

Tuesday - April 25, 1995 - 2:00 p.m.

Room 623 - City Hall

BUDGET WORKSESSION

Present: Mayor Russell Martin, Presiding; Vice-Mayor Chris Peterson; Councilwoman Barbara Field, Councilman Gary McClure, Councilwoman Leni Sitnick, and Councilman Joseph Carr Swicegood; City Attorney William F. Slawter; City Manager James L. Westbrook Jr.; and City Clerk Magdalen Burleson

Absent: Councilman Herbert J. Watts - in hospital regarding knee problems

City Manager Westbrook presented Council with a balanced 1995/96 recommended annual operating budget of \$48,224,977 which keeps the tax rate of .57 cents per \$100 valuation. He then went through each City department separately explaining the staffing changes and reasons for increases or decreases in the individual budgets. Staff answered various questions of Council and questions which could not be readily answered would be provided to Council as soon as possible.

It was the consensus of Council to increase the hourly billing rate of the City Attorney from \$75.00 to \$95.00.

Councilwoman Field felt that the new proposed Building Safety Department should remain a division under the Fire Department.

On a vote of 5-1 (with Councilwoman Field voting "no"), Council directed the City Manager to proceed with the recruitment of a Building Safety Department Director, which position is to be effective July 1, 1995.

Councilwoman Field was very concerned about the moving of tree trimming and right-of-way maintenance functions from the Parks & Recreation Department to the Public Works Department. She felt the Parks & Recreation Department contains the expertise necessary when dealing with trees. She suggested Council consider the hiring of a part-time or full-time arborist in the next budget. She also hoped Council consider the recommendations of the Tree/Greenway Commission to license tree trimmers. She urged the departments responsible for mowing, trimming, etc. to be aware, and not to use, the many sprays, etc., that pollute the ground water.

Council felt Buncombe County should help pay for some of the capital improvements necessary in the Civic Center.

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Councilwoman Sitnick requested another worksession regarding public information and for the staff to re-consider where we do advertising - perhaps using the Mountain Xpress, the Asheville Advocate and the African American newspapers to reach more readers. Vice-Mayor Peterson said he would like to see the advertising split up between the three papers Councilwoman Sitnick mentioned.

Mayor Martin suggested a ticket surcharge at the Civic Center. City Manager Westbrook said that a worksession will be set up for Council.

Council asked for a report from the City Manager about the possible renovation of the seventh and eighth floors of the City Hall Building.

Councilwoman Sitnick asked the City Manager for a report of items that Buncombe

County used to help pay for but don't anymore, for instance, the subsidy at the Civic Center and the Youth Council.

It was the consensus of Council to appoint Councilwoman Field and Councilmen McClure and Swicegood to the committee which will review the outside agency funding.

Mayor Martin adjourned the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

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CITY CLERK MAYOR

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