

TOWN OF COATS
Board of Commissioners
Thursday, March 21, 2024
Budget Work Session

The Town of Coats Board of Commissioners met in a scheduled budget work session on Thursday, March 21, 2024 at 6:30 p.m. in the Board of Commissioners' Meeting Room at Coats Town Hall.

Members Present:

Mayor Chris Coats
Mayor Pro Tem Marc Powell
Commissioner Jerry Beasley
Commissioner Kelvin Gilbert
Commissioner Shirley Allen

Others Present:

Nick Holcomb, Town Manager
Connie Lassiter, Finance Director/Town Clerk
Rodney Pleasant, Public Works Director
Ken Storicks, Police Chief
Mike Collins, Parks & Recreation Director

I. CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Mayor Chris Coats called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

A. Invocation & Pledge

Mayor Coats delivered the invocation and led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Approval of Agenda

RESOLVED, to approve agenda.

MOTION BY: Mayor Pro Tem Marc Powell

SECOND BY: Commissioner Shirley Allen

APPROVED: Unanimously Approved

II. OVERALL BUDGET INTRODUCTION

Town Manager Nick Holcomb declared that normally Department Heads come before the Board with requests for items to help them do their job better or items in need of repair; but in light of budget constraints, departments are content to hold the line and look more toward the Board to set the priorities based on what they would like to see if there is additional room in the budget.

He highlighted the following information:

- Estimated \$26,000 property tax increase from last year
- Decrease of \$36,000 in General Fund for end of contract amount for Library Consolidation
- Revenue from Interest is relatively unknown at this time; rates could likely decrease from the past year by three-quarter point rate between now and December; amount of principle on which to draw on would change

Commissioner Jerry Beasley requested that the County be pushed to give cost on the amount we would have to pay for equipment and software for our budgeting purposes. Town Manager Holcomb responded that the County was aware and working on it.

III. ONGOING CAPITAL PROJECT UPDATE

Town Manager Holcomb summarized the ongoing Capital Projects to illustrate why the department heads had been directed not to push for capital projects and noted that we just did not have the capacity to handle more work even if the budget allowed.

He gave update on Capital Projects as follows:

- ARP Fund (43): Remaining \$131,230 would be brought to the Board for final budget transfer in May
- Capital Project Water Fund (46): Last meeting, some over \$500,000 was moved over to cover overage of Waterline Replacement project
- Water Fund (60): AMI Water Meter Project estimated at \$475,000 under Capital Improvement Plan line in FY 23-24 Operation Budget
- Capital Project General Fund (45): Multipurpose Hardcourt project would be closed as soon as painting was done
- Most relevant to be discussed was \$50,000 pass-through grant from Harnett County that needed a scope of work; deadline June 2025
- Downtown Revitalization Grant: progress is being made on determining scope of work

IV. DEPARTMENT REQUESTS

A. Parks & Recreation Department

Parks & Recreation Director Mike Collins asked that if the Program Supplies line could be increased he had ideas of doing fireworks. He mentioned taking the old Public Works truck that was to be sold as surplus for use in the Parks & Recreation Department and noted that there would be repair expenses involved in getting that truck operational.

He mentioned that he was not going to do any capital projects but that he would like to add lights on basketball courts and add drainage in the top field.

B. Public Works Department – Streets and Water

Public Works Director Rodney Pleasant announced his plan to retire at the end of the year, so in light of his pending retirement he turned the presentation over to Wes Blount whom he had worked with on the budget preparation.

Mr. Blount requested that the grass cutting/maintenance line item in the Cemetery Fund be increased to \$800 as the cost of pesticides had tripled. Town Manager Holcomb commented that there was a plan to present eliminating the Cemetery Fund since there would be no more revenue for lots sales to balance the expenditures and create an Appearance Department in the General Fund that would include the cemetery expenses as well as other appearance and beautification items. Mayor Pro Tem Marc Powell suggested raising the grave opening fee to \$100 or \$150.

Mr. Blount proposed some increases to cover rising cost of items in the Street Department line items of Hand Tools, Street Signs, Tires, and Vehicle Repairs. He presented a request for the Water Department of slight increases for janitorial supplies and tires; and a more significant increase from \$11,000 to \$12,000 in the Meters & Taps line due to the increase cost of brass. Mr. Blount concluded his presentation with an idea for use of the \$50,000 pass-through grant at the Public Works Shop for fencing and building 20'x20' pole barn which would allow everything to be moved from storage at the old Public Works Shop.

Mr. Blount informed the Board regarding the upcoming AMI meter project that the 2-inch and larger meters would need to be replaced in approximately 10 years because the batters would completely die. He noted that the current cost of one register is about \$1,000 and roughly 20 would need to be replaced.

C. Police Department

Police Chief Ken Storicks proposed slight increases to the Medical Drug Test line due to increased cost and the Travel expense line item with the hopes to send officers for more training in the coming year.

Commissioner Jerry Beasley requested that the SRO contract be on the next meeting agenda. Discussion ensued over the need for the town to provide the SRO officer or give it back to the County in relation to rather providing for two officers to be on duty covering the Town at all times.

V. CONTRACT INCREASES

Town Manager Holcomb informed the Board of the following contract increases:

- Animal Control increasing from \$12,000 to \$24,000
- AMI Annual Maintenance was originally roughly estimated at \$6,000 but would probably be somewhere around \$8,000
- CAMPO annual fee is estimated to be approximately \$1,800

VI. BOARD/STAFF/CITIZEN PRIORITIES

Town Manager Holcomb presented items with approximate associated cost as applicable that had been mentioned at previous times by the Board, Staff and/or Citizens for consideration as follows:

- Future Land Use Plan (\$15,000)
- Council Chambers audio/video additions and improvements and Computer (\$10,000)
- Website Upgrade (\$10,000 with estimated \$3,000-\$4000 annual maintenance)
- Christmas Tree
- Remove Cemetery Fund; create a General Service/Appearance Department in the General Fund to include cemetery upkeep expense

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Chris Coats called for a motion to adjourn.


RESOLVED, to adjourn.

MOTION BY: Commissioner Jerry Beasley


SECOND BY: Commissioner Kelvin Gilbert

APPROVED: Unanimously Approved

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.



Connie Lassiter, Town Clerk



Chris Coats, Mayor