

A budget workshop of the City Commission of the City of Apalachicola was held on Tuesday, August 23, 2011 at 6:00 PM at the Apalachicola Community Center, #1 Bay Avenue, Apalachicola, Florida.

Present: Mayor Van Johnson, Commissioner Jimmy Elliott, Commissioner Brenda Ash, Commissioner Frank Cook, City Administrator Betty Webb, City Clerk Lee Mathes, Chief of Police Bobby Varnes

Visitors: Susan Clementson, Clarice Powell, David Adlerstein, Mark Friedman, Tom Daly, Caty Greene, Judy Luten, George Mahr, Joe Taylor

Workshop opened by Mayor Johnson.

Commissioner Ash stated she has mixed feelings about reimbursing employees for the 3% retirement employee contribution and any pay increase because she just can't justify putting this burden onto the taxpayers.

Judy Luten asked if city employees receive health insurance benefits, and if employees have to pay any portion of the insurance premium.

Mayor Johnson stated the City pays the full insurance premium for employees.

Commissioner Ash stated the in the private sector a majority of employees have to pay a portion of their insurance premium. Commissioner Ash stated she is not trying to strip employees from their benefits, but at some point sacrifices are going to have to be made.

Commissioner Ash stated the Caty Greene has asked for insurance benefits, and would like to know under what circumstances she was hired.

Caty Greene stated she was hired to work 20 hours per week with no benefits.

Discussion held concerning condition under which Caty Greene was hired, insurance benefits for Caty Greene, determination of Caty Greene's employment status (City employee or Library Board employee), function of Library Board, Library Board budget allocation, and services the Library provides to patrons.

Citizens' comments received regarding Library discussion.

Ms. Webb stated the Library Board, Recreation, and Fire Department are given an allocation and they decide how to run operation. Library Board made recommendation to hire and determine how many hours to pay Caty Greene.

Discussion held concerning the County providing some funding for the Library because it is the only Library in Apalachicola.

Commissioner Ash stated she is not diminishing what services the Library provides, and if it turns out that Katy Greene is indeed a City employee, then the City will do the right thing.

Chief Varnes stated he does not feel the employees should have to pay the 3% without getting reimbursed because employees have not had a raise in 6 years. Employees are continuing to go backwards.

George Mahr stated the City could save money by transferring the Library to the County. Mr. Mahr asked about the specifics of the Key Trust Funds.

Commissioner Ash stated that Attorney Floyd will have to give a legal opinion.

Discussion held concerning millage rate.

Mayor Johnson stated either the City raise taxes and provides services or cut taxes and cut services. Citizens can't have it both ways.

Discussion held concerning revenues and expenses.

Commissioner Elliott joined workshop at this time.

Commissioner Ash stated she will meet with Ms. Mathes to thoroughly review and break down the budget. The City just needs to figure out where it needs to be at this point.

Mayor Johnson stated before the Commission considers taking on a new employee, the Commission needs to take care of the existing employees.

Judy Luten stated she doesn't see how the Commission can justify not making employees contribute towards their insurance.

Discussion held concerning retirement reimbursement, insurance benefits, and other expenses.

Mayor Johnson recommends drafting a budget to decrease millage rate to reflect the same amount of ad valorem taxes as last year, but keep the 3% retirement reimbursement and 2% pay increase.

Workshop adjourned.

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Van W. Johnson, Sr., Mayor

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Lee H. Mathes, City Clerk