

SALISBURY CITY COUNCIL
BUDGET WORK SESSION
MAY 13, 2015

Public Officials Present

Council Vice President Laura Mitchell
Councilman John "Jack" R. Heath

Councilwoman Eugenie P. Shields
Councilman Timothy K. Spies

Public Officials Not Present

Mayor James Ireton, Jr.
Council President Jacob R. Day

In Attendance

City Clerk Kim Nichols, City Administrator Tom Stevenson, Assistant City Clerk Julia Glanz,
and Internal Services Director Keith Cordrey

The City Council convened in a Budget Work Session at 10:00 a.m. in Conference Room 306 of
the Government Office Building.

Fire Inspections

Salisbury Fire Chief Rick Hoppes, Fire Lieutenant Eric Cramer, Planning & Zoning (P & Z)
Director Jack Lenox, and County Fire Marshal Kevin Wright joined Council to discuss fire
inspections. Mrs. Mitchell noted that Council received information and perspectives from both
departments, and Council wished to make their decisions based upon a clear view of each
proposal. The presentations will help determine any budget adjustments needed in the Salisbury
Fire Department (SFD).

The following is a synopsis of Chief Hoppes' and Lieutenant Cramer's presentation to Council:

- The two agencies (Fire Department and P & Z) share the same goals, but their approaches differ in what should be moving forward.
- The two target groups include citizens and the fire protectors who protect the citizens.
- SFD differ in opinion from Mr. Lenox and Fire Inspector Wright because the SFD will present what they feel is best for the citizens of Salisbury and the SFD.
- Currently the County is responsible for fire code enforcement, plan reviews and permitting for all projects within the City limits of Salisbury.
- The proposal is for the SFD to perform ongoing verifiable inspections for all the building stock that is within the City limits because the inspections model decreases the risk.
- Because the inspections portion costs money to hire inspectors, Chief Hoppes suggested the revenue model be merged with the expense model so that revenue generated from

permitting, plan reviews, and enforcement is brought into the same realm as the expense model needed, which is under the SFD realm.

- Both agencies work for the citizens; P & Z collects revenue for the services it provides. SFD wishes to provide inspections, but there has to be revenue associated with those inspections or else it becomes a flat expense.
- Chief Hoppes recommended placing everything in one department so revenues generated will go towards providing ongoing inspections, which currently are not being done.
- Chief Hoppes asked for P & Z's inspection plans, as he has not discussed this with P & Z.
- Chief Hoppes understands the perspective but not the reason for concerns about setting up a different system than all of the other jurisdictions in the County because every career Fire Department in the State of Maryland (and 100% of them have been polled) performs their own fire prevention code enforcement.

Mr. Lenox and Mr. Wright reported:

- P & Z is a City agency having responsibilities that go beyond the municipal boundaries.
- His department is open to discussions to make improvements, but cannot comment on the SFD's approach because it has not been discussed with P & Z.
- The average income for the past eight years in the Fire Inspector's office countywide, including all municipalities in the County, is \$157,715, and the highest amount ever generated by the agency was \$278,000 in FY13. 40% of that amount was based on two projects, Edison Court and Ocean Aisle. Of the \$157,715 average per year, about 75% falls within the City limits. There has never seen that much revenue countywide.
- Mr. Lenox stated they have real numbers opposed to projections.
- Wicomico County added an additional Fire Inspector this year.
- Wicomico County is taking the projects on, received additional funding, and are actually spending more money with employee benefits, vehicles, and training. (almost the reverse of the Fire Service Agreement)
- The Salisbury Fire District extends beyond Salisbury, and this would be setting up a different system in different parts of the Fire District.
- The Fire Inspector handles all new commercial projects, apartments and townhomes, and does not handle new home construction.

Council questions and concerns included:

- (Mrs. Mitchell) Not interested in making more expense for the County, but if that is what it takes to make sure that people are safer, that is fine.
- (Mrs. Mitchell) The interpretation that matters most is that of the people who are going to be running into the burning buildings.
- (Mrs. Shields) Everybody agrees the City needs fire inspections and safe buildings. Everyone should meet and develop a plan to present to Council.
- (Mrs. Mitchell) Asked how many positions were in the proposal. Chief Hoppes said a total of three, plus a promotion. There is an administrative assistant and two inspectors. The budget totals \$217,000 regardless of the revenue projections.

- (Lieutenant Cramer) Much of the projected budget work was completed two years ago, and the problem with the Fire Code is that there are 34 permit-required processes.
- Mrs. Mitchell stated that Councilman Heath was the ideal person to take point on these discussions as he understands the Council side, Fire side, and the business perspective. Mr. Heath agreed to meet with both to discuss each plan.

Mrs. Mitchell stated that in terms of the budget, it may be at least four to six weeks before everybody can meet again as the budget must be passed before this can be finalized. She suggested putting a placeholder in the budget with equal revenue and expense lines for the fire inspections. Whatever is determined, they will likely match up in some sort of way and will avoid the City having to pass a budget amendment. If nothing becomes of it, it just will sit there, and otherwise, internal adjustments can be made, thus allowing Council to resolve other issues.

Council unanimously agreed with Mrs. Mitchell's plan and timeline.

Council recessed at 11:00 a.m. and reconvened at 11:10 a.m.

Fire Department Personnel Committee

Salisbury Fire Department Acting Lieutenants Aaron Colegrove and Ron Wismer joined Council and reported on the following Fire Department personnel requests:

- The number one issue continues to be staffing.
- Outlying agencies are currently called to handle ambulance calls between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. because of the influx of the City's population, and Salisbury EMS cannot handle more than three calls at one given time.
- During the hours between 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. they currently have allowed other agencies to handle calls totaling approximately \$368,000 (only on a 50% collection rate)
- Requested six (6) personnel to cover the daily ambulance calls on that peak timeframe.
- The six additional personnel would impact the budget in the following manner: salaries and benefits- \$435,553. EMS receipts and billings are increasing each year, but the budget would be impacted by about \$60,000 in the "red".
- In 1990, there were 53 personnel working at the SFD and the call volume was 5,137. In 2014, they had 68 personnel working at SFD, but the call volume increased to 11,755.
- Call volume will continue to increase.
- The 2% the Mayor has proposed in the budget is greatly appreciated, however, they would like to see 2% for COLA. A few years ago they split 1 & 1 (1/2 step increase and 1/2 COLA). This would be beneficial for morale and all departments across the board.
- Mayor reduced training and education by \$8,000. Education is crucial for certification and moving up in the ranks. If the City pays for employee training and classes, they can keep employees working with the City longer.

Council comments, questions and concerns included:

- How often are services provided to Salisbury University? Average of two calls per day
- Mutual aid to the other neighboring towns? Fruitland about once per week. The City can bill for these calls, but their call volume is nothing compared to the City.
- Are these positions FF/EMS or are they just EMS that would be focused during these time frames? Every position is FF/EMS

Acting Lieutenant Aaron Colegrove told Council he would like to meet once or twice during the year to convey ideas and thoughts and come up with a way to work through the various issues.

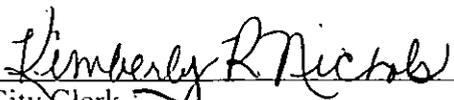
Neighborhood Services and Code Compliance (NSCC) Personnel Committee

NSCC Inspectors Dan Hogg and Duran Rayne joined Council to discuss the following NSCC personnel requests:

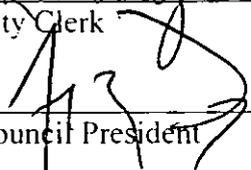
- They were appreciative of the 2% step increase and stated it should continue.
- Suggested the creation of a Code Enforcement Officer Career Ladder to create a Code Enforcement Officer I and II. Criteria for obtaining the second rank would include obtaining certifications and expanding knowledge of code enforcement techniques and concepts, earning Associates and Bachelor's degrees, and would allow for advancement.
- Increasing the training budget would allow employees to receive more training.
- Vacation time (annual time) reaches a cap at 20 years. Requested an increase in annual time after twenty-five years and thirty years. The increase is ¼ day per month.
- Would like to see the percentage paid for retired employees' health insurance increased from 40% to 50% or 60%.
- Asked for an increase in the shoe allowance (\$150 per year). Steel-toed boots are not required but desired.
- They wear hard hats occasionally but they also need mold filters, tyvec suits, gloves, and other safety gear.
- Certifications are required and they make both NSCC and the City look good.
- Discussed how inspectors must take turns taking classes and certifications, and how it holds other inspectors back from moving forward.

Council was concerned that a major obstacle for NSCC has been that the City has continually increased the responsibility of the inspectors but has not provided them enough funds for training. Council reached unanimous consensus to increase NSCC training budget by \$1,000.

With no further discussion, Mrs. Mitchell adjourned the Budget Work Session at 12:10 p.m.



 City Clerk



 Council President