

**City of West Orange
Friday, July 24, 2020
Budget Workshop**

**West Orange Community Center
2700 Western Avenue (rear entrance)
West Orange, Texas
3:00 p.m.**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Roy McDonald	Shirley Bonnin	Dale Dardeau
Michael Shugart, Sr.	Brent Dearing	Randy Branch

APPOINTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Alex Parker	Theresa Van Meter	Mike Stelly
David Roberts	Simmie Gibson	

Call to Order

Mayor McDonald called the workshop to order at 3:00 p.m.

2021 FY Budget Workshop

The mayor opened the workshop with discussion pertaining to anticipated revenue for the upcoming fiscal year. Mrs. Van Meter explained that the amount shown under "Net Current Property Tax" was based on the Preliminary Property Values as provided by the Orange County Appraisal District and the Orange County Tax Assessor-Collector. The Certified Values had just come in earlier that morning, but had not yet been put into the draft budget. She stated that the certified values did come in a bit more than the preliminary ones had, but that as she does not know whether or not the current year's budget will be met, she recommends staying on the conservative side and leaving the amount in this draft as is.

The mayor asked Council if there were any questions on any of the other revenue items. He stated that, "In a city, there's not much you can do about revenue. It is what it is."

The decrease in projected court revenue was questioned and Mrs. Van Meter answered that she based those numbers on what had, or had not, been brought in during this current fiscal year. She stated that there has been a significant decrease in revenue in the court this year and she has no idea that that will change in the next year, therefore she budgeted accordingly.

The mayor then called everyone's attention to the expense items of the various departments, beginning with Administration. It was pointed out that Employees' Health Insurance Coverage increased 8% for the coming year, while Dental and Vision remained the same. A 3% cost-of-living wage increase in all departments has also been included in this draft.

Mrs. Van Meter explained that her department has been working toward making sanitation billing and collections as convenient for the citizens as possible. Payments by telephone are now accepted 24/7 via a toll-free number. This has proven very successful, especially during the pandemic. She plans to implement a new feature during the next fiscal year whereby sanitation bills can be emailed to the customers who wish to receive them by that means rather than by mail. This will save on the cost of the cardstock and printing of the bill itself, the postage to mail it, and the staff time to handle it. She further stated that it will cost approximately \$6,100 to have this service set up and implemented, but after that the only cost will be the annual software maintenance fees.

Council Member Branch questioned where the Municipal Court Judge's salary was shown. Mrs. Van Meter explained that it was listed under "Contractual Services" on the Municipal Court page.

On the Fire Marshal's Department page, the mayor pointed out that the much of the amount budgeted this year for Contractual Services was moved to Code Enforcement, which has already been moved to the Police Department.

The discussion then turned to the Fire Department's budget. Fire Chief Roberts stated that this was a bit different than what had originally been discussed. He then distributed a copy of an itemized list of what was included in the \$20,000 Equipment budget he was requesting. Assistant Fire Chief Gibson then went down the Equipment list handed out by Chief Roberts,

explaining the need for each. The mayor stated that some of the things on this list are certainly needed, and some would be nice to have.

Council Member Branch asked Fire Chief Roberts what the priorities were for the department. Fire Chief Roberts replied, "Bunker gear," adding that he cannot expect anyone to show up at a fire when they have no gear to protect them. Chief Stelly reported that a \$35,000 grant for bunker gear has already been approved. Chief Roberts explained that \$24,000 would buy eight full sets of gear. Council Member Branch asked when the gear could be ordered, and Chief Stelly replied, "Very soon." There are also two racks for bunker gear included in this proposed budget. Each rack holds three sets of gear. Chief Roberts reported that he does not allow anyone to bring their gear home.

In discussing the grant funds, Chief Stelly explained that the \$85,000 shown in the budget is to be added to the \$315,000 grant to cover a \$400,000 fire truck. Also, any grant funds not spent on bunker gear, air packs or SCBAs could be added to the fire truck, as well.

Council Member Shugart questioned the need to have the new radios reprogrammed. Mayor McDonald responded that they do not need police department frequencies on them. No other fire departments do. Chief Roberts disagreed, stating that they do, as they are programmed the same as ESD #4 and other departments, too. This is a safety issue....not for talking, but for listening. If they are going on a call, and some type of dangerous situation exists (such as a hazardous leak or even an active shooter), his men need to be aware of it before they get there in order to know how to respond. The discussion on the radios then stopped and discussion on the budget resumed.

The mayor pointed out that, in the Sanitation Department, the one large expenditure listed is a dry-trash truck. Council Member Dardeau stated that this is a great service to the residents of the city. Council Member Dearing questioned if the new truck would be a single or tandem axle. Chief Stelly replied that it would be single.

The mayor then stated that there was really nothing to note in the Humane Department's budget, other than the standard increases in wages and insurance.

Mayor McDonald pointed out that the Code Enforcement duties have been moved to the Police Department, necessitating the move of that line item from the Fire Marshal's budget to the Police Department's budget. It also necessitated the need to increase the postage line item. Council Member Shugart commended Officer Ashworth in the job he has been doing in the Code Enforcement capacity.

The Municipal Court budget was next; no questions or discussion brought forth.


The mayor pointed out that there were very few changes in the Street, Parks or Maintenance Departments' budgets other than in the Personnel sections. No questions were asked.

Mayor McDonald stated that Council was looking at a \$4,000,000 budget, an increase of about \$500,000 over the current year. He believes this budget to be achievable without raising the tax rate.

Council Member Dardeau stated that he wished there were funds available to demolish the old dilapidated houses in the city. Chief Stelly explained that Mr. Parker has a list of approximately 40 houses whose owners will be notified of the Acquisitions Grant that would enable the City to purchase their property and demolish the structure. They will also be assisted in completing the application. These lots can be sold and built upon again once the elevation is built up to code. There are guidelines that must be followed, however.

Adjournment

With there being no further business before Council, the mayor adjourned the meeting at 3:40 p.m.


Roy McDonald, Mayor

ATTEST:


Theresa Van Meter, City Secretary

