

**MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
March 30, 2010
City Council Chambers – Rouss City Hall**

PRESENT: President Jeff Buettner; Vice-Mayor Michael Butler; Councilor Evan Clark, Milt McInturff, Les Veach and John Willingham; Vice-President Art Major; Mayor Elizabeth Minor (8)
ABSENT: Councilor John Hill (1)

President Buettner called the meeting to order at 5:29 p.m.

New Business:

Taxing Chart

Treasurer Mark Garber presented a proposal to put a tax chart on the back of all real estate bills showing how each tax dollar is spent. The debt service and operation costs for education are shown separately in the chart.

Councilor Hill arrived at the meeting at 5:30 p.m.

FY11 Budget Item Review

City Manger Jim O'Connor stated this was a follow up from the last Budget Committee meeting. He presented a balanced budget that included the updated information received from the State late last week. To cover the shortfall from the State for Constitutional Officers, staff recommended the money come from the EDC. A list of requests from outside agencies was also presented with two options to consider.

Vice-President Major expressed his concerns about reducing organizations that do a lot of good in the community and increasing the Discovery Museum. He stated although the museum is a good, these organizations would do a lot of good especially in this economy. He suggested giving the Discovery Museum less money.

Vice-Mayor Butler stated he is very much a fan of the Discovery Museum but putting them back in the budget with such a large number at this time gives him concern. He supports the museum whenever he can but they need to stand on their own. They do serve an educational need in the community but he is concerned.

After a brief discussion on the difficulty of determining which organization is more important than the others, Mr. O'Connor stated each organization is required to complete an application that explains what they do in the community. President Buettner directed staff to develop the process further to consider who would provide the core services if the City did not exist and how that might save money.

Vice-President Major asked that financial statements be included in their application to determine if funding was really needed.

Mr. O'Connor stated the budget includes \$100,000 to give to the county to renovate the proposed Detox location outside of the city limits to get it out of the downtown area. He has asked if that amount includes the acquisition of the building to the City. The County would like to have an additional \$120,000 for the operational expenses for a total of \$220,000.

President Buettner stated he would like to know the timeline for renovating the building.

President Buettner stated Bluemont and First Night do wonderful things for the downtown area. The County has cut them to zero. He sees the City getting a better return on investment for Bluemont and First Night over the Civil War Museum.

Karen Helm, Director of Old Town, stated the advantage of the museum is it is open 12 months of the year with an annual visitation of 5,000 a year. Bluemont has the biggest return on investment with the restaurant with about 400 people per night. First Night brings in about 5,000 tickets sold.

President Buettner requested the City Manager prepare a better process of review for next year that will have staff determine which organizations fit the City's mission.

Vice-Mayor Butler requested time to think about the requests being made. He also suggested the organizations come in to present to Council with a copy of their audits. They should be required to present their goals and objectives for that year and how they met their goals and objectives for the previous year.

Vice-Mayor Butler stated he hates to see the City get into a "he said/she said" with the County where we are completely isolated in the areas of development. They may take leads meant for us and vice-versa. Both localities can gain from having facilities located in each other's communities. Isolation in economic development would not be beneficial to anyone.

President Buettner stated he agrees but he thought we had already got there. He was taken back when he was told at the Joint Finance meeting that the City could come back in only if funding both years.

Vice-President Major stated the EDC has come to Council before to justify funding for them. However, they have stated retail space is not their mission and the city does not have suitable space for offices. They also stated when they put a business in the county, it helps the city. However, when we put businesses in the city it benefits the county but they don't put money into our development. If they are not willing to change their mission, why should we fund them? Without revenue sharing we are in direct competition. If that is the case, he wants to win.

Vice-President Major stated the cigarette tax increase is to give us the revenue to cover the cuts from the State. He is not willing to approve a budget that increases taxes for cuts from the State.

Councilor Clark expressed his concern that it may not be legal to put it in writing where the money goes but it could be done in a verbal agreement. He would support the tax increase if it paid for the agencies discussed earlier in the meeting.

After a brief discussion on the proposed personnel cuts, Mr. O'Connor suggested Council email their list of priorities to him so staff can determine what Council wants to focus on.

As a point of privilege, President Buettner stated he has given more thought to the rezoning request to change the Historic District. The more he thinks about it, the less he agrees with it and asked the members of Council to give it more thought. This Council is big on process and procedure. If we start to piecemeal things, he fears we will have something in the future that we do not want.

Mayor Minor stated she does not think we can overlook the Planning Commission and disrupt the Historic District. She agrees that Council needs to think very hard on this request.

Adjournment

President Jeff Buettner moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:56 p.m. *The motion was seconded by Councilor Clark then unanimously approved by voice-vote.*