



**COMMITTEE AS A WHOLE SESSION
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF
BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2015; 5:30 P.M.**

1. Call to Order

Mayor Renner called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and asked City Clerk Lawson to call the roll.

2. Roll Call

Aldermen: Jim Fruin, Kevin Lower, David Sage, Mboka Mwilambwe, Amelia Buragas, Joni Painter, Karen Schmidt, Scott Black, Diana Hauman.

3. Public Comment

Mayor Renner opened the floor to public comment.

The following citizens offered comments to the Council:

Matt Sorensen
Gary Lambert
Patricia Marton
Sue Feldkamp

4. Consideration of approving the Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes of August 17, 2015.

Motion by Alderwoman Painter, second by Alderman Black that the minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of August 17, 2015 be dispensed with and approved as printed.

The Mayor directed the Council to verbally vote, which resulted in the following:

Ayes: Aldermen Fruin, Lower, Sage, Mwilambwe, Buragas, Schmidt, Black, Hauman, and Painter

Nays: None

5. Presentation of the Budget Task Force Committee Final Recommendations.

Mayor Renner thanked the Budget Task Force Committee for its work.

Alderman Black introduced task force members and asked them to stand. He presented a PowerPoint to present budget recommendations to Council. The process consisted of at least 9 (nine) meetings, including several touch points throughout the summer, covering topics such as: process, background information, cuts, revenue increases, and recommendations.

Mr. Black also discussed the next steps, which would include: presenting recommendations to City Council, and “starting in October, staff will craft resolutions for each recommendation for the Council to vote for approval”.

Pertaining to the High Level Recommendations, based on Task Force consensus, they were:

1. Citizens should pay for services consumed (the higher the consumption, the higher the individual cost, and fees should be in line with service costs)
2. Combination of new revenue and service cuts
3. No new revenue for new program/departments
4. Bloomington and other government partners should share costs equal to use/benefit. In the past, Bloomington has had to shoulder more of the responsibility being a bigger area and the task force believes that practice should be discontinued.

Pertaining to the Recommendation Categories, they were:

1. Program Reductions or Eliminations
2. Service Reductions or Eliminations
3. Shared Services
4. Alternative Service Delivery
5. Operational Efficiencies in Service Delivery

Regarding the Police and Fire Pension Funding, we are still following the pension policy that we established last year.

Regarding Solid Waste, for the Fiscal Year (starting in May 2016), the task force wanted to implement various changes listed on the PowerPoint and noted that these are simply recommendations, and that the Council would have the final say on these changes. An important note is the closing of our landfills and the costs associated with that. That will definitely have impacts on our costs.

Mr. Black discussed Program Reductions or Eliminations and referred to the PowerPoint slide. If the schools were to eliminate this program, there would need to be discussions on the impact of that decision.

In addition, if we sold the BCPA, we would still have to pay the bond on that.

If we established a Park District, there are numerous options, including: city, city/town, city/town/county, etc. We also want to keep mindful of low-income considerations.

As far as Operational Efficiencies in Service Delivery, all departments should develop contingency 5% reduction plans. We are still uncertain as to what the State of Illinois is going to do, so we need to take the initiative on that.

Another recommendation is to allocate budget resources to investigate operational efficiencies in all departments and to make sure “that we are getting the best bang for our buck.” We can also take a top to bottom look at our current compensations for all city employee positions and see how comparable they are to the private sector. Example: The public sector may be paid less but they have a better pension.

For Revenues, we can look at license, fee, and tax increases, but need to use Town of Normal as a gauge and not to go above that. We would also need a clear line-of-sight between what that money would be raised for, where is it going.

He also wanted to note that some of these ideas came not only from the Budget Task Force, but also from members of the public. Mr. Black also wanted to emphasize that that these were key ideas, albeit controversial ideas that are worthy of conversation.

Mr. Black asked the Council for questions.

Alderwoman Schmidt, I am interested in the idea of total compensation review. I could see two outcomes of that that make me nervous; one: that we are overpaying people, or two: that we are really underpaying people.

Jamie Mathy, Budget Task Force Member, from our outside conversations, some people felt like some government positions were overpaid. The positions were being compared to the private sector and they were not aligning with where compensation should be.

Alderwoman Schmidt, it sounds like a really good idea, but I am trying to envision how that would play out, i.e. with a union. Maybe that is a Legal or HR question. Can we do anything about that if we do see discrepancies?

City Manager Hales, I believe that such a study is critical because we want to be able to recruit and retain outstanding talent. As you know, over 80% of our workforce is collective bargaining agreement. Even the other employees that are not unionized; we are not only in competition with the private sector, but the public sector. We need to look at: what is the public sector paying for talent as it becomes much more challenging to recruit that talent, but also, this information will help the council to set a compensation strategy going forward. We also need to note that the private sector will usually pay less and will usually not provide a pension or retirement; instead they will provide a contribution plan. With this, we will need to know exactly what we are looking for in the future and with the most cost-effective way while being

sensitive to the competitive wages, while also being sensitive to what the private sector is paying for in competition. This will be difficult, but allows more certainty moving forward.

Jamie Mathy, What we were looking at specifically is the total compensation plan, including pensions, because there is a lot of talk about salary. From a healthcare perspective, the responsibilities have been increasing for both the private and public sectors, and the healthcare plans that are in the public sector are far better than the private sector. We need to have comparable costs for the pension and total compensation package.

Alderman Fruin, there could be some interpretations on some of these things, so I am wondering what direction we are giving our staff. For example, for the BCPA and golf, there looks like there was a range of things increasing in here from raising fees to selling. Are we going to have a follow up discussion on the council or is this a product that we hand to staff to figure out?

Mayor Renner, we need to discuss that; we need to evaluate that. We need to give the staff some options as to how much things would cost to raise the golf fees, for example.

Alderman Sage, what may not have come across on the PowerPoint was that we have several items highlighted as consensus items from the Budget Task Force. Those items expressed were reference points and we will make those items clear on the draft.

Alderman Fruin, it is going to be a tremendous challenge to figure out which governmental groups that are going to pay for the cuts. We are going to have to work together and figure out the best way to apply the revenue for these items. This is only the beginning of a lot of discussion of how we share and how we allocate. This is going to be a tremendous challenge.

Mayor Renner, we are much more ahead of the game than we have been, so thank you to the Budget Task Force.

Alderman Mwilambwe, I would like to hear more about the creation of the Park District and how the response in the discussion has been within the town, city, and county.

Mayor Renner, I had some interest in that too. Would we just be passing the buck? Would the Park District have to raise taxes too?

Alderman Black, those are the ideas that we hear a lot, and the Council needs to provide the direction on what it wants the staff to do. I would envision that the staff would offer a resolution, at some point, about what a Park District should look like, and then we make the decision if it is something that we want to look into. We need resolution from the Council on which direction we want to go, and if there is not, there may not be support for it, and that would be the end of that conversation.

Alderswoman Hauman, for the Park District concept, I think there are some opportunities for marketing that would bring more people in to use our resources, like Miller Park Zoo. It really is a regional attraction and would be a way not to overlap with the Parks and Recreation Department if we looked at combining those.

Alderman Fruin, I would like to echo that Park District concept. I think we have seen in our City of Bloomington conversations that we are providing a lot of services that are regionally used. Example: zoo, BCPA, golf courses, etc. Those are all decisions that we made in the City of Bloomington and not in collaboration with any of the other groups. But now that times are tough, and we know that some of that usage is outside of Bloomington, which is why we are subsidizing what we are.

Alderswoman Painter, Finance Manager Silva recently sent out a memo speaking to that. What it says, Section 3.2 of 25 IL CS, and it says: “yes, we could form a Park District, but we would have to form it from two other units of existing local governments”. Am I wrong about that? Could somebody clarify?

Alderman Black, this is one of those items that requires staff time and further research in 2018 and beyond. We would need Council approval to give the go ahead to research so any time spent is not futile. It is critical that we provide the clear direction.

Alderswoman Painter, I think it would be a good idea, especially if we could create one with Normal, but I do not want to go down that road if we cannot do it, so I think we should figure that out.

Alderman Black, the resolution is what we would be looking into...

Mayor Renner, I think the first thing we need to find out from Angela if that is even possible. If it is not possible, then discussion over, but if it is possible, we can continue discussions on it and look at advantages and disadvantages of creating park districts or any kind of special districts. We have over 200 local governments and independent taxing authorities in McLean County, so that might be something to consider.

Deanna Frosche of the Budget Task Force, I think we have learned a lot from... (inaudible)...we still do not know some of it...it is a huge undertaking...that the Council and the City has to take on these issues and it takes a lot of background, a lot of knowledge to decide what you in fact want to do for the citizens. I know that the members of the task force have been asked: Why do you even want to do this? As citizens, we have a responsibility to look at what is actually going on and what we can do as committee members. I do not envy the Council or the Mayor, who have to make these decisions.

Mayor Renner, We appreciate those tangible items that you gave us that we can grapple with.

6. Adjournment

Motion by Alderman Hauman, seconded by Alderman Mwilambwe to adjourn Regular Session. Time: 6:15 p.m.

The Mayor directed the Clerk to call the roll which resulted in the following:

Ayes: Aldermen Fruin, Lower, Sage, Mwilambwe, Buragas, Schmidt, Black, Hauman, and Painter.

Nays: None.

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

ATTEST

Tari Renner, Mayor

Cherry L. Lawson, City Clerk