

Minutes

City of Coatesville

Via – Virtual Meeting via Zoom and You Tube – COVID 19

Monday December 9, 2020 -Preliminary Budget Public Hearing



Council Present: President Linda Lavender-Norris, Vice President Carmen Green, Ms. Khadijah Al Amin, Ms. Nydea Graves, Mr. Donald Folks, Edward Simpson

Council Absent: Mrs. C. Arvilla Hunt,

Staff Present James Logan, City Manager; Chief Jack Laufer, Police Department; Richard Troutman, Finance Director and Ruthann Mowday, Recording Secretary.

President Lavender-Norris opened the Public Hearing at 6:35 pm.

President Lavender-Norris provided City Council, staff and the public with an outline for the Public Hearing who have tuned in. This is a public hearing on the city of codes feels proposed 2021 budget being held in accordance with section 2 - 604 of the city's Charter and the purpose of this hearing is to permit interested citizens to express their views on the budget. And before we begin I want to note that public notice of the city council's public budget workshops was published in the daily local news on October 20th. Those workshops were held on November 4th, 11th and 16th; Council adopted the City's 2021 Preliminary Budget on November 24th, 2020. The notice that the preliminary budget with a summary was available to the public and was published in the daily local news on the 27th of November 2020 with a summary of the budget. The publication also included notice of tonight's hearing. They're being proper notice for this budget hearing. We shall proceed and a summary of the preliminary budget was published on the 24th of November. The preliminary budget is balanced as required by the city's Charter at this time. Does any member of council have a comment on the proposed budget?

Vice President Green stated the budget is the budget and we all wish we had a hundred tons of money, but I just wanted to report as a resident. I would just like to you know, speaking to the public to the staff and to my colleague some, you know, the budget is the budget and we would wish that we would have pools of money in our corporates, you know, but I'm just grateful that this year. We're not taking money that was set aside from our trust to make the budget work. There're some things that you know, we have to comply by, some contractual obligations, that the city is obligated to but this year has proven that you know, things are looking up for the City of Coatesville. And as these items that are not within our control become within our control. We can look at them going forward in the next year or so, but I'm just grateful for what we have and I just thank the staff I thank our City Manager for having the wherewithal and is going through and dealing with what we have and making it work and I'm just on this thankful for that.

Mr. Logan thanked Vice President Green and thanked the staff for all their hard work as well, as well as everyone for all the hard work.

Ms. Graves explained this is her first year doing budget and really understanding some of the contracts and things that we have that sort of fixes our budget overall. We still spend over half of our budget on Police which I understand with the contracts that we have is a little hard to fix at this point this year, but we do need to continue to look at the Police Union contract and the kind of grants that we take that really fix us into numbers of Police that we have to have by these contracts in the kind of

autonomy that we have over our community. Of course, we can depend on grants and things to open up our community center. But if we continue to Advocate to make our budget more flexible, we can be able to make sure that we have money for things like open our pool in our community center, working with developers to create Eco housing and things like that things that we deserve, free Community Gardens, things that all of our residents deserve, so this budget is not the people's budget that the people deserve. We did our best to get a budget this year. But we're going to continue to fight and advocate for the people's budget, a budget that puts people in community first overall over profit and we are looking forward to looking at whatever we have to do in 2020. I wanted to make sure the budget that we passed for 2022 is really centered on people and people focused.

Ms. Al Amin said I would just like to say I'm very, very pleased this year with the budget each year. We work very hard to make a balanced budget and this year. We made a balanced budget with no anticipation of a withdrawal from the rainy day / trust fund. And so I think for the city that that is a very large accomplishment. It isn't like we have an overabundance of Revenue or Revenue comes from tax dollars. I am very happy and want to say thank you to all, Mr. Logan, Mr. Troutman and all the Departments for handing in budgets that were within the realm for us to come up with a balanced budget and we do always have to consider profit. I'm going to say that, just because I want the residents to understand because if we don't consider the amount of money that the city comes in and the city falls short and there isn't a trust fund / rainy day fund then the only option which is something that I never want to do would be to raise taxes and I do not believe that our residents would be happy with a tax increase. We were very blessed and fortunate this year. There's no tax increase, the trash bills are not going up and we don't make money off of the trash bills. That's not a for-profit business. That's a for service business and we're not going to pull any money out of the trust fund / rainy day fund. So as in anything else, there's always areas to grow because if you can't grow well, then there's something wrong but Overall, I do not think then what was accomplished this year with having a true balanced budget. I don't know when the last time that, that actually happened that some kind of money wasn't taken from the trust fund / rainy day fund. So, I just want to say not good job to everybody but great job to everybody and thank you so much everybody for all of your hard work so kudos to everybody. Thank you.

Mr. Simpson stated that you know, some council members don't think this is the people's budget, but I think it is the people's budget and what I'm hoping and praying for is that the city prospers with our revitalization and we get to the point where we have more police officers, more community policing, whether we get up to the numbers where our Police Department cannot have all the overtime and working the outrageous number of shifts that they work. And I'm all in favor for the city prospering so that we can add to our Police Department. Thank you.

Mr. Folks thanked everyone.

President Lavender-Norris stated she agrees with my colleagues, Mr. Simpson when he said this is the people's budget. I totally agree because we are the people, we are of the people, for the people, by the people. This budget is not about any one individual on Council. It's about our entire city and us having the ability to trust the ones that we've put in place to manage our budget to the extent that we don't have to increase taxes. We don't have to lay anyone off and we can still keep the city moving forward in a positive manner. This nothing short to me of a blessing because as Councilwoman Al-Amin said we've always had to foster a balanced budget by drawing down and borrowing from this time. We didn't have to borrow from anyone, any account. We were able to come up with a balanced budget. Thanks be to our staff and our administrators. So, during this season, the spending has been

like we're on working with the Skeleton Crew through for the most part and spending has been cut beyond measure, and we're still able to move forward. So for the people, who I consider myself one of, I'm grateful for this budget. Thank you, thank you, thank you, job very well done by Mr. Troutman. Mr. Logan, all of our department heads and everyone that had input including Council. Thank you. The City of Coatesville is moving forward in a positive manner. We haven't always been in this position. We want a lot. We have a long wish list, but with reality in front of us, we have everything we need right now. So, take the next step. We want more, than we have to go out and make more happen. We can't cut our way out of growing. So again, thank you so much to everyone. With that being said, Mr. Logan, would you like to have input comment?

Mr. Logan replied No, I again I think everyone has pretty much shared my sentiments in reference to our budget, to moving forward. Certainly Miss Graves, we are every year, we're trying to get better at what we do but we do work for the people in this community and we take into consideration everything that's going on in our community. So, this is not a city for profit. This is a city for prosperity and for quality of life for everyone. So, you know as we all collectively try to work to that particular objective. I know that we all are not going to agree. We may not all get to the same road at the same time or take the same path, but collectively we will get there. I think that it is important that our community understands that you all as council members are working with everyone with me, with our finance department, our Police Department, to make this city, a wonderful place to live and work and play. When they see that leadership, it makes them want to be part of it. My job along with Police Chief, Finance Department the Fire Chief, Codes Department, our job is to make these things happen to bring to you all as Council leaders the best ideas, the best policies, the best practices to make this all shine. I just encourage you guys to support us and if you have any questions come to us directly, our doors are open and if it's not in the budget. Certainly, you can reach out to me and if it's regarding anything related to our policies and our terms of our service deliverables to this community, you should always reach out to me or if it's a Police related matter to the Chief. That's what we're here for. We don't need to hide behind emails or post or anything like that. We're here for you and my doors are open. Thank you.

Chief Laufer echoed the other council members comments, that you know this, I've been here eight years and this is my eighth budget year that I participated in support of the of the city. As was mentioned, this is the first in my eight years where we do have a legitimately balanced budget and that's due to the hard work of a lot of people behind the scenes and also the support of Council. We are excited, the Police Department is excited to kick 2020 out the door, for other reasons and the hopefully usher in 2021 and make sure it's a better year for everybody.

President Lavender-Norris opened the floor to interested citizens to express their views on the budget. If you wish to express your views, please raise your hand, the feature in the message in Zoom will inform us and we'll open the mic to you. Each citizen has three minutes. Are there any?

Mrs. Mowday replied there are no questions or comments at this time.

President Lavender-Norris announced Council will allow a 10-15-minute grace period for any of our citizens that are interested too speak.

Vice President Green asked to address something while we wait. She explained that she spoke with Mr. Logan earlier read the "Simple wear your mask" that's going on. I was trying to put together a picture or video or whatever. I am actually proposing on Monday, that we make wearing a mask

mandatory like they did in West Chester because the cases here in the city or mounting up and they're moving quickly in some neighborhoods. I asked Mr. Logan to send out to everyone a new City of Coatesville mas. I was asking him if we were able to take pictures of us having the mask on, if he would be able to put that together as a PSA. I don't know if anyone else would be interested in doing that, but I'm not computer savvy enough to put that together. I tried and it wasn't working for me. But I think that for the community that we should take a stance on this Mask situation. Yes. That's the logo right there. Simply ask, Wear a mask.

Ms. Al Amin stated that we need to take this a little step further and put a mandate on the mess. On Thursday, we went up 25 cases, on Friday we went up 19 and a death. They were late posting today, but they've posted it and we went up another 33. So, we're at 533. I've seen a lot of videos on Facebook as well people House parties and I've gotten a couple calls from people. There's really nothing we as Council can do. I got a call from someone and they told me that they were in a store and there was an individual was in that store that tested positive and I said well how do you know they tested positive and they said go to such and such page you'll see. So, I did and sure enough they had put a post-up that they had tested positive and since people are not adhering to what they should, if you have it, stay in quarantine. If you go out you, wear a mask and really right now that being out with a mask, that's a state mandate. That's a Governor Wolf mandate. And so, I don't know how else we make people understand how serious this is. Unless we put some things in place and we should not have to babysit. But we as Council are responsible for the citizens and the community. So, it is our responsibility to try our best to keep the residents safe and I just don't know how to do that anymore without implementing some mandates.

President Lavender-Norris stated she too was speaking with Mr. Logan regarding the Mask mandate campaign, simple ask: wear a mask. I thought it would be a good idea for all of us as council members to have our pictures taken with the city the masks with the city logo and maybe even put not just on our webpage but also on our on the billboard. Well, it's not a billboard, the digital sign up on 30. I think we as Council should be very clear with our leading by example and help our residents to understand that we're not asking them to do anything that we're not willing to do. So, I agree with the even with regard to the Mandate and possibly an ordinance like you said similar to what West Chester's doing. I don't know how many people are aware. But I think their ordinance comes with a hefty fine for not wearing a mask and not paying a fine is as easy as wearing a mask. It's your choice, your decision and we have to be mindful of the health and safety of everyone in the community. Not just the ones we associate with so looking into an ordinance and mandate following the governor's and possibly I don't know where the Commissioner stand right now, but we do have to be proactive with this we have to get on top of it.

Ms. Graves agreed that the pandemic is getting very dangerous especially through the holiday season where people, more people are traveling, more people are gathering to celebrate. So, we definitely need to put in mandates that will keep people safe. But we also need to as a city look over our city code to see what kind of relief that we can provide to people too because these next couple weeks are just going to get dark for people. We really hope that the eviction moratorium continues, but right now if it doesn't then you know, what are we doing to help people who are getting evicted and I know that the Cares Act is expires on the 14th. So, I really would love for us to explore what we can do on the local level to provide some relief for COVID whether that be make a Mutual Aid Resource map or try to facilitate a City ran Mutual Aid Network where people can volunteer, but be something the City is helping run and pouring resources. This is in addition to the mandates to keep us safer. We also need to invest in relief for the people because it's definitely going to be a dark time as the

weather gets colder, as more holidays come up and people gather more and as this pandemic moves into its second wave.

Vice President Green asked Ms. Graves to detail when she says for resources and what exactly she was speaking to.

MS. Graves replied throughout covid a lot of cities have been doing Mutual Aid networks, which is a network people use like a pinpoint map where people can drop a pin on things. They need they'll put on the map pay. This is my address to sometimes they put their street corner if they don't want to list their address. I'm a I'm a person and Coatesville. I live on Fifth Avenue and I need somebody to go grocery shopping.

00:30:44

(speaker)

Thing for me right? I need groceries and then somebody else who uses the mutual Aid map May pick up the pen and be like, oh I can respond to this. Can I get these groceries for you, you know contact them throughout through this map. It's a usually a Google map and drop off the groceries, but for the city we can maybe provide the website for it. Maybe we can ask counsel people check in on the

00:31:13

(speaker)

People who are helpers and check in on the people who need help to make sure they get connected but the idea of mutual Aid is people who help people also need help and it's very communal and it's just taking it's like putting the aid into community and you know, the city can even sometimes be people who respond to people who need Aid

00:31:42

(speaker)

Well, I mean if that's something that you would like to put together, I mean, I think it would be great. I mean as counsel people we have that we can put something like that together. But as far as if you're saying staff to do it, we are not a first-class City. We are third class know as far as the resources financially we would not be able to to do anything like that strictly Nations and volunteerism now the county

00:32:11

(speaker)

Have something similar setup and there were agencies that they lose their fur. Is this to see what the different sounds woman green. Your phone is the kind of coming out a little bit, but there's agencies in the city.

00:33:08

(speaker)

I just posted the freedom to read things up again. I just posted that shared uncle's will growing greater. They've been sharing all kinds of things for people to give assistance. So if that's what you're talking about, that's not what you're talking about. That's what you're talking about.

00:33:34

(speaker)

Yeah, absolutely Council / sad councilwoman green. I can definitely reach out to you for help with that. I wouldn't expect our staff to to work on that because I know that we are understaffed for sure. So you can definitely I can definitely reach out to you for that. I just know that we do need mandates, but we also need relief.

00:34:00

(speaker)

We have a

00:34:03

(speaker)

Well, I was with the county and I was talking to James about you know, you go to downtown or Westchester. They have them great big sign to cross the streets. It's all went to the county and say why can't we get one for Gateway Park and I think they're working on that. That should be sort of guys out there measuring the holiday so maybe mr. Logan could Charming on that.

00:34:28

(speaker)

Logan

00:34:35

(speaker)

I'm sorry anymore about the sign or the Gateway Park? Yes, I'll Jewels he provided the information to the Commissioners contact or staff as far as the delivery date. They have to get the sign made usually sign take about two weeks to turn around. So I would say in the neighborhood of two weeks.

00:35:04

(speaker)

And there's a contact person at the Coatesville Library. Yes. She is. She has information for a lot of Human Service needs similar to what you're speaking of Miss Graves. I can't remember her name off the top of my head, but she's definitely in the library downstairs.

00:35:34

(speaker)

If if you just refer any of your constituents to the library, I'm sure Penny could direct them. Yeah.

00:35:52

(speaker)

Yeah, there's a whole list of services that are available and if you can lead to the library she cookie.

00:36:03

(speaker)

The services that councilperson graves are talking about come from.

00:36:10

(speaker)

State county state and federal level that that is not anything that that we can do at a council level and am I correct in understanding in my understanding or am I wrong as far as I understand you're correct and with your understanding I have the same understanding, okay.

00:36:33

(speaker)

Mutual Aid

00:36:41

(speaker)

Yes, I'm talking about the well, they're doing Mutual Aid all across the country, but they are doing there is one in Philadelphia a mutual Aid map and it's not just the nonprofit and services that are helping out with mutual. Aid is also, you know, the community community members are listing. You know, what they need other community members are helping and investing in it. It's a

00:37:11

(speaker)

A way to help us take care of each other during this time.

00:37:21

(speaker)

President Lavender-Norris asked if there are any citizens comments at this time. Mrs. Mowday replied none at this time.

President Lavender-Norris stated as it appears, there's no expressions of citizens views on the budget if Council doesn't have any further questions or comment I would like to entertain a motion to close the hearing but first again if it doesn't have any further comment.

Ms. Al Amin made a motion to close the hearing; Mr. Folks seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

President Lavender-Norris thanked everyone for attending the hearing. Thank you to all have a blessed evening. Be safe and God willing. I'll see you on Monday. Good night.