

**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
GARDINER CITY COUNCIL
Wednesday, March 18, 2009
City Council Chambers
6 p.m. Workshop – Audit Presentation
7 p.m. Business Meeting**

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

In attendance: Mayor MacLean, Councilor Rambo, Councilor Nickless, Councilor Holmes, Councilor Hart, Councilor Giberson, Councilor Trask, and Councilor Johnston.
Anne Davis introduced Brad Truman who came to test the audio equipment.

3. PETITIONS, COMMUNICATIONS, RESOLUTIONS, & PUBLIC HEARINGS

3.1. Consideration of Comments from the Public on Issues that Do Not Appear Elsewhere on the Agenda (Please limit comments to five minutes.)

Mayor welcomed all staff and members of the public. Note that all members of council all present. No one from the public had comments

4. CONSENT AGENDA

- 4.1. Consideration of appointing Councilor Rambo signing February 2009 [Warrants](#)
- 4.2. Consideration of Minutes [2/11/09](#)
- 4.3. Consideration of Mayoral [Appointment](#)

- 4.4. Consideration of Ordinances [09-03](#) Updating the General Assistance Ordinance

Motion to accept all items on Consent Agenda made by Councilor Trask, Second by Councilor Nickless, Vote: Unanimous.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.1. PRESENTATION OF FEBRUARY FINANCE REPORT

Sandy Runyon presented the finance report for February. He said it is very similar to all the others so far. We are exactly where he would expect us to be. We are doing good job of staying within budget. Taxes are coming in and we have collected approximately \$2 million dollars since mid March. Councilor Rambo asked about late paid taxes and questioned if that is within the norm. Sandy said that today was tax due day and that in all likelihood there are mortgage companies that have yet to pay so we will see more revenues. Jeff said he wanted to apologize for the link to the finance reports not working and said it should have been all set. Councilor Trask asked about excise tax and what we expect to collect. Sandy said he still hopes to come in a little better than budget.

5.2. DISCUSSION OF FY 10 BUDGET GAP ALTERNATIVES

Jeff showed slides to let Council see where staff is at with the budget at this point. We are one month in and Council had asked that city staff look at ways to address the gap. The process was a series of management meetings on Monday mornings. Staff tried to be creative in their approach.

Towards the end they took a more traditional approach and looked at where they could find monies to increase revenues. The focus was on this year but they also took the next several years into consideration as well. This was the first year of a formal zero percent increase but in fact it has been happening for the past several years. The Gap analysis is a direct result of the reorganization of the Finance department. It could not have been done without that investment. They looked at revenues and found that the gap was defined as an issue within revenues. The bottom line for expenditures was a cut of \$200,000. This was prior to the projection of a loss of \$400,000 of revenues. They looked at each line of the budget and made \$53,000 worth of cuts. It leaves us with no flexibility if anything happens outside of the norm. With some new revenue ideas they generated about \$49,000 in revenues to help with the Gap. To summarize they are not proposing any position cuts at this time and they feel that the budget cuts they have made are very manageable. The budgeted flat for the school budget.

They are proposing some land use fee increases, such as building permits. On the expenditure side of things they are proposing to eliminate the temporary staffing line at the library. It means that there will not be a position for students and that full time staff will assume those duties. Proposing to leave the South Gardiner fire station as is and not heat it or provide funds for upkeep. Not recommending hiring a seasonal plow driver this year. Postponing the recycling committee request which is a brand new expense. Looked at not funding KVCAP, Boys and Girls Club, furlough days for non essential staff and reducing the work week for some staff. The open patrolman position was looked at and it was felt that the negative impact of not filling the position would be too great. Jeff said they are looking at the open Fire Chief position as well as the two open positions in the Fire department and again it is felt that it would impact too negatively to leave those positions open. We incur a lot of overtime to cover those shifts Acting Fire Chief Cody said he actually has four open positions and they are having to turn calls away due to a lack of staff. They looked at selling the South Gardiner Fire station and found that zoning is an issue.

Mayor MacLean reiterated that this is not a budget discussion. We will have an opportunity through workshops to pick it apart and ask questions.

Councilor Hart asked if this presentation will be in the packet so that he can look at it in depth. Jeff said it would be helpful to know as soon as possible if a Councilor has an issue before we get too far in. Councilor Hart asked about the open positions and if we can we hold off as long as possible before filling them. Jeff said we have posted the positions already and that they were not recommending that they leave those positions vacant. Councilor Rambo thanked the City Manager for the information he provided. He said he had some questions about the downtown TIF and wondered if we bonded something back then. Jeff said yes there is still outstanding debt involved. Councilor Rambo said he really wants to look at this in depth and Jason said they were planning to look at it next month so he will be able to give Council more data at that point. Jason said they need to keep in mind the benefit of these TIF funds.. Councilor Holmes spoke and said overall he is comfortable with the approach that Jeff has taken with this. Councilor Trask said he doesn't want to start cutting the budget lines for trucks and equipment. He believes instead that we should look at the city as a whole and do we want to run an ambulance service? Topsham has 10,000 more people than we do and they have a volunteer Fire department. Firefighter Rich Kindelan said he worked for BNAS as a firefighter for ten years and the reason Topsham gets by is because BNAS is their back up. He further stated that Topsham has a volunteer call crew of about 50 people where as Gardiner has a call crew of 5.

Councilor Nickless thanked Jeff for the presentation and said he would like a copy of the information so that he can reflect on it as well. Councilor Rambo said he would hope that they would look at all of it in detail and he recently realized that he has been on the council for six years and has no idea what the staff make for salaries. He knows what department heads make but not general staff and he would like to have that information. Councilor Hart also thanked Jeff and said he was very glad to have the information. He looks forward to more in-depth conversation about the cuts that are proposed. Councilor Giberson said he agrees with Councilor Hart. He was expecting much worse as far as the cuts go. Councilor Holmes asked how they can take what he has given them and provide feedback. He doesn't feel they have enough to go on yet. Jeff said they can begin reacting anytime and they can have another meeting to hash it out some more. Councilor Johnston wanted to know approximately how much money we are spending on overtime in public safety due to open positions. Johnston wanted specifics about dollar amounts. Chief Toman said it varies week to week but it can cost as much as a salaried position. When someone gets sick our flexibility is affected and Jim said we have to look at putting our Detective back in a uniform and using him as a patrolman. Jeff said if the Council wants us to keep the position they can mandate that but they can't ask Jim to do that. He needs to be able to staff appropriately and safely. Councilor Trask said he is opposed to leaving a vacancy in the Police Department. Crime is up and we don't have alternatives where that is concerned. He feels the public would be against that as well. Sandy Runyon spoke and said we will put together a better picture of what it would look like if we don't fill the positions versus if we do. Councilor Holmes said he agrees with that but wants to see it across the board for all positions. Lou Benner spoke and said he feels the City is being very proactive and trying to resolve the budget gap. He also asked about budgeting flatly for the school budget. Councilor Nickless said he doesn't want to see any cuts to the library fund. Councilor Trask asked about the Boys and Girls Club budget and our portion. Jeff said they have a budget of \$ 1,000,000 and our portion is \$ 51,800.

6. CITY MANAGER REPORT

Jeff reminded everyone of the upcoming Board of Trade awards banquet and encouraged everyone to attend.

7. COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Councilor Holmes said he would like a microphone that doesn't go behind his ear. Councilor Rambo spoke about the increase in heating costs and said he wants to look at possibly converting to natural gas city wide. Rambo wants to look at the purchasing policy as he feels it may be in conflict with the City Charter. He would like that to be on a future agenda to discuss further. Councilor Johnston spoke about bringing the gas line in at Libby Hill business park and selling the product to the tenants. It would be another feather in the cap for selling lots to Libby Hill. His nephew who is involved in budgeting for the state would be willing to come down and speak to Council further. He also said he is embarrassed every time he walks down Water St. He feels some of the owners there disregard the City's ordinances entirely. There are points where you have to walk through inches thick cigarette butts and dog feces. Unfortunately some of these areas are in front of empty buildings. He thinks we need increased signage regarding littering. He says we won't be able to sell vacant buildings because of this. He also feels that long term relationships with other communities are something we need to be looking at. If we can combine any services and save funds we should. Department heads need to be having those conversations and Jeff needs to be speaking with other town managers. Jeff said we are currently providing technical service to Randolph and his approach with other communities has not been well received but he will continue to pursue. Councilor Trask said he has always hated the brick

sidewalks downtown. If they are looking at repaving with stimulus funds perhaps they could do what Augusta did and pave and stamp the brickwork. It would be much safer as well. Jeff said he believes the paving money is for Water street but not downtown. Councilor Giberson said he has always been disgusted with the people who don't clean in front of their stores. He also does not want to see a cut back in police force. He said the trend is for lots of graffiti downtown and they need the patrolman down there.

Councilor Hart said he feels tonight's meeting went well and he is glad to have the information. He was not specifically asking to eliminate a position but saying lets look before we fill one. He also wanted to say he knows there has been a lot of criticism of Jeff and he wanted to say he is appreciative of what Jeff does and he feels Jeff is very responsive to any requests from the Council.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 9: 03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kathy Cutler

Council Clerk