

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

MINUTES

May 11, 2023

Call to Order: Vice Chair Eric Navickas called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm.

Roll Call

Present:

Councilor Paula Hyatt	Mike Gardiner
Councilor Dylan Bloom	Eric Navickas
Councilor Gina DuQuenne	Andy Card
Councilor Bob Kaplan	Linda Peterson-Adams
Councilor Eric Hansen	Leda Shapiro
Mayor Tonya Graham	David Runkel

Via zoom: Shane Hunter, Jeff Dahle

Absent: None

Approval of Minutes-Peterson-Adams/Hyatt motioned/seconded the approval of the April 27 minutes. Discussion: none. Voice vote. Motion unanimously approved.

Public Hearing -Written testimony submitted by Paul Mozina, see attached.

Open Gov Overview- Bryn Morrison and Mariane Berry presented to the committee a presentation on how to use Open Gov financial reporting software.

Department of Innovation & Technology Presentation – Director of Innovation and Technology Jason Wegner presented to the Committee a presentation on the Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT) budget. Page 131 of PDF budget. **Presentation attached.**

Leda Shapiro asked if the city will be in more competition with Hunter communications with the pilot project. Wegner responded that the pilot project will put the city in a better position to compete with Hunter. Shapiro asked if the city is getting franchise fees from Hunter. Sabrina Cotta responded that is correct.

Paula Hyatt spoke about cyber security. She saw that one of the future goals is for cyber security analysis. Do we have plans for cyber security? Wegner responded that pending the approval of the budget there are plans to hire consultants to help us identify areas that we can improve upon.

Bob Kaplan asked about franchise fees and how much are paid by Charter and other companies. Sabrina responded we would need to pull the contracts. We have separate agreements with each provider. Kaplan then commented that DoIT is a service provider for the rest of the organization, does DoIT get funds transfer from other parts of the organization? For example, DoIT purchases computers for all other departments in the organization, do those departments transfer funds into

DoIT's budget? Wegner responded that he thinks Kaplan is referring to central service fees. Yes, departments transfer funds to cover certain purchases made on their behalf.

Police Department Presentation- Chief of Police Tighe O'Meara presented to the committee a presentation on the Police Department budget. Page 163 of the PDF budget. **See attached.**

Mike Gardiner commented that a couple years ago APD partnered with Talent to help cover some of their needs. He asked if that program was still moving forward and if it is reflected in the budget. Chief O'Meara responded that it is a source of revenue, not an expense. Ashland has a contract or IGA with Talent for about \$750 a month to provide access to on-duty supervisors, the criminal investigation division, and training opportunities. And if an APD officer wants to they can pick up a shift in Talent as needed billed at a rate of about \$105.00 per hour. This rate covers overtime, benefits, wear and tear on the patrol car as well as gas. APD does not provide any hours of patrol in Talent like what was done in the past. O'Meara expects this partnership to remain the same going forward. There was an exploration as to whether Talent and Ashland police departments should combine. Talent decided they wanted to reestablish their own fully staffed police department, which is what they have done. But they remain great partners.

Tonya Graham, spoke that when she looks at this budget for Police, she understands that the budget is holding the staffing level to 28. O'Meara responded no; the upcoming budget gets police up to 30 staff. Graham then asked when you talk about coming to Council to ask for staffing up to 32, we are really only looking at one or two positions. O'Meara responded that police onboarding is so long it takes a year for that person to be functional. But at some point, O'Meara will come back to council and ask for more positions, such as the school resource officer but that will probably be a couple years down the road. Graham spoke that we should consider this to be adequate staffing given how long it take to bring people on. O'Meara responded that yes, this gets us solidly in the right direction for the next couple of years.

Navickas asked if with that staffing, we would remove ourselves from the IGA with Talent as we would not need that anymore? O'Meara responded that they are two different things. The IGA with Talent is a benefit to them. It is incumbent on us to be a resource to them in order to maintain the relationship.

Dylan Bloom spoke that O'Meara mentioned that onboarding takes about a year, he saw the posting to hire a lateral police officer, is that somebody who is already trained in another jurisdiction? And is that onboarding time still one year? O'Meara responded, no, the onboarding time of a year is for an entry level recruit with no police experience. The save in hiring a lateral officer is that you don't have to spend resources sending them to the academy and training them. It is much less onboarding time before they are operational. Bloom asked in terms of cost is there a significant difference between a lateral police officer and a new recruit? Is it relatively more affordable to just hire lateral officers or a new recruit? O'Meara responded that it's just two different things. Laterals are easier to train but bring their own issues. They cost more money because they

start at a higher salary than new officers. But new officers are ours to mold into Ashland Police Officers. Sometimes we just have to get what we can and train them. Lateral officers are hard to get right now.

Bob Kaplan asked what does the police vehicle fleet look like? O'Meara responded, there is not a line item to buy vehicles. We pay into a replacement cost which goes into the Public Works department then they buy vehicles according to the cycle. Sabrina Cotta added that it is an equipment fund and all of the city's departments pay a monthly rate based on their fleet. That way there is an associated cycle with each piece of equipment. And we can replace items in a timely fashion. Kaplan spoke that on page 207 in the PDF budget book there is a summary of internal service fees. There is a grant for \$4,000 that is an expense for indigent assistance. O'Meara responded that he believes it is for bus tokens and gas cards for folks who are in need so we can help them out.

Leda Shapiro asked if vehicle maintenance was included in the equipment fund. O'Meara responded yes, if the vehicle is under warranty then Public Works will get to the dealership to cover it. If it's not under warranty, then Public Works has mechanics that can work on vehicles. Shapiro asked if gas was included. O'Meara responded that gas is a different line item just like a fleet maintenance line item that we pay similar to how the central service fees work. Shapiro asked if the IGA with Talent covers salary, overtime, and benefits. O'Meara responded it does. It is based on a calculation of what a junior officer may make and what a senior officer may make and includes wear and tear on the vehicles and gas costs.

Sabrina Cotta spoke that she would like to clarify that all vehicles are in a separate equipment fund and all departments have internal charges for items such as fleet maintenance and equipment replacement.

Mike Gardiner asked if there was any funding in the budget to bring back park patrols? O'Meara spoke that Park Patrol is funded by the Parks department. In the current budget that money was not identified due to the cuts that all departments faced. The Police department is dependent on Parks providing funding to employ the park patrol officers. APD would love for it to be in the budget. Gardiner asked if APD hires and supervises the Park Patrol officers. O'Meara confirmed that is correct.

David Runkel asked how do changes in the community affect the police budget? Ashland has an aging population and a sharp decline in visitors. O'Meara responded that it's premature to say post-pandemic what that is going to look like. The officers are currently very busy. Self-initiated activities such as traffic stops have been way down because officers don't have the time. Officers are busy reacting to situations. They're not lacking work, regardless of the shifting demographics or the number of tourists downtown. Whether or not there's some great cultural community shift is something that we must keep our eyes open for. As we normalize from the pandemic and as we see what is happening with organizations like the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, we don't know what downtown is going to look like in the coming years. APD needs to be open to a shifting

demographics and a shifting community but right now Ashland Police Officers are very busy regardless.

Eric Hansen asked in the last biennium how much did the police department lean on grants? O'Meara responded that APD does not receive many grants. The most significant grant they recently received was about \$300,000 for crowd control equipment that was done in conjunction with Medford and Grants Pass. There are grants that are automatically given out for drunk driving enforcement, distracted driving enforcement, seat belt enforcement, etc. but those are a few \$1000 apiece and those cover some amount of overtime to cover for an officer specifically for those types of enforcement. Hansen asked if O'Meara had any grant aspirations for the next biennium and would your department benefit from help from a grant writer? O'Meara responded that he would like to explore the school resource officer program but that conversation involves high school administration, staff, students, parents, the school board, and that's the sort of specialized police function that has a higher probability of getting a grant.

Paula Hyatt asked about overtime. She noticed that overtime is trending down. What is driving that trend? O'Meara responded that there has not been any travel training for the past couple of years which removed the need for backfilling on overtime. APD had been more mindful and not doing as much. They have been maintaining core functions and not really participating in anything over and above. That's not sustainable, we can't forego training. We need to spend money, we need to send people to training so that they can bring back information and maintain best practices. As things normalize officers have to be going to trainings and conferences to maintain skills, otherwise we won't be the police department the community wants.

Tonya Graham spoke as a follow up to the training conversation. It comes back to the ideal that the people of Ashland want a certain type of policing. When we look at the training numbers there is about \$25,000 a year for additional training. Given all the changes, is that enough to be able to get us where we need to be in terms of normalizing? And making sure all of our officers are able to receive that training and operate at expected levels. O'Meara responded, he thinks it is a good start. And we have the ability to reallocate funding it is not used in another area such as a vacant position. We should be able to stay on par with the best police departments in the country. Sabrina Cotta pointed out that the human Resources Department has training funds for citywide DEI training for the next biennium.

Leda Shapiro asked if the budgeted overtime will be sufficient as people start attending more trainings and conferences? O'Meara responded that yes, the budgeted overtime has remained pretty consistent over the last several budget cycles. We always have an ending fund balance.

Eric Navickas spoke that he is curious about the revenue side of the budget. He asked what is the number of police who were funded by the Parks department. O'Meara responded that in the past they had funded half of one downtown officer. But in this budget Parks is not funding any police officers.

Navickas asked how much of the public safety utility fee goes to the Police department. O'Meara responded that all the revenue goes to the general fund and then the council allocates money to the Police department. O'Meara went to council in 2017 and asked for four more officers. There were three main funding sources; \$1.50 public safety utility fee, TOT funds were at 10% and 30% of 1% was non-restricted and put into the general fund, and it was when recreational marijuana was legalized and there was the idea that municipalities would get signification marijuana money from the state. The public safety utility fee was put in place to support the police department through the general fund. Navickas commented that he would prefer the public safety utility fee to go away and the putting the burden on property taxes.

Navickas commented he would like to see more social service officers rather than typical police officers. We previously had a youth liaison officer position. He would feel more comfortable funding more police officers if it were someone who's doing more outreach for example to the homeless community rather than the status quo officer. He asked Chief O'Meara what he thinks about that. O'Meara responded that we need to have trained officers to appropriately address all kinds of situations. He agrees and supports the idea that we need more social workers and mental health professionals. Jackson County Mental Health currently has pilot project local offering similar to what Cahoots has in Eugene and Springfield. They have a partnership with Mercy Flights. And he agrees there are a lot of situations better handled by a social worker and police officers need to treat everybody compassionately and professionally, but it can't be at the expense of police officers. A few years ago Jackson County Mental Health received a grant to embed a crisis intervention worker full time with the Ashland Police Department. And from the get-go, we recognized that the city of Ashland is probably not going to provide enough crisis intervention business for somebody for 40 hours a week. So they added in Talent and Phoenix and made it a south county crisis intervention offering. That employee did everything she could to make herself useful and still could not fill 40 hours in a week. Regionally we need to have better resources for people in distress, but it has to be a regional offering. And while that reginal offering is being created, we still need to have police officers to responds to incidents as compassionately and professionally as they can with the entire skill set that an America law enforcement officer needs. Navickas stated he feels like if he is going to approve funding for more police officers he would like to see a more diverse police force that is more focused on the needs in the community.

Gina DuQuenne spoke that it is her understanding that we are looking at a Cahoots type program like what Eugene has for a more regional outreach program. Is that correct? O'Meara spoke that yes, it is a partnership with Mercy flights to take calls as appropriate away from law enforcement and have a mental health crisis worker and or a substance abuse counselor or a paramedic respond and handle those situations. DuQuenne asks if Ashland PD is still working closely with BASE (Black Alliance for Social Empowerment)? O'Meara responded that yes, they are working with BASE and the program has expanded to include Talent and Phoenix. They still meet on a regular basis and are looking for new ways to find a better relationship.

Fire Department Budget Presentation Fire Chief Ralph Sartain, Deputy Chief of Operations Marshall Razor and Division Chief of Wildfire and Community Risk Protection Chris Chambers presented to the committee a presentation on the Fire Department budget. Page 112 of the PDF budget. **See attached.**

Paula Hyatt spoke that in looking at the materials and services line and seeing the jump from 7.2 to 11 on personnel services caught her attention. How much of that is driven by GEMT funds? Sartain responded Ground Emergency Medical Transport is funding we receive back. We have what is called a pair profile which is provided by transport. In our community we have an older population which we transport as well as the unhoused population. This is reimbursed by Medicare/Medicaid at almost \$.46 on the dollar. If we charge \$12,000, we get \$600. The Center for Medicare Services or CMS provide our fee and they write it off. We want to be transparent with everything we do from the numbers that were given to you, and when there are presentations. Previously what was presented was what was earned, but what it didn't tell you was what was billed. The increase is a true accounting of what we billed. We billed \$3.6 million last year, and we did not get that amount back. Out of the \$11.54 million about \$4.1 million is the actual write off going to the federal government. The actual net increase in prices and services is just over \$500,000. This budget gives the real line item budget of what the fire department is actually doing.

Eric Hansen spoke about the presentation brought to Council. How long is it going to take us to ramp up to include these new services? Sartain responded as soon as the budget has been approved he is ready to bring on the first two EMT basics which is the start of the program and they would begin their two week training. The vans will be ordered in the next budget which will be used for two ambulances which is what is needed for the program to roll. He believes he should be able to train new EMTs and get the vans in about a month after receiving the green light to proceed.

David Runkel commented as a follow-up to Councilor Hyatt's question. The budget shows current revenue as \$2.8 million and you have projected \$9.5 million. How realistic is that? Sartain responded that the revenue is the true billing amount. All the numbers provided are based on a conservative 5% projection increase which includes GEMT funding. We receive a check that shows up randomly. We went with a very conservative plan so we weren't overburdening the community and are sure we are putting the right resources in the right place. Runkel spoke that transfers go from \$50,000 to \$688,000. Is that for the same reason as the previous projection? Sartain responded that, that is based on us adding to the system. With this current plan, the way it is with the four new individuals that is truly 100% in a stopgap measure. That does not increase our transport capabilities. That number is based on adding another ambulance to the system. We can handle 1.2 calls per hour off of that system. In the middle of the day by adding the two ambulances it will give us overload ability to start transporting people. Runkel asked what number is the charges for services in the budget? Bob Kaplan said he has a similar question in how do we track revenue verses bad debt? Sabrina Cotta responded that we track revenue coming in so we know how much revenue and how much we billed. Medicare and Medicaid have set rates so we know when we transport we are only going to get a certain percentage back. Runkel asked what number in ambulance revenue is included in

the overall budget figure? Cotta responded that staff will have to get it for him. Paula Hyatt commented that you will never get 100% of what you bill just based on the nature of how medical insurance companies pay out. You would budget the revenue for what you billed with the understanding you will never collect 100%. Cotta added that the previous budget model only reflected what was actually received whereas this budget model is based on what we anticipate billing so we can show our bad debt write off.

Tonya Graham stated her question is about wildfire reduction efforts specifically the efforts inside the city. The ability to protect ourselves from wildfire is really about how well all of us do around our own homes. She saw we are aiming to have 700 inspections. But if we compare that with the number of structures we have in Ashland we are at least ten years out. Given the changing risk profile, what risk are we taking by taking so long? What should we be looking at in terms of budget figures to do more to help actually residents deal with their own particular fire risk? Sartain spoke that he isn't sure what type of budget that would entail but it would significantly more than what we could handle right now. Fire is everybody's issue and right now we collect a minute amount of funding needed for fire prevention and fuels mediation. That is policymakers' tasks. The council would have to provide direction of what they want to be done and come up with the funding.

Eric Navickas asked about the fee that is on the water bill for AFR, Ashland Forest Resiliency. Are we still paying the forest service a certain amount? Chris Chambers responded that yes those funds are still being spent for the appropriate purposes with AFR which include Lomakatsi. We are at the point where we got through the initial footprint of the AFR project on federal lands and we are investing that money in maintenance of fuels in the watershed. In 2017 the rate increased from \$1.50 to \$3.00 per household but those funds went for staffing which reduced the amount from \$100,000 to about \$89,000 to reduce fuels and stay current with the regrowth because of the choice that was made in the 17/19 budget. Navickas spoke that his concern is the mechanism used for funding AFR. Is there any interest in renegotiating with the forest service? Chambers responded that the funding was always meant to be seed money to bring in more investment. We have brought in 10s of millions of dollars as a result of the City putting money into the bucket with the Forest Service. We were able to get some funding in this current biennium by getting a grant from the state of Oregon through Senate Bill 762, which is the wildfire spending bill that the legislature passed two years ago. Right now we are paying a quarter of it and the state is paying the rest. When the state money goes away at the end of June, we will then have a chance to talk with the Forest Service. The funding is not going to rest solely on the City. It's always been seed money to create more funding, either through or federal funds and has been very successful at doing that and I expect it will continue. That money also goes to the current management of our city and parks, forest lands and of the Ashland Forest Plan. This budget sees a decrease, we started 17/19 with \$546,000 and the proposed budget is \$200,000. Mike Gardiner asked if that was due to less work. Chambers responded that no, there is always more work and now there is more work than ever.

Tonya Graham spoke that she would like to go back to the organization chart. One of the things we are trying to figure out is how to fund the Fire Marshal and the Training officer. In the org chart the

Fire Marshal and CERT coordinator are in red and that means they are not funded but she believes the CERT Coordinator is funded in this proposal. Ralph Sartain responded that no, both the Fire Marshal and CERT Coordinator positions are not funded. The EMS providers and student program would report to the Fire Marshal if we were to get one. The Fire Marshal actually oversees the entire division. Graham asked are we looking at 3 positions then, the CERT coordinator, the training Officer and the fire Marshal that are not funded? Sartain responded that actually with the hiring of the fire life safety specialist, one of his tasks is that of the CERT Coordinator and he has done a phenomenal job doing that as a part-time role. We do not need a full-time person as the CERT Coordinator. It is on the org chart is that way for funding purposes. The Fire Marshal would help with the CERT program.

Gina DuQuenne spoke that she would like to talk about volunteer fire fighters. Josephine County seems to be doing a good job with a volunteer program. She knows that we touched base on possibly getting volunteer fire fighters through grants, and she knows it costs for the training and the time. However, we don't know when and if the next Alameda fire will be coming. Can you talk about the possibility of a volunteer program? Sartain responded that he has looked into it and with Ashland's demographic it simply isn't possible. There is so much training that is required, it is a full-time job. Josephine County does do a better job, but they also have a different pool to pull from. They are also losing their student program. Ashland's call volume is primarily EMS and we cannot properly fund a volunteer program through our call volume. He would be more than happy to start a student program to bridge the gap. Navickas added that we have the CERT program which helps with emergencies. DuQuenne added that she understands the shortage and the need to train people but when you talk about demographics, we have the University to pull from. She spoke that she would rather be proactive moving forward and looking at this possibility and not just shutting it down and saying it's not possible because everything is possible.

Paula Hyatt spoke about the fire marshal. She asked if one of the things that can bolster our ISO is having a fire marshal. Sartain responded that having a fire marshal and an inspection program that was subsidized by the fire inspector as well as three firefighters to perform fire inspections improved the ISO rating. Hyatt asked that with the absence of a fire marshal would it further degrade our rating? Sartain responded that yes would probably go down about five points.

Eric Hansen asked why are we not asking for that position to be funded in budget? Sartain responded that it was asked to be funded but due to budgetary constraints we did not get everything we asked for. The Fire department has been understaffed for 27 years and this is the first time we are stepping in the right direction. Hansen asked how is this acceptable if you are still understaffed? How come we don't have all the funding requested by the fire department? Sabrina Cotta responded that it is because we don't have the revenue. Fire is funded through the general fund and pending the outcome of the ballot several of these items will be brought forth as a recommendation to fund. But until then it's a difficult balance between all the needs of the various

departments. Hansen responded that he is concerned about downtown businesses not being able to get insurance or have a higher insurance premium due to this, what are we going to do? Cotta responded that, that is why we are doing a revenue study. We recognize that the revenue is limited when it comes to general funds and we need to find a way to move fire, parks, police all into the future knowing that the community's needs are far outweighing the revenue that we're bringing in through traditional general fund revenue sources.

Tonya Graham spoke that at the upcoming study session, the Council will be talking about the priorities in terms of, if there is money that comes available, what can be allocated in this biennial budget. The council's intention is to provide to staff some prioritization about the different possibilities of what could be funded, what could be brought into this budget.

Announcements

Next Citizen's Budget Committee Meeting May 18th at 3:00 p.m.

Eric Navickas called the meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Alissa Kolodzinski
Management Analyst

Public Written Testimony

From: Paul Mozina

Date: May 9, 2023 at 5:44:58 PM CDT

To: finance@ashland.or.us

Subject: 5/11/23 Budget Committee Testimony

Mayor Graham, Councilors and Budget Committee members,

When you take up the Ashland Fire Department's budget request, please ask Chief Sartain why the number of EMS calls is "exploding", which is the word he used to describe it at the April 3rd study session. This was also very evident in the graphs he presented.

I am processing an open records request for information regarding this with the Ashland Fire Department now. It is too early to comment on the data received so far and I will be in touch with you all on this as I clarify the response from Chief Sartain. I hope you all have the curiosity to ask the Chief to explain what the data shows.

Yes, overlapping calls for service keep the Chief up at night, and it is obvious that the more calls for service you get, the greater is the chance for them to overlap. Why did EMS calls for service go up by almost 12% in 2022? Ashland should not focus on this as a Supply problem to solved by running the EMS Division "like a business" — rather this must be viewed as a Demand problem — a Community Health Problem — what is driving the "exploding" demand for EMS in Ashland?

Paul Mozina