

A workshop meeting of the Caribou City Council was held 6:00 p.m. on Monday, November 30, 2015 at the Caribou City Council Chambers with the following members present: Mayor Gary Aiken, Deputy Mayor David Martin, Philip McDonough II, Joan L. Theriault, Shane McDougall, Tiffany J. Stewart, and Jody R. Smith.

Councilor-Elect Timothy C. Guerrette.

Austin Bleess, City Manager was present.

Department Managers: Penny G. Thompson, Tax Assessor; Scott Susi, Fire Chief; Wanda Raymond, Finance Director; Lisa Shaw, Library Director; Gary Marquis, Supt. of Parks & Recreation; and Michael Gahagan, Police Chief.

Item #1: 2016 Budget

Mayor Aiken opened the Workshop by giving an overview of the Budget process thus far. He noted that five or six Councilors have stated that they don't want to see a mil increase. The City Manager brought forward a Budget without an increase but it appears that a number of the Councilors don't care for the proposed cuts. This year the Mayor finds it difficult to expect the taxpayer to accept a mil increase when the City has received back \$3.4 million. \$3 million has been invested in CDs for the pension fund, a portion has been moved to City's unfunded compensated absences account, which leaves approximately \$220,000 that hasn't been used.

The Mayor offered several suggestions:

1. Pay for the Fire Department's new boiler out of the TIF account. The cost is \$53,000.
2. For 2016, reduce the amount budgeted for the Fire Equipment Reserve Fund by \$53,000.
3. Take the approximately remaining \$75,000 budget increase out of \$220,000.

Councilor Martin stated that he agrees with the Mayor's suggestions.

Councilor Stewart wants to see another full-time staff person at the Library.

Councilor Smith agrees with the Mayor's suggestions as long as there isn't a mil increase.

Councilor McDougall stated that we are "just kicking the can down the road" if we do not have a mil increase and it is going to make it that much harder next year.

There was a discussion concerning 2016 State Revenue Sharing projections.

Councilor Martin stated that he would be fine if the Library changed the hours that they are open if there is work that needs to be done without interruption.

Councilor McDougall sees the money moved to the City's unfunded compensated absences account as a positive action taken by the Council.

Councilor McDonough wonders what we would be doing today if this \$4.3 million hadn't been returned to the City. We need to make the hard choices that we don't want to make, but now it is a little late in the Budget process. We don't fix the problem, we just push it ahead.

Councilor Martin doesn't like to see one time funds spent on the operating budget.

Proposal: The City could remove \$100,000 from the Ambulance Reserve budget and replace it with \$100,000 from Fund Balance plus take \$53,000 from the Fire Equipment Reserve and pay for the new boiler out of the TIF account.

Councilor Theriault can support the proposal.

Councilor Stewart can't support it.

Councilor Smith can support it.

Councilor McDougall can't support it.

Councilor Martin can support it.

Councilor McDonough can't support it.

Mayor can support it.

With these adjustments, Manager Bless projects that the City will have to make up nearly \$230,000 before the start of the 2017 Budget year and this is without knowing any of the City's fixed costs. We could easily be looking at a \$320,000 or more gap a year from now.

TIF funds can be used for Fire Department buildings but not equipment. Councilor Martin asked if the replacement doors could be paid for out of TIF funds.

It is Councilor McDougall's opinion that we are funding the library "half way" and that it is an asset to the community and we shouldn't be treating it that way. Councilor Stewart and her family often use the library and it is always "jammed packed" with people. She praised Library Director Shaw. When asked, Manager Bless stated that a third of a mil increase for an average home would be \$31.00 a year. Director Shaw stated that the Library cannot continue to be short staffed and needs the second full-time person to keep up with what is happening at the Library. It takes staff to process passport applications and to write grant applications which would increase Library revenues. Councilor Theriault stated that not everyone can afford their taxes. The Mayor stated that the population is decreasing and aging. Gail Hagelstein shared the story as to why her family chose to move to Caribou rather than another community in the area. She stated that Caribou was selected because of a Library, it was the Caribou High School Library, but the deciding factor was a Library.

Councilor McDonough stated that our population isn't growing, our economic base isn't growing and we cannot continue "fund, fund, fund and take the money out of someone else's pocket".

Manager Bless suggested that maybe it is time to decide if we should be "doing it at all". He knows that is a tough thing to say but that the City can only continue to do things "half way" so long. He continued "if there is a tough decision to be made then maybe that tough decision should be made today".

Councilor Theriault commented that she doesn't see the City treating the Library and Recreation as "half way" but we do need to be supportive of our essential services.

Meeting declared adjourned at 6:53pm.

Jayne R. Farrin, Secretary