

## 2024 Budget Hearing Minutes

Meeting was called to order at 8:05am at City Hall.

Chairman Mohorcic administered the pledge of allegiance.

\*FULL PROPOSED BUDGET CAN BE PROVIDED BY EMAILING CHRISTINE MORGAN [cmorgan@cityofwillowick.com](mailto:cmorgan@cityofwillowick.com)

### 2024 Mayor's Budget proposal and Finance Director's Presentation

Director Benedict began the meeting by giving council an overall financial preview to the 2024 budget. The total 2024 proposed budget is \$20,428,017, a decrease in \$750,180 from 2023.

Major budget items include a new dump body package for our five-ton dump truck, equipment for the new fire-pumper, a new ambulance, and Willowick's portion of the local share for the Vine Street Resurfacing Project and 305 sewer improvements.

Wages and benefits account for \$10,077,750 or 49.3% of the total proposed budget. Healthcare premiums are expected to increase 20% for the period July-December 2024. Councilman Mohorcic stated potentially moving all new hires to the county healthcare plan, allowing for better bargaining power since the pool is much larger. The Cities of Wickliffe and Kirtland are already on the plan and existing employees would not have to change their current providers. Mayor Vanni and Director Benedict stated healthcare costs would be discussed during collective bargaining this year.

The General fund carry-over is expected to be \$3,677,520 for 2023, a 504,000 increase from 2022. Income tax collections remain high, with an estimated \$4.2 million generated from collections and property taxes remaining consistent around \$2.6 million in revenue to the city.

Director Benedict discussed several special revenue funds the city has. Her and the Mayor discussed specifically the Street Lighting Fund. This year, these funds will be used to upgrade all the existing lights on Vine Street to LEDs to alleviate the current darkness problems on Vine. This would temporarily solve the problem. There was then a discussion about using funds to change all of the light polls on Vine to help with streetscaping and making it more pedestrian friendly to our retail corridor.

The Recreation Improvement Fund was also discussed. These funds will be used for new surveillance system and roof for the Manry Bathhouse. Councilwoman Bisbee also discussed the need for these improvements.

Director Benedict also stated that the remainder of the ARPA dollars will be used for the City's share of the E 305 sewer rehabilitation project.

Lastly, Director Benedict outlined the City's Enterprise funds, which is the City's sewer fund. These funds are operated like a business. The city advanced \$50,000 and \$280,000 from the general fund to offset costs in 2022 and 2023. The City was able to repay the \$50,000 to the general fund but not the \$280,000 advance. This is due to the 2023 25% sewer increase from the City of Euclid. The City of Euclid passed a 15% increase in 2024. This means if the City does not increase the sewer rates, we will need to advance \$600,000 from the general fund to the Sewer Fund, creating a total of \$880,000 of advances into the fund. Director Benedict said there should be no advances into this fund in a perfect world. The rate increase will be discussed at a Finance Committee Meeting on February 7<sup>th</sup> at 530pm.

### Building Department

Director Brennan discussed some staffing concerns he has for his department. After the retirement of a part-time inspector, he would like to bring someone on full-time to help with the increase of calls.

#### Service Department

Director Shannon outlined the breakdown of the department Budget. When discussing short-term needs, he identified the need to replace a mechanic who is retiring this year. He also discussed how the department's entry level wages were lower than other cities comparable to Willowick. He asked for council to consider sign-on bonuses or higher starting hourly wages.

In the long-term outlook, Director Shannon discussed adding an equalizer system close to the 305 and Lakeshore system. This where all of our sewer systems meet to go to Euclid. An equalizer system would be a tank that would collect overflow rainwater during high rains when Euclid restricts the flow of water to their treatment plant. This would prevent water from going back up residents' lateral.

#### Police Department

Chief Daubemire discussed the several short-term needs for the department. This included the need for a new K-9 car, pursuit training, and the need for an additional detective. Chief discussed the increase in crime in the City and the need for an extra detective to investigate the increase in call volume they have received. He also stated this isn't just a Willowick problem, crime is up across Northeast Ohio, the State, and the US as a whole.

Long-term needs included updated patrol cars and 4 additional patrol officers. Currently the department has 15 patrol officers and one on leave (Officer Maddie). They would like to have 20 total.

#### Parks and Senior Center

Director Kless discussed the major park improvements outlined in 2024. This includes new pipes at Dudley, 2 new sensors for spray park, and 20 filter pads. It also includes a new boiler for Dudley Pool. There was also a discussion for an Assistant Parks Director position to be created to support all of the programs. Councilman Malta stated that when Director Kless started, we only had 1 program and now we have over 100.

Director Kless stated that Senior Center had received a lot of upgrades in 2023. The only major budget item was for supplies for 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration for the center.

#### Miscellaneous

There was discussion around increasing the City Prosecutor's salary due to her continued strong work on Shoregate Towers. Councilman McFarland discussed exploring costs for live streaming meetings. Councilwoman Bisbee echoed those sentiments as well.

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