

THE GENEVA CITY COUNCIL

JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

October 19, 2022 – 6:00 PM

Public Safety Building
255 Exchange Street
Geneva, NY 14456

Presiding – William Pealer, Deputy Mayor

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Clr. Regan, Clr. Camera, Clr. Gaglianese, Clr. Noone Clr. Burrall, Clr. Brimm,
and Mayor Valentino (via Zoom)

Absent: Clr. Salamendra

2. 2023 PROPOSED BUDGET DISCUSSION

City Comptroller Newcomb told council that the current levy with the two changes made at the September 26th meeting is \$8,425,324, and the current tax rate would be \$17.25 per \$1000 assessment. She said she received communication from the State Comptroller saying that we need to include the tax levy for the BID, but this does not change our overall tax levy. She said our total tax levy number is supposed to include real property tax, worker's compensation fund, the BID tax levy and any city omitted taxes. When asked, she said that the current tax rate for 2022 is \$16.76. When asked why if the rate of inflation is so high are we expected to stay below a 2% increase, Mrs. Newcomb said that it is either 2% or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower. A question posed by council was why the taxes are required to be paid in one installment now. Mrs. Newcomb explained that this is a change to the school taxes only and not the city taxes. When asked why the worker's comp rate is separated out, Mrs. Newcomb said that the worker's comp rate is set by the county and that is how it has historically been done. When asked about holding at the 2% increase or \$16.83 tax rate, Mrs. Newcomb said that we would need to pull \$208,171 from fund balance as long as no other changes were made tonight. When Clr. Camera asked if there were enough one-time expenditures in 2023 to cover the \$208,171, Mrs. Newcomb said yes, but she does not recommend taking money from the fund balance to balance the budget as this could cause problems in the future.

When asked about the capital improvement plan and how it affects debt, City Comptroller Newcomb said that for every \$1 million borrowed, that affects our annual debt payment by roughly \$35,000 over an average of 25 years. She also told council that about \$281,800 is being taken from the fund balance in 2022 to cover costs, so the estimated balance would be \$2,714,090 or 14.35% of the recommended

budget for 2023 which is between the 12-15% recommendation from the state. She said that the income from firewood sales is currently not broken out in the 2023 budget, as the money goes to the general fund to offset expenses within the DPW budget. She said that NYS requires a certain chart of accounts for us, and she has not had a chance to see if a new line can be added.

City Manager Hendrix referred to a council question about the \$25,000 in the budget for the farmer's market study and if in the lakefront study we could include the possibility of moving the farmer's market away from the lakefront. Ms. Hendrix said that we could develop that scope and look at our options, but until we have the funds, staff has not developed a scope. Clr. Gaglianese asked about using that money for something else rather than another study. Mayor Valentino advised council members that if they would like to add or remove items from the budget, they should come forward with a motion to add or remove and direction to staff as to where the money should come from. Clr. Noone asked why we can't ask residents, such as the gentlemen who provided ideas for Genesee Park or an intern, to come up with ideas and designs for this study. Clr. Gaglianese said he would like to have a water rescue boat or jet ski rather than a study. He proposed taking the \$25,000 out of the budget.

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Gaglianese; seconded by Clr. Regan

MOVED THAT the \$25,000 for the farmer's market study be removed from the budget

Clr. Camera said he would like the study done to see if it would be beneficial to move the farmer's market into downtown and draw traffic into our city. Clr. Regan said she agrees that we have too many studies that often do not provide what we need. She did however question if a study could tell us how to keep the boat launch open. City Comptroller Newcomb told everyone that the \$25,000 is not all for the study, but rather \$15,000 for outside contractors that we already use in this department with \$10,000 for the study and some upgrades needed. She said that they anticipate only around \$5,000 for the study and \$5,000 for minor improvements.

With that information, Clr. Gaglianese withdrew his motion.

Council had asked about compensation, and City Manager Hendrix said that the budget has all management staff receiving a 2% increase in alignment with a 2009 non-union agreement. She said that if councilors wanted to give management staff an additional 2% increase in 2023, that would amount to roughly \$36,000. Clr. Regan said that matching what council did for the city clerk will present issues with others. City Manager Hendrix said that she will be doing in-depth research in the next six months and will be presenting accordingly at the next budget session. Clr. Gaglianese said that our salaries need to be competitive, and we need to attract more lateral transfers because we can't afford to do nothing with all of the retirements coming up.

The next topic that council wanted more information on was recreation. Recreation Director Dave Sharman gave council a list of the programs for this year and next. Clr. Regan asked how people know about our programs as they are not on the recreation website. Director Sharman explained that they have

had some issues with the Civic Rec program that was supposed to launch 8 months ago. He said he recently had 12 hours of training on it and his new Recreation Supervisor needs similar training. He said he has been working with the school district to get information out to students and their families. Cllr. Camera also voiced his concern that recreation information is not getting out to residents.

Director Sharman said that his office uses social media along with the website and community calendar, and Comptroller Newcomb noted that we are currently without our communications person, and she will be meeting with Mr. Sharman and the Civic Rec people to work on the last piece.

When Cllr. Gaglianese asked about the drastic changes in the marketing and communication number in the budget, Comptroller Newcomb explained that some of the money was in the city manager budget, and the current contract with the Business Improvement District (BID) for a communications director had money coming back to the city from the BID to cover their part. Mrs. Hendrix said that the communications director started in March as a partnership with the BID, and the person recently resigned. She said that we are evaluating our needs for the position. She also noted that the Recreation Department is just getting to three full-time employees, as it has been 1.5 to 2 for a while.

Cllr. Gaglianese referred to an email from Chris Lavin asking for the city's help with their Community Basketball Program in the amount of \$17,000. He proposed giving the Boys and Girls Club the money for this.

ACTION TAKEN by Cllr. Gaglianese; seconded by Cllr. Burrall

MOVED THAT \$17,000 be given to the Boys and Girls Clubs for the Community Basketball Program

Cllr. Regan said she would love to help, but she would like to find a way without raising taxes. She referred to many other organizations that need funding for programming and questioned how funding them would affect the Recreation Department. Cllr. Noone said he supports programs that target our youth, but he also has concerns about the other organizations needing funding. He also asked about restructuring to be able to do this. City Manager Hendrix said that if council wanted to fund these outside agencies, she would have to ask the Recreation Director what he would cut in order to fund these other programs. She said we need to look at the contracts with these partners and provide answers to all of the questions that come up along with finding out what council's priorities are.

Cllr. Brimm said that with the rate of inflation, he feels the recreation budget should be more. Mayor Valentino said that historically the city has had challenges with funding outside agencies, and we took the opportunity to decide on funding based on the service these agencies could provide and if we were not able to provide that service. He noted that council needs to understand what services they want to provide. Cllr. Burrall said he does not feel youth basketball should be an outside agency, but rather city run with the help of outside agencies. Cllr. Pealer said he supports this but would like to consider a budget amendment to put funding in the recreation budget to outsource.

City Manager Hendrix asked to clarify that Mr. Lavin's email request was for 2022.

With that information, Clr. Gaglianese withdrew his motion.

Clr. Regan noted that this will be an issue for 2023 and questioned if council has resolved to look for a way to fund this later. City Manager Hendrix said that council can either cut other programming or set aside funding in the 2023 budget for this.

City Manager Hendrix told everyone that the next topic council wanted to discuss was the dasher board advertising. Director Sharman told council that approximately 6-7 years ago they began soliciting businesses for donations to cover the expense of publications. He said that any net at the end would go to the publications budget. Mr. Sharman noted that for the past two seasons they have not done this due to the current situation. Clr. Burrall said that he feels we could charge more for the advertising.

The next item council wanted information on was cultural and recreation, and Comptroller Newcomb said that we received \$5,000 from the Welcome Center to use for additional items in the farmer's market bucket and this \$5,000 was not broken out in the past.

The next topic was insurance coverage and the police department. Comptroller Newcomb said that the police department insurance cost is lumped into the entire premium and they look at the last five years not including the current year. City Manager Hendrix noted that all of the police professionals premiums increased by 15% in 2020.

The next topic was a question about the two staffing positions being restored at the police department. Comptroller Newcomb said that these were not the two abolished positions, but rather the unfunded ones in the 2022 budget. City Manager Hendrix said that in 2020 we had 35 positions with one frozen since 2015, in 2021 council voted to abolish two positions leaving 33, in 2022 there were two not budgeted for leaving us with 31, and in 2023 we will have 33 positions. She clarified that there are not nine people retiring from this department in 2023. Police Chief Passalacqua noted that they currently have six vacancies and three pending retirements in 2023 resulting in 9 open positions. He reported that his department has gained interest from a couple lateral transfers and they are working with human resources and civil service. Clr. Regan asked if it would help to have incentives to help bring people here, and City Manager Hendrix said that they did put money in the Human Resources budget for incentives for all departments, and Chief Passalacqua added that his department is working hard to recruit and change how our city is looked at. He invited councilors to come to the Public Safety Building and see what goes on there daily and they may have a better understanding and appreciation of the additional work everyone is taking on. He said he will work hard to get every position available filled to help take pressure off his officers.

The next topic was fleet management and take-home vehicles. City Manager Hendrix said that as staff has started to look at the 2023 budget and take-home vehicles, council will see that there are some

vehicles that are not in this budget, noting that all do not fall into the amortization plan. Some have been purchased with grant money and some when the prior vehicle broke down. She said that staff has begun to look at the take home policy and the data for these vehicles. She said she would like to bring in a fleet manager temporarily because we do a lot of internal maintenance.

Clr. Noone said he would like to know what the amortization fund looks like and if money was taken from it, if it would remain stable. City Manager Hendrix told everyone that the city tends to drive vehicles to the end of their life and don't get much salvage value for them. With regard to amortization, Comptroller Newcomb told council that she will be looking at the city's larger assets and putting together information for the 2024 budget discussion as there is currently no policy in place.

When the 125th Anniversary Celebration was mentioned, City Manager Hendrix said that there is currently no funding in the budget, but funding was added to the council budget for requests from committees which could be defined by council. Clr. Regan said she understood the 100th Anniversary Celebration was funded by city, local people and businesses. She said she feels the city should contribute. Comptroller Newcomb reminded council that this would be a one-time cost. Mayor Valentino suggested a resolution on the November agenda reallocating funds which would require a super-majority vote of council.

The next topic for discussion was short-term rentals and if we could look at tax on them and what it would do for the city? City Manager Hendrix said that the City of Ithaca recently did a study and one option would be to charge a room occupancy tax. She said she believes there is a way, but would not have a significant impact on the 2023 budget. She said council could amend the current room occupancy tax code to include short term rentals, and we would want to have a vendor who has an application to search all sites to locate all of the short-term rentals located in the city. She said that permitting fees could also be included, and there are a lot of factors to consider such as income and whether the county should be involved. Clr. Pealer said he has received complaints on the number of Air BnB's and overcrowding.

Clr. Noone said he feels this budget puts us on strong footing, and he commended the city manager and comptroller. He said he would like to move forward with a vote on the budget.

3. RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2023 GENERAL FUND BUDGET

City Manager Hendrix presented the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the General Fund budget of the City of Geneva for the year 2023 has been submitted to the City Council for its approval, and

WHEREAS, it appears that the General Fund budget as it is presently presented should be adopted.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Geneva, New York, that the General Fund budget as presently presented be and it hereby is adopted, and that a copy of the General Fund budget as hereby adopted be set forth in full in the minutes of this meeting, and

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED that the several sums in the General Fund budget for the year 2023 as appropriations for expenditures, in the total amount of **\$ 18,959,212** be and the same hereby are appropriated in the amounts provided for in the attached Chart of Accounts.

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Noone; seconded by Clr. Gaglianese

MOVED THAT this resolution be approved

Clr. Camera said he is not in favor of voting tonight noting that he appreciates the information received tonight. He said he would like to get the rate down to \$16.83, and he feels the public needs time to review what has been discussed tonight. He said it seems to be an insult to our residents to pass 5 minutes after getting the information. He said they should be able to discuss topics with their councilor in the next 7 days.

Clr. Noone said it is not an insult and amendments can be made after. He said he would like to move forward. Mayor Valentino said that he agrees with Clr. Noone, noting that council has not made any changes tonight so it is the same budget it was a week ago. He added that the comptroller will need to give council the final numbers that they will be voting on.

Clr. Regan said she agrees that council has sat on the budget with not many changes since council met with residents, but she would like to look at lowering the budget to under the 2% tax cap. She said she would like to take money from the fund balance to save tax payers money. She asked how much money would need to be taken from fund balance to get down to the \$16.83 tax rate, and Comptroller Newcomb said it would be a total of \$303,000 which would be an additional \$208,000 on top of the \$95,000 already being taken from fund balance.

Clr. Camera said he would like to take that extra \$208,000 out of fund balance as this is unspent money from our taxpayers, and we will remain within the state guidelines.

Clr. Gaglianese said he is concerned that some councilors don't want to increase the tax rate, then they will need to increase by more money next year. Clr. Noone said he does not support taking from reserves as things could get worse and make more trouble for us.

Clr. Burrall said that council has been told over and over what the state guidelines are, and he feels it is not fiscally responsible to take from reserves. He said it would be different if we have a much higher reserve.

Clr. Pealer said he feels small increases are better than creating large increases down the road. He said he feels the 2% cap is not reasonable and creates a false sense of achievement.

Clr. Camera said that we need to grow out of our problems noting that the former American Legion property will be a year more mature, and money for the PILOT will be coming in. He said he feels we can afford to take money from the reserves.

Clr. Regan asked for a point of clarification on the fund balance. Comptroller Newcomb confirmed that we are currently at 14.35% of the 2023 budget, and the state recommends 12-15%. City Manager Hendrix said staff needs to review that policy as the state does change it from time to time, and she cautioned that when that percentage gets lower, it affects many things such as bond rating and others.

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Camera; seconded by Clr. Regan

MOVED THAT this resolution be amended to move an additional \$208,000 from the general fund balance to keep the tax rate at \$16.83

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye – Clr. Regan and Clr. Camera

**Nay – Clr. Gaglianese, Clr. Burrall, Clr. Pealer, Clr. Brimm,
Clr. Noone and Mayor Valentino**

Absent - Clr. Salamendra

MOTION DEFEATED

{Roll call on the original resolution}

**ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye – Clr. Gaglianese, Clr. Burrall, Clr. Pealer, Clr. Regan, Clr. Brimm,
Clr. Noone and Mayor Valentino**

Nay – Clr. Camera

Absent - Clr. Salamendra

MOTION CARRIED

4. RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2023 TAX LEVY

City Manager Hendrix presented the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Geneva has heretofore adopted General Fund and Workers' Compensation budgets for the year 2023 and appropriated the several sums in the budget for the year 2023 in the total amount of **\$ 8,784,989**, and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the adoption of said budget the amount necessary to be raised by taxation upon the real property and franchises subject to taxation by the City of Geneva is **\$ 8,425,324** for General Fund expenditures and **\$ 359,665** for Workers' Compensation premiums.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Geneva, New York, that the amount necessary to be raised by taxation to defray the expenses of the City of Geneva for the year 2023 is **\$ 8,784,989** and that the said **\$ 8,784,989** be and the same hereby is levied upon all real property and franchises subject to tax by the City of Geneva according to the valuations thereof as

shown on the current assessment roll, and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the City Clerk, in accordance with Section 5.11 of the Geneva City Charter, file with the City Comptroller, a certified copy of the Appropriation Resolution and a copy of the budget for the year 2023 as adopted by the Geneva City Council, and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the City Comptroller shall extend and apportion the said amount of **\$ 8,784,989** levied to be raised by taxation on the last assessment roll delivered to him and shall under warrant signed by the Mayor and the City Clerk and annexed to said assessment roll, proceed to collect the several sums specified in said roll as assessed against the persons or property therein named and described, together with the percentage of penalty applicable thereto as provided by the Geneva City Charter and Section 999 of the Real Property Tax Law, and in the manner provided by said Charter.

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Noone; seconded by Mayor Valentino

MOVED THAT this resolution be approved

**ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye – Clr. Gaglianese, Clr. Burrall, Clr. Pealer, Clr. Regan, Clr. Brimm,
Clr. Noone and Mayor Valentino**

Nay – Clr. Camera

Absent - Clr. Salamendra

MOTION CARRIED

5. **RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2023 WORKERS COMPENSATION BUDGET**

City Manager Hendrix presented the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Workers' Compensation Fund Budget of the City of Geneva for the year 2023 has been submitted to the City Council for its approval, and

WHEREAS, it appears that the Workers' Compensation Budget as presently presented should be adopted.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Geneva, New York, that the Workers' Compensation Budget as presently presented be and it hereby is adopted, and that a copy of the Workers' Compensation Budget, as hereby adopted be set forth in the minutes of this meeting, and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the several sums in the Workers' Compensation Budget for the year 2023 as appropriations for expenditures, in the total amount of **\$ 359,665**, be and the same hereby are appropriated in the amounts and for the several purpose of payment of workers' compensation insurance premiums.

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Gaglianese; seconded by Clr. Brimm

MOVED THAT this resolution be approved

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (8-1 absent)

6. RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2023 WATER FUND BUDGET

City Manager Hendrix presented the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Water Fund Budget of the City of Geneva for the year 2023 has been submitted to the City Council for its approval, and

WHEREAS, it appears that the Water Fund Budget as presently presented should be adopted.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Geneva, New York, that the Water Fund Budget as presently presented be and it hereby is adopted, and that a copy of the Water Fund Budget as hereby adopted be set forth in the minutes of this meeting, and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the several sums in the Water Fund Budget for the year 2023 as appropriations for expenditures, in the total amount of **\$ 3,523,354** be and the same hereby are appropriated in the amounts and for the several purposes therein specified in the attached Chart of Accounts.

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Gaglianese; seconded by Clr. Noone

MOVED THAT this resolution be approved

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (8-1 absent)

7. RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2023 SEWER FUND BUDGET

City Manager Hendrix presented the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Sewer Fund Budget of the City of Geneva for the year 2023 has been submitted to the City Council for its approval, and

WHEREAS, it appears that the Sewer Fund Budget as presently presented should be adopted.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Geneva, New York, that the Sewer Fund Budget as presently presented be and it hereby is adopted, and that a copy of the Sewer Fund Budget as hereby adopted be set forth in the minutes of this meeting, and

FURTHER, BE IT RESOLVED that the several sums in the Sewer Fund Budget for the year 2023 as appropriations for expenditures, in the total amount of **\$ 4,931,376** and the same hereby are appropriated in the amounts and for the several purposes therein specified in the attached Chart of Accounts.

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Gaglianese; seconded by Clr. Noone

MOVED THAT this resolution be approved

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (8-1 absent)

8. ADJOURNMENT

ACTION TAKEN by Clr. Brimm; seconded by Clr. Noone

MOVED THAT the meeting be adjourned at 8:49pm

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (8-1absent)

Lori Guinan

City Clerk