

SPECIAL WORK SESSION  
PUBLIC SAFETY LEVY

City Council, 8:00 a.m. February 7, 2015

All members present except Cimmino and Crouch

Public comments:

Terry Odegard, 2101 Lake Hills Drive: Heights Task Force vice-chair, residents want more police officers on the street, not sure about Fire Department needs. Want Council to set a police officer/1000 population standard, we're low compared to other cities. Police challenges with crime. Need public safety to grow and to serve visitors. Willing to pay more if there are more police.

Swanson: Agree with statement, last levy City officials didn't work hard enough to share information about number of officers, comparison to other cities.

St. John: 1.3/1000 population is OK but actual officer work load study measures are better. Showed council that information at last meeting.

Hanel: Police Department is short. What is reasonable number to meet current demands?

St. John: Want to be up to current authorized, plus the six (6) that we'll talk about later today. Last point is that for all practical purposes, we have 10 vacancies because officers are either not hired or in various stages of training. Thereby, they don't help out staffing issues because they are not out on their own.

Pat Weber presentation: Adjusted FY15 funding due to unpredicted \$3.1 million (\$1.1m under-spent in FY 14 and \$2m in paid protested taxes (telecom)). Explains the revised community growth scenario. Compares projections from past levy to revised numbers. 5-7 year levy – Council decides the number. Compares projections of past levy with a no-growth scenario. City could use reserves in FY 16 to hire additional Public Safety staff and levy more in future. Compares that scenario with community growth. Can't sustain the FY 16 hiring if a levy doesn't pass in FY16.

Tina: Decision points for Council – Number of years in a new levy? Number of personnel to hire? Recommend a Blue-Ribbon committee to work on proposal, appointed as early as April, advise the Council from community viewpoint. County election administrator outlined the available dates, paired with the School District (2016) and County plans (2015). Charter sets the requirement(s) for a municipal primary election. Outlines when taxes would be available depending on date of

election. Can do mail ballot and cost is approximately \$70,000. Elections office requires 70 days notice.

Hanel: What schedule does the Council want?

McCall: No longer makes sense to consider 2015 election – time is too short to wage an effective campaign.

McFadden: Voters will resent another levy ballot issue if it's too soon after the last one.

Hanel: Staff did lots of presentations in 2014 but citizen committee would help the next time.

Cromley: Concerned about waiting too long between elections – sends the message that the money requested last time wasn't really needed. Have more immediate needs.

Hanel: We have \$3.1 million now that we didn't know about in the 2014 election.

Swanson: Agree that we need officers now.

Cromley: 2016 election competes with so many other ballot issues.

Bird: Agree that we need to have election sooner. Want to be in front of rather than behind growth. Departments don't have the resources to do the best possible job now. Understand voter fatigue but Public Safety is consistently a strong issue. November 2015 is her preference.

Swanson: Numbers about crime increasing?

St. John: Developing annual report information now. Looks like there were 82,000 calls for service vs. 80,000 calls the previous year.

Swanson: Still lots of problems with homeless/inebriates.

St. John: Making some headway, researching, developing responses.

Yakawich: Agree with McCall. People understand the Public Safety needs, but need to show public how City is saving money, educate citizens, don't want to fail again.

Hanel: \$3.1 million, about 1/3 is from savings within the Public Safety departments.

Bird and Cromley: Would a citizen committee help and would reducing years and money help?

Cromley: Agree that citizen committee is valuable. Need more people working on this, raising campaign money, putting out signs, etc.

McFadden: Agree that yard signs would help.

Bird: Under-resourced Public Safety, have saved as much as possible, need to inform citizens about service demands and budget. Departments having to triage calls shows that City needs more Public Safety dollars. City has to send a consistent message to voters. City is still safe but she's hearing from residents that they're increasingly concerned about personal safety. Crime is somewhat dependent on demographics. Youngest age cohort is larger than previous one and that will generate more crime.

McCall: Regardless of the election this year or next year, need the citizen committee.

Brown: Not enough time to wage effective campaign this year. Dollars are not that different from past campaign. Obvious that City needs more Public Safety money. 80% of people never need to call for Public Safety, so need to stress that Public Safety is working hard, responds when there are genuine needs but can't meet all demands. Need to stress workloads, not money.

Tina: Need to better inform people about why the levies must continue – to support the on-going personnel costs.

Bird: Personnel are so stretched, they're in crisis mode. No time to do the community oriented activities. Can't be pro-active.

Dextras: Police Department is really stretched. Arvada failed two (2) levies, advisor said that they needed to explain what people would gain or would lose with the vote. \$3.1 million extra is hard to explain to citizens. Time before campaign may be helpful but Council has to be solid about what happens if the next levy election fails. Easier to sell to citizens the closer the time when cuts will happen, so campaign will be easier some years down the road. Can't currently explain to people what they would lose in the Fire Department if levy fails, but will be more able to tell them the closer we get to the financial cliff.

Swanson: Police Department printed material told what department would lose if levy failed but Fire Department brochure was positive about what the Fire Department does. Have to develop a consistent message.

Bird: Hearing from people that we need to present a consistent message. Need to be clear what we need now and what the needs will be in the future. Departments are working well and they are still doing what they need to do. Lack of resources keeps the city from delivering the level of services residents want, so need to tell that story.

Tina: Hearing consensus about needing a citizen committee, number of fire, dispatch and police is OK. Six (6) firefighters would staff three (3) positions. Some questions about number needed in each dept.

Bird: OK with considering different numbers. Add firefighter shift advantages and cost?

Dextras: Explains current schedules, what FLSA allows and what adding one (1) shift would do for the staffing. Equals 12 firefighters. Adding a shift has to be negotiated.

Tina: Wage reopener with Fire Department this year, no other issues such as shift schedule. So, adding a shift will have to wait until 2016 to consider it. Adding a shift increases amount of money Fire Department needs.

McFadden: Adding a shift increases wages, wages are open for negotiations, so couldn't we talk about that this year?

Pat: Cost of adding a shift = \$1.2million. Six (6) new firefighters; first year of projections = \$300k and would reach \$1.2 million in approximately 10 years.

Bird: Would adding shifts allow Fire Department to state what citizens will gain if approved?

Dextras: Twelve adds more people to each shift, might be able to expand squad program, other unspecified at this time. Would save health insurance and some equipment costs. Could staff another station with equivalent of 12 firefighters. We could not staff an eighth station if we hire six (6) firefighters.

McCall: Need to explain Police Department services, what is being added or reduced.

St John: Police Department will do the necessary services. But already starting to see the service cuts that were predicted in the levy campaign. City is growing and Police Department needs more resources, but hard to predict exactly how much. For example, have already lost the dedicated traffic enforcement unit. Will hire two (2) more officers to replace current vacancies, only have three (3) in the hiring pool. Takes almost a year to produce an officer that can function on his/her own.

Break at 9:40.

Reconvene at 10:00.

Tina: Consensus on six (6) Police Department officers and citizen committee, appointed by Mayor/Council.

Cromley: City council should not create the committee.

Hanel: Could agree but there would be no input or formal recommendations to Council.  
Tina: In her past work, committees vetted the proposal and made recommendations to the governing body. Either purpose, one needs to form soon, even if election is in 2016.

McCall: Want to see the numbers for adding nine (9) officers.

Pat: If Council wants to add to the recommended six (6) officers, recommend longer levy period, seven (7) years.

Yakawich: Support fewer officers and shorter time.

Brown: At least seven (7) years. Think this will succeed if there is a citizen committee and Council promotes it.

Hanel: Need to show the reserves, how they're spent and start using them before putting request to voters.

McFadden: Agree with lower numbers and fewer years – show voters that we heard them and respect them.

Hanel: Consensus is seven (7) year levy. 6-9 officers with the final decision to be made later.

Cromley: Agree that Council wasn't active in past campaign but commend what staff did.

Tina: Need direction on the committee's tasks – if they raise money, might need to be separate from City or City appointed.

Cromley: Think the past two (2) meetings let the community know the city's needs, so committee's task should focus be promotion and fundraising.

Tina: Staff needs guidance on who appoints the committee – Mayor/Council ad-hoc committee? Or, talk with groups about creating a committee that is entirely separate from the City?

McCall: Need more information on whether a City committee could raise campaign money.

Tina: Need legal opinion. Regardless of how committee forms, needs to happen soon if election is within a year.

Yakawich: Why separate? Want committee input.

Cromley: Committee raises money for campaign; Council has to set policy on when, how much, how many etc.

McFadden: Could Union representative have a seat on committee? Discussion about why a city appointed committee would have restrictions on activities. Would there be Union involvement?

Tina: If committee raises money, employees are limited to providing information to that committee.

Hanel: Summary: 6-9 officers, seven (7) years, committee that is not city appointed but city could ask individuals or organizations to create one and support the proposed levy.

Tina: Will seek legal opinion about whether a city appointed committee can promote and fund-raise. Reviews costs for six (6) firefighters and adding a shift to present staffing.

Bird: What is a schedule for an 8<sup>th</sup> station?

Dextras: Station study said it should be near Rehberg Ranch, but better if it is added elsewhere in Heights.

Tina: Will estimate the cost/mills necessary to go from six (6) firefighters to adding a shift to current schedule. Discussion about when to put levy on the ballot.

McCall: Ask people who worked on campaign last time and advertising/campaign experts about when to have it, time needed to run a campaign, disadvantages/advantages of a separate ballot issue.

Tina: Have to decide by late August if the issue is going on the November 15 ballot.

Public comments:

Tom Zurbuchen, 1747 Wicks Lane: Charter is clear that City Administrator proposes a budget and Council approves. There is an adopted 2015 budget that includes all authorized police officers. Not right to not hire authorized numbers. Council should direct the City Administrator to hire the authorized officers.

Tina: Have authorized all but four (4) positions. Council discussion about whether to hire authorized positions.

Ann Ferguson, 436 Lewis Ave.: When does tax money from annexation and development start coming into the city?

Tina: Six (6) year reappraisal cycle – flattens taxable value and mills are fixed.

Terry Odegard, 2101 Lake Hills Drive: Where is the Legislature with a local option tax.

McCall: League request for Mayor/Manager letter to support the tax by Tuesday. Time is short to get it introduced and passed by first house by end of February. Jeff Essmann will sponsor if we get the statewide support. League formatted a letter for Mayors to sign or can change it.

Adjourned 11:10.