

Council Meeting Minutes

March 26, 2024

The Tazewell Town Council met in a budget work session at 6:00p.m. in the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Present:

Mayor Michael Hoops

Councilmember Jonathan Hankins

Councilmember Zach Cline

Councilmember David Fox

Councilmember Emily Davis

Councilmember Joe Beasley

Absent:

Vice Mayor Glenn Catron

Staff present were: Interim Town Manager, Lianne Regon; Executive Assistant, Susan Reeves, Water Clerk, Sabrina Schooley.

BUDGET WORK SESSION

Interim Manager Regon stated that there were a few items to discuss before getting into the number part of the budget meeting.

She stated that in the contract for the fireworks, we can choose a rain date and she asked when we would want that rain date to be. They held discussion and it was decided to ask for a rain date of Saturday, July 27th. This would be held right after Main Street Moments ended. The crowd could clear off Main Street and go straight to the middle school for fireworks. It was also discussed if we have to cancel it for rain, who makes that call. Executive Assistant Reeves stated that if it is the day of, usually the fireworks company will call it. They will watch the radar maps if rain is in the forecast and they will decide if they can shoot or not. If that occurs, and we cancel the day of and they have already traveled here and loaded the fireworks, we must pay an extra \$3,500. However, if we see that the chance of rain is a great percentage and we cancel it a day before, then we do not have to pay the extra \$3,500.

They then had a discussion of the Friday night music for Main Street Moments. It was stated that with the school's permission we will be holding this event at the front lawn of THS. This will keep us from having to close the road on Main Street and reduce some of the over time cost.

Interim Manager Regon then moved the discussion to another item that she needed to discuss. She has been approached about a DIG Grant which is a planning grant for the mini park and greenspace on Main Street. She stated that it is a matching grant and Tazewell Today has been approved for this grant and previous Manager Day had stated that the Town would support this grant. She also stated that the matching part is for \$15,000 and this is not currently worked in the budget, however if council directs, she will rework it and include it. They asked questions about this grant and the Town's support of such. She then read a letter that Manager Day had written

stating that the Town would support Tazewell Today looking for external sources. Council pointed out that in the letter she just read, it did not state that the Town would be matching that grant. Mayor Hoops stated that more information may be needed for this. At this time it was discussed that Tazewell Today now has a new director and it is one of our councilmembers. It was stated that we need to make sure that this is not a conflict of interest for the council moving forward. They discussed that council was needed to set the budget for the upcoming year and they did not want any conflict with a councilmember voting on something that they will be benefiting from. They discussed what to do with the Tazewell Today line item and if the councilmember would have to recuse themselves from voting on the whole budget. They discussed ideas such as doing away with the Tazewell Today line item in the budget and moving that money into the donation line item, then the councilmember would not be able to vote on any donations because that is the line item that they would benefit from. It was then stated that we needed to ask Attorney Pyott for some clarification for this matter to make sure that we handle it appropriately.

Interim Manager Regon then moved on to another line item she had questions about. She stated that in the budget was a line item for the historical society. She asked if any of them knew what this line item was for. She stated that someone had requested the funds be released to them and they did. However, she wanted a little clarification on what the line item was for. They held discussion and it was stated that the historical society was open one possibly two days a week. The line item is for a \$5,000 donation. After their discussion, council decided to reduce the amount of donation to \$2,000 a year and add the remaining \$3,000 to paving.

They then moved into discussion of an idea for new revenue line items. Interim Manager Regon stated that Public Works Director Pruitt has suggested creating a line item for using the wood chipper. The Town has the wood chipper already and we could offer use of it and charge \$100 for a dump truck load. It would be a possible way to add a little revenue to our budget. She also stated that he had suggested creating a line item for the use of the sewer jet. There are customers that have sewer issues and will not repair them but call us out to fix it. We currently do not charge for this service. The suggestion is that the first time the Town goes out, that it is free. Each additional time we are called out to that property, it would be a charge of \$25 during working hours and \$35 after hours. They discussed the idea and stated they think that charge is too low. They suggested \$50 during working hours and \$75 after hours for repeat visits to the same location.

At this time Interim Manager Regon stated that at the last meeting they voted to support the fair. She stated since this is something that is done each year, she made a separate line item for that so it would be easier to see in the budget.

At this time they reviewed the remaining portion of the budget that they had yet to see. They discussed the train station section of the budget. Councilmember Cline stated that this is a category that is just an expense. He suggested to cut their days of operation and use the funds saved to add to the paving line item. Interim Manager Regon stated that after the last budget work session, she approached the train station employees and challenged them with some new tasks. She told them that she would like for them to create a quarterly newsletter. This would go out as an insert with our water bills so there would be no extra cost for mailing. She also stated

that Executive Assistant Reeves asked them to come up with one event a month to hold at the train station to draw folks in there. Interim Manager Regon asked if council had any suggestions on how they could turn the train station into a revenue generator. They discussed renting the facility out. It was stated that there were items get damaged when we rented it out and that's why we had to stop the rentals. She asked council to give some thought to creating ways to generate revenue there before they decided to cut hours.

They went through the remainder of the budget line items and it was said that this budget is currently a balanced budget, all revenues equal expenses. With no other questions regarding the budget presentation, Interim Manager Regon moved the topic to purchasing equipment for the public works department. She showed them information on the paver they have been discussing. She showed the cost of a new paver and discussed procurement processes. She also showed pictures of the used paver they could purchase and discussed price and procurement with it as well. She also showed them pictures, prices, and details on a new dump truck versus a used dump truck. Council stated to go with the used equipment and keep the allocated amount presented the same and we could use the difference to go toward paving. They also stated that we need to finish Maplewood sidewalk and gave the go ahead for that as well. Councilmember Fox asked if we could straighten the road out there at Buchanan Street. Interim Manager Regon stated she didn't know if that was a possibility but she would check on it. He also asked about the storm drains on Carline and said water comes up through them when we get a lot of rain and the lids come up. Interim Manager Regon stated that she thought that issue was take care of a couple years ago but she will ask the public works director to be sure.

Councilmember Fox had a previous discussion with Interim Manager Regon stating that he wanted to find a way to help our senior citizens and he was concerned with the tax assessment increase and how that would affect them. Interim Manager Regon stated we currently offer an elderly tax exemption for real estate. The requirements are that a person must be 65 years or older and they cannot have a house hold income of more than \$25,000. She stated that they had discussed possibly increasing that income threshold. The county currently has a limit of \$30,000. We could mirror what they do or we could even raise ours to \$35,000.

They discussed the next budget work session. It was decided that we would have the next meeting on Tuesday, April 2nd at 6:00pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Davis made a motion to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Councilmember Beasley. On vote, Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Councilmember Beasley, aye.

Meeting adjourned at 8:18pm.