

October 21, 2015

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A Public Forum Workshop meeting of the Caribou City Council was held 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 21, 2015 in Council Chambers with the following members present: Mayor Gary Aiken, Deputy Mayor David Martin, Joan L. Theriault, Philip McDonough II, Shane McDougall, and Jody Smith. Tiffany Stewart was absent and excused.

Austin Bless, City Manager.

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

PUBLIC FORUM WORKSHOP

The Public Forum Workshops are a requirement of the 2012 City Charter. This change is to allow a better understanding of the budgets and to allow discussion between the Council, Department Managers, and the Public. Other Public Forum Workshops were held October 19th and 20th.

From the adopted City Charter:

Expense Budget. 5.06 [a] (3) (ii) On or before November 1st: The City Manager will have each City Department Head present a written detailed Expense Budget Report to both the City Council and the City's citizens in a public forum where both the City Council and Caribou's citizens can ask questions and provide input to the City Manager and each Department Head.

Capital Expense Budget. 5.06 [b] (3) (ii) On or before November 1st: The City Manager will have each City Department Head present their written detailed Capital Expense Budget Report to both the City Council and Caribou's citizens in a public forum where both the City Council and Caribou's citizens can ask questions and provide input to the City Manager and each Department Head.

Public attending: Kevin McCartney, Kate McCartney, Paul Theriault, and William Tasker.

General Discussion:

Mayor Aiken opened the third 2016 Public Forum Workshop and stated that any Councilor may start the discussion.

In 2015, the City received from MSRS approximately \$3,441,000. Councilor Martin suggested moving \$100,000 to \$150,000 from the returned monies into Uncompensated Absences and remove from the 2016 budget the \$25,000 currently budgeted for that account. Take \$10,000 of that \$25,000 and add it to the Pool Reserve Account with the remaining \$15,000 to be savings.

Discussion as to whether monies should be transferred to Uncompensated Absences now or later. Councilor Martin stressed using one-time money, for one-time expenses. The Mayor expressed his concerns about any transfer to the Uncompensated Absences account. Councilor Theriault wonders if the whole amount \$441,000 should be transferred to Uncompensated Absences plus remove the \$25,000 already in the proposed 2016 Budget. Council Martin stated that he agrees with Councilor Theriault's suggestion of moving \$441,000 to Uncompensated Absences. He asked whether there was Council consensus on this issue. The Council was split three to three.

Council McDonough doesn't want to increase taxes and is not in favor of doing away with the positions that have been recommended. He would like to see a mandates list prepared, then meet and discuss the matter with Caribou's legislators so they can work on the issue in Augusta. He is not in favor of the additional \$1,000 for General Assistance non-reimbursable. He asked to have a breakdown, so that it is clearer, plumbing salary, fuel costs, and retirement contributions. He ask if Housing and FSS budgets are keeping pace with their expenses or are they living on their reserves? Manager Bless stated that Housing is looking like they are okay but that FSS might have to utilize some of their reserve. Councilor McDonough asked questions about professional dues, training, and assessing cell phone which is also used for code enforcement work. He made a comment about janitor services for the municipal building, asked about the City's fleet vehicles, and he learned that the Public Works loader is 23 years old.

The General Assistance Administrator offered to reduce General Assistance aid from \$47,000 to \$46,000 and reduced non-reimbursable General Assistance from \$1,000 to \$500. Thus reducing both lines by a total of \$1,500.

Council Consensus: To reduce General Assistance aid to \$46,000 and non-reimbursable General Assistance to \$500.00.

Councilor McDougall doesn't want to eliminate the police officer and wants to keep the Assistant City Manager (ACM) position which includes Code and HR. When the City provides services to other communities, we should be getting back our costs plus an additional 5% to 10%.

Councilor Smith stated that it is easier to save by not filling a position, last year they have been doing the best they can without filling the positions, it is tough but he doesn't support filling the positions.

Councilor Martin thinks we really need the ACM and if it is reinstated then we need to cut someplace else. Councilor McDougall spoke about employee burnout. Also he wants the same services.

Councilor Theriault doesn't want to see the police officer cut and would like to see the ACM hired and wonders if the ACM could be paid out of the TIF account. Mayor Bless doesn't believe the State would approve the ACM being paid out of the TIF account. Councilor Theriault wonders if the Public Works telephone calls could be forwarded to City Office.

The Mayor stated that we have until the end of the year with the budget, we don't know the total revenues and won't for a while. The Mayor believes the ACM position is important because we don't have an HR person and Code Enforcement person plus the ACM serves as backup for the City Manager. The Police Officer position is important too, but we have operated for most of the year probably short more than one police officer. He hasn't received any complaints about there being a lack of police and although it is important, to him the ACM is more important. If the majority of the Council wants, he would suggest reinstating them into the budget now and wait and see how everything works out and if they want to make a change later, they can. The Mayor commented that the budget can be reduced anytime. Councilor Theriault commented that the budget can be reduced but not increased after adoption.

Discussion about State Revenue Sharing. The City Manager is comfortable with the number he is projecting for State Revenue Sharing.

Manager Bleess commented that his 2016 Budget has three positions not funded plus eliminating one or more additional positions. The Mayor's suggestion is to add the positions back in to the budget and see how it shows.

Councilor Theriault suggested that the City look at all properties, including the 94 City owned properties she has looked at to see if any could be sold and put on the tax rolls, plus sell Flora-Dale park, and consider putting the Nylander building on the market. She questions if the parking lot reserve could be reduced as the City will not own as many parking lots plus wonders if there are any other entities that should be paying a Fee for Services? The City Manager responded that everyone under state statute that could be forced to pay a Fee for Services is paying. Councilor Theriault wonders if the City can sell ads on Channel 8.

The Mayor suggested a discussion on revenues. He suggested to push the properties to get them out and on to the tax rolls. He asked if anyone knows the tax value of the 94 properties mentioned by Councilor Theriault. According to the Finance Director, the City still has some old payment arrangements with prior owners that are still making payments. The Mayor requested a breakdown of the City owned property. Councilor McDonough commented that the current administration has cleaned up immensely City owned property compared to what it was in the past. He continued to say that there were in the past things not done and now they are being fixed.

The Library's budget divided by the number of households in Caribou figures to be \$60.00 per household. Currently the City charges non-residents \$30.00 individual and \$40.00 per family to use the Library. Councilor Martin proposed the Library charge non-resident \$75.00 per household to use the Library. Manager Bleess wonders if that is for only people who have library cards or anyone that walks through the door. The City is unable to charge for the use of on-line services because that is federally funded.

Flora-Dale Park is 1.2 acres. Supt. Marquis would have to check the deeds for any conditions because the land was donated. The City would own the Nylander collection even if the building is sold. The City Manager would like to see some of the collection retained and displayed in other public buildings. Councilor McDonough suggested that state statutes be reviewed to see if there is anything about disposing of museum type collections.

Councilor Martin asked if there would be room for the Chamber within one of the City's buildings. Manager Bleess commented that currently "no" but if the main floor of City Office is remodeled then "perhaps". The City is not obligated to provide a home for the Chamber.

The Mayor believes the Nylander building would sell very easily, with its location, nice looking appearance, and lots of parking.

As to reducing parking lot reserves, the PW Director stated that this reserve account is also for the maintenance of all the City's building parking lots, including, City Office, Fire Department, and Police Department. The Fire Department's Capital Reserve does include additional monies for the Fire Department parking lot.

Councilor Smith again stated that his is not in favor of filling positions.

The Mayor doesn't see the doing away with janitorial services and supplies at City Office. He asked if there was any way to reduce the time for the service. Concerning Fire and Ambulance Service, he isn't going to say anymore right now as he has requested information on the number of calls since 2010. He wants to see the information before making any determination as to whether they are right or wrong on their projections to date. He suggested that \$29,000 be put into the Pool Reserve as it has been done every other year since the City has stopped running it. He knows that sometime down the road the City will have a pool or an aquatic center so we might as well be putting some money away for the cost. The Mayor stated that the Fire Department reserve is well funded for the next 20 years. He stated that this is the account to take out some money to fund the additional pool money.

The Council and Chief Susi discussed various pieces of rolling equipment. The Mayor suggested reducing the money going into the Fire Reserve from \$65,000 to \$25,000 and taking that \$40,000 savings to cover the cost of janitorial services for the City Office and add an additional \$19,000 to the Pool Reserve.

Council Consensus: To reduce the Fire Reserve from \$65,000 to \$25,000 for 2016 with the note that it will be fully funded in the following year. To add money for janitorial services for the City Office and to add an additional \$19,000 to the Pool Reserve for a total of \$29,000 going to the Pool Reserve.

The Fire Chief reminded the Council that \$53,000 will be coming out of the Fire Reserve for the cost of the new furnace.

The Mayor discussed the Enterprise budget and the Chamber of Commerce. The Mayor remembers that 2015 was to be the last year that the City funded the Chamber. When asked, William Tasker stated that there is appropriately \$33,000 in the Chamber Reserve Account.

The Mayor stated that it is very difficult to fund the Chamber when the City could lose a police officer plus the Chamber has \$33,000 in reserves.

Council Consensus: Budget zero for the Chamber of Commerce.

Councilor Martin would like to see a budget that adds the Assistant City Manager back in, shows the \$40,000 in changes between Fire Reserve, janitorial service, and Pool Reserve, and the \$1,500 change in General Assistance. Manager Bleess stated that with those changes there is approximately \$135,000 in expenses over revenues.

P.W. Director Ouellette stated that the P.W. Office Manager did more than answer the phone. Director Ouellette spoke about his taking over accounts payable, accounts receivable, fuel reports for the City, safety program, and building inspections. He understands budget issues and will do whatever he has to do. He may after time be able to delegate some of these tasks within his crew. There was a discussion about the City's current phone system and how he plans to return to his old system once the City's contract with OTT ends.

There was a discussion about the City's current loader and how the City has been saving for a new one. Director Ouellette would like the Council to put the loader out to bid now and he thinks the City might be able to purchase a loader with what is already in the reserve, and not have to fund P.W. CIP for 2016. In 2017, it would be necessary to budget \$60,000 to \$65,000 for the department's CIP. For the several years, he has been looking for a loader through the DRMO program and has been unable to

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locate one. He would like to sell the current loader locally rather than trade it in. Both Mayor and Councilor McDonough told the Director to go get bids. Councilor McDougall suggested building a proposal and take it around to the dealers. There was discussion as to whether a new loader will last as long as the City's current loader has. The need for a certain size of loader is driven by the size of the snow blower that is attached to it. The Director stated that the loader with the snow blower is the backbone of the department.

Councilors McDonough, Theriault, Martin, and McDougall are all in favor of filling the Assistant City Manager position now and not waiting until April or May.

Caribou resident and small business owner, Kevin McCartney spoke in support for the Chamber of Commerce.

Discussion about the Police Officers. The Police Department is down two officers and the proposed 2016 Budget only has funding for one of those two.

Discussion concerning the change for library fees from communities paying for their residents to have access to where individuals and families from outside communities pay their own fee.

Workshop adjourned at 7:55p.m.

Jayne R. Farrin, Secretary