

**CITY OF LABELLE
BUDGET WORKSHOP/SPECIAL MEETING
AUGUST 15, 2022**

Mayor Wilkins called the Budget Workshop/Special Meeting for fiscal year 2022-2023 to order at 4:03 p.m. A roll call was taken. Members present were Commissioner Hugo Vargas, Commissioner Bobbie Spratt, Mayor Julie Wilkins, Commissioner Jackie Ratica, and Commissioner Daniel Akin. Commissioner Vargas provided the invocation. Mayor Wilkins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Commissioner Spratt asked for a moment of silence to honor a former Commissioner that had recently passed, Clyde Akin.

Following the moment of silence, Gracie Morton, Finance Director for the City of LaBelle, introduced Daniel Anderson of Mauldin and Jenkins whom provided the 2020-2021 fiscal year annual-auditing services for the City of LaBelle.

Mr. Anderson provided a brief history of the company, and then gave an overview of the financial audit that was conducted and its findings.

Attorney Rooney recommended to accept the audit and its findings in its draft form.

Commissioner Ratica motioned to accept the audit and its findings in draft form.

Commissioner Akin seconded the motion.

The motion carried 5-0.

Mrs. Morton introduced Area Manager Glenn Burden of Woodard and Curran. Mr. Burden provided a summary of the budget for the current year. He noted that they were \$20,000 under budget. He then presented requests for the operating and maintenance budget, as well as the capital budget for the upcoming fiscal year. There was discussion on the funding requested from the legislature. He provided an update on the approved funding. There was then conversation on how the funding would be utilized. There was then discussion on a stormwater master plan in reference to the condition of the roadways in Ford and Sunset Parks and how to resolve the issues with drainage.

Mitchel Wills addressed the Commission with his proposed immediate solutions to repair the roads in the subject area by partnering with the County._____

Commissioner Vargas asked Mr. Burden about a secondary storage and pumping station at the water_____ treatment plant. Mr. Burden explained that the items were included in the master plan. There was then discussion on water towers.

Chief Brent Stevens of the LaBelle Fire Department presented to the Commission another revised proposed budget for the Fire Department. He explained the need for additional full time fire fighters, and that the officers declined a pay increase in order to help fund the additional full timers. There was then discussion on adding a new fire truck to the legislative funding requests for the City. Conversation continued on the requested additional full time fire fighters.

Mrs. Morton then directed the Commission to review the assessments and the interlocal agreements between the City and the County in order to determine the City funding versus the County funding for the fire department.

City Attorney Derek Rooney explained that extra money should always be put in the proposed budget in order to plan for capital improvements in the future.

Chief Brent Stevens discussed the future of the fire department and how a new fire station would be required in order to house a ladder truck.

There was discussion on if there were other options to fund the additional full time fire fighters that did not include the officers not receiving their pay increase.

Conversation then continued on purchasing a new fire truck and if the money should go in the 2022-2023 budget or wait until the following budget.

Chief Stevens stated that he and Mrs. Morton would calculate seven-year financing and ten-year financing for the truck to present to the Commission.

Commissioner Akin asked Chief Stevens on immediate needs for the Fire Department and if they were in the proposed budget. Chief Stevens noted that tires for the trucks were a large cost and that they were factored in to the proposed budget as well as uniforms, training, travel and per diem.

Mrs. Morton addressed the Commission to discuss the cost-of-living salary increase. She presented them with the current wage cost as well the costs for a dollar increase, and the costs for a three percent increase. There was discussion on how to get employees to the minimum fifteen dollars an hour sooner rather than later.

Attorney Rooney noted that the benefits were an added bonus to retain employees. He suggested a review of the current bands, and possibly conducting another salary survey. He suggested doing a cola across the board then rolling the cola into the new bands. Discussion continued on how to increase wages to comply with the fifteen dollar an hour minimum wage required in the near future. There was also conversation on if there was a pay increase after the probationary period ended. Conducting evaluations for employees after that period once supervisors had been trained to perform the evaluations correctly was discussed.

April Aguilar of the Utility Billing Department stated that it was her understanding that the pay increase once off probation was fifty cents per hour.

There was conversation on if a part time fire fighter that transferred to a full-time position would qualify for the proposed increase in wages. There was then discussion on the retirement for the fire fighters.

Commissioner Ratica motioned for a one dollar increase for all full time City employees, Commissioner Vargas seconded the motion.

Human Resource Director Lisa Awbrey phoned in and was asked about the wage increase after the probation period ended and how long the period was. She stated that the increase was usually fifty cents

per hour unless administration saw fit to raise that amount. She also noted that the probation period was 180 days.

Commissioner Spratt requested that employees also be shown the value of the benefits they were receiving when being shown the dollar increases.

Conversation continued about the value of the benefits in addition to hourly wages.

Commissioner Ratica amended her motion for the dollar increase for all full-time employees to exclude the Commission.

Commissioner Vargas seconded the amended motion.

The motion carried 5-0.

The meeting was recessed at 5:51 p.m. _____

The meeting was reconvened at 5:59.

After brief discussion on the proposed budget increases for the Sheriff's Department, Captain Shawn Reed addressed the Commission to explain the three options that were presented at a prior budget workshop. He noted that the third option provided for two additional deputies assigned to patrol the City of LaBelle. After further discussion on how to fund the additional deputies,

Commissioner Ratica made a motion to accept option three of the Hendry County Sheriff's Office budget request which would add two designated deputies to patrol the City limits.

Commissioner Spratt seconded the motion.

After further discussion on the third option and how to fund it in the future,

Commissioner Ratica amended her motion to include that a rate study be conducted,

Commissioner Spratt seconded the amended motion.

The motion carried 5-0.

Mrs. Morton discussed employee appreciation, Christmas luncheons, as well as holiday gift cards for employees. She noted that those expenses had been removed from the Special Events budget to the Commissioner budget under the line item of Office Supply. There was discussion on possibly having those items under a different line item. Mrs. Morton said she would explore more options.

Commissioner Ratica asked what account the money for replacing the credenza in the Utility Billing Department would come from.

April Aguilar of the Utility Billing Department noted that a new credenza was no longer desired for the department.

There was discussion on the funding for employee uniforms.

There was short conversation on if any City property was still located in the Jaycee Lions building. Superintendent Gary Hull stated that he would look into it.

The next items on the agenda were the financial support requests.

Mrs. Morton noted that the LaBelle Downtown Revitalization Corporation (L.D.R.C.) had requested \$20,000 to pay the directors salary, the phone bill and the internet bill. She also noted that the City paid the insurance, electric, water, sewer, and garbage for the LDR.C. There was discussion on funding repairs to the L.D.R.C. building. Conversation continued on what the City was funding for the LDRC.

***Commissioner Ratica made a motion to provide the requested support of \$20,000 plus utilities and the other mentioned services from the L.D.R.C.
Commissioner Spratt seconded the motion.
The motion carried 5-0.***

Conversation then moved to the requested annual support for the Barron Library.

***Commissioner Spratt moved to contribute to the library the requested amount of \$25,000.
Commissioner Akin seconded the motion.
The motion carried 5-0.***

Continued support of the Area Housing Authority (AHA) was then discussed. Mayor Wilkins gave a brief overview of the purpose of the Area Housing Authority.

***Commissioner Vargas motioned setting the requested funds aside, and requesting a financial update.
Commissioner Spratt seconded the motion.
After further discussion, Commissioner Vargas withdrew his motion.***

Mrs. Morton explained that the City provides \$25,000 annually to the Economic Development Council (E.D.C.)

Mayor Wilkins requested a financial update from the E.D.C. prior to approving the funds.

Mayor Wilkins took up the request for donation to the LaBelle High School. There was discussion to develop a policy on providing donations to school organizations.

Attorney Derek Rooney suggested that recreational organizations requests be deferred to the Recreation Board.

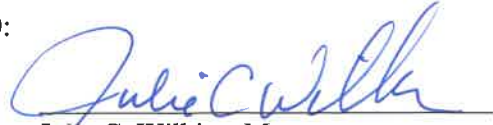
Commissioner Spratt suggested that the Commission as a group donate to the school board. It was decided that each Commissioner would donate personally if they chose to do so.

***Commissioner Ratica motioned that recreation requests for donations will be deferred to the Recreation Board.
Commissioner Vargas seconded the motion.
The motion carried 5-0.***

There was discussion on the time of the final budget hearing.

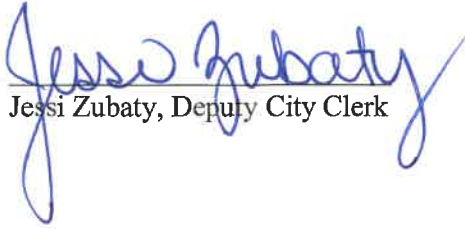
*Commissioner Spratt motioned to adjourn.
Commissioner Akin seconded the motion.
The meeting was adjourned at 6:49 p.m.*

APPROVED:



Julie C. Wilkins, Mayor

ATTEST:



Jessi Zubaty, Deputy City Clerk