

**CITY OF LABELLE
BUDGET HEARING
SEPTEMBER 19, 2022**

Mayor Wilkins called the City of LaBelle final budget hearing for fiscal year 2022-2023 to order at 5:05 p.m. Commissioner Vargas provided the invocation. Mayor Wilkins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members present were Commissioner Hugo Vargas, Mayor Julie Wilkins, Commissioner Jackie Ratica, and Commissioner Daniel Akin. Commissioner Spratt was absent.

Gracie Morton, City of LaBelle Finance Director stated that the proposed final budget reflected the necessary changes to comply with the tentative 4.25 millage rate. She then explained that the difference of funds from the proposed 4.5 millage rate in which the budget balanced, was deducted it from the contingency fund.

Mayor Wilkins expressed her desire to not raise the taxes for the residents.

Commissioner Ratica agreed that it was not her desire to raise taxes however, she did not feel comfortable taking the additional funds out of the “hurricane fund” (professional services).

There was the discussion on the “hurricane fund” and the ability to be reimbursed in a timely manner by FEMA, and other sources in the event of a hurricane occurring.

Attorney Derek Rooney stated for the record that the rate increase reflected the need for necessary funding for stormwater, transportation, and utility projects as well as establishing a hurricane fund reserve, and other capital projects.

Commissioner Vargas noted that in order to provide the necessary services to the residents, the extra funding was needed in order to reinvest in the departments that had been neglected in previous years.

There was discussion on previous years millage rates, and the possibility that leaving the millage rate at 4.0 would deplete the contingency fund.

***Commissioner Vargas made a motion to increase the millage rate to 4.25.
Attorney Derek Rooney then stated for the record that the rate hereby caused the proposed tax rate as a percentage change of the roll back rate to be an increase of 9.94%.
Commissioner Ratica seconded the motion.
After brief further discussion, the motion carried 4-0.***

Mayor Wilkins took up the proposed final budget that reflected the 4.25 millage rate.

There was then conversation on the fire assessments and how the assessments did not cover the proposed budget totals. Mrs. Morton stated that the City would be responsible for providing the difference.

Commissioner Akin noted that it should not be done like that in the following years, and that the fire assessments should be raised in the future. Conversation continued on the raising of the assessments in the future.

The discussion then turned to the funds requested by the Recreation Board for the current fiscal year, for the upcoming fiscal year.

Mrs. Morton recommended revisiting the topic in February or March to evaluate if the funds were needed by the Recreation Board.

Commissioner Akin stated the Recreation Board would be in a deficit this year. Discussion continued on the funding for the recreation board.

Mrs. Morton noted that Barron Park was in need of new electric in the near future.

There was then discussion on having master plans for the park to indicate where the funds would go.

Mrs. Morton stated that going forward, anyone requesting funds from the City of LaBelle would need to provide an invoice reflecting the request.

After further discussion on the requested funding by the Recreation Board as well as the budget for the Recreation Board,

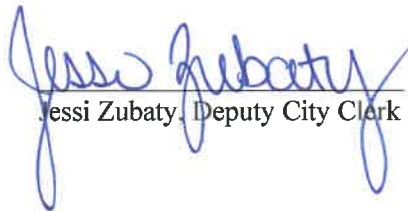
***Commissioner Akin made a motion to approve the proposed final FY 2022-2023 budget.
Commissioner Ratica seconded the motion.
The motion carried 4-0.***

The meeting adjourned at 5:34.

APPROVED:


Julie C. Wilkins, Mayor

ATTEST:


Jessi Zubaty, Deputy City Clerk