

Budget Committee Meeting
Minutes
May 22, 2008 6pm
Civic Center, Council Chambers, 1175 East Main Street

CALL TO ORDER: The Citizen's Budget Committee meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm on May 22, 2008 in Council Chambers at 1175 East Main Street, Ashland Oregon.

ROLL CALL: Committee members Chapman, Douma, Everson, Gregorio, Hartzell, Heimann, Jackson, Morrison, Navickas, Silbiger, Stebbins, Thompson were present.

COMMITTEE ABSENT: Committee Members Hardesty and Slattery were absent.

STAFF PRESENT: MARTHA BENNETT, CITY ADMINISTRATOR
LEE TUNEBERG, ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES/ FINANCE DIRECTOR
BRYN MORRISON, ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVE
DIANA SHIPLER, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Douma/Morrison m/s to approve minutes of April 21, 2008. All Ayes.

DISCUSSION: Hartzell pointed out that even though the minutes stated that Medford no longer wants to subsidize the dispatch service, there is actually a contract for the current level so subsidize is probably not the best word, even if it does reflect what was actually said.

Committee member Jackson arrived 6:07 pm.

PUBLIC INPUT

John Stromberg gave information about the struggle between settings. He stated that Council should provide the Budget Committee with a framework of priorities and policies to guide decision making. He explained that without guidance it is really difficult for the Committee to make decisions.

BUDGET WRAP UP

Ms. Bennett explained that the Committee should discuss what worked in the process, what didn't and what should be done differently next year.

The Committee discussed what worked in the Budget Process. It was agreed that the Staff did a great job with the Budget Document and the Committee was very thankful to staff for sticking with the suggestion to continue with service levels.

The Committee suggested that the group should get the audit report and be able to have a meeting to discuss the auditors. Mr. Tuneberg said the City can notify the group of the meetings so that anyone can attend.

The Committee discussed the nature of the committee and the challenges they face in this process.

The Committee thanked the staff for handling the information requests and details so efficiently. Also appreciated how quickly staff gave updates as the details changed.

The Committee appreciated the budget message.

The Committee discussed working together, some felt divided while others felt that such a diverse group of people worked well together.

The Committee appreciated the even level of all the department presentations. The presentations have improved since last year.

The Committee discussed what went wrong in Budget Process. Ms. Bennett explained that The Budget document was not done before the first meeting because 3rd quarter numbers were not done. The problems with this are that the Budget doesn't get looked at as thoroughly, and it takes longer to make corrections.

Committee member Everson arrived 6:39 pm.

The Committee discussed that presenters should use PowerPoint as an outline for a presentation and not to read directly from it.

The Committee discussed what to do differently. Ms. Bennett suggested that council drop one of the two study sessions and would like the Committee to meet twice a week. Also suggested more discussion upfront and have the department presentations more compressed. The Committee agrees that the staff schedule is compressed that it would be a good idea to switch the schedules.

The Committee suggested departments have more information in the budget document and have the departments focus on the information that is already in the budget document.

The Committee stated that department heads need to anticipate any changes and should be prepared to answer those questions (preferably before they are asked). It was suggested that some of those answers should be in the budget document. The Committee stated this is the department's opportunity to explain their department and what it does which might be lacking if all answers were in the budget document. The Committee stated that there will always be questions regardless of what is in the budget document. It is important to accept that there is always a learning curve.

The Committee discussed one of the things that did not work was the meeting that was focused on cuts without having an end goal. The Committee would like to see more roundtable discussion to figure out what each member would like to see out of the process, and would like to see answers get solved in a more efficient way. The Committee stated that the format should be that each item needs to be evaluated as to it's own worth. More discussion would be a good change.

The Committee discussed another thing that went wrong was the divide between the immediate budget and the future year's budgets. Some members of the Committee were more focused on the future and others were focused entirely on this specific year's budget. It would great to find a way to see both short term and long term impacts for each item.

Some committee members felt uncomfortable with the add and cut packages. Council felt that there wasn't enough talk about adds.

The Committee suggested that council should be making the presentations relating to the add packages instead of Staff.

The Committee stated the need to look at long-term budget rather than being so focused on this one budget. Affordability was a constant discussion and felt it was false considering the rental market we currently have. The Committee discussed frustration with the franchise fees and how they are being used to save the general fund because the costs of those are hurting the least affluent members of the Community.

Committee member Morrison left 7:40 pm.

The Committee would like a discussion of property taxes vs. progressive fees and other taxes. The Committee would also like training on municipal budgeting. The Committee suggested adding one discussion night prior to having deliberation discussions.

The Committee discussed confusion regarding the Budget Committee's job versus Council's job.

Martha suggested a subcommittee of Council members, Parks Commissioners, and Budget Committee members to convene in the fall to discuss how to tackle long term issues. Particularly those related to ambulance and parks services.

The Committee discussed the key issues of concern for next year:

Personnel/ benefit costs

Ambulance and Fire Department costs and charges

Utility Infrastructure – capital project needs and long-term financing impacts

Transportation

Use of volunteers

Public private partnership

How other communities deal with Measure 50 constraints

2 Year Budget Process

ADJOURNMENT

This meeting adjourned at 8:36 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Huhtala
Administrative Secretary