathered in at the lower rate.

President Lampke suggested adding a third option. Mr. Harvey said he would do that and work on the numbers. Mr. Harvey said if you phased in the increase on all individuals who are age 60 plus (including 65 and over) that is a considerable amount of money for the City or the younger residents to subsidize. Mr. Weber said he is not comfortable billing seniors at two different rates. President Lampke stated that the age should be the qualifier. The City needs to pay the 1.1 million regardless of how many seniors we have or not. Mr. Kessler said he agrees with Mr. Weber and has concerns about two different senior rates. He is in support of using age as the only qualifier as well. Mr. Harvey said the current rate is $264.00 for all residents and the 60 plus rate would be $246.00.

President Lampke suggested that the wording be added to reflect attainment of the particular age by January 15, 2010. Ms. Jones suggested this Ordinance be tabled until the next meeting. Mr. Harvey said that would not be a problem provided the finalized Ordinance is passed before January 1st, 2010. He said he will adjust the breakdown to $272.00 for a regular; $246.00 for age 60 – 65 years old and $195.00 over age 65 by January 1st, 2010. Mr. Harvey wanted to clarify that the 65 years and older would qualify for the subsidized plan whether they had previously been on the plan or not. Council confirmed he understanding was correct.

** Mr. Harvey added that these rates will apply to residential property only. Commercial property is exempt from any discounts.

Ordinance 63-09 providing for the issuance and sale of bonds in the maximum principal amount of $4,200,000 for the purpose of paying the costs of improving municipal streets by reconstructing, resurfacing, repairing and otherwise improving the same, and including but not limited to, related sidewalks and water

improvements, together with all incidental work and related appurtenances thereto, introduced by Ms. Jones (Introduced on November 10, 2009) **Tabled**

Mr. Heiser said the Task Force did not want any additional debt added to the City. We have only spent 1 million so far on the breakdown between the sidewalks and the street. He would encourage Council to Table this Ordinance and see where we are in six months before making any decisions.

Mr. Harvey said it is a cash flow issue and Gary Qualmann thinks the City should bond and Mr. Heiser thinks we should wait.

Ms. Jones said that she has heard the Task Force members feel like their voice has not been heard. Mr. Heiser said that the fact that this Ordinance was even introduced makes them think this way. He said Gary's position is that it adds flexibility.

Mr. McClelland said Mr. Heiser's Tabled Ordinance about the Estate tax had not been thoroughly discussed. He agrees that perhaps this bonding issue should be tabled. Mr. Morison said he was also in favor of tabling this issue. Mayor Brennan asked if it could be tabled until a specific date in January. He said he did not want to be in a position where the street repairs and sidewalks get a late start and can't take advantage of the good weather which is what happened last year due to waiting for approvals on the funding.

Mr. Kessler said realistically the City receives 1.6 million a year in estate tax but we have a 1.5 budget. We can't afford to put that money to the side. Mr. Heiser said he could rework the amount of the estate funds that are put away. Mr. Harvey said 1.3 million out of that is reduced by cash flow. It has nothing to do with money spent to operate the City. Mr. Heiser said it has effected what we do operationally. Mr. Harvey said is hasn't effected it yet. The 2010 street work being done needs to have those bids out as soon as possible. The more in demand, the more the cost of the bids will be. He would like to complete the bids and get the crews out working in April. The more people bidding, the higher the cost will be to the City.

Vote was 2-0 to table the Ordinance. Mr. Morison added to table until January, per Mayor Brennan's request. Mr. Kessler stated he would revisit this issue next year with the Finance Committee.

Second Readings.

Amended Ordinance 66-09 to appropriate $20,000.00 from the unencumbered General Fund for the purpose of paying for the Turf Maintenance Contract within the Parks Department and to appropriate $30,000.00 from the unencumbered General Fund for paying police salaries and wages for the remainder of 2009; and to appropriate $2,500.00 from the Recreation Fund for the purpose of paying

Senior Programs salaries and wages for the remainder of 2009, introduced by Ms. Jones (Introduced November 17, 2009) **No Action**

First Readings.

Ordinance 68-09 to establish rates for all salaried employees, Police Chief, Police Captain and Part-Time and Casual Employees of the City of Bexley, effective as of January 1, 2010, introduced by Ms. Jones, (Introduced on December 8, 2009) **No Action**

Mr. Heiser said he wanted to begin with stating that he was upset that this Ordinance was not introduced last week. He said the numbers in the current Ordinance do not reflect the increase that he wanted to give his employees which was 11% and 14% instead of a 3% increase. He stated that both Beecher and Eunice are his employees and report directly to him. He said he introduced those numbers based on the wage scale which was presented by an elected official. Mr. Heiser stated that pay studies are not always comparing apples to apples. If someone is really good, shouldn't they be at the top of the pay range?

Mayor Brennan stated the pay study was conducted at Council's request to provide strictly a range for each employee. Council asked for salaries and this was included in the pay study. The Ordinance proposes 3% for non-union employees. Mayor Brennan said he does have a few additional employees that he would like to discuss in Executive Session at the end of the meeting.

Mr. Morison suggested that Council move on the 3% increase for all non-union employees this evening and if we need to make any market adjustments than those can be done at a later time.

Mr. Kessler said he had concerns about any increases in pay since the City is projecting a deficit. Several State, City and County positions have frozen or decreased their wages. Most people, including him are experiencing a negative income growth and thinks it is a discussion worth having.

Ms. Jones said it is a balance between the responsibility with both the residents and the employees. Mr. McClelland stated that the employees are the ones that have to work each day in the atmosphere of employee morale issues. He is in favor of the increase.

President Lampke clarified they would not be voting on the budget but the increase in pay. Mr. Morison stated that the 3% is not excessive and stated that a lot of employees at City Hall have taken on additional responsibilities and have still been able to maintain a high level of service for the community.

Ms. Jones asked Mr. Heiser for an example of where the salaries and wages lines in the budget are actually increased or do not match.

Mr. Heiser pointed out Recreation and Parks salary and wages and the Garage line items do not match. Mr. Harvey stated that these are additional funds pertaining to existing employees that we would prefer to discuss in Executive Session.

Ordinance 69-09 to revise the Codified Ordinances by adopting current replacement pages for 2009 and declaring an emergency, introduced by Ms. Jones (Introduced on December 8, 2009) **No Action**

Ordinance 70-09 to revise the Codified Ordinance by adopting current replacement pages for 2008 and declaring an emergency, introduced by Ms. Jones (Introduced on December 8, 2009) **No Action**

Ordinance 71-09 to appropriate $8,500.00 from the unencumbered General Fund to pay for electricity for the remainder of 2009, introduced by Ms. Jones (Introduced on December 8, 2009) **No Action**

Ordinance 72-09 to establish the water and sewer rates charged by the City of Bexley, introduced by Mr. Masser, (Introduced on December 8, 2009)

Mr. Harvey requested that Ms. Jones address this Ordinance since Mr. Masser is unavailable. He stated that the City of Columbus has raised the rates and we want to pass that on to the residents. It is an emergency because it is effective the 1st of January, 2010. City of Columbus has informed us what the rate will be for 2010.

President Lampke asked what we had achieved last year or this year. Mr. Harvey said the sewer and water pipe work was very small this year. The City has replaced 4,000 sq. ft. of water lines out of 20,000 sq. ft. Mr. Lampke suggested going into a replacement schedule and discuss what would be achieved. Mr. Harvey said he would see what he could find out but it probably won't be done before the next meeting on Tuesday.

Mr. Weber asked about the water bills being retroactive. Mr. Harvey said that was correct and the increase wouldn't be reflected on the resident's bill until June, but that legally the rate must be approved before the usage in January. Ms. Jones asked if anyone had any questions regarding the budget.

President Lampke stated he would like to take a closer look at the Capital Improvements" on page 28th.

Ordinance 73-09 to appropriate $2,250.00 from the unencumbered General Fund to pay for the prosecutor's contract for the remainder of 2009, introduced by Ms. Jones (Introduced on December 8, 2009) **No Action**

New Business:

Old Business: An article was distributed by Mr. Chodosh which explains the different liquor licenses. The article was distributed to Council.

Mileage Reimbursement/Car Allowances: Mr. Harvey stated that currently, only Directors are reimbursed for traveling through a car allowance. We do not reimburse employees who travel within the City limits in their own vehicles. He said he was not sure why it was set up that way but someone like Russ Halsey who is driving back and forth from City Hall to the new police station every day does take a lot of wear and tear on his private vehicle.

Mr. Heiser said in 2006 it had been discussed and they did a six month study at that time. He said it was determined to be more of a "perk" for directors. Mr. Harvey said it is more of a problem today. He said it is in Russ' IT budget and he does a lot of driving and certainly deserves to be compensated. He believes people who use their personal cars for City business should be compensated. Russ and some of the Park and Recreation directors do use their personal cars for business, even if it's once a month. They could complete a mileage report and that would be the responsibility of the manager.

Ms. Jones said she had the impression that they were receiving a flat rate because they didn't want to handle mileage reports. Mr. Morison said he agreed with Bill that the employees are certainly entitled to the IRS rate for reimbursement. President Lampke said it he recalls that it was Mr. Blaugrund who described it as only being applicable to "outside" city limits. Mr. Harvey said that once someone leaves their place of work and drives for business purposes, they should be compensated.

Mr. Price stated that personally, from an administrative position, he would prefer the flat rate so it would eliminate the time and responsibility to assure that the mileage reimbursement is correct for each employee. Council voiced the opinion that the mileage would be more accurate. Mr. Morison was in favor of allowing them to be reimbursed for their mileage and traveling within City limits.

President Lampke asked if the flat amount is added to the W-2 at the end of the year. Mr. Harvey said yes it is added and an employee still has to keep track of the mileage themselves in order to deduct it each year. President Lampke was of the opinion that employees should keep track of their mileage and receive reimbursement for travel including within City limits.

Adjourned 6:55 p.m.