



CITY OF FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA

CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES

Council Chambers, 715 Princess Anne Street
Fredericksburg, Virginia 22401

HON. MARY KATHERINE GREENLAW, MAYOR
HON. CHARLIE L. FRYE, JR., VICE -MAYOR, WARD FOUR
HON. KERRY P. DEVINE, AT-LARGE
HON. MATTHEW J. KELLY, AT-LARGE
HON. JASON N. GRAHAM, WARD ONE
HON. JONATHAN A. GERLACH, WARD TWO
HON. DR. TIMOTHY P. DUFFY, WARD THREE

April 18, 2023

The Council of the City of Fredericksburg, Virginia, held a budget public hearing on Tuesday, April 18, 2023, beginning at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall.

City Council Present. Mayor Mary Katherine Greenlaw. Vice-Mayor Charlie L. Frye, Jr. Council members Kerry P. Devine, Dr. Timothy P. Duffy, Jonathan A. Gerlach, Jason N. Graham and Matthew J. Kelly.

Others Present. City Manager Timothy J. Baroody, Assistant City Manager Mark Whitley, Assistant City Manager David Brown, City Attorney Kathleen Dooley, Finance Director Robyn Shugart, Assistant Finance Director Richard Lawrence, Budget Analyst Donna Leahy, Fire Chief Mike Jones and Deputy Clerk of Council Brenda T. Martin.

Opening Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance. Council was led in prayer by Vice-Mayor Charlie Frye followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Councilor Jason N. Graham.

Officer Recognized. Mayor Greenlaw recognized the presence of Officer J. McCurdy at this evening's meeting.

Notice of Public Hearings (D23-142 thru D23-145). The Clerk read the notice of the Fiscal Year 2023 Budget public hearings as they appeared in the local newspaper, the purpose being to solicit citizen input.

- Fiscal Year 2024 Recommended Operating and Capital Budget (D23-142)
- Proposed Increase in Real Estate Tax & Transient Occupancy (Lodging) Tax & Notice of Personal Property Tax Rate (D23-143)
- Proposed Increase in Water & Sewer Rates and Fees (D23-144)
- Proposed Increases in Emergency Medical Services and Parks and Recreation Fees (D23-145)

Staff Presentation (D23-146). Budget Analyst Leahy gave a brief overview of the budget in a PowerPoint presentation. She reviewed the recommended budget at a glance totaling \$ 120.52 million. The recommended Real Estate Tax Rate for the budget was \$.88/\$100 assessed value and the advertised rate was \$.91/\$100 assessed value. The latest consideration by the Council was \$.90/\$100 assessed value primarily for compensation.

Ms. Leahy reviewed the proposed lodging tax rate to be increase from 6% to 8% and she compared it to other surrounding localities. She also reviewed the Personal Property Tax Rate, EMS Fees and Parks, Recreation and Events Fees. There is also a proposed Water and Sewer Rates and Fees increase at 10% for water and 10% for sewer.

Ms. Leahy went over each of the propositions which were as follows:

- Real Estate Tax rate – additional pennies to advance public safety and other compensation
- Thurman Brisben Homeless Shelter level funding – \$60,000 to \$80,000
- Micah increased funding – \$22,000 to \$60,000
- Sister Cities increased funding – \$2,000 to \$6,000
- Schools Funding – additional \$484,500
- Medic Position -- \$97,168 full year; \$48,584 half year

She also discussed the State budget process.

Disclosures. Councilor Duffy disclosed that he was employed by the Fredericksburg City Public School System, but he could participate in the budget discussion fairly, objectively and in the public interest.

Vice-Mayor Frye disclosed that his wife was employed by the Fredericksburg City Public School System, but he could participate in the budget discussion fairly, objectively and in the public interest.

Ann Kloechner, Executive Director, Legal Aid Works (LAW) (D23-147), stated that they have served the residents of the city since 1973. She thanked the Council for their past support and asked for level budget funding. The three full-time and one part-time attorneys cover five counties and fifteen courts. They represent low income residents with civil legal matters such as domestic violence protective orders, illegal eviction and foreclosures. There are 3,902 residents who could qualify for their services. Attorney Kloechner stated that during the pandemic they were on the front lines preventing illegal evictions and foreclosures that would imperil the public health of the

community, they represented vulnerable abuse victims, they helped seek protective orders and advised workers whose benefits were illegally denied. LAW has notice that more people have slipped into poverty since the pandemic and are eligible for their services creating an increased demand for expertise to allow them to be housed, safe and with the public benefits they need to survive. In the last fiscal year, 200 City residents were assisted by the five attorney's.

Ms. Kloechner advised the Council that they would be celebrating their 50th Year Anniversary and she said they could not have done it without the City's support.

Laurie Webb, Executive Director of the SPCA (D23-148), said they provide lifesaving care to animals and much needed assistance to their families. She introduced the Director of Development Melanie Johnson.

Ms. Johnson said they were celebrating a major milestone, they were celebrating, 80 years of service. Our Intake and Diversion and Outreach programs address the critical needs of the community with a focus on providing resources to pet owners so they don't have to make the difficult decision to surrender their pets because of financial difficulties. The People Empower Through Support (PETS) program was created to give support to those who need support keeping their pets in their homes. They are also working to make pet ownership barrier free. Through this program they provide free pet food and supplies to families through the Pet Pantry as well as low to no cost veterinary services. They expanded the pantry to be more accessible through their mobile pantry. She said the PETS program also provides a safe haven for those families who are experiencing housing transitions due to critical circumstances.

Ms. Johnson said as part of their commitment to educations they also invest in the Animal Advocates of Tomorrow. Their clinic has partnered with rescues that do Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) in order to control population and this year they provided over 300 surgeries since January 1, and average 20-30 feral cat surgeries and vaccinations each week. She noted they served 550 clients of Fredericksburg with more than a dozen being subsidized by the Pet Program.

Each year more than 900,000 animals are euthanized and they help prevent his with a 96% live release rate.

Ms. Webb said they were extremely grateful for the funding that has been provided but they requested \$40,000 to help to give the City residents the services they require.

Dr. Gaila Sims, Curator of African American History and Special Projects at the Fredericksburg Area Museum (FAM), she thanked the City Council and Fredericksburg for the support they receive. She said being housed in the historic Town Hall was a privilege and important to the museum. They were appreciative of the care given to the building by the City staff. FAM is a vital part of the City as a community institution they welcome thousands of people to the museum through the Sounds of Summer concerts series and Winter Holiday Market. Ms. Sims said by the end of the Fiscal Year they will have engaged over 20,000 people though admissions, events and programs.

FAM recently opened four new exhibitions, A Monumental Weight (Auction Block), Stomp Effects, Kiwanis Building Through Service and Honoring the Artistic Vision of Black Artist with local ties.

Dr. Sims also talked about her work as the curator and how she has had the privilege to work with local educators, City staff, museum professionals and community members to develop web text, walking tours, exhibitions, presentations brochures and Wayside panels centered on stories of Fredericksburg's African American community members and their contributions to the City. She was also working to encourage black tourism to the City and spotlighting the City's diverse activities, eateries and experiences.

Dr. Sims has also reconvened the Auction Block working group to develop recommendations for the former location of the auction block and she was also curating an exhibition on Marquis de Lafayette.

Dr. Sims stated that FAM was grateful for the generous support of the City of Fredericksburg.

Sandra Erickson, Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) Greater Fredericksburg (D23-149), expressed gratitude for the City's past support of their mission to create a support one to one mentorship. The BBBS Board of Directors asked that the City Council approve the funding request of \$10,000. This funding will help to enroll children and volunteer mentors, do background checks and train mentors, provide support to the mentors and the mentees. Ms. Erickson said BBBS provide role models for the children to look up to. BBBS also serve children who live in adverse situations and have experience elevated levels of trauma. She also spoke of all the advantages of a child having a mentor.

Juanita Shanks, CEO and Director of FailSafe ERA, stated that they provide re-entry support and services to individuals and families that have been impacted by incarceration. They have been in operation for 13 years. She thanked the Council for considering FailSafe in the budget, she said it will help to provide the services needed in the community. Last year they serviced over 100 returning citizens and there were only 3 re-arrests. They also services over 80 families. Her organization provided resources, trauma and inform care serviced to the family members, provided hotel funding, rental assistance, job leads, and employment opportunities. Ms. Shanks said they also provided mental health and substance abuse referral assistance, financial assistance and life skills training.

The organization will be in the jails providing their Courage to Change training which is important for success when they are released. They inducted 17 members into their Hall of Change, which include those who are productive citizens in the community. She also spoke of several programs they were working on as well as a pilot program with Goodwill Industries.

Ms. Shanks said the difference in their request and what was approved for them in the budget will have an impact on their ability to continue to provide the services they provide in the community. She asked Council for reconsideration of the full amount of their request so they can continue to provide their life skills training and the resources they provide to help those newly released to become productive members of the community.

Patricia Wolfrey, Executive Director of American Red Cross Rappahannock Chapter (D23-150), stated that for 140 years American Red Cross has been helping to prevent human suffering in the face of emergencies. She said helping people to prepare for and respond to and recover from disasters has been at the heart of the Red Cross' mission since their founding. The Red Cross helps to provide funding for basic needs like food, shelter, clothing and replacing medications when people are faced with disasters. In 2022, the Rappahannock Chapter provided assistance that exceeded \$42,000 to 79 households within the City of Fredericksburg due to fires. They recently installed 124 smoke alarms in low income neighborhoods, in the city limits.

Ms. Wolfrey also spoke about the Red Cross blood services where staff goes out to collect blood that is used by the community hospitals and is used to treat cancer patients, accident victims, people with sickle cell disease and other critical blood needs. In 2022, red cross conducted 29 blood drives within the City.

Meghann Cotter, Executive Servant-Leader, offered insight regarding their cold weather shelter funding. She noted some changes that have impacted their request and those were as follow: they cannot safely house 60 plus people with complex needs and disabilities in a building meant for 35. This winter they successfully operated a hybrid model with 35 beds in their congregate location and 20-25 in hotels. They were able to do that with local government resources and some remaining pandemic money which they will not have after June 30. She said it will cost more in a post pandemic world. Their budget for this hybrid model is \$197,000 and they made this request across the region along with their own fundraising. The Shelter is actually located in Stafford and

they believe they will be receiving \$55,000 from Stafford, \$60,000 from Spotsylvania, \$6,500 from King George and the City has proposed to give \$22,000 of the requested \$60,000 and this leaves a \$53,000 deficit.

Ms. Cotter noted that 20 years ago the City was the only funder of the cold weather shelter. She said Micah's help with the cold weather shelter has provided consistent leadership for running it.

Ms. Cotter noted that they were caring for more people with the same amount of resources. She said they are more committed to having no one sleeping outside and the cold weather shelter is the only thing they are asking the City to help with.

Jackie Davis, Executive Director, Bay Consortium Workforce Development Board (D23-151), stated that they serve 16 localities and they are responsible for the administration of the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. They work with individuals who have some sort of barrier to completing education or finding a job and retaining that job on their own. They also help with recruitment, worker training and on the job training as well as other things. The Bay Consortium also has a Virginia Career Work Center located in Spotsylvania County and they are the conveners on the public workforce system. The Work Center provides service to individuals as well as businesses. She said they have seen 5,335 visitors through the center and 449 of those were from the City of Fredericksburg. They have trained 14 City residents at a cost of \$28,540. The funding requested is to support the business services representative and the youth program influencer. These two individuals will provide outreach and career

exploration work based on opportunities for the youth and provide information and resources that are available to them through the public workforce system.

Barbara Barlow, Executive Director, Mental Health America Fredericksburg, explained that they were listed in our budget as MH17 a senior visitor program, which is only one of their programs. She wanted to know if it was the intentions of the Council to restrict the funds of Mental Health America to that one program because they have other programs. An example is their helpline which was started 10 year ago and they recognized there was not enough mental health providers. She said 30 percent of the callers come from the City and they partner with the Department of Social Services, Moss Free Clinic.

They also offer partnership with schools where they give presentations to students and they found the greatest need at Walker-Grant Middle School. They provide therapeutic counseling for those kids as well as group sessions. The sessions are provided for free if their insurance does not cover the cost.

Ms. Barlow said they received pilot program funding from the City, APC and a small amount from Mary Washington Hospital Foundation but the funding would not be available next year and they want to continue the program because it is needed and its changing lives. She asked the Council to increase the funding to cover the cost of the programs or not restrict the funding that is provided to them.

Mayor Greenlaw thanked everyone for their concerns and for coming out to speak. She recognized the critical services each of the agencies provide to the community.

Councilor Duffy stated that he appreciated all the organizations coming forward to explain what they do for the community. He said the work that Mental Health America was doing with the students at Walker-Grant Middle School was making a difference and he was in favor of finding a way to not restrict the funds.

Vice-Mayor Frye asked for clarification on the helpline and Ms. Barlow explained that the helpline is an information hub and referral source for local mental health professionals and agencies. The line helps to connect people with counselors, therapists etc. she noted there are times when people are put on wait lists and in those cases they are available to reach out daily weekly or however often the person needs until they can be seen so they know they are not alone.

Councilor Gerlach said he was also in favor of not restricting the funds for Mental Health America. He also noted that as an attorney he does pro-bono work for Legal Aid Works and he finds it very rewarding and he invited other attorney's to take a few hours and do some pro-bono work for people who cannot afford it.

Ms. Shugart explained that they do not normally fund specific programs, they usually issue funds to the agency. She thought it would be easy to take a look to see why this specific program was funded. Councilor Kelly said he would like to see if the schools would like to partner with the City on the Mental Health America funding.

Mayor Greenlaw asked if everyone was in agreement with the propositions proposed:

- Real Estate Tax rate – additional pennies to advance public safety and other compensation

- Thurman Brisben Homeless Shelter level funding – \$60,000 to \$80,000
- Micah increased funding – \$22,000 to \$60,000
- Sister Cities increased funding – \$2,000 to \$6,000
- Schools Funding – additional \$484,500
- Medic Position -- \$48,584 half year

Council was in agreement with the propositions as well as looking at not restricting the funds for Mental Health America.

Mayor Greenlaw thanked everyone for the good work they do in the Community.

Adjournment. There being no further speakers to come before the Council at this time, Mayor Greenlaw declared the meeting officially adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Mary Katherine Greenlaw

Mary Katherine Greenlaw, Mayor

Brenda T. Martin

Brenda T. Martin, Deputy Clerk of Council

APPROVED
05-09-23