

TOWN OF PHILLIPSBURG  
Work Session Meeting Minutes  
February 28, 2023– 7:00 PM  
PHA – Community Room  
535 Fisher Avenue

CALL TO ORDER – 7:00 pm by Council President Wyant

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING ACT STATEMENT - Read by VP Clark

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - All

ROLL CALL – Wyant, Clark, Marino, Piazza, Kennedy (by audio)  
Also present – Attorney Moscaguiri, BA Matt Hall and Deputy Clerk Loudenberry.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - NONE

DISCUSSION – 2023 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

Councilman Marino directed question to Mayor regarding Police Dept and how many officers short; to which Mayor Tersigni responded (2). Cnclman continued and asked if Class III Officers were for school safety only or could be used for parking meter collection? Mayor responded he would address.

Councilman Piazza asked if the (2) officers needed were Budgeted in or not? Mayor responded that CFO Merlo assured him there was enough in there to cover. Cnclman Piazza continued, regarding Senior Center facing increases in Insurances and utilities, lighting, requested Council consider raising from 30k to 35k.

**MOTION** – to raise amount given to Senior Center from 30k to 35k

Cnclman Piazza moved to raise amount given Senior Center to 35k. Cnclman Marino seconded the motion.

Mayor Tersigni wanted it noted he presented a flat budget to Council.

Council President Wyant stated, 5k would not be significant enough to not make it flat.

Councilman Kennedy (by audio) commented the Budget is flat now – difficult choices needs to be made and would not support the increase to the Senior Center.

**ROLL CALL**

**Passed 4-1**

| Councilmembers          | First | Second | Yea | Nay | Abstain | Absent |
|-------------------------|-------|--------|-----|-----|---------|--------|
| Councilman Piazza       | X     |        | X   |     |         |        |
| Councilman Marino       |       | X      | X   |     |         |        |
| Councilman Kennedy      |       |        |     | X   |         |        |
| Council VP Clark        |       |        | X   |     |         |        |
| Council President Wyant |       |        | X   |     |         |        |

**Discussion**

Council Vice President inquired if the 5k increase would raise taxes? CP Wyant responded, would not be a big impact.

Councilman Piazza questioned the use of one million dollars from the American Recovery Act money; which is a (1) time award, adding the funds are not available year to year, noting they need to be used within a certain time period, but cautioned not all at once.

CFO Merlo (in the audience) stated within (4) years; which would be 2025.

Councilman Piazza inquired if all DPW was capital or some of it operational? Also asked if thought Budget was good for residents now and in the future.

CFO Merlo responded operational – coming out of savings. He noted the flat Budget is good for the residents right now, but not so sure in the future.

Councilman Piazza noted we are also down 14 employees; which must effect the Services TOP can provide. Noting lack of staffing in Inspections being just one (1) department. He continued, unless there is a way to generate new/more revenue would be facing a drastic drop-off next year. He suggested staggering the grant money and questioned Mayor Tersigni if there is a plan in place to generate revenue next year.

Mayor Tersigni stated when voted into office worked to keep taxes flat. He noted the Pilot Program and more ratables as generating revenue.

Councilman Piazza noted using surplus to make Budget flat, continued if majority is coming out of savings to make it flat – we need to be looking at next year and know we can make up a million dollars.

Mayor Tersigni stated he believes he can make with revenues and continued he believes this is a fiscally responsible Budget.

Cnclman Piazza stated, need to think about Taxpayers going forward – an incremental increase is better than all at once. Asked if Mayor Tersigni would email his plan to generate new sources of revenue. He then inquired about the purchase of a Sewer Camera for DPW being a capital expense and if so would be good use of that type of dollars.

CFO Merlo replied it would be part of the Capital Budget.

Councilman Kennedy stated nobody likes dipping into surplus to stay flat, continued it has been done the last several years. Noted comes down to do we want to use surplus or raise taxes. He continued, reluctantly supports Budget as is right now.

VP Clark stated, supports Budget - noting not ideal to use surplus. Continued, there are things out of the TOP's control such as nationwide inflation. Hoping next year interest rates may drop – adding the plan this year, as it is such a difficult time - don't want to raise taxes. He thanked Mayor Tersigni for submitting a flat Budget. Noted the Parking Revenue was an increase at 74k, Cannabis tax 329k an increase in Permits revenue. Feels if continue to work hard can put tax dollars back in surplus.

CP Wyant noted - nice to see "0" Budget, but feels like kicking the can down the road. Understands previous budgets have been flat, noting his first year as Mayor he had to raise taxes by .16 cents. He continued it is not good to have a flat Budget without having enough in surplus should we be faced with a major disaster. Stated a couple cents increase just to keep up with inflation and have ability to keep some in surplus. He continued every year the Emergency Squad receives just 15k – stated they have a vehicle (truck); which would be of good use for the Fire Department. He moved to increase the Squad's amount to 20k to offset donating truck to FD.

#### **MOTION**

CP Wyant motioned to increase the amount given to the Emergency Squad from 15k to 20k. The motion was seconded by Councilman Piazza.

VP Clark inquired if this increase would effect the Budget?

CP Wyant noted for each 72k increase it would go up (1) cent.

Cnclman Piazza noted it would be 1/3 of a penny to support the increase for the Senior Center of 5k and the Emergency Squad of 5k.

Cnclman Kennedy noted he would not be for either increase.

**ROLL CALL**

**Fails 3-2 (Majority needed for any increase)**

| Councilmembers          | First | Second | Yea | Nay | Abstain | Absent |
|-------------------------|-------|--------|-----|-----|---------|--------|
| Councilman Piazza       |       |        | X   |     |         |        |
| Councilman Marino       |       | X      | X   |     |         |        |
| Councilman Kennedy      |       |        |     | X   |         |        |
| Council VP Clark        |       |        |     | X   |         |        |
| Council President Wyant | X     |        | X   |     |         |        |

CP Wyant asked if entire Council had received letter from Mayor Tersigni regarding the 2023 Municipal Budget.

Mayor Tersigni read his letter aloud. (Attached)

Cnclman Marino noted Library amount was kept at 686k and Library employee stated need 900k to operate. He asked if the Referendum does not pass – what does it do to the Library?

CP Wyant stated not into effect until next year, but they survived on 686k last year.

Cnclman Kennedy noted he had nothing else to bring up.

CP Wyant posed to Council whether they wanted to move on this Budget or wait. He continued if not willing to cut – may move to introduce on next Agenda.

Cnclman Piazza stated, wanted to wait for email with future Revenue information from Mayor Tersigni, especially considering possible 200k need from Library.

CP Wyant noted if the Referendum passes there will be an increase.

Cnclman Piazza questioned if the funds allotted for the part time Assistant to Recreation Director be taken and used for salary for full time Recreation Director.

Mayor Tersigni noted, talked with CFO Merlo about this subject, would be able to make that happen.

Cnclman Piazza asked if this had been Budgeted.

CFO Merlo noted the Recreation Director – the part-time money is there. Also, aide money could be shifted to the full-time Recreation Director can legally be taken from the

Open Space fund. Added Open Space Committee does need to present their Budget to the TOP.

Cnclman Piazza stated, when OS Committee meets – he would like copy of the minutes.

CFO Merlo stated, he has yet to receive the numbers from State Aid. He continued, it is usually the same each year, but would like to wait for figures from the State.

**MOTION**

VP Clark motioned to introduce the Budget on the March 7<sup>th</sup> Agenda. The motion was seconded by Cnclman Kennedy.

**ROLL CALL**

**Passed 3-2**

| Councilmembers          | First | Second | Yea | Nay | Abstain | Absent |
|-------------------------|-------|--------|-----|-----|---------|--------|
| Councilman Piazza       |       |        |     | X   |         |        |
| Councilman Marino       |       |        |     | X   |         |        |
| Councilman Kennedy      |       | X      | X   |     |         |        |
| Council VP Clark        | X     |        | X   |     |         |        |
| Council President Wyant |       |        | X   |     |         |        |

ADJOURNMENT – 7:37 PM