

NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL
FY 21-22 BUDGET WORK SESSION
MINUTES
APRIL 12, 2021

Newberry County Council met on Monday, April 12, 2021, at 6:00 p.m., in Council Chambers, at the Courthouse Annex, 1309 College Street, Newberry, SC, for a budget work session.

Notice of the budget work session was duly advertised, as required by law.

PRESENT: Henry H. Livingston, III, Chairman (District 3)
Mary Arrowood, Council Member (District 2)
Nick Shealy, Council Member (District 4)
Les Hipp, Council Member (District 5)
Travis Reeder, Council Member (District 7) - arrived 6:20 p.m.
A.J. Tothacer, Jr., County Attorney
Karen Brehmer, Deputy County Administrator
Debbie S. Cromer, Finance Director
Taylor Davenport, Assistant to the County Administrator
Susan C. Fellers, Clerk to Council

ABSENT: Todd Johnson, Council Member (District 1)
Johnny Mack Scurry, Council Member (District 6)

MEDIA: Andrew Wigger, Newberry Observer

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Livingston called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. He advised that Mr. Johnson would not be present tonight because of the death of his grandson. Mr. Livingston had not heard anything from Mr. Scurry or Mr. Reeder; however, Mr. Reeder arrived at 6:20 p.m. With four members of Council present at 6:00 p.m., Mr. Livingston declared a quorum present.

2. CONSIDERATION OF ANNUAL INDEXING OF ELECTED OFFICIALS' SALARIES.

- **Newberry County Ordinance No. 1-01-17 provides that “absent a successful vote to the contrary by Newberry County Council at its first meeting in May, the county-funded salary portions for all county-wide elected officials shall be increased at a rate equal to the consumer price index for all urban consumers (CPI-U), as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (unadjusted) for the most recently reported 12 month period.”**

Mrs. Brehmer advised the CPI had not been received yet. There is a 1.5% increase in Social Security but that is all the County has received at this time.

Mrs. Arrowood stated that if the Council doesn't vote for the raise, the County has to give them the CPI. She recommended that the elected officials receive the 1.5% proposed for all county employees.

Mr. Hipp asked what would happen if the Council takes no action.

Mr. Tothacer advised that if Council takes no action by May, it will be the CPI. If Council takes action before then, it is not in violation of the ordinance.

Mr. Livingston recommended waiting until the first meeting in May. There is a work session on April 26 and Council can discuss this at that time.

Mrs. Cromer was told the CPI would be received on May 6th.

The consensus of Council was that this be put on the agenda for the April 26th work session.

3. PERSONAL APPEARANCES

- **Molly Fortune, Newberry Opera House Executive Director**

Ms. Fortune provided Council Members with a handout as to Opera House finances. (A copy of this handout was not provided for the record).

Ms. Fortune updated Council as follows:

- The Opera House provides one performance per year for school students.
- They host an Astronaut Camp and an Astronaut Academy with 15 fully funded scholarships.
- The Opera House hosted a park jam every Friday last year with 19 artists from Newberry County performing.
- The arts in the lobby of the Opera House are always open to the public.
- The Opera House is always involved in community outreach.

4. **GENERAL OPERATING BUDGET - FINANCE STAFF**
5. **COMMUNITY SERVICES LEVY BUDGET - FINANCE STAFF**
6. **DEBT SERVICE LEVY BUDGET - FINANCE STAFF**
7. **CAPITAL BUDGETING AND FUND BALANCE - FINANCE STAFF**

Mrs. Brehmer and Mrs. Cromer presented the proposed FY 21-22 budget to Council. (Copies of these budgets are on file in the Finance Department).

Mr. Livingston asked how many bonds would be coming off by 2018. Mrs. Cromer advised the Lease/Purchase would come off quicker than the GO Bonds.

8. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS.

No comments.

9. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ben Setzler, Chairman of the Newberry County Soil and Water Conservation District, addressed Council regarding the budget cuts affecting this agency.

He questioned the \$17,000 which was cut from their collections budget. Mrs. Cromer advised that \$17,000 has been transferred to the Recycling Coordinator for the Keep America Beautiful program.

As to the balance of the funding, which was cut, Mrs. Cromer advised additional information was needed from the Soil and Water Conservation District. She had heard rumors of a part time employee from sources within the agency. The Soil and Water Conservation District has not been notified of this cut but now that Council has met, those letters will go out tomorrow.

Mr. Setzler explained that most of what they receive goes to a part time employee. A bill is sent to them each month, and the County is reimbursed for what they pay that part time employee. The County is their biggest source of income.

Approximately half a million dollars was brought into the County last year by Soil and Water Conservation. We spend money on Camp Conservation, scholarships, gardens, a green house, outdoor classrooms and Keep America Beautiful.

He advised their agency was going through changes with their employment, and they are now trying to hire an employee. Some things have been out-sourced to provide continuity. This employee would work 20-30 hours per week with the option to go full time, if things go well. Their agency is not shrinking but is expanding. Even if the agency goes to a full time employee, it will continue to outsource.

If Newberry County cuts the Soil and Water Conservation's entire budget, it will be the only county in the state giving zero dollars toward Soil and Water Conservation. It would also kill the \$15,000 received by Soil and Water Conservation from DNR. Many grants are received which depend on in-kind contributions.

Mr. Hipp inquired as to what percent budget donation is contributed by each county to the Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Mr. Setzler said he would try to get that information but the county would probably have better luck getting it than him.

Mr. Setzler asked that Council revisit the decrease of the \$17,000 and the \$32,000 for a full time employee. Mrs. Cromer advised more justification would be needed for this full time position as all other county employees work a 40 hour week. Mr. Setzler advised their previous employees worked more than 40 hours, as they are expected to go to meetings and conferences.

Mrs. Cromer explained that Council has received complaints about litter, and staff felt that money should be transferred to the Recycling Coordinator's budget for the county to oversee.

Mrs. Cromer asked about the outside sourcing. Mr. Setzler said that related to an accounting firm and a marketing firm. They also want to hire an education coordinator once schools open back up.

Other persons who signed up to speak had either left or stated they didn't need to speak at this time.

10. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before Council, Mrs. Arrowood moved to adjourn; seconded by Mr. Hipp.

Mr. Livingston declared the meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL

Henry H. Livingston, III, Chairman

Susan C. Fellers, Clerk to Council

Minutes Approved: _____