

CITY OF SALISBURY  
BUDGET WORK SESSION  
APRIL 23, 2024

Public Officials Present

Council President D’Shawn M. Doughty  
Council Vice-President Angela M. Blake  
Councilmember Michele Gregory

Mayor Randolph J. Taylor  
Councilmember April R. Jackson  
Councilmember Sharon C. Dashiell

In Attendance

City Administrator Andy Kitzrow, Finance Director Keith Cordrey, Deputy City Administrator John Tull, Assistant City Clerk Julie English, City Staff and Department Heads

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The City Council convened in Budget Work Session at 8:42 a.m. on April 23, 2024 in Room 306 of the Government Office Building to review the City’s Financial Health and the FY25 Mayor’s Proposed Budget.

**Financial Health Report (attached to these minutes)**

Finance Director Keith Cordrey presented the Financial Health Report for the City. During the presentation, the following questions were asked and discussed.

During the review of capital assets, Mayor Taylor asked why depreciation was used. Mr. Cordrey responded that there were two statements provided. One statement was at the fund level showing cash in, cash out. The second statement showed capitalized assets and their depreciation, and debt. Mayor Taylor then asked what depreciation schedule was used. Mr. Cordrey explained that there was a Capital Asset Policy and each asset class had a different schedule.

While discussing the General Fund - Unassigned Fund Balance Analysis, President Doughty asked if Mr. Cordrey could see a time when they would need to change the target of four months. Mr. Cordrey stated that if the City continued to have a sustainable budget, there would be no reason to change it.

In the Mayor’s FY25 Budget, the ten frozen police officer positions remained. Ms. Jackson expressed her concern since there had been a shortage of officers for some time. Mr. Kitzrow explained that he and Chief Meienschein felt it was inappropriate to unfreeze positions while active positions remained vacant. Ms. Jackson asked how many positions the police department had. Mr. Kitzrow stated there were 103 sworn positions with ten frozen. Mayor Taylor added that they were looking into the possibility of having auxiliary police. Ms. Jackson stated that due to the City’s demographics and growth, she did not agree with freezing the positions.

In referencing the FY25 General Fund Capital Outlay, President Doughty asked which vehicles would be replaced and added. He also wanted to know the hierarchy in determining which locations in the City would benefit from the surface maintenance and street reconstruction funds. Mr. Kitzrow stated that streets were placed on a list in priority order to determine where capital funding would be used. Similarly, there was a fleet depreciation schedule for City vehicles which also had a scale to note their condition and priority level.

Ms. Blake questioned why Schumaker Pond was funded at \$5,000 less than what was requested. Mr. Kitzrow shared that the Field Operations Director, Mike Dryden, recommended not going in and ripping out the vegetation due to a concern that it would destroy the ecosystem of the plant life. Mr. Dryden believed that spraying first would be a better option. Ms. Blake then asked about the option to do a study to see what pollutant(s) were going into the pond. The top three suspects she named were failing water and sewer septic systems, waste from animals, or runoff chemicals from homes. Mayor Taylor and Mr. Kitzrow believed the County had funds set aside to assist with that process. Mr. Kitzrow acknowledged that spraying was a temporary fix and agreed that the study would give them answers as to what was going on.

Ms. Jackson asked Mr. Kitzrow how this problem was handled in the past. He answered that the City would pay for the chemicals and the County would go out in a boat and spray. However, due to the silting and increased vegetation, they were not able to reach certain parts of the pond and that process was abandoned.

Ms. Gregory asked about the Andean Bear exhibit. Mr. Kitzrow responded that, ideally, they would like to see the City and State each fund a quarter of the total cost, and receive private funding for it. The City did not receive State funding for it this year. He added that it would take about a year for a capital campaign. Five million dollars was needed and it would take some time.

Ms. Blake had two topics she wanted to discuss that were listed as City Weaknesses. She expressed her frustration with regard to the Fire Service Agreements and asked what Mayor Taylor's vision was for it. Mayor Taylor stated that the City could make a strong case to the County with the increased call volume. Mr. Kitzrow explained that the City was currently in a one year agreement that would begin July 1, 2024. That agreement would mean the County would treat the City's three unincorporated areas the same as any other County district. Council questioned if the agreement would give the City enough money based on the cost of running their calls. Mayor Taylor believed there needed to be a very serious conversation with the County to include consequences if they refuse to pay what we were owed.

Ms. Blake also expressed her concern with the Tax Differential. Mr. Kitzrow stated that the State would have to make a change in legislation.

### **Police Department**

Chief Meienschein highlighted several areas in the Police Services budget where they requested increases for various reasons. Some of those areas included salaries, uniforms, and vehicle maintenance. There was a discussion about the higher caliber rifles the officers were seeing out on the streets. The level 3 vests, around \$3,000 each, would be needed to stop those bullets. Chief Meienschein mentioned they were down about 5 dispatchers in their Communications Division. They requested increases in salaries and equipment. The Animal Control budget was primarily made up of operating costs for the Humane Society. The SPD pays about 1/5 of their operating costs and this year there was an increase of \$31,000.

Ms. Jackson asked how they felt about the freezing of 10 positions in their department. Chief Meienschein responded that those positions would allow them to do more community policing. He would not ask to unfreeze positions until the other positions are filled. Along with unfreezing a position, there would also be additional costs that came with that.

### **Fire Department**

Chief Frampton stated that the Fire Department submitted five Essential Items. They explained the need for three Fire Fighter/Paramedic positions. It was explained that a study had been done in 2001 which determined more fire fighters/paramedics were needed. Currently they are getting double the number of calls and they remained understaffed. Chief Frampton pointed out that the increase in the overtime budget was related to this shortfall. The additional positions would also provide coverage when employees were off.

It was clarified that the 12 SAFER grant positions were approved at the Mayor's level to become City positions after the grant expires in March 2025. The requested fire fighter/paramedic positions would be in addition to the 12 SAFER positions. Ms. Gregory requested numbers showing how many employees are out, on average, in a given time. Chief Frampton would get those numbers to Council.

There was a discussion on the Fire Service Agreement and Mr. Kitzrow summarized that the agreement the County Executive and the City Administration came to was in the hands of the County Council. Ms. Gregory shared her frustration regarding the City not being compensated for the work they are doing for the County.

Mr. Kitzrow pointed out that after the Mayor's Proposed Budget was completed, there were additional adjustments that had to be made to offset the salary increases agreed to through the Collective Bargaining Unit.

### **Infrastructure & Development**

Mr. Kitzrow began by referencing the reorganization that Council had approved. Deputy City Administrator John Tull then presented Council with the Infrastructure & Development budget. He stated that the individuals who played a part in the FY25 Budget were no longer there. The budget was flatlined and there were no essential items to present.

Mr. Kitzrow explained that within the reorganization there were two positions cut and a Deputy position added. President Doughty then asked how the department would function with the changes. Mr. Tull confirmed that the department would be using consultants to keep projects moving along and filling vacant positions within the department. Mr. Kitzrow added that the City had struggled with hiring seasoned, 10 year engineers. They were beginning to look at the individuals just coming out of school rather than the seasoned individuals. Mr. Kitzrow also shared how costly engineers had become.

### **City Clerk's Office**

Assistant City Clerk Julie English presented the budget for the Clerk's Office. A few changes were made in preparation for City Clerk Kim Nichols' retirement. The new office phones provided a savings for the department so the savings was distributed between the printing, travel and training accounts.

Mr. Kitzrow also shared with Council that a reclass was put into the budget for Ms. English at the Administrative level for the additional responsibilities she had taken on.

### **City Council**

Ms. English noted that the only change to the Council budget was moving \$50 from community promotions to meals. President Doughty inquired about having an account for discretionary funding. Ms. Jackson shared her frustration with having to use her own credit card for travel arrangements. President Doughty questioned why the Mayor had a City card but Council was told they cannot have one. It was determined that the Clerk's Office would get a purchase card.

President Doughty requested that the Clerk's Office track the City laptops to assist with planning ahead for their replacement.

Ms. Blake requested the Mayor and Council salaries be reviewed and increased. There was discussion on possibly changing the positions from part-time to fulltime as well as reviewing the qualifications for the candidates.

### **Water Works**

Water Works Director Cori Cameron reviewed some of the department's essential items. She talked about the CDL drivers and the bonuses she would like to continue offering them. Mr. Kitzrow explained that with having the unions, when you offer something to one group of people in a department, it would then have to be offered to everyone in that group for all departments.

Water Plant Superintendent Ron Clapper explained the request for funding to switch the current Verizon lines to fiber lines, which run to the well houses. The Verizon lines had gotten expensive and switching to the fiber lines would save about \$20,000 per year.

Utilities Superintendent Trey Klaverweiden explained that equipment and chemicals had gone up significantly so there was a request for more funding in the Utilities equipment account.

There was a discussion on what vehicles were requested for Water Works. Mr. Kitzrow also explained that some vehicles for other departments were requested through the use of the Water & Sewer funds. Not all of the vehicles that were listed under Water Works were for their department.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Superintendent Connie Luffman spoke about the request for an additional mechanic. She explained that the City was growing so there is more to take care of and maintain. The mechanics in the department were stretched thin and not able to keep up on things.

Ms. Cameron and Ms. Luffman explained several of the projects that were requested in the FY25 budget but would be moved to FY24 to save money.

Ms. Luffman explained a new process that her department was using that involved dewatering dumpsters. This method saved the department money by only having to take in the dry solids to the landfill rather than having it mixed with water.

Mr. Kitzrow explained that with the changes needing to happen in relation to the PFAS situation, it would be a long and costly process. He added that there would likely be grant funding received to assist with the cost.

### **Field Operations**

Field Operations Director Mike Dryden began by sharing the positions they asked for in the FY25 budget. Those positions included increased staff for the Parks, Sanitation and Fleet Divisions, as well as an Electrician position to keep up with the increased work load.

Mr. Kitzrow explained that merit increases and career ladder increases were not cut from the Mayor's budget.

Mr. Dryden stated that the positions he would prefer filling most were the Electrician and two Parks positions. A brief explanation of the process used for vehicle replacements was given. There are several factors used.

Mr. Dryden explained to Ms. Blake, with regard to Schumaker Pond, that the City was doing their part. He added that the residents who lived around the pond also needed to do their part. There was discussion on what the best course of action would be and what the possible causes could be. Ms. Blake would like the City to work with Salisbury University to look further into the problems in the pond.

Mr. Cordrey asked Mr. Kitzrow to review the General Capital projects that Administration wanted to move from FY25 to FY24. These included the Beaver Park Dam improvements, GOB exterior waterproofing, Zoo facility improvements, North Prong Park land acquisition, Jefferson Avenue street light additions and the Amphitheater pedestrian bridge. These were high priority projects. Ms. Blake added her concern for street lighting in Spring Chase.

Mr. Kitzrow clarified that the current discussions for Schumaker Pond included a treatment of the growths in the Pond rather than the removal of it.

### **Housing & Community Development**

Housing & Community Development Director Muir Boda provided an update on Anne Street Village (ASV) daily expenditures. He shared that the \$18,000 approved at the Mayor's level would cover daily operations such as electricity, utilities, snacks for residents and pest control services. Mr. Boda mentioned the funds for the Housing First Program, which was requested but not funded. Mr. Kitzrow noted that the goal this year was to take care of those currently in the program rather than expanding the current program. Mr. Boda explained the changes that were made in reference to the budgeting of the grants and employees associated with the program. He made it clear that HCDD was not asking to expand the Housing First Program but wanted the funds necessary to maintain the housing they already had. The final request was for a merit increase for the Community Relations Manager.

Mr. Boda added that the department was in need of replacement vehicles. He communicated that receiving two new vehicles would allow them to shuffle their vehicles around and better accommodate the staff based on their responsibilities.

Ms. Dashiell asked for the status on Anne Street Village. Mr. Boda responded that his staff were currently running it and would continue as needed. The RFP was in process. Ms. Dashiell's biggest concern was that it was never full.

Mr. Boda responded to a question from Ms. Jackson and stated that there were 25 units at ASV with one serving as an office, another as a community kitchen, and about 14 to 15 filled with residents. Ms. Jackson did not understand why there were vacancies in the homes. Mr. Boda responded that the staffing he had was two people and their days were already full with the residents who lived there, so they could not take on any additional residents.

### **Volunteer Fire Department**

Lee Smith, Volunteer Deputy Chief for the Salisbury Fire Department, addressed Council regarding the FY25 Volunteer Fire Budget. He gave a summary of how the FY24 funds were used. Among those expenditures were: a new "jaws of life", the initiation of a cancer reduction program, new protective masks for each member, replacement fire hoses and gym equipment.

They asked for funds to purchase additional thermal imaging cameras, upgrades for the hydraulics, replacement supply line, and new high-rise packs. Mr. Smith shared that the calls for service continued to increase. Additionally, he mentioned several things the volunteers were in support of. Some of those included the purchase of new fire engines, making the twelve SWIFT members full-time employees and replacing some of the radios.

Mr. Smith shared that the Firefighter EMT program was coming back to the CTE program at Parkside High School. Fifteen students would go through the two-year program.

**City Attorney**

Mr. Kitzrow began by stating that \$30,000 had been added to one of the line items for the City Attorneys budget for the purpose of paying for special council in potential arbitrations and discussions with the unions. City Attorney Ashley Bosché responded that she would like to be a part of any arbitration that may come up, at no cost to the City, to gain the experience and be able to take over the arbitrations at some point. Ms. Bosché felt that Cockey, Brennan & Maloney (CBM) would be able to take over some of the work involving the unions. That would benefit the City since it cost more for special council.

Mr. Kitzrow also explained that the “other attorney” line item would include all attorneys used by the City except for CBM.

After discussion, it was determined that the additional \$30,000 was not needed since there was the ability to transfer between the two accounts and there were sufficient funds in the “city attorney” account.

The Budget Work Session adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

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City Clerk

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Council President