

**NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL
BUDGET WORK SESSION
MINUTES
MAY 24, 2021**

Newberry County Council met on Monday, May 24, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at the Courthouse Annex, 1309 College Street, Newberry, SC, for a special called budget work session.

Notice of the meeting was duly advertised, as required by law.

PRESENT:

Council Members:

Henry H. Livingston, III, Chairman
Todd Johnson, Vice Chairman
Mary Arrowood (via Zoom)
Les Hipp
Nick Shealy
Travis Reeder
Johnny Mack Scurry

Administrative Staff:

Debbie S. Cromer, Finance Director
Karen Brehmer, Deputy County Administrator
Taylor Davenport, Assistant to County Administrator
Susan C. Fellers, Clerk to Council

Others:

Donna Lominack, Auditor
Beth Folk, Clerk of Court
Wesley Boland, Sheriff's Office
Ben Chapman, Sheriff's Office

1. Call to Order

Mr. Livingston called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and determined a quorum to be present.

2. General Operating Budget - Finance Staff

Mrs. Cromer advised she was there to answer any questions that still existed after the two readings and public hearing.

Mr. Hipp said historically budget changes have been made on third reading of the budget. The Finance Committee should have gone into more detail at the time the budget was presented to them and changes could have been made then. He talked with the finance staff today and received the answers to his questions.

Mr. Hipp requested an amendment at third reading changing the 1.5% and 2.5% COLA to 2% for all employees.

Discussions were held among Council Members as to the COLA amendment.

Wesley Boland, Sheriff's Office, discussed the adjustment previously given to the Sheriff's Office. They were losing deputies to other counties because the pay was not competitive.

Ben Chapman, Sheriff's Office, stated the starting pay for a deputy now is \$41,000. Richland County is approximately \$43,000.

Mr. Shealy asked if the money coming from the federal government might be used for this.

Mr. Livingston said possibly. That money can be used as premium pay up to \$13 per hour for essential workers.

Mrs. Cromer advised both NACO and SCAC have been contacted regarding the stimulus money but no answer has been received.

Mr. Hipp requested that the increase for the spay and neuter program not be increased, as requested, but decrease that line item to \$50,000 in the FY 21-22 budget. It was his understanding that a lot of that money was due to feral cats being brought to the shelter. They go through the spay and neuter and are then released back to the wild with no owner.

Mrs. Brehmer advised the feral cats were not brought to the animal shelter. An individual traps the animals, and she takes them to Pawmetto Lifeline for spay and neuter but the County does have to pay for them. They are then taken back to the location where they were. Some people are upset with the trap and release program. The County can place a limit on how much money can be spent on spay and neuter. There are also residents who bring their animals to the shelter for spay and neuter, but they pay a portion and the County pays a portion. The County pays wholly if they are called to pick up an animal and then puts them up for adoption.

After discussion, the consensus of Council was to leave the funding at \$75,000 for FY 21-22 but to look into this prior to next year's budget.

Mr. Hipp also said the contracted maintenance of the facilities has more than doubled. Mrs. Cromer advised lawn maintenance and HVAC services are contracted out. Mrs. Brehmer advised the Newberry County Disabilities and Special Needs cleaning is not back in full force yet.

Mr. Hipp questioned the increase in the Planning and Zoning tech fees from \$18,000 this year to \$100,000 next year. These are contracted services to review plans for new subdivisions.

Mrs. Cromer and Mrs. Brehmer offered to talk one on one with Council or as a group if there were any other budget issues,

3. Community Service Budget - Finance Staff

No further discussion.

4. Debt Service Levy Budget - Finance Staff

No further discussion

5. Capital Budgeting and Fund Balance - Finance Staff

No further discussion.

6. Public Comments

Mr. Chapman thanked Council for listening and taking salaries into consideration for all employees.

7. Questions/Comments from Council Member

Mary Arrowood - everything she had questions about had been answered by staff. She appreciated Debbie and Karen for answering all of her questions.

Johnny Mack Scurry - Every County office deserves incentive to know they are appreciated but we need to look out for law enforcement.

Travis Reeder - We need to show the employees we appreciate them and each department should receive a little more since there were no salary increases last year.

Todd Johnson - We have reached a great compromise.

Les Hipp - He appreciated all Council Members indulging him when he asked for another budget work session. He has gotten his questions answered and felt the resolution to give everybody 2% COLA and give first responders stipend money was fair.

Nick Shealy - He felt it was great that Council reached a compromise as to the COLA. County employees deserve much more than we can afford to give them. We want to retain our employees.

Mrs. Cromer advised that staff would draft any amendments, if Council so desired.

Mr. Livingston felt something had to be done with Public Works to attract new employees. We have high priced equipment and need qualified employees to use it. We need to study what that number should be and put it in the budget next year. He asked if that could come out of contingency as a recurring expense.

Mrs. Cromer said if Council knows what they want, SCAC has all the jobs and descriptions.

Mr. Livingston felt a study should be done to see what salaries should be and implement it over a period of a couple of years. Over the past years our millage has not increased but we can only continue to provide good service and keep good employees by looking at things that need to be done. We cannot allow quality employees to escape.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Johnson moved to adjourn.

Mr. Livingston declared the meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL

Henry H. Livingston, III, Chairman

Susan C. Fellers, Clerk to Council

Minutes Approved: _____