



Mayor
Elise Partin

Mayor Pro-Tem
James E. Jenkins

Council Members
Phil Carter
Tim James
Hunter Sox

City Manager
Tracy Hegler

Deputy City Manager
Jim Crosland
Assistant City Manager
Michael Conley

**City of Cayce
Special Council Meeting
Budget Work Session
Wednesday, April 19, 2023**

A Special Council Meeting was held this afternoon at 2:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. Those present included Mayor Elise Partin, Mayor Pro Tem James Jenkins and Council Members Phil Carter and Tim James. City Manager Tracy Hegler, Deputy City Manager Jim Crosland, Assistant City Manager Michael Conley, Municipal Clerk Mendy Corder, Finance Director Kelly McMullen and IT Director Jamie Beckham were also in attendance.

Mayor Partin asked if members of the press and the public were duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the FOIA. Ms. Corder confirmed they were notified.

Call to Order

Mayor Partin called the meeting to order and Council Member Carter gave the invocation. Mayor Partin led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Discussion Items

A. Discussion of Proposed FY2023/2024 General Fund Budget

Ms. Hegler stated that she was going to give a brief introduction regarding where the budget was at the moment and do a brief summary of the revenues and then the individual department managers and directors would review their proposed budgets with Council. She stated that the FY 23-24 General Fund budget was currently out of balance as it often was, at this point, by \$2,642,202. She stated that the projected revenues were \$19,074,337 and the projected expenditures were \$21,716,539. She stated that she would review some of the increases that staff knew of and some of the City's costs. She stated that the only increase proposed at that point was a \$2 per month increase in sanitation fees. Ms. Hegler stated that over time the City had been working to get the Sanitation Department to be self-sufficient. She stated that the department had some lease purchases payments that the increase would help cover.

Ms. Hegler stated that a cost of living adjustment for staff was not currently in the proposed budget but was included in the white paper as a 1%, 2% or 3% for Council to consider. She stated that there were a couple of large scale purchases that needed to be discussed that were not included in the budget because of the time it took to build items like a fire engine so staff and Council would have to look at ways to fund those type of items with long three-year lead times for development and how to obligate future budgets. She stated that funds for the Facade Grant Program were not currently in the budget but staff had received renewed interest in the program. She stated that as of

June 30, 2022, the General Fund had a fund balance of \$15,726,468 and that was with the addition of a \$1.5 million addition to the fund balance that was accrued last year.

Ms. Hegler reviewed a pie chart that illustrated where the City received its revenues. She stated that 27.6% of revenues were from property taxes, 27.4% were from licenses and permits and 27.2% were from grants. She stated that staff did a lot outside of traditional funding sources to get things done on behalf of the City. She stated that accommodations and hospitality taxes made up 7.6%, fines and forfeitures 1.1% and charges for services made up 9%.

Ms. Taylor Gray, Grants Manager, stated that she would like to start by thanking the General Fund Directors. She stated that they were a phenomenal resource for her in trying to find ways to allocate funding, and find ways to supplement funding through grants. She stated that they always were there to give her information. She stated that staff was always looking at alternative funding sources to leverage every dollar they could. She stated that staff was facing a lot of challenges with inflation. Ms. Gray reviewed a list of existing grants and one's staff planned to apply for in the current fiscal year. She stated that the opioid recovery grant funds, if awarded, would be used to fully fund the firefighters EMT equipment. She thanked Senator Lindsey Graham for supporting the \$858,000 grant funds the City was using to overhaul the complete technology system at the Police Department and being used to fully fund the rest of the City's obligation. Ms. Gray stated that staff was excited about finishing the Julius Felder sidewalk improvements and ADA additions. She stated that the City had also applied for funds through FEMA to fund portable and handheld radios for the Fire Department since they were in need of technology upgrades as well.

Mayor Partin stated that Ms. Gray's presentation was amazing and she loved seeing the teamwork and partnership among everyone. She stated that after reviewing past budgets it appeared that there was a bigger proportion of grants being a part of the City's revenue source. She stated that Ms. Gray was knocking it out of the park and Council was beyond thankful.

Mr. Jim Crosland, Deputy City Manager, reviewed some of the challenges the City faced in the upcoming budget. He stated that retirement increases for the employee portion was 1%, and health insurance was 3.7%, after increasing 16% and 18% in prior years. He stated that costs continued to rise and there were supply chain issues. He stated that changing customer expectations was a challenge because everyone was still used to the COVID generation where people were at home and not going into the office therefore people were paying their bills a little slower. He stated that City Hall had serious space limitations and was at capacity. Mr. Crosland stated that some employees were actually in closets that had been converted to offices.

Mr. Crosland reviewed the Administration budget. He stated that a replacement City vehicle for lease was requested to replace the 2012 Chevy Tahoe that was initially

a police vehicle. He stated that it would be replaced with a Ford Explorer that could be used to drive to conferences and other meetings. He stated that the prox card project had been completed at City Hall and staff now accessed the buildings with scan cards which also could be tracked. He stated that the City Garage, Parks and Sanitation building, and the Museum would be done next and then all City buildings would be on one system.

Ms. Mendy Corder, Municipal Clerk, reviewed the Public Buildings budget. She stated that she had requested a new awning for the drive thru in the Water Department because the current awning was original to the building and leaked any time it rained. She stated that the leaking water caused the electrical at the drive thru to short circuit and lose power. She stated that she also had requested new chairs for Council Chambers since they were showing their age and were very uncomfortable to sit in. She stated that she requested monies to contract for electrical services for City events since the City only had one (1) electrician to meet all the City's needs.

Mr. Thomas White, Sanitation Manager, thanked Council and Administration for the new trucks for his department. He stated that they were really needed and were already saving the City money since there were no longer high repair costs for the old trucks. He stated that he requested a new driver position for the City's new sweeper who would also drive a garbage truck. He stated that he requested a truckload of new roll carts to replace some of the roll carts purchased in 2008. He stated that they were falling apart and staff had to replace approximately 10 of them a week. Mr. White stated that he requested to replace one of his department's pickups that was a 2008 F-250 that had 160,000 miles. He stated that he wanted to replace it with a new pick up and his truck would be given to the Sanitation Supervisor to use for on-call calls.

Mayor Partin asked if staff was planning on applying for more grants to purchase recycle roll carts for the neighborhoods that did not have them yet. Mr. White stated that Ms. Gray was working on some grants and Public Works Administration was working with her. He stated that the more quantity purchased the cheaper the roll carts were but staff had only been able to purchase 300-400 at a time and that was not enough to supply an entire neighborhood. Council Member James asked how much of the City did not have recycle roll carts. Mr. White stated that only a 1/3 of the City currently had them. Mayor Partin asked if the recycle roll carts actually saved staff time and energy. She stated that recycling was tough because globally there was not as much of a market for recyclable materials. Mr. White stated that he thought it was worth it even though the City had to pay for it. He stated that it kept those items out of the landfill and off of the streets as litter. He stated that the community loved recycling and felt that it was necessary. Mayor Partin asked if the roll carts were more efficient in regards to man power. Mr. White stated that it was. Mayor Pro Tem Jenkins asked if staff ever tried to address the garbage that residents put out by their roll cart or trash can. He stated that he was asking because he had noticed that Sanitation staff had to spend extra time picking up the trash that was not placed in the roll cart. Mr. White stated that

when staff saw that issue they asked Code Enforcement to go by and talk to the resident. He stated that he and his staff did not mind picking those items up as long as they were placed by the curb the day of their pickup. He stated that if it was put out before their pickup day animals would get into it and it would get strewn all over the streets.

Mr. James Denny, Parks Manager, reviewed his budget. He thanked Council for all they had given his department in the past and thanked them for their support. He stated that he had requested a new position so he could create a Crew Leader position in his department. He stated that currently the Groundskeeper II was the position for the department's leaders and his staff did not have another position to grow into. He stated that he had requested an additional \$16,000 for tree services. He stated that there were huge cottonwood trees in the Riverwalk that needed to be cut down before they started dropping limbs. He stated that there were also a few trees in Guignard Park over a 100 feet tall that needed to be professionally removed.

Mr. Denny stated that Sanitation and Parks had been in their new building since 2016 and staff had asked to make some improvements to it by adding a range in the kitchen. He stated that would require a fire suppression system which cost approximately \$6,000. He stated that both departments got together occasionally to cook and eat lunch together and it was a way to show them how much they were appreciated for the hard work they do. Mr. Denny stated that he and his staff used Kabuto's more than their trucks to go from park to park and other areas within the City and they were getting old and needed to be replaced. He stated that the Kubota's on Timmerman Trail were the oldest and were starting to have a lot of mechanical problems. He stated that he also requested a grappler for the department's Bobcat so they could get more use out of it. He stated that they currently had a bucket attachment and a broom attachment and wanted to add a grappler attachment that would help in removing limbs and branches that fall off trees along the Riverwalk. He stated that it had reached a point where there was too much debris on the sides of the trail and it needed to be cut back.

Mr. Denny stated that he had requested a larger dock trailer to be used for the flower beds along Knox Abbott. He stated that they had an increasing need for mulch and it was almost impossible to get a truck there. He stated that it could also be used for City events. He stated that he requested a set of forks for the Bobcat that staff could use to move items around and keep the area clean where the department's building was located.

Mr. Carter asked if Dominion removed the stumps in the medians on 12th Street Extension. Mr. Denny stated that Parks staff removed the stumps. He stated that they had six (6) more to remove and then would plant the same type of plants that were being planted along Airport Blvd. Ms. Hegler stated that Dominion did provide funding for replanting since they removed the trees.

Mr. Mike Clayborn, Fleet Manager, reviewed his department's budget. He thanked Council for everything they had done for the Garage and his staff. He stated that his buildings were getting old and the garage roof needed to be replaced because it was leaking. He stated that he requested a carport to be put off the front of the tire building to provide shelter for staff when they were replacing tires. He stated that he requested updated computers that could communicate with the cars and it would cost \$6,000. He stated that the backup generator was at least 20 years old and needed to be replaced. He stated it was used to power the fuel pumps. Mr. Clayborn stated that he was retiring in August. He introduced Mr. Bill Clark who was training to fill his position when he retired. He stated that Mr. Clark had worked in mechanics all his life and would do a good job for the City.

Mayor Pro Tem Jenkins asked if the generator Mr. Clayborn requested was for backing up all of the garage. Mr. Clayborn stated no, it was just for the fuel pumps. He stated a larger generator would cost \$30,000 and he had requested it in past budgets but it was cut out of the budget. He stated that Ms. Gray was constantly looking for grants to fund the generator and hopefully they would be awarded the funds in the future. Mayor Partin stated that Council appreciated the focus on making sure that the City could provide municipal services in the event of an emergency.

Ms. Rochelle Smith, the Business Services Coordinator for Planning & Development, reviewed that department's budget along with Mr. Stuart Jones, the City's Building Official. Ms. Smith stated that they had requested a new full time Administrative Assistant position. She stated that the City was growing but the Planning and Development department had not grown and staff had more and more on their plate. She stated that she currently handled all business licenses, building permits and any type of construction permitting. She stated that she also processed hospitality tax and accommodations tax payments. She stated that her co-workers helped her when they could but they could not do their own jobs when they assisted her.

Ms. Smith stated that they were currently using Edmonds software which was actually a financial software that had been tweaked to do the bare minimum of what they needed. She stated that they still did everything by paper and if they needed to find something they had to search through files which was very inefficient. She stated that Code Enforcement did not have a way to do what they needed to do out in the field. She stated that there was not a customer database. Ms. Smith stated that customers could not do online payments and staff was not able to take any online payments. She stated that staff had recently started using a new, smaller software that made it possible for customers to pay online. She stated that they had received so many emails and thank yous from people because they could save time doing everything online. She stated that she had demoed 10 different types of software just to take a look and see what was out there. She stated that even the most basic software was miles and leagues ahead of what they currently had.

Mr. Jones stated they really needed software that was more user friendly, where reports could be pulled, the different divisions of permitting could be broken down and more accurately reported to. He stated that every five (5) years staff had to report to the community rating system for the floodplain management and then every five (5) years, they had to do a report to ISO for building code grading effectiveness. He stated that it was a very difficult report to pull with the software they currently had. Ms. Smith stated that they wanted to form a Stormwater Task Force to help educate the public more, send bulk mailers out, train staff, and hold different types of events to keep people aware.

Mr. Jones stated that they requested a new truck to replace his current 2012 truck that had 225,000 miles on it and the garage recommended rotating it out because of the wear and tear and the age of the vehicle. Ms. Smith stated that they requested docking stations to be more efficient in their department. She stated that currently they did not have the capability to be mobile and more efficient. She stated that they could be used at their desks and in meetings away from their desk or office. Ms. Smith presented data to illustrate how the City had been growing. She stated that in 2022, there were 188 new businesses in the City and 290 in 2023. She stated that in-city businesses grew from 47 to 92 in a year. She reviewed commercial values, showing building permits, new construction, additions, alterations, the totals and how they had increased from \$9.6 million in 2022 to \$21 million in 2023. She stated that a lot of that was from the new Lexington Rehab Hospital. She stated that residential had grown from \$7.4 to \$10.3 million in total construction values.

Ms. Smith stated that she conducted audits when time permitted and she had found \$154 million in revenue that was not taxed and the total came to 205. She stated that she would love to be able to take more time to do audits but just did not have the time. She stated that there had been some growth in hospitality tax and accommodations tax but the City would see an increase in the accommodations tax because the South Carolina Department of Revenue was working with City staff now. She stated that they let staff know of any short term rentals in the City and how much revenue they brought in. She stated that would really help with keeping track of it. Council Member Carter asked how many short term rentals the City currently had. Ms. Smith stated that the first report she received had 10 and someone had just come to City Hall that day to pay back two (2) years' worth of Air B&B that they had been doing in their house.

Mayor Partin asked if the Department of Revenue was giving staff the addresses of the short term rentals. Ms. Smith stated that they did not give the addresses. Mayor Partin asked why they had access to the addresses but the City did not. Mr. Conley stated that the City only received information on the ones that were identifying revenue to the State and staff still had to try to find those that were not reporting their revenue. Council Member James asked how many City ordinances they were violating by not registering their home. Mayor Partin stated they were violating the property registration

Ordinance and Ms. Smith stated that they were not paying the accommodations tax they were required to pay. Mr. Conley stated that code enforcement and Ms. Smith monitor the short term rental sites and had built a database. Ms. Hegler stated that Lexington County was in discussions about regulating short term rentals. She stated that the City could charge a fee but there were not many other places other than the City of Columbia who just adopted an additional fee for short term rentals. Mayor Partin asked if staff went online to look for short term rentals in the City. Ms. Smith stated that she spent a good amount of time online pulling short term rentals but the sites did not give the address. She stated that it only noted the area the home was located in so staff had to print pictures from the site and went out and try to locate the house from the picture which was very time consuming. Mike Conley stated that some of the software that staff was looking at already had a module that would allow them to track short term rentals.

Ms. Hegler stated that the software was geocoding which was parcel based. Council Member Carter stated asked if the potential software after year one (1) could get data about historical records the City currently had. Ms. Smith stated that she had discussed that with almost everyone they had met with and there was a way to do that for an additional fee. She stated that it was possible to upload everything that the City currently had for a cost. Mayor Partin asked where the Administrative Assistant's office would be. Mr. Conley stated that person would probably go into Ms. Smith's current office. He stated that Ms. Smith needed an office where she could focus on the amount of work she was doing and to do audits. Mayor Pro Tem Jenkins suggested getting a modular building to house more offices. Mayor Partin stated that she gave up her office at City Hall over a decade ago and a lot of a lot of cities not only had a Mayor's office but an office for Council. She stated that the City had done an amazing job of moving forward and continuing to place people in but at some point they were going to have to address a new City Hall. She stated that she appreciated the willingness of staff to do what they could with what they had.

Mayor Partin asked about the online payments Ms. Smith mentioned. Ms. Smith stated that a couple months ago, staff started using Cognito, which was a form and payment kind of software. She stated that since then, she had loaded business licensing, home occupations, property registration, and worked out a way to send invoices for permits. She stated that she was about to add hospitality tax and accommodations tax too because she knew it was really an inconvenience for people to have to come to City Hall to make a payment or mail it in. She stated that it was similar to the State portal but with the software staff was using they could do new businesses as well as renewals whereas the State was restricted to just renewals. Ms. Hegler stated that Ms. Smith was considered an expert on the State portal. She stated that she had been asked to speak at conferences and talk about her experience with it. She stated that Ms. Smith was a real resource for MASC.

Ms. Rachel Stuckey, Clerk of Court, presented her department's budget. She stated that she had requested an updated jury box that would cost \$4,000. She stated that the Police Officers sit in the jury box as well and their gear did not fit in the chairs. She stated that she would like to find a long bench style seating so more people could fit on it and it would not be an obstruction for the officers to sit there. She stated that she had requested CJT software maintenance that would cost \$1,000 a month. She stated that it might be a lower fee because the company did a sliding scale based on how many tickets were paid online. She stated that an online payment system was built into the new software and they were going to that because the Police Department was going to Smart Cop.

Ms. Stuckey stated that the Court currently had 150 outstanding traffic tickets that were past due date. She stated that when she first took over as the Clerk of Court there were 700 outstanding traffic tickets. She stated that when she first started there were 350 jury trials scheduled and now they were down to 48. She stated that they were entirely caught up from anything COVID related. She stated that the City's new Prosecutor, Mr. Shawn Graham, started the past week. She stated that she appreciated Council appointing him and he had been great. She stated that he hit the ground running and handled everything wonderfully for Court.

Ms. Stuckey stated that she might request to change one item in her budget. She stated that the Judges were paid \$500 a day when they worked outside of their contract. She stated that they were contracted to work Tuesday mornings and Thursday afternoons. She stated that she would like to double the budget from \$5,000 to \$10,000 to cover all the jury trials the Judges had to work. Mayor Partin asked if that cost was in line with industry standards. Ms. Stuckey stated that cost was normal but some built in two (2) days into their contract. She stated both Judges had one (1) more year on their contract but that might be something to look into when redoing their contracts.

Mr. Andy Thomas, Cayce Historical Museum Curator, presented his budget. He stated that wanted to share with Council some of the successes of the Museum for the year. He stated that the Columbia Speedway exhibit opened and there was a lot of interest in it. He stated that they had done several successful lecture programs and had a sweetgrass basket maker who held a class with 25 people and they just raved about it. He stated that they also told the story of Dave Drake, the African American potter from Edgefield County and they held a lecture on Lexington County quilts, which was very successful. He stated that they were holding a lecture on the quarry the following night.

Mr. Thomas stated that the Museum had a successful Christmas open house and a successful Colonial Village at Tartan Day South in which the Cayce Museum took the lead in organizing and bringing all the colonial village together. He stated that for the first time since 1987, the Museum Commission had new bylaws and they were

really excited about that. He stated that there was ongoing repair work being done to the historical cabin's roof. He stated that the creation of the African American exhibit was going forward and was about 50% completed. Mr. Thomas stated that he had all the objects for the exhibit and hopefully, by the end of April or early May, they would be able to open the African American exhibit. He stated that the Museum Commission was in the process of creating a new 501(C) 3 organization which would help with fundraising for the Museum. He stated that they would also be doing strategic planning for the first time in many, many decades and were looking forward to that.

Mr. Thomas stated that he was continuing to look at options to repair the ceiling in the Fire and Police exhibit and also needed to repair the upstairs windows in the Museum. He stated that the Museum currently had wooden windows on the top floor and rain had poured down on those windows for many years causing them to rot. He stated that he had requested to replace the windows and add a gutter system to divert the water coming down on the roof of the Museum. He stated that he also requested more money for Phase Two for the Public Safety exhibit to get the ceiling repaired, along with the walls and floors. He stated that he wanted to get the exhibit cases ready and do some printing for that exhibit. He stated that he was really excited to tell the history of the City's Police and Fire Departments with the exhibit.

Mr. Thomas stated that the Museum's African American Committee would like to add some artwork to the African American exhibit so he was requesting additional monies to purchase a local artists artwork. He stated that Mr. Larry Levy was a painter who had paintings in the White House and the Vatican and they wanted to acquire some of his prints for the exhibit. He stated that last year, they acquired all of the dollars that were connected with series seven of the Confederate that was printed in South Carolina and would like to do a small exhibit on money during the 19th century. He stated that it would also include stamps. Mr. Thomas stated that he wanted to tell the stories of when Sherman walked in and found his soldiers playing poker with Confederate money.

Mr. Thomas stated that the Museum had an opportunity to do a fundraising tour in the fall of a historic home on Deliesseline. He stated that it was a house that was owned by one of the Guignard family members that was built in the late 30s or early 40s. He stated that there was a Guignard family member who also lived in a house that was connected with the Guignard family. He stated that there was also the historic kilns so they would like to do a historic tour to include all three. Mr. Thomas stated that he would like to hire an architectural interpreter for the tour. He stated that he would like to use that to raise money for the Museum and put it in as a starter for the 501(C) 3.

Mr. Thomas stated that the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence was in 2026. He stated that a lot of people would visit South Carolina to look at Revolutionary War sites and he stated that hopefully the Museum, could become a nexus for that, and bring people in to take a look at the exhibit. He stated that he had

been assigned to set up tours for the 12,000 Year History Park which had been successful. He stated that the Park currently did not have a line item in the budget. He stated that he would like to spend funds for advertising and promoting the park so he had requested some monies for that. He stated that lastly he would like purchase some scanners to be able to handle the documents the Museum had, some of which were very fragile documents and some were very large documents. He stated that they were looking at a couple of different standards to be able to digitally scan those documents and before they were lost due to some of them falling apart. Mr. Thomas thanked Council for their time.

Mr. Jamie Beckham, IT Director, stated that he had a lot of equipment that he ordered at the end of the 21-22 budget cycle that he was still slowly getting in and he was still waiting on a lot of equipment he ordered at the beginning of this year that were still coming in. He stated that he was starting to move a lot of things along that he requested last year such as the network rebuild. He stated that the City would be moving to a more redundant set of firewalls and more secure remote access for staff. He stated that Council approved a part time position for IT last year for a helpdesk person but he had experienced a real problem filling that position because it was a part time position. He stated that plenty of qualified people were interested but were looking for full time work so he was requesting to reclass it to a full time position. He stated that he had a new employee starting the next day that he found through a recruiting and staffing agency.

Mr. Beckham stated that he was doing a bit of succession planning since he had been with the City 25 years. He stated that he did not plan to retire anytime soon but was trying to forecast down the road and start passing on institutional knowledge and get a couple of people that he could train up. He stated that he did his best to document everything but there was a lot of information that someone else needed to be trained on. He stated that there was equipment that needed to be replaced earlier than planned that he was having problems with. He stated that he was starting to see some of the City's equipment that was in the four and five year range really struggling. He stated that one of the things he was doing to combat that upfront was upgrading the City's minimum PC specs, which also raised the cost a little. He stated that he was also trying to make staff more mobile and more efficient when they were moving around. He stated that when appropriate, when replacing desktops, he was trying to put people down to more of a laptop and a docking station situation. He stated that when they were replaced it would cost a little more up front. He stated that he requested a vehicle for his staff to drive to the City's various buildings and outposts.

Mayor Partin stated that the work Mr. Beckham did was very important to keep the City safe. She stated that years ago she was at a MASC board meeting, and everyone was raving about Cayce because of the work that Mr. Beckham was doing in being proactive about safety and security. Mr. Beckham stated that one of the biggest challenges was that security had really become inconvenient and he had to try to find

that right balance between keeping staff from working at all versus trying to keep things secure. He stated that it was a constant balancing act and that was why he was doing the network improvements to try to get a better eye on things and try to get a little more control.

Ms. Kelly McMullen, Finance Director, stated that she would like to update Council on where finance had come. She stated that she was constantly looking at ways to integrate timekeeping ways to get position control because they wanted to be able to be as transparent as possible. She stated that her ultimate goal was to not only show the citizens the transparency, but to make it easier Council to log in to the software and see exactly how the City was doing financially. She stated that her goal for the future was to have a live dashboard online. She stated that Finance had gone through several changes since she started in 2020. She stated that the City now had a new auditor and had switched banks, and both were doing great. She stated that with those changes came added responsibilities but they were responsibilities that should have been theirs prior to her starting with the City but they were more the auditors. She stated that all those were now flowing back into Finance where they belonged.

Ms. McMullen stated that she had been working with the auditor who was great. She stated that she was getting all of their schedules in place and compiling their own Annual Comprehensive Finance Report (ACFR) themselves. She stated that they were doing all their own accruals. She stated that she was constantly renegotiating the City's contract with its bank. She stated that with the prior bank, she was budgeting roughly \$20,000 annually to pay bank fees and as of several months ago, the City just renegotiated the contract and was expected to earn about 10 to \$12,000 in interest a month. She stated that instead of spending \$16,000, the City was now making \$12,000 a month which was an added revenue source. She stated that she and her staff were compiling all of the City's bank accounts and creating agreements with Synovus to give the City the best interest rate available on those funds.

Ms. McMullen stated that Ms. Hegler mentioned assessments earlier. She stated that with inflation, the change in the housing market was insane and hard to keep track of. She stated that she had noticed that the City was having so far a 4% increase to all of its assessments and its assessments had gone from about \$58 million to about \$61 million. She stated that was all inclusive to include real estate, boats, mobile homes and cars. She stated that one had to remember that taxes were always one (1) year behind so, all those assessment values were based more on the October 2022 timeframe. She stated that basically, when one purchased a home, they are buying it at that level that they purchased it at so a \$100,000 home 20 years ago, could sell for \$250,000. She stated that the State sent the CPI for calculation for millage increases, if Council were so inclined, however the current budget did not have a millage increase in it. She stated that the CPI was currently budgeted for 2024 at 8% per the State.

Council Member Carter stated that he appreciated the changes and the advances that had been made since Ms. McMullen had started with the City. He stated that it was done in a way that he could understand it easily. Ms. Hegler stated that Ms. McMullen mentioned the internal process work and part of that was the extra work that Finance should have always been taken on and it made the City's audits that much better. She stated that it was extra work for Finance but it created much more transparency in the City's system. She stated that Ms. McMullen was very thoughtful about the City's budget lines and creating project budgets for all the grants that the City was awarded. She stated that it was very clear how much came in from a grant, how much went out and staff then knew where to charge that. Ms. Hegler stated that was not always the case in the past. She stated that Ms. McMullen had a really good tracking mechanism for where the fund balance funds were going and coming from. She stated that Ms. McMullen was doing a great job.

Mr. Steven Bullard, Fire Chief, presented his department's budget. He stated that in January 2022 the Public Safety Department split into separate departments of Fire and Police. He thanked Council for allowing that to happen. He stated that he thought it had been a great benefit for the City and he had been able to increase staffing. He stated that the Fire Department had added three (3) Battalion Chiefs which increased each shift to seven (7) firefighters. He stated that the Fire Department had implemented a 24-hour pay system so the firefighters were actually getting paid for every hour that they were there working. He stated that they were currently in a trial phase of a 48-96 hour shift, which reduced stress and had more healthy benefits for the firefighters. Chief Bullard stated that they were working two (2) days on and then had four (4) days off. He stated that they were in week 11 of the 12-week trial and everyone loved it and it had helped with recruitment of people who lived out of state or lived further away within the state. He stated that instead of having to drive to work 10 days a month they only had to drive to work five (5) days a month. He stated that it cut down on their gas bill and people were more excited to come back to work.

Chief Bullard stated that they had been able to update some older equipment to meet their current needs and established true policies and procedures for the Fire Department. He stated that they had improved the City's ISO rating from a three (3) to a two (2) and were so close to getting the one (1) rating. Council Member James asked how close they were to the one (1) rating. Chief Bullard stated it was based on a 100 point system and they were five (5) points away from the number one (1). Council Member James asked when they reached that five (5) points would Chief Bullard call or have to wait for them to come back. Chief Bullard stated that he would call them and he planned on calling them later in the year to get it done.

Chief Bullard stated that the Fire Department's staffing had been consistently full. He stated that they had increased their standards and were hiring and retaining better qualified personnel. He stated that they had built a culture and a morale that people were fighting to come to. He stated that their last interview panel had 27 applicants

from all over the country. He stated that their call volume had increased quite a bit in the past year. He stated that in 2022 they ran 1,947 calls, which was a 31% increase from the prior year, during the same timeframe. He stated that most of those were medical calls and this year about 64% had been medical calls and only 3% had been fire calls. He stated that their turnout time which was how fast they got out of the station from the time the call was received was about 82% in meeting the NFPA standard, which was a minute and 30 seconds. Council Member James asked what dictated that time. Chief Bullard stated that there were several factors - time of day, radio traffic, etc. He stated that one year prior, the department was at 63% so they had about a 20% increase in their effectiveness. He stated that the NFPA standard for total response time, how long it took them to get on scene, was eight (8) minutes and they were meeting that about 83% of the time, which was a 2% increase from the year prior. Chief Bullard stated that their response time had a lot to do with the area the City covered. He stated that Hunters Mill and Bluff Road took longer times to get there so that skewed their numbers a little bit.

Council Member James stated that less than 80% was great. Chief Bullard stated that they should be close to 100% since they were pretty centrally located. He stated that future additional fire stations would help accommodate some of that and give them better response times. Council Member James asked how many times the City's Fire Department arrived on scene for medical calls before the County. Chief Bullard stated that the City arrived there first the majority of the time. Council Member James stated that there were pros of why the City should offer that and continue to offer it because they were saving lives. Mayor Partin stated that she absolutely agreed with that but it was more of a burden on City staff and the County should be rolling more ambulances if there was more of a need. She stated that if medical calls had increased so much shouldn't the County step up for some of that. Chief Bullard stated that fire services were going in the direction of taking a more medical side so they provided more medical training. He stated that they spent the majority of their time doing medical training since those were the most calls they ran. Mayor Partin stated that she was beyond thankful for that but wanted to make sure it was not a burden on staff if it was someone else's responsibility to be stepping up and shouldering some of that.

Assistant Fire Chief Ryan Gates stated that there was a great deal of benefit to running medical calls. He stated that it put staff in the community a lot more and making contact with their citizens. He stated that also when they were in homes for a medical call they were looking to make sure they had smoke detectors so after the initial medical incident was over, they went back to that location to look for things of that nature. He stated that when they went to medical calls, they were doing pre plans and getting to know the area better. He stated that the only real solid way to do that was actually truly running the calls to get their drivers the training they needed in those high stress situations. He stated that there were a lot more benefits than just the service call itself.

Chief Bullard stated that he was requesting a fire marshal and two (2) firefighter positions based on the request that Council approved for the FEMA grant AFG grant. He stated that hopefully they would hear soon on that, but it had been a year before people received word on being awarded the grants. He stated that he requested headsets for their apparatus which would improve communication and the safety for the firefighters out there. He stated that he requested computers for the trucks which would allow for reduced radio traffic. He stated that it would enable them to see live CAD data, all the streets and all their hydrants. Chief Bullard stated that he requested an exhaust removal system that would go into their apparatus bay and hook to the tailpipes of their apparatus and remove all the diesel particulate out of the building. He stated that way the fumes were not staying stagnant in the bay, while they were out there breathing it in.

Chief Bullard stated that he had requested a kitchen and bathroom up fit. He stated that he did not think the buildings had ever been renovated and with increased staffing, everything had to be rearranged to allow for more comfortable living space. He stated that their current refrigerator was packed full every day. He stated that they purchased a large three (3) door refrigerator with funds from the 1% fund and now had to make room for that. He stated that he requested an alerting system that alerts them to a call. He stated that currently they relied on a cell phone app to alert them to calls which did not always worked on the cinderblock building that had dead spots in it sometimes. He stated that the system was built into the station and hooked up with their dispatch system. Assistant Chief Gates stated that the station alerting technology had increased greatly over the last decade or two and the systems they were looking at were fairly basic systems. He stated that the software could control the lights and volume in different areas, it could be programmed to shut off the stove, it could automatically shut the bay doors behind them after they pull out after a certain time in case they forget to do that because they were currently using a garage door remote. He stated that the capabilities were endless with it. Chief Bullard stated that the department currently had an SUV that was purchased in 2017 that was being used as the battalion vehicle. He stated that they wanted to get the fire gear out of the passenger compartment so they were not breathing in all those chemicals while they are in the vehicle so they were asking to replace it with a pickup truck.

Mr. Chris Cowan, Police Chief, presented his department's budget. He stated that he and his staff had taken a really proactive approach to criminal enforcement and community policing. He stated that he was really proud of the team. He stated that they seized 85 weapons the prior year, made 786 custodial arrests, and had an average increase of traffic enforcement of 176%. He stated that simply meant that the people in the department had been out and they had been visible, and they were policing and they had been doing a great job of it while at the same time they had been increasing their community involvement exponentially.

Chief Cowan stated that they had created some new programs at no cost to the City where they now had a new social worker program and had two (2) social workers embedded in the department and working with officers to reduce calls for service. He stated that 80 to 85% of calls for service for law enforcement across the state had a mental health component and their goal was to try to prevent continual calls for service by having the social workers embedded in the department. He stated that they could review the cases that the officers were working and try to make contact with the individuals that the officers were working with and try to provide them additional resources outside of jail or the hospital. He stated that they were doing a very good job of that and hopefully by the end of the year they would have some really good statistics about how they had reduced calls for service. Chief Cowan stated that some of the other agencies that were using social workers had seen a 25 to 30% reduction in calls for service, during a time that calls for service were going up.

Chief Cowan stated that the department's School to Squad Program, Myles Pinkney from Benedict College, graduated May 5 and was going to the police academy on June 12 and would be going from a school component to a squad component. He stated that they were really proud of that program and excited about it. He stated that they had also created a new partnership with the Secret Service since about two thirds of law enforcement calls for service involved a digital component. He stated that the Secret Service had a program where the department would partner with them and they provided them extensive amounts of equipment and training. Chief Cowan stated that instead of having to utilize other law enforcement agencies to do the digital components of an investigation, they could do them in house. He stated that their long term goal was to start doing that for other agencies and charge them for that service so that they could recoup some for their expenditures.

Chief Cowan stated that they had a new Internet Crimes Against Children component that they were working on. He stated that it was growing rapidly as well as the canine unit. He stated that there was a new direction with the City's narcotics intervention team with a program that had been in place for many years with Lexington County. He stated that the department's sergeant was really being proactive and working criminal enforcement in the City. He stated that they had done a lot of things to streamline and really try to create better opportunity for their staff and citizens. He stated that they were trying to streamline their records management program with Smart Cop coming online thanks to Council. He stated that AXON was going to innovate what they did digitally, and how the officers operated, as well as administrative staff, who had worked really hard to get to this point. He stated that they had been spending a lot of time focusing on their leadership investment, and trying to create an opportunity to grow their leadership team.

Chief Cowan stated that violent crime in the United States was up 54% and it was up 80% in South Carolina. He stated that they had to continue to come up with ways to proactively police, and build community programs to reduce the impact to the

City's citizens and to the City. He stated that South Carolina was the third fastest growing state in the country and the City would have an impact of that both by people traveling through as well as people moving there. He stated that there were 5,100 law enforcement jobs currently open in the state and they were feeling the impact of that. He stated that it was an extremely competitive market and the City was competing with state revenues and state salaries that were 20 to 30% higher than what some of the local agencies were paying. Chief Cowan stated that they were also competing with local agencies that were paying 15 to 20% higher salaries than the City was. He stated that it was competitive in the fact that the City had openings, but it was also competitive in the fact that other agencies were stealing the City's people because they were paying them more. He stated that they wanted to continue to evolve and thanks to Council they were able to do some very strong increases in salaries last year, which made the City more competitive and they wanted to continue on that route.

Chief Cowan stated that in 2021 they had 10,748 calls and this year there had been 11,700 calls for service. He stated that traffic stops were up and cases assigned were down. He stated that the reason cases and criminal investigations were down was because they had a new lieutenant and a new process of how they process cases and investigations and how they assign them. He stated that they were more proactive and more productive in the outreach that they were doing with victims. He stated that he was concerned about the number of traffic collisions they were working and was looking at how and why they worked them and what other agencies could do and should be doing. He stated that their Animal Services calls went up and the Park Safety team had been very proactive, comparatively to other agencies in the state.

Chief Cowan stated that he and his staff were trying to look at how they dealt with the increase for calls for service and the increase in crime and one of the ways they did that was to look at new ways to do interdiction. He stated that Ms. Gray had worked with them on an opioid grant to try to come up with some ways that they could deal with interdiction on that side. He stated that he was requesting increases in their overtime budget, so they could deal with major crimes with training, because they had to stay ahead of the curve. He stated that they had increased costs on uniforms and equipment, recruitment, retention, health and wellness. He stated that they were looking at ways to automate their records management area and how to charge people online for the services that they provided when it came to records management. Chief Cowan stated that they were looking at credit card payment systems and also looking at restitution for cases that involved drugs where they had to pay for the actual processing of the drug cases. He stated that they were looking at ways that they could force restitution on the suspects to pay the City back for those charges. He stated that he was asking for additional staffing and he thanked Council for approving them going after the gang investigator and the violent crime investigator grant.

Chief Cowan stated that they needed another records clerk and most agencies their size or smaller had two and three records clerks. He stated that the City's records

clerk was doing so much for the City as a whole so they were trying to streamline what she was working with to take some burdens off of her. He stated that in the process of doing that, they had identified that her workload was that of three people so they were doing some things to offset that by assigning people to help her. He stated that they did need another records clerk tremendously. He stated that they needed an administrative staff and the way to build that was by accommodating the influx of requests that they get every day. He stated that they needed to continue to grow the City's patrol division as the City continued to grow. He stated that as their calls for service increased, they needed to make sure that they were not burning out their team. Chief Cowan stated that they needed to make sure that they were comparable to other agencies that were their size or smaller. He stated that in order to do that, they needed to grow by a minimum of two positions next year and they had a five-year plan to try to continue to do that as the city grows.

Chief Cowan stated that they really wanted their AXON program to grow since they knew the feds had to contribute money to cover that program. He stated that they wanted to turn that system into what was called license plate readers. He stated that if there was a shooting in an apartment complex or a neighborhood, if the City's officers had LPR's in their cars they could scan every car that went in and went out of that location, before, during and after. He stated that it was a great investigative tool and agencies that were using it were finding their criminal apprehension increase.

Chief Cowan stated that in FY26, they were going to be forced to replace every single radio within the department. He stated that currently they could not communicate with Richland County or Lexington County, because their radios were encrypted, and the City's were not. He stated that they could spend \$120 to \$130,000 next year to replace some of the radios and get the encryption keys but the next year after that, they would have to replace every single radio anyway. He stated that their request was to come up with a plan, he stated that he knew there were other needs for the ARPA funds, but they were looking at about \$500,000 to come through and completely replace every single one of their radios. Chief Cowan stated that it was an Officer safety issue and they had to be able to communicate. He stated that they had brought down the cost by moving away from Motorola radios and moved to Kenwood radios which were half the cost.

Chief Cowan stated that floods, hurricanes and crisis happen so he wanted to put the City on a rotation for being able to provide food rations for all staff. He stated that in order to do that, they needed \$9,000 every year to be able to replace the food rations they had that would last the entire City staff was actually due to expire this year. He stated that they needed to start that rotation and start replacing it. He stated that he was really asking that Council consider a COLA increase for all City employees, because that would continue to help make the City competitive and continue to put them in a situation where they could continue to compete with other agencies. He stated that he was working with Ms. McMullen on a plan to replace vehicles. He stated that a good

portion of their fleet had 136,000 to 145,000 miles on them and the police industry standard was 120,000 to 125,000 to replace vehicles. He stated that they wanted to replace five (5) more vehicles this year as part of their request.

Mayor Pro Tem Jenkins asked Chief Cowan what his department did with the weapons that they confiscated. Chief Cowan stated that he was really proud of the fact that they had done a complete evidence overhaul that needed to be done and taken all the evidence that were weapons related and sold them to a group in Tennessee that then purchase patrol rifles with the proceeds. Mayor Pro Tem Jenkins asked if it would be better to just burn the weapons. Chief Cowan stated that there were different schools of thought but why not take the product that would protect the City's officers and not go back to the taxpayer to provide that to the officers. He stated that his stance was his officers needed patrol rifles and that was the best way to do it in the most efficient way they could do it.

Adjourn

Mayor Pro Tem Jenkins made a motion to adjourn. Council Member James seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by roll call vote. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.

Elise Partin, Mayor

ATTEST:

Mendy Corder, CMC, Municipal Clerk