

CITY OF OWOSSO
SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2013
7:00 P.M.

Meeting to be held at City Hall
301 West Main Street

AGENDA

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:
ROLL CALL:

ADDRESSING THE CITY COUNCIL

1. Your comments shall be made during times set aside for that purpose.
2. Stand or raise a hand to indicate that you wish to speak.
3. When recognized, give your name and address and direct your comments and/or questions to any City official in attendance.
4. Each person wishing to address the City Council and/or attending officials shall be afforded one opportunity of up to four (4) minutes duration during the first occasion for citizen comments and questions. Each person shall also be afforded one opportunity of up to three (3) minutes duration during the last occasion provided for citizen comments and questions and one opportunity of up to three (3) minutes duration during each public hearing. Comments made during public hearings shall be relevant to the subject for which the public hearings are held.
5. In addition to the opportunities described above, a citizen may respond to questions posed to him or her by the Mayor or members of the Council, provided members have been granted the floor to pose such questions.

NOTE: It is likely that only portions of this agenda will be completed at this meeting and will be addressed at one or more subsequent meetings prior to the budget hearing scheduled for May 6, 2013.

DISCUSSION

1. General Fund
 - A. Estimated revenues
 - B. Estimated expenditures
 - (1) General services--city council, city manager, finance, assessing, city attorney, clerk, personnel, treasury, information and technology, cable commission
 - (2) Community development--building and safety, community development Special Revenue Funds--Community Development Block Grant Revolving Loan Fund and Housing and Community Development Fund
 - (3) Public safety--police, fire, emergency medical
 - (4) Public works--buildings and grounds, public works, leaf and brush collection, parking, parks and Special Revenue Funds--Major Streets Fund and Local Streets Fund
2. Special Revenue Fund--Historical Fund

3. Debt Service Funds
 - A. 2010 General Obligation Bonds Fund
 - B. 2009 Long-term General Obligation Bonds Fund

4. Enterprise Funds
 - A. Transportation Fund (SATA)
 - B. Sewer Fund
 - C. Water Fund
 - D. Wastewater Fund
 - E. Fleet Maintenance Fund

5. Component Units
 - A. Brownfield Authority Fund(s)
 - B. Downtown Development Authority

COMMUNICATIONS

1. Burton Fox, Councilperson. Letter regarding the 2013-14 Proposed Budget.

CITIZEN COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

ADJOURNMENT

The City of Owosso will provide necessary reasonable auxiliary aids and services, such as signers for the hearing impaired and audiotapes of printed materials being considered at the meeting, to individuals with disabilities at the meeting/hearing upon seventy-two (72) hours notice to the City of Owosso. Individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services should contact the City of Owosso by writing or calling the following: Amy K. Kirkland, City Clerk, 301 West Main Street, Owosso, MI 48867 or at (989) 725-0500. The City of Owosso Website address is www.ci.owosso.mi.us

April 16, 2013

Owosso City Council Members
Owosso City Manager
Owosso City Clerk
Shiawassee Independent
The Owosso Argus Press

Since I will not be able to be in attendance at the budget workshops due to my being in Arizona from April 18 Thru May 2, I am taking this opportunity to provide some of my thoughts on the budget for the year 2013-2014.

After reading the cover letter by the City Manager, I became concerned about the additional tax that is being proposed. I feel that in these economical times we should not be asking our tax-payers to be required to take on additional costs for the funding of SEDC or the proposed museum director position.

As for the adjustments to the fee and licenses, I feel we need to take a very close look at the total costs to our citizens and tax-payers.

These additional costs may appear to be insignificant to some, but to others they may be an addition financial Burden they may feel is not needed. Some of these individuals and families are surviving on a very tight fixed income budget and may not be able to easily afford the increases.

In addition, there appears to be another increase in water and wastewater rates. This is just another rate or cost some of these families may not be able to afford and we could very well be considered by them to be a way of not considering their welfare.

I realize we may need additional revenues, but I feel we need to get away from the traditional means of funding our city operations. It may be time to look at other means and to really consider them. Could I suggest we should think out of the box, dream a little and maybe even reach out to others for information we do not currently have.

There are property owners within the city of Owosso who are not paying their fair share as they pay absolutely zero dollars in property taxes. I refer to the two largest property owners in our community. They are Baker College and Memorial Healthcare. In addition there are churches and other non profit organizations which I feel could very well contribute to the funding of the services the receive.

As a city we are required to provide fire and police protection to all properties within the city and each and every one of the afore mentioned properties have been provided those services for years at no actual charge. I realize this could raise some eyebrows and opposition from those property owners, but any other tax increase on properties that are not tax exempt will also bring those same positions from our other citizens.

I think it is time for this council to step up to the plate and make some difficult decisions, even if it does cause some others to be in opposition to our decisions. I realize this will result in some heavy discussions by some and sighs of relief in others. We were elected to represent the people of our community and not just accept everything that is given us as the only way to do things.

I know there may be legal questions, but those questions can be answered and then we can make our decisions. We may even be required to go beyond our city attorney to get final answers, but we must do what is fair and equitable to our citizens. If necessary we can ask for the State Attorney General's opinion on fees or whatever we are dealing with. I do know that what we do must be in accordance with the city charter, as we all took an oath of office to uphold the constitutions of the United States and the State of Michigan along with the charter of our city.

I am proposing we study a way or means of assessing those properties I cited above a fee to enable us to continue to provide them with excellent fire and police protection, which I feel if it is reasonable and they are as concerned about our community as we are, they will be in agreement and support the proposal. I am suggesting we invite representation from each of these entities to a work session so we can have an open discussion which will result in coming up with a plan that will be accepted by the majority of those property owners. I am positive this would be a move in the direction of fairness to all.

We could consider a fee structure based upon square footage, land area or any other means someone might suggest. Each of you very well may have some other ideas of how to base the fee, but I am convinced we must consider this or we will have neglected the very people we are responsible to.

If we succeed in establishing another means of increasing revenues without increasing taxes, those revenues would be dedicated to the budget of the Public Safety Department and an equal amount could be moved to the general fund or another area of the budget where needed.

Once I had reviewed the fees and license spread sheet, I feel there are some fees that are in excess. I would hope that we as a legislative body of the city would receive a finalized listing of the fees and license charges for our approval prior to our approving this budget.

I am in full agreement that we must study the issue of the condition of our streets and come forth with a stabilized plan on updating them. I would support placing a bond issue on the ballot in November for the purpose of repairing and rebuilding of our streets. Prior to placing the issue on the ballot it would be beneficial to have a set plan of when and what we would be doing. The last bond issue of which we are using the remaining fund this year seemed to be inefficient, if not ineffective. It would be my desire to see a plan that would utilize the majority of the funds early concentrating on getting the work accomplished while the materials and labor may be lower.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity for me to provide my input and I am looking forward to being in attendance of the May 6 council meeting.

Respectfully Yours,

Burton Fox