

TOQUERVILLE CITY COUNCIL
Special Business Meeting Minutes
August 17, 2021, at 6:00 pm
212 N. Toquer Blvd, Toquerville Utah



Present: Mayor Lynn Chamberlain; Councilmembers: Keen Ellsworth, Justin Sip, Ty Bringhurst, Gary Chaves, Chuck Williams; Staff: City Manager Kent Page, Treasurer Dana McKim, Accountant Candus Tibbits, Public Works Director Lance Gubler, Recorder Ruth Evans.

A. CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Chamberlain called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Councilman Williams led the Pledge of Allegiance. Councilman Bringhurst gave the invocation.

Mayor Chamberlain explained the purpose of this meeting is to discuss a proposed tax increase. The City is in need of financial help to keep services rendered to all residents. The Council, staff, and residents have to live here and pay property taxes and want to do what is best for the City. The Councilmembers are honest and are here to listen to the citizens. It's not an us vs. them situation. We are all in this together.

Treasurer McKim reported on the budget review held in May and the City's accountant Candus Tibbits helped put together the draft budget. After reviewing the previous and proposed budget, it was found that the city needs an increase of \$36,675 to balance the proposed budget. The City does not have a very big budget and relies primarily on property taxes. The County sent out notices of what each proposed increase would be. The average increase would be \$25.03 per year. The proposed mill levy rate is .001325. The City believes this is a conservative and reasonable amount to increase property taxes to continue to offer the best services to its residents.

The Council discussed that prior to last year, the City had not increased taxes for 13 years. A larger increase was actually proposed last year but was reduced due to public input. The City does listen to its residents. With that increase, the City was able to hire a city manager and provide health benefits to the staff. The City needs to keep good employees. Part of the proposed increase would also cover the huge increases in materials that we have all seen this year. The Council thanked Treasurer McKim for all the work she has put in to balancing the budget.

B. PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Public input is sought on a proposed property tax rate increase.

Resident Manning Butterworth commented that costs have increased, home values have increased, and new homes and residents are increasing. To what degree do home values and the city's costs that have increased compensate for those increased costs?

The Council responded that there are more residents moving in, however the city has had huge increased and unexpected repairs and other cost increases. So just because more residents are moving in, doesn't necessarily mean the city receives more money. The property tax does not increase based on new residents; it actually lowers the rate the current residents pay. The city gets a set amount of property tax dollar amount despite how many residents are in the city.

Resident Tyler Barton asked the Council to justify the large increase in employee benefits



Mayor Chamberlain responded that the employees previously had no health benefits, and it is very important to keep good employees and offer competitive wages.

Resident Gary Lunt commented that the budget started May 2021. The printout that was given to him today shows actual expenses ending in June. This is for the general fund only. The difference between the actual revenue brought in this year and the year before is \$1,000,921.00 less. The difference between the actual expenses this year and the year before is an increase of \$250,869.00. We can certainly find \$36,000.00 because the revenue is understated. We can do better than that. The Council needs to use the actual figures. La Verkin has two hotels and that's why they have a lower rate. We need to say no to any increases.

Accountant Candus Tibbits commented that it is difficult to compare year over year because some years the City has projects. Last year the City received Covid money but that is all earmarked for specific expenditures. It is not really a fair comparison. The City uses conservative budgeting practices. The mill levy rate is based on historical payment history and there could be more late payments this year which would drop that number really fast.

The Council discussed the City needs to do several street and water repair projects. The City needs that money to replace old infrastructure and do these badly needed projects which include Anderson Junction water upgrades and turn lanes into the Cholla Creek subdivision. The Council would like to know what projects the citizens would like to see, nice streets, more trails, or improved parks? All these projects take money to realize.

Resident Dan Catlin commented that he has been to city meetings and has heard about broken trucks, outdated and old backhoes and other equipment that has needed unexpected repairs. Is the Council sure \$36,000 is enough to keep up with these and other repairs?

Resident Todd Sands would like to understand truth and taxation more and wondered if the taxable value gets paid to Toquerville City?

The Council explained that the tax amount that get submitted to the County is the only amount the City gets. It does not get increased if more residents move in, in fact, if more residents move in, everyone's taxes will go down. This is why truth in taxation needs to be done every year to evaluate the amount of money the City receives.

Resident Anita Eaton commented that there are those who don't want growth and that is understandable, but those that moved here recently have ruined it for those already living here. Not sure when the gates should have been closed if we wanted to stay a small bedroom community, but that was lost with the proposal of the bypass road. Some residents are tired of driving elsewhere to buy fuel, groceries, clothing, and everything else. We appreciate the thought that went into this budget and the minimal increase. This amount will easily increase the good things in our community and more importantly, increase office staff.

Mayor Chamberlain commented that other communities like Hurricane have grown and changed but still have that small-town feel. We can have what we want and what we need if we manage the growth right.

Resident Tyler Barton commented that he appreciates the elected officials, but the city employees are not elected. Mr. Barton worries about increasing benefits and wages for employees can turn



them into career employees and a bureaucracy that can become corrupt. He understands you want to hire good employees, but it can be very easy for someone with bad intentions to get a city job.

Mayor Chamberlain responded that he would like to see city employees make a career here. Long term employees are good for the city and reminded everyone that they are subject to the Mayor and Council.

C. BUSINESS:

1. Discussion and possible approval on a proposed property tax rate increase.

The Council discussed they can wait and make a motion later or make a decision now. Councilman Sip commented that after hearing the residents tonight and the facts of the budget, he is ready to decide now.

Councilman Justin Sip moved to approve the proposed property tax increase of \$36,675. Councilman Chuck Williams seconded the motion.

It was suggested that Councilman Sip include the proposed mill levy rate in his motion. Councilman Bringhurst commented that the city is in a good place and has done a good job managing all the city has to do so we have a nice place to live. The staff has done a good job managing what we have with the current budget, and it is exciting to see what is coming for Toquerville.

Councilman Justin Sip moved to approve the proposed property tax increase of \$36,675 with a mill levy rate of .001325. Councilman Chuck Williams seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried, 5-0. Ty Bringhurst – aye, Keen Ellsworth – aye, Justin Sip – aye, Gary Chaves – aye, Chuck Williams – aye.

D. ADJOURN:

Councilman Justin Sip moved to adjourn the Special Business Meeting. Councilman Ty Bringhurst seconded the motion. Motion unanimously carried, 5-0. Ty Bringhurst – aye, Keen Ellsworth – aye, Justin Sip – aye, Gary Chaves – aye, Chuck Williams – aye.

Mayor Chamberlain adjourned the meeting at 6:49 p.m.



Mayor – Lynn Chamberlain

Date 9/29/21



Attest: City Recorder – Ruth Evans

