

CITY OF JEFFERSON
Council Worksession
January 13, 2022
6:30pm

COUNCILORS PRESENT: Mayor Myers, Dave Beyerl, Walt Perry, David Kellogg, David Watkins, Bob Rossiter
COUNCILORS ABSENT: None
STAFF PRESENT: Sarah Cook, CM/R; Jeff Buskirk, PWD
OTHERS PRESENT: Council Applicants: David Veenendall, Keonali Hutley

I. **CALL TO ORDER/FLAG SALUTE** – Mayor Myers called the meeting to order at 6:30pm and led in the flag salute.

II. **WORKSESSION TOPICS**

A. Application Review, Selection/Appointment, and Swear-In New City Councilor

Mayor Myers thanked both applicants for volunteering to serve and spoke of the time commitment, learning curve, and the 3 years left on the vacant position, noting the upcoming election was another opportunity for the person that wasn't selected to put their name in.

Questions asked of each applicant included:

What can we expect from you regarding City money?

What is your vision for the City in terms of growth?

How would you deal with making tough decisions that people won't like, but knowing you have to make them?

Can you make the time to get involved beyond just coming to the Council meetings twice a month?

Would you have any problems attending events outside the Council meetings, such as Tree Lighting?

Mr. Veenendall responded to say he would make the best decisions he could when it came to City funds, and had been a successful business owner for many years. In terms of growth, he would like to see an increase in both the population of businesses and residents. He understood decisions of the Council would not always be easy, but knew they had to be made and he could only hope the citizens would understand why when the time came. He had no problem committing whatever time necessary to be informed and involved in the City Council as well as outside events or activities.

Mrs. Hutley responded to say she was a homeowner herself and knew the importance of being responsible with money, adding she thought it was important to have voices from all different economic backgrounds representing the City. Regarding growth, she liked the idea of responsible growth and was really interested in learning the functions of the City and being another voice at the table. Responding to the question about making tough decisions, she noted her job required a lot of that and she felt it was important to listen to other perspectives. While she still worked a daytime job, she explained she was at a point in her life, with her two kids grown up, that she could commit the time needed and really wanted to be involved in the community she lived in.

Voting ballots were provided to each Councilor and once completed were passed to the City Manager to tally and read the results.

Results: Keonali Hutley – 3 votes; David Veenendall – 2 votes. Mayor Myers reminded Mr. Veenendall of the election, noting he would add great value to the Council. Keonali came forward, took the oath of office given by Mayor Myers, and was welcomed at the table with the City Council.

B. Discussion Re: 3rd Deputy – Costs & Funding Options

Mayor Myers noted the subject had been discussed for several years and the need had been evident for quite some time. The options he saw included continuing business as usual, or creating a funding stream by way of a.) public safety fee; b.) 5-year levy. The Council was in agreement that the need for additional police service was there and it had been a long time coming; however, the way to fund a 3rd officer was not unanimous. Councilor Kellogg felt strongly that the decision should be that of the voters by way of a levy. However, it was a consensus of the rest of the Council, and the opinion of the Mayor, to consider a public safety fee, for various reasons including the temporary security a levy provided, the length of time it took to pass a levy and begin receiving funds to utilize it, as well as the extremely low success rate given the current climate, regardless of how well a package was put together or how great the need was expressed. Discussion from Councilors in favor of considering a safety fee included the upcoming growth and development, the City funds that would be depleted after one year, the fact that the City really needed at least 2 deputies and not just one, the understanding that though difficult at times, they were elected to be leaders and to make informed decisions for the overall good, realizing there would always be people who disagreed, and it would never stop being debated, as well as emphasizing the need for public outreach and feedback.

Moving on, Mayor Myers shifted the discussion to the dollar amount for a safety fee, drawing attention to the draft figures provided from Marion County Sheriff's Office the year before, which indicated the higher expense in year one due to the purchase of a patrol vehicle. It was his hope that, no matter what level of fee they began with, that it could decrease over time with periodic evaluations. Discussion ensued about fees ranging from \$12 - \$15 per unit, per month, noting the City could commit an additional \$40k on top of current figures. Councilor Rossiter reminded the Council that they shouldn't only consider the immediate need, as proper planning considered years ahead. So, while \$180k might get them by the first year or two, rising costs and the fact that the City was so far behind the national average for police coverage already, he thought they should be looking at things from a different perspective - the City wasn't short roughly \$200k, it was actually short \$600k when they considered the actual need for 3 officers to bring Jefferson in line with the average.

Councilor Kellogg expressed his frustration with the process being considered, noting the way the Council was talking about the fee was what he hated about government. He was not comfortable charging a \$15 fee to citizens if it was not needed at the time. Councilor Perry spoke about inflation, pointing out that the process of budgeting was not for today, but for the future. He felt strongly about preparing for what they already knew would be coming and further reminded the Council of the City's proven ability to budget smart and forward plan. Councilor Rossiter agreed and added that even with a 3rd officer, they were still far short of protecting the community around the clock, and he

would rather not have to come back to the community asking for more later. Mayor Myers spoke of his very deliberate process during the meeting, assuring Councilor Kellogg there would be no voting, no decisions, and staff would prepare several public releases to get the information out and invite comments and feedback from the community. His plan was for the Council to take it all in over the next several meetings and come back in April for a decision on the path forward, which allowed ample time for the public to be engaged. He understood the concern about high taxes, but noted the majority of those dollars were not going to the City.

Mayor Myers summarized the discussion, noting the majority of the Council wanted to consider a safety fee of \$15 to cover the costs of a 3rd deputy and that public outreach was imperative. There was brief discussion about an informational flyer for the public and the idea of a survey link.

III. APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE – Councilor Beyerl moved to approve, seconded by Councilor Perry. Discussion: clarification was provided on the invoice for Arts Plus and the after hours on-call service provider. All in favor: Ayes – 6, Opposed – 0. **APPROVED.**

IV. VISITORS

Patti Ball – shared the survey they had for the museum received 100+ responses. She thought a \$12 - \$15 fee was reasonable and encouraged them to think of 4 or 5 officers, not just the 3rd. She liked the way the City saved and planned ahead and appreciated that kind of future forecasting.

V. COUNCIL/STAFF COMMENTS

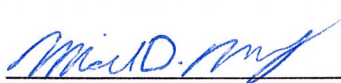
Councilor Kellogg would like to see a deputy attend when they could.

Councilor Rossiter attended the School Board meeting and learned 22% of students and 25% of staff were out sick, and the elementary school was temporarily shut down. He asked everybody to think of them and do what they could to encourage them during the challenges they were facing.

Mayor Myers reminded everybody of the Water Treatment Plant Open House on January 26th at 2:30pm, and thanked the Council for working through the discussion that evening.

VI. ADJOURNMENT – Councilor Beyerl moved to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Perry. All were in favor and the meeting closed at 8pm.

MINUTES APPROVED this 24th day of February, 2022.



Michael D. Myers, Mayor

ATTEST:


Sarah Cook, City Manager/Recorder