

Bob Mollette

3rd Ward Councilman

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February 14, 2008

Honorable Council Members
Jim Kalb, Mayor
Trent Williams, Auditor
Michael Jones, Solicitor
728 Second Street
Portsmouth, Ohio 45662

Re: City of Portsmouth 2008 Operating Budget Tabled Appropriation Ordinance

Council tabled the Appropriation Ordinance after a Third Reading at the February 11, 2008 Meeting. It appears a legal question raised by a citizen concerning the proposed salary increases for the Mayor and the City Solicitor derailed any productive discussions between Council members for the purpose of problem solving and approving a workable operating budget. I am forwarding my objections, concerns, and unanswered questions (#07-061 dated December 27, 2007) for your convenience.

I would have fewer administrative questions if Council received a budget that reflected projected expenditures that were less than projected revenues. I believe a budget committee or finance committee that includes citizens would be very beneficial. I firmly believe the City of Portsmouth needs a five (5) year plan to provide a vision for our future that encourages citizens to be a part of the system and not a victim. Citizens have a low opinion of their City government and express a high anxiety towards future decisions. We must stop living from paycheck to paycheck and take control of the future with proper planning.

1. The budget reflects the Mayor's projected General Fund revenue of \$11,354,000. The Mayor has not enhanced my confidence the projected revenue is achievable over the Auditor's projection of \$10,500,000. The Mayor's projection also includes \$300,000 from the Health Insurance Savings account which I consider a temporary crutch or band-aid to a more serious revenue shortfall. What mechanisms are in place to monitor and assure these revenues will be met? Explain.
2. I disagree with the transfer of \$300,000 from the Health Insurance Savings account to cover an avoidable deficit. It is a poor management decision. The Health Insurance Savings provides a buffer for unexpected health insurance needs in the future and will only be used as a temporary fix.
3. Does the proposed operating budget include a plan to improve traffic safety and reduce crimes associated with drugs and prostitution to address fears expressed by constituents in residential districts? Explain.
4. The Public Service Department budget indicates \$315,000 for fuel. This is an increase of \$20,000 from the 2007 Budget. It is difficult to project the price for fuel but consumption should be scrutinized to assure the taxpayers efforts are being taken to conserve. Describe what measures have been implemented to conserve fuel and any future strategy.

5. The Public Service Grounds Recreation Division reflects \$148,225 expenditures but indicates an overall \$13,996 deficit. Does the City have a strategic plan for maintaining our City Parks including McKinley Pool? Explain.
6. The Municipal Court Department budget reflects new court security officers for \$35,000. The City has contracted with the Scioto County Sheriff Department for \$88,374 or \$7,364.50 per month. The proposed budget only reflects \$8,000 for contractual services with the Sheriff Department. One (1) month has already passed; provide a plan with a timeline for the transition to the City supplied court security officers otherwise this budget may be underfunded by as much as \$45,374.
7. The Police Department budget reflects \$82,000 expense for Special Duty. Describe the Special Duty Program (duties/policies/procedures/associated costs) and the proposed events planned. Also the 2008 General Fund Revenue estimates \$5,000 for Campus Security and \$135,000 in revenue for Police-Special Duty/Admin. I support the overtime opportunities for our officers and acknowledge they are an important asset. Are these efforts self-sufficient? Again describe the program and include future plans.
8. I disagree with the future part-time employment of a Human Resources Officer at \$12,480 and Police Code Enforcement Officer at \$20,800. This decision is based on the potential deficit if the Mayor's projected General Fund revenue is not achieved and the ability to utilize our current resources to provide this service.
9. I believe it is not logical to raise the salary and benefits of the majority of our City employees (union) through negotiated collective bargaining contracts without maintaining consistency with our nonunion employees including the elected officials. I would suggest an ordinance to be considered by Council to require consistent raises within departments and avoid the term conflicts with the Mayor, Solicitor, Auditor, and Council members. Keep in mind the current documented citizen concern over the legality of pay raises included in the proposed budget for the Mayor and City Solicitor must be addressed by the Solicitor.
10. I disagree with the three (3%) percent water rate increase applied January 1, 2008 by the Mayor. The Mayor stated it was needed because our current rates do not create a large enough hardship on the users to qualify for grants. I feel utility rate increases for the water, sewer, and sanitation should be reviewed by a committee, which includes citizens, to provide transparency with our goals to maintain our infrastructure and expand in the future as needed. I feel the water rate increase is perceived as an increase needed to pay for additional administrative charge-offs.

There are many challenges facing our community and I remain positive with the thought that by involving the public and providing a plan with open discussions we will meet those challenges. If additional meetings will be required prior to the next Regular City Council Meeting scheduled for February 25, 2008 please contact me. If you have any additional questions or comments contact me.

Respectfully,



Bob Mollette, 3rd Ward Advocate and Representative on City Council

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cc: Jo Ann Aeh, Clerk (Record)