

Mayor
Ricky Waring

Council Members:
Bob Jackson
Russ Touchberry
Aaron Brown
Terry Jenkins
Kima Garten-Schmidt
William McIntosh



Town Administrator
Lisa Wallace

Town Clerk
Beth Messervy

Town Attorney
G.W. Parker

TOWN of SUMMERVILLE

**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
BUDGET RETREAT – DAY #2 OF 2
Friday, April 21, 2023**

ATTENDANCE

Present: Mayor Ricky Waring, Councilmembers Kima Garten-Schmidt, Bob Jackson, Aaron Brown, Russ Touchberry, Terry Jenkins and Bill McIntosh. Also in attendance were Town Administrator Lisa Wallace and Town Attorney GW Parker. A quorum was met. Public and press were duly notified. The meeting took place at the Cambria Hotel at 405 Sigma Drive, Summerville, SC. The meeting was livestreamed and recorded.

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Waring called the meeting to order at 8:45am.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Before the discussion on fund balance started, Ms. Wallace recapped that in the discussion from the previous day, a full-time prosecutor and Parks & Rec programmer were in the budget. She also stated that staff would bring the Sanitation Fund options back to the Finance Committee with more information. She recapped that staff would like the bump to a starting salary of \$15/hour as well as the 8% for increased salaries.

Mr. Jenkins stated that he would like to increase the starting salary to \$15 per hour before the 8% salary increase was taken into consideration. He then stated that he would like to increase the 8% to 10%, pulling from the fund balance, but the money would not actually come from fund balance because that are enough vacant positions to cover the increase. Mr. Jackson agreed. Mr. Jenkins stated that the department heads would be in charge of how to distribute the 10% based on their needs. Ms. Wallace asked Mr. Jenkins to confirm that he would like a 10% “bucket” and not an “across the board raise” of 10%. Mr. Jenkins confirmed. He stated it would cost roughly \$400,000 to fund the 10%.

Mr. Touchberry complimented the Town staff and stated that the Town needs to increase their pay to retain them and show them that the Council values their work.

Mr. Brown asked if the Department Heads will decide how the 10% will be distributed amongst employees. Mr. Jenkins confirmed that that is what he said. Mayor Ricky Waring agreed. Ms.

Garten-Schmidt stated that this is a great step forward and that the Town employees deserve the raise.

Ms. Wallace said that she and Ms. Moore would recalculate the numbers to bump the 8% to 10% and bring the numbers to Council at the first reading of the budget.

Mr. McIntosh stated that he was concerned about doing even the 8% raise 8% does not “get it done.” He stated that he is not happy with employees who make over \$100,000 a year getting an 8% raise because it sends a message to taxpayers that the Town is rewarding our higher paid employees with even more money.

Chief Wright stated that he does not think that the Town should diminish higher level employees, especially because their counterparts in other municipalities and counties get paid more than Town staff does. He stated that when the Town doesn’t give higher paid people a raise, it’s just “kicking the can down the road.”

Some discussion followed regarding the difference in pay structure amongst departments. Mr. Touchberry stated that Council should rely on the division directors and department heads to distribute the raise as they feel necessary. Mr. McIntosh stated that the Town has a Council-form of government, meaning that the Council is the top of the Administration for the Town.

Stormwater Manager Ryan Dews asked for confirmation that the 10% bucket would be distributed by department heads as they feel necessary. Mr. Jenkins confirmed that statement.

Mr. Brown stated that all departments need to implement an annual written evaluation of employees so that there is a record of everyone’s performance.

Ms. Wallace stated that staff would work on getting 10% into the numbers and present a proposal to Council.

Mayor Waring stated that it is not good that after the first day of the budget retreat, staff was led to believe that everyone was getting an 8% raise, but that now some Councilmembers were saying something different. He stated that a 2% cost of living adjustment is not enough.

Mr. Jackson stated that Council needs to recognize that each department is different and can distribute the raises as necessary. Chief Richard Waring stated that all of the department heads have a solid plan as to how they will distribute the money and that they share their plans with each other. He stated that all department heads are very transparent with their employees when it comes to this subject. He also stated that the Town needs to use this raise as a starting point for recruitment and retention.

Ms. Wallace stated that staff would work on getting 10% into the numbers and present a proposal to Council.

FUND BALANCE DISCUSSION:

Ms. Moore stated that Council needs to update the Fund Balance policy to fall in line with how auditors view “committed” funds versus how the Fund Balance policy explains them. She stated that the unassigned target is 30% of fund balance. Ms. Moore stated that the proposed new policy shows what the Town actually has in fund balance to spend. Some discussion followed.

FEE SCHEDULES:

Planning Director Jessi Shuler, Parks and Recreation Assistant Director Tim Orvin, and Public Works Director Russ Cornette gave their proposed updates to the Planning & Zoning, Parks & Recreation, and Engineering/Stormwater fee schedules to be a part of the FY24 budget.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS PROGRAMS AND RETENTION INITIATIVES:

Ms. Wallace stated that Town staff has met with four brokerage firms to explore ideas to make health insurance and benefits better for employees. She also stated that staff will bring recommendations to Council about a retiree health insurance plan.

Human Resource Director Chris Grant presented the current employee benefits, as well as employee retention ideas to explore.

PURCHASING POLICY:

Ms. Wallace stated that the threshold of what purchases need Council approval is too low, set at \$25,000 by the current ordinance. Mr. Jenkins asked if the items are budgeted, and Ms. Wallace confirmed that even budgeted items \$25,000 and over need Council approval. Mr. Jackson stated that the change order policy in the current purchasing ordinance needs to be reviewed. Mr. Cornette stated that all large projects will have change orders.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

Mr. McIntosh made a motion to give first reading to an ordinance to partially rescind the 2022 property tax increase by 4 mills. There being no second, the motion failed.

Mr. Touchberry thanked staff for their hard work on the proposed budget for FY24.

Mr. Jackson stated that Ms. Wallace should take 10% to give division directors and department heads raises.

Ms. Garten-Schmidt stated that the Town should start charging for parking in the garage for special events to recoup some money for maintenance of the parking garage. Mr. McIntosh stated that for events downtown, parking spaces in the garage should collect a premium between \$10-\$20 per spot. Mr. Jenkins stated that the concerns when this subject was brought up last year were from the merchants, who were concerned that their employees would have to pay to park in the garage. Ms. Garten-Schmidt stated that she and Mr. Touchberry had spoken to the merchants last year. Mr. Cornette stated that this same idea was discussed at last year’s budget retreat, but that in subsequent days it was considered an “ill-conceived staff proposal.” Mr. McIntosh stated that there are roughly 5 or 6 events during which the Town could charge for parking.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Mr. McIntosh made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jenkins, to enter into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters related to Associate Municipal Judge(s), personnel matters related to pay programs/salary adjustments (if needed), personnel matters related to the Director of Community and Economic Development position, and personnel matters related to the Organizational Structure. The motion carried unanimously, and Council entered into Executive Session at 11:13am.

Council returned from Executive Session at 1:30pm. Town Attorney GW Parker stated that Council met in Executive Session to discuss personnel matters related to Associate Municipal Judge(s), personnel matters related to pay programs/salary adjustments (if needed), personnel matters related to the Director of Community and Economic Development position, and personnel matters related to the Organizational Structure, and that no action was taken in Executive Session.

ADJOURN:

There being no further business, Mr. McIntosh made a motion, seconded by Mr. Jackson, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 1:31pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

APPROVED:

Beth Messervy, Town Clerk

Ricky Waring, Mayor