CITY OF STONECREST, GEORGIA

Honorable Mayor Jason Lary, Sr.

Council Member Jimmy Clanton, Jr. – District 1 ***Council Member Rob Turner- District 2***

Council Member Jazzmin Cobble – District 3 ***Council Member George Turner- District 4***

Tammy Grimes – District 5

BUDGET HEARING MEETING MINUTES

VIRTUAL MEETING

October 26, 2020 at 6:00 p.m.
Citizen Access: URL

I. **CALL TO ORDER**: Mayor Jason Lary

II. **ROLL CALL**:

All members were present.

III. AGENDA ITEMS:

1. Budget Hearing

Motion 1 – made by Mayor Jason Lary to continue to open the public hearing Seconded by Council Member Jimmy Clanton.

Motion passed unanimously.

Budget was presented by Deputy City Manager Plez Joyner.

Public Comments were emailed to Megan Reid City Clerk and read aloud in the meeting.

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Hello Ms Reid, please add my comment below in regards to the budget meeting.

Mayor, Council and all other decision makers, thank you for your time in listening to our requests as citizens of Stonecrest. In addition to repaving our roads, please consider adding sidewalks/bike paths that connect our communities to local shops and parks. This will help citizens such as our family to bike/walk to our local restaurants vs traveling to Cobb County to enjoy their amenities. Rock Springs Rd is in desperate need of at least a sidewalk. We would love to frequent Arabia Mountain, but the paths would also need to be maintained as there is a ton of leaves throughout the path (its fall and expected, but it appears it has not been blown off in weeks compared to other trails outside of Stonecrest). Please consider our plea for additional sidewalks and bikepaths in addition to maintaining them.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Elijah Ajayi

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Councilperson Grimes (yay District 5!), other council members, and Mayor Lary:

I think it is perhaps a little premature to be able to make comments and give you feedback on the budget without more information about what we the citizens will get from the 30% increase in proposed expenses.

I hope the Mayor and council will share answers to the questions all citizens are asking tonight and then allow comments to be made to before approving this budget. It is easy to see or guess what we are getting for new computer systems and why have some large added expenses pertaining to the city hall move, but other than that there isn’t a lot that’s been explained about what we the citizens will be getting from increasing the budget 30%. I am not saying that any particular thing is bad but am just asking y’all to explain some things for we can be informed citizens.

5 key questions are:

- What items from the Transportation Master Plan are funded in this budget?
- What items from the Parks Master Plan are funded in this budget?
- What work items from the Comprehensive Plan are funded in this budget? Does it include catch up for items that were supposed to be done in 2020 or previous years as well as all of the 2021 scheduled items?
- Why is there an extra $100,000 for City Events under City council, up from 0, and an additional $200,000 added to City Events under Parks? What will this fund?
- What do we get for Parks Technical services going from 12,000 to 217,000 and Professional Services going from 600,000 to 1,001,760? Shouldn’t we be hiring employees instead of funding contractors?

Perhaps less important, but of concern are these 8 questions:

- Economic Development has had some tangible results for Stonecrest but perhaps not as many as we’d like. Other than the cost of living adjustments for salaries, why aren’t we putting more into this area compared to the current year?

- Why are business licenses (03210) expected to be down 92%, from 1.6 million to zero? Are they now added into some other line item?

- In terms of expenses, why is there a 5% increase to all of the salaries that are paid by Jacobs when the consumer price index is up on 1.3% (per the Social Security Administration). This is described as “modest” but seems overly-generous.

- Why are City Council - Regular Salaries increasing over 100% and professional services increasing by 900%, and increase of about $385,000? Is this for the Finance Director? What else is included? If it isn’t for the Finance Director, what line item covers that position?

- Has money for the Helen Cornelius contract been removed from the budget, if it was included?

- Why is there a cost at all for City Manager salary and expenses when there seems to be no intent to have one? And, for that matter, why have we paid Jaobs over $200,000 for a city manager in 2020 when they have not provided one — and that figure is increasing by 5% increasing? Is this item covering just the Deputy City Manager? Both positions?

- Why is City Hall electricity going up from $30,000 to $160,000 and general Internet and phone costs going up from $30,000 to $100,000? Are those annual increases to expenses resulting from the city hall move?

- I want to add that I have the impression that citizens wish code enforcement would do more and speedier enforcing, but its budget doesn’t have any real increase. Can more be allocated?

Finally, It is good to see that there is real money int he budget for bike paths, which I hope included bike lanes. I hope that a lot more sidewalks will be funded, as well.

Thank you,

Dave Marcus

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From H. Smith

What new Budget line items are being proposed above those currently budgeted and justification ?

Are there any salary increases budgeted; and if so how are they being justified during this current COVID-19 economic downturn?

What new revenue sources beyond the current sources are there to help balance the 30% budget increase ?

1) What major budget line items are increasing over the current year and why?

2) If the increases are significant in the contingency fund (if there is one) what is being anticipated that might happen going forward ?

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To whom it may concern,

I have the following citizen questions about the proposed budget that I'm hoping get addressed:

1. We have a number of budget items that appear to be going over their budget allocation. How do we address cost overruns to the budget and what is the approval process for charging/spending more on an item than is budgeted for?

2. Why do we have a number of computer software costs that are increasing by such large percentages compared to the 2019 actuals? For example, software expenses for Parks (400%), Finance (300%), City Clerk (566%), etc. How are we cost justifying the benefits to services we would be obtaining for these expenditures?

3. After the capital expenditures (CAPEX) for the city to acquire city hall, why do we still have things like rents (52301) in the budget? What is this line item accounting for?

4. It appears that we have a number of operational expenses (OPEX) for service when those things can be paid for with capital funds (CAPEX) in the 2021 budget so that we aren't paying for them every year. What steps are we taking to capitalize and amortize assets as opposed to leasing or otherwise having an annual cost structure?

5. What is the Security line item for parks and recreation supposed to cover specifically?

6. Why does Parks and Recreation have such a small expense for budget for Internet, but we are targeting $100k for the general Internet line item in general (53105). In addition, why is it 200%+ more than it was last year?

7. In general there appear to be a number of items where the budget is substantially larger than the 2019 actuals, but there is no discernable reason in any planning document to suggest the need for it. Why is causing us to create such large estimates in the budget if we aren't seeing a plan for a substantial increase in services in these areas? While it may not be an accurate assessment, it appears that we're increasing budgets just because we can spend money since there is no tracking from 2019 to this budget or increase in services which justifies the increase in expense. It seems it would make more sense for many of these items to NOT be budgeted since they don't spend this level of money on an annual basis regularly and have those line items make a request for funds when appropriate. This ensures that we can spend money where it is necessary and when it is necessary, instead of allocating funds to line items that don't have a reason to spend that money.

8. Why is the total fund surplus decreasing by 100%?

Thanks,

Gregory Pierce

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In looking at the City's budget, I'm encouraged to see that despite the turmoil that occurs on City Council, our city staff seems to be doing a solid job.

While I'm sure there will be a lot of nit-picking, I hope our council members don't lose sight of the big picture. I know everyone believes they are acting in our best interests, but there is also such a thing as being over protective to the point of stagnating the city's growth and stifling innovation.

There are certain areas where I hope the City doesn't become stingy. I believe the new City Hall needs to be a showcase. It needs to be a positive symbol for our residents, our businesses, for those considering to do business here and those who are considering to move here.

Another area is Parks and Recreation. A strong Parks & Rec. system encourages health, good sportsmanship, and attracts families and quality businesses as well.

And of course we should continue to commit to good roads, sidewalks and street lights.

I hope City Council will demonstrate, despite their differences, they are fully engaged in approving a budget that will best serve the interests of the community and position Stonecrest for the future.

Thank you for your time.

Bill Bruckner, Resident of District 5.

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Thank you for allowing me to express my view. It is very positive from the viewpoint of a citizen and taxpayer to see that the city of Stonecrest operate within the budget, even in very challenging times. The increase of the expected revenue from 2020 to 2021 provides the city council and city staff the opportunity to make substantial improvements in the city. Continuing road improvements, park and recreation upgrades and the build outs and design and development of the new city hall will all be visible and tangible signs that Stonecrest is a city businesses and people want to move into. The sooner these are completed the better for all. Thank you for your efforts to keep things moving.

Suzanne Frick District 5

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Motion 2- was made by Mayor Jason Lary to close the Public Hearing and was seconded by Council Member Robert Turner.

Motion passed unanimously.

MEETING ADJOURNED BY MAYOR LARY.

Read and adopted in the regular meeting of the City Council held on this _____ day of _______________, 2020.

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Mayor Jason Lary

ATTEST:

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Megan P. Reid, City Clerk