Board members present: Mayor Tim Helms

Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer

Commissioner Jane Alexander

Commissioner Mason Blake

Commissioner Kitty Fouche

Commissioner Kent Otto

Board members present via

Zoom: None

Board members absent: None

Town staff present: Ben Blackburn, Interim Town Administrator

Angie Murphy, Town Clerk

David Arrant, Chief of Police

Barry Creasman, Public Works Director

Darlene Carrasquillo, Finance Officer

Town staff present via Zoom: None

Approximately two members of the public were present at Town Hall and several more were watching via Zoom. Mayor Tim Helms called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Agenda Approval**

Commissioner Mason Blake moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Commissioner Kent Otto seconded and the motion carried 5/0.

**Review and Discuss the Proposed 2022-2023 Fiscal Year Budget**

Interim Town Administrator Ben Blackburn reviewed the highlights of the proposed FY 22-23 Budget. The proposed FY 22-23 General Fund budget totals $2,074,556, which is a 14.56% increase over the current year. The proposed budget does not include any fund balance appropriation. The ad valorem tax rate in the proposed budget remains at 43 cents per $100 valuation. The proposed budget does include American Rescue Act Plan (A.R.P.A.) money. The proposed FY 22-23 Water Fund budget totals $359,734, which is a 4.56% increase over the current year. The Water Fund budget does not include any appropriation from fund balance. The General Fund and Water Fund proposed budgets combined total $2,434,290 which represents a 12.96% increase over the current year.

The proposed budget accomplishes several key goals:

* Allocates funding for the resurfacing of Oklahoma Road
* Allocates funding for the Texas Road Bridge conversion
* Allocates funding for the purchase of six Body Cameras
* Allocates funding for the purchase of a Patrol Vehicle
* Allocates funding for two Portable Generators for Water Department use
* Allocates funding for the five year Water Tank Inspections
* Allocates funding for a 2% C.O.L.A. and up to 3% merit increase for Town staff.

However, the budget does not appropriate funding for several capital projects identified in the Capital Improvement Plan:

* Chipper Replacement
* Dump Truck Replacement
* Street’s tractor replacement
* Sidewalks

The Council then went page by page throughout the budget asking questions and making comments. Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer asked how much money was earmarked for the next Town Administrator or Town Manager. Interim Town Administrator Ben Blackburn advised that $85,000 is set aside for the new employee. Commissioner Mason Blake went on to say that he had reviewed the salary ($66,500) set aside for the part –time (24 hours a week) Zoning Administrator, who did an average of 10 zoning permits a year, and asked Mr. Blackburn if it would be possible to advertise for a Town Administrator/Town Manager with a significant Planning & Zoning background. Mr. Blackburn advised that when he was Town Manager in Lowell that he served in both capacities. Mr. Blackburn also advised that most candidates interested in the position would probably have a strong background in Planning & Zoning. Mr. Blackburn feels that the salary would have to be increased slightly due to location and with wearing two hats but that the job will definitely be do-able. Mr. Blackburn suggested $85,000-90,000 would be sufficient for the new candidate. Commissioner Kent Otto expressed his pleasure in the possible cost-savings aspect and thanked Commissioner Blake and Mayor Pro Tem Widmer for their thoughts on this matter.

The Capital Outlay Projects for the Police Department include a patrol car with $16,000 coming from the General Fund and $28,000 coming from A.R.P.A. funding as well as $6,000 worth of Body Cams with funding from the General Fund. Commissioner Otto reflected on the amount of monies that have been spent on legal fees this year and mentioned that other areas may have to do without to compensate for those legal fees. Commissioner Otto advised that with the state of the nation right now, with inflation and gas prices, it’s of his opinion to move the patrol vehicle replacement schedule forward a year. With regards to body cams, Mr. Blackburn advised that they are one of the best tools around to weed out a bad officer as well as saving the Town a lot of money in certain situations. Mayor Pro Tem Widmer advised that the Town has five vehicles and five officers and with funds as scarce as they are he doesn’t feel as if General Fund monies should be spent on a patrol car. The patrol vehicle was unanimously voted down. Staff notated changes for the final budget.

Commissioner Otto expressed his thanks for the Public Works Department going without a chipper, a dump truck, a tractor and sidewalk repairs during these uncertain times. Commissioner Otto and Public Works Director Barry Creasman discussed the street paving and the cost of asphalt which is increasing daily. Mr. Blackburn pointed out that the monies earmarked for street paving were Powell Bills which could carry forward in subsequent years. Commissioner Blake pointed out with regards to the Oklahoma Road surfacing that it would make more sense to replace the water line and then do the resurfacing. Mr. Creasman suggested resurfacing a Lookout Rd up to Yale Road instead of Oklahoma Road. Commissioner Kitty Fouche expressed some concern about the damage on Suwannee Road due to an earlier mudslide. Mr. Creasman advised that there are issues with who the property belongs to and Town Attorney Susan Taylor Rash was supposed to be looking into the ownership issues. Mr. Creasman also advised that it would be quite the undertaking to repair as well. Mayor Pro Tem Tom Widmer noticed the amount for the Texas Road Pedestrian Bridge Conversion Project decreased $1,000 from last budget year and questioned the reason as to why. Mr. Creasman advised that his crew plans to do a great deal of the work. Mr. Creasman also stated that he hopes to meet with the bridge inspectors and discuss his plans with them. By consensus the Council removed the street paving for the fiscal year.

Commissioner Kent Otto asked Mr. Creasman if the water department could make do with one generator instead of two this year. Mr. Creasman advised that he could alternate locations with the one generator and keep the water system going during emergency situations. The council voted 5/0 in favor of the one generator. The Oklahoma Road Water Line Replacement was not funded in this budget year. The 5-year water tank inspection was included in the budget for FY22-23.

Mayor Helms and the members of the Commission thanked Town Staff for their diligent work on the budget.

**Adjournment**

Commissioner Jane Alexander moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Kitty Fouche seconded and the motion carried 5/0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

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Tim Helms , Mayor Angie Murphy, Town Clerk