

FY 2021 City Council Budget Work Session
CITY SPACE
February 6, 2020, 5:00 p.m.

The Charlottesville City Council met on this date at CitySpace, 100 5th Street NE, with the following members present: Mayor Nikuyah Walker, Vice Mayor Sena Magill, Ms. Heather Hill, Mr. Michael Payne and Mr. Lloyd Snook.

Ms. Walker called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. and turned the meeting over to City Manager Tarron Richardson to discuss the budget.

Dr. Richardson introduced the budget team of Mr. Ryan Davidson, Ms. Krisy Hammill and Ms. Letitia Shelton. He then gave an overview of the budget development process.

Mr. Davidson provided a breakdown of Council Equity Fund expenditures, as requested. He reviewed the calendar for upcoming budget worksessions, advised of additional important dates, and advised of FY2021 estimated revenues.

Ms. Hammill reviewed budget challenges and answered Council questions.

Ms. Walker reviewed her budget recommendations.

Commissioner of the Revenue Todd Divers shared information about the Charlottesville Home Affordability Program (CHAP).

Mr. Davidson reviewed the community agency funding program and presented two potential funding scenarios for Council to consider. Ms. Kaki Dimock, Human Services Director, shared additional information about changes to the agency funding program. Councilors agreed on funding scenario one.

Council discussed whether to advertise a consideration of a real estate tax increase for purposes of meeting a 30-day public hearing advertising deadline. Councilors expressed a desire to not increase the real estate tax rate, but wanted flexibility to continue budget discussions, and agreed to advertise a potential rate increase of two cents.

Mr. Payne expressed thoughts on how the budget information is presented and the desire to have more information to make specific decisions. He advised that staffing levels should be considered for addressing City priorities.

Ms. Walker opened the floor for public comment.

Mr. Jay Dorsey, Charlottesville firefighter and member of Local Union 2363, spoke about the lack of medic-level ambulances available to serve the City. He asked for no further cuts to the Fire Department budget and to allocate funds for additional positions.

- Ms. Walker clarified that there have been no cuts made to the budget.

Mr. Greg Wright, Charlottesville Fire Department medic and President of Local Association of Firefighters, spoke about the need for medic-level ambulances to serve the citizens of Charlottesville. He requested nine new fully funded positions for the Fire Department.

- Dr. Richardson advised of the need to have conversations about appropriate staffing and possible redistribution of personnel to respond to calls appropriately.

Mr. John Gaines, resident, spoke in support of the firefighter requests and shared ideas for tax saving measures. He suggested using funds for keeping cooling shelters open, services for the disabled and elderly, affordable housing funds and home assistance, and supporting Habitat for Humanity. He spoke in support of fully funding the schools request while holding them accountable. He also asked for reopening the discussion on Vinegar Hill and increase public use of the bus system by providing free transportation.

Ms. Sheila Hurley, City resident and member of IMPACT (Interfaith Movement Promoting Actions by Congregations Together), spoke in support of funding for the Charlottesville Affordable Housing Fund.

Mr. Peter Krebs, representing the Piedmont Environmental Council, spoke about connectivity. He requested funding for sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, and trails development.

Mr. Court Hammond, City resident, echoed Mr. Krebs' comments in support of multimodal transit.

Mr. Andy Orban, resident, spoke in support of fully funding the schools request. He expressed concern about the building of a new parking garage. He spoke of the importance of the Human Rights Office and the need to fully staff it with the departure of Manager Charlene Green.

Mr. Walt Heinecke, City resident, spoke in support of funding a position to evaluate efficiency. He also spoke in support of funding the Charlottesville Affordable Housing Fund. Regarding the Police Civilian Review Board, he requested 1% of the Police Department budget and funding the two requested positions. Regarding the Human Rights Commission, he asked for funding to hire a Civil Rights Attorney or Director of Compliance for the Office of Civil Rights to investigate employment and housing discrimination, allowing the Commission full enforcement and compliance capability. He mentioned setting up a strike fund for housing.

Mr. Tom Ecklund, with IMPACT, spoke in support of funding the Charlottesville Affordable Housing Fund and opportunities for purchasing land and building affordable housing.

Ms. Shymora (last name not stated), City resident and Habitat for Humanity homeowner, spoke in support of funding the Charlottesville Affordable Housing Fund to support lower income families and help the homelessness issue.

Ms. Walker closed public comment.

Ms. Walker advised that Council needs to see City Department budget line items before determining how to fund the Schools request. She advised that the Cost of Living Adjustment for City staff and Schools staff should be in parity. Schools requested a 3% increase, and the current City budget includes a 2% increase.

Mr. Davidson added that departmental budget were not cut, but not all of the requests above baseline could be funded.

Mr. Payne expressed the need to increase teacher salaries.

Dr. Rosa Atkins, Charlottesville City School Superintendent shared information about teacher salaries and challenges with compensating teachers fairly relative to neighboring localities.

Mr. Payne expressed concerns about progressive taxation and limits based on General Assembly decisions.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

BY Order of City Council

BY Kyna Thomas, Clerk of Council