

October 23, 2013

13-25 wksp.

A Budget Workshop meeting of the Caribou City Council was held 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 23, 2013 in Council Chambers with the following members present: Mayor Gary Aiken, Deputy Mayor Kenneth G. Murchison, Jr., Joan L. Theriault, *Philip McDonough II* * and David R. Genthner, Sr. Aaron P. Kouhopt was absent.

**amended per vote of the Council November 12, 2013*

Austin Bleess, City Manager, and Tony Mazzucco, Assistant City Manager.

Department Managers: Scott Susi, Fire Chief; David Ouellette, Public Works Director; Wanda Raymond, Finance Director; Lisa Plourde, Housing Executive Director; William Tasker, Chamber of Commerce Director; Elizabeth A. O'Bar, Tax Assessor; Diane DuBois, Library Director; Kathleen Mazzuchelli, Supt. of Parks & Recreation and Steve Wentworth, Code Enforcement Officer.

Attending: Carol Pierson and Shane McDougall.

Natalie De La Garza representing the Aroostook Republican and Time Warner covered the meeting.

Item #1:

The Mayor opened the Budget Workshop. The Mayor stated that the City would face a 2.8 mil increase if the 2014 budget is accepted as presented. He stated that the City is at a crossroad with either increasing taxes or reducing services. He wonders what areas the Council would reduce services if the Council decides not to increase taxes. The Mayor wants to hear from Council as to how they want to handle the budget process.

Question to Council: Where would you like to see the Budget?

- P. McDonough – agrees with the Mayor about reaching a crossroad. The City cannot continue not funding capital programs. He will follow the Mayor's suggestion and send his thoughts on the budget to the City Manager.

The Mayor stated that it would take the closing of departments and a reduction in services to eliminate a tax increase.

- D. Martin – suggested not restarting the quarterly review of properties, stop paving and use more chip seal, feels the recreation and library have come in with reasonable budgets, try to increase recreation revenue, does not want to see an increase but he would stop at one mil.
- K. Murchison – agrees with the Mayor about the budget. He suggested throughout the budget season that the City continue to look for efficiencies. He wants to keep the core services.
- D. Genthner – extended a thank you to the Library, Fire, Housing, and Public Works Departments for their budgets. Other departments need to find areas to cut. He hopes no one will be laid off. He wants the City to move forward with the City of Presque Isle and the sharing of services.
- J. Theriault – people want the services. She noted that the City of Presque Isle is reducing hours from 40 to 37.5 per week. Maybe this is something the City of Caribou should study. She does not know what to do to reduce the budget without reducing services and/or laying off people. The Council needs to think outside the box.

Director Ouellette thanked the Council for understanding the budget situation. Mr. Ouellette answered Council questions about the URIP funding and how it can be spent.

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Supt. Mazzuchelli spoke about the budget process and micromanaging. Ms. Mazzuchelli stated that it would be easier if the Council gave Department Managers a figure to work towards rather than looking at each line item.

The Mayor stated that there are unknowns in the budget including health insurance costs.

Councilor Martin suggested giving the Department Managers a target of one mil.

The Mayor does not want to see all the cuts coming out of the CIP.

Councilor McDonough stated that Department Managers work hard, and do a good job, and he is proud of everything that is done, but Councilors have to look out for all 8100 citizens of Caribou.

Chief Susi has looked at other fire departments for comparisons and has found that Old Town is the most similar, with run numbers, population, and services provided. Old Town's department takes in less than a million year and has a larger staff. Caribou's department makes a little more than two million a year. The Chief's expense budget is directly correlated with his revenue budget.

The Mayor does not believe a percentage reduction can be done across the board.

The City Manager read into the record his October 22, 2013 memo to the Mayor and Council. (Exhibit A)

Councilor Murchison proposed keeping an increase to 1.4 mil and to continue to look for efficiencies.

Council consensus: keep an increase to 1.4 mil and to continue to look for efficiencies.

Mayor wants the Councilors to once again review budget and send their suggestions and comments on to the City Manager.

1.4 mils is approximately \$550,000.

Councilor Genthner suggested that citizens visit the Fire, Police, and Public Works Department.

Workshop adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Jayne R. Farrin, Secretary