FINAL

LEBANON CITY COUNCIL
BUDGET WORK SESSION
Monday, November 15, 2021 at 5:30 PM
CITY HALL – COUNCIL CHAMBERS or
REMOTE VIA VIRTUAL PLATFORM
LEBANONNH.GOV/LIVE

MEMBERS PRESENT	Mayor Timothy McNamara, Assistant Mayor Clifton Below, Councilors Erling Heistad, Karen Liot Hill, George Sykes, Douglas Whittlesey, Devin Wilkie, Jim Winny
MEMBERS ABSENT	Karen Zook
STAFF PRESENT	Shaun Mulholland (City Manager), David Brooks (Director Planning and Development), Phillip Roberts (Police Chief), Chris Christopoulos (Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director)

The work session began at 5:30 PM.

1. Meeting Access

This is not a regular Council session; it is a workshop for the departments to present their budgets. The actual Public Hearing for the budget will be in Council Chambers on December 15, 2021. The Airport presentation on the agenda will not occur tonight.

2. Review of 2022 City Budget – Question & Answer Session with City Departments

A. Planning & Development (pages 2-4, November 15, 2021, agenda packet)
Requesting $1,142,110 an increase of $62,390 or 5.6% from the 2021 budget

Director David Brooks gave an overview of the sections of his department budget to benefit new members' understanding what is covered by the line items. The overall change is 5.8%. It is all nondiscretionary items including wages, benefits, and contractual obligations. Without taking those items into consideration, the budget goes down by about $3,000. Community development functions include the Director's budget and the administrative offices including the wages, salaries, benefits, and advertising for the office. Also, the Planning Department and staff, the GIS Coordinator and the Regional Planning office are included. It also covers Conservation, dues and memberships, mileage, and development. He discussed the percentages of the budget breakdown. The codes administration and enforcement budget are changing by about 5.4%. The Regional Planning is the biggest change this year because of the GWI change for the RPC, as well as the change in the census. It went up almost 11%. Most of the operating budget and discretionary spending are remaining flat. They continue to work with the GIS Enterprise system. There will be a conversion to a new management system, BS&A, for community development to track the building permit process.

Councilor Below asked about the increase in retirement expenses. It will be an increase for two years. It is based on the rates from the State that are based on the State's investments. The State's retirement system is still in the red. The mileage is not necessarily increasing. Originally it was all lumped into travel and now it is separated out to keep track of greenhouse gas. It covers the inspectors' daily travel around the City. The inspectors do not travel much. Councilor Whittlesey asked about the retirement system. The new rate applies to the employer fees only, which are prescribed by the State and are not optional.

B. Police (pages 5-8, November 15, 2021, agenda packet)
Requesting $6,893,010 an increase of $672,890 or 10.8% from the 2021 budget

Chief Phillip Roberts discussed the proposed 10.8% increase that is coming from wages, retirement, and gasoline. Otherwise, things are remaining status quo. Councilor Below asked about the variations in the cost of workers' compensation. In general, it is based on the occupation and the rates come from the insurance company and vary disproportionately. Councilor Winny asked how the percentages of wage increases varied. It was based on wage studies by occupation that were done for police and fire. Some of the positions were off market by a substantial amount and therefore some positions needed to be adjusted at higher percentages. Mayor McNamara asked about cybercrime. Chief Roberts said it has been increasing and he has been able to reduce that budget by having some of that work done during regular time instead of overtime which decreased the separate budget line under cybercrime. There are no new positions. Historically, there are 2 empty positions in a year, but right now there are no applicants across the State. In addition, if a person is hired, it takes a year to get them on the street and working within the system. There was extra overtime this past year due to vacancies and officers being out sick for extended periods of time.

This summer the police department began partnering with West Central and their Mobile Crisis Unit. That work is funded by a grant, but there are not enough people to work in the community agencies and the Unit is unable to do as much work as they would like to do. The Chief does not see any recurring issues from homelessness in this community. Councilor Hill asked about the training that is done on a standard and annual basis. The Chief hopes to do more training and development when things are back to normal. As of now they are only meeting the state mandates for training. There is a huge list of required training, and the entire force must complete all the training to maintain their certification. The police officers wear body cameras and the school police officer position is not grant funded.

Councilor Hill joined the meeting at 5:51 PM in person.

C. Fire (pages 9-12, November 15, 2021, agenda packet)
Requesting $4,602,030 an increase of $267,040 or 6.2% from the 2021 budget

Chief Chris Christopoulos highlighted his proposed budget which is up 6.2%. Station management software is going to be replaced for $38,000 this year. Overtime is up $50,000. As staff gain in rank, their salaries increase and that must be accounted for in benefits as well. Training overtime is up $18,000 due to a high number of the paramedic recertifications this year and staff training development is the actual cost for the staff training program. In 2021, the retirement contribution rate was 30.09% of wages in the first half of the year, and the last half of the year is 32.9%. That will remain the same higher rate for the entire next year. Gasoline is increased and calls are going up. There were over 300 calls this year so far. The other major change is to absorb the salaries of the part time community nurses. It will be a little over $78,000 which will be offset with a contribution from the DHMC pilot program of $75,000. With the new program, there will be two nurses each working 20 hours a week and that will expand their outreach through collaboration with the mobile integrated paramedic. There will be new ambulance rates coming in the next budget, which have not been raised since 2018 and this will help keep up with expenses. The fire department serves 3 other towns with ambulance agreements, and the contracts have been renegotiated with an 8% increase based on what it costs to run EMS. This will help revenues. The only salary increases in the budget are the step increases on salaries. There are no staff shortages and there are no current openings. The candidate pool is very shallow, but the new hires are great.

There is nothing planned for the new fire station. They are reviewing options and locations for both. They are in the very early stages of finding locations for the new fire stations. In light of that, some drainage work is needed at Station 1. Station 2 may have some heating plant issues. Right now, it is difficult to find contractors. There is some concern about the air quality in both stations, and they are checking on the air movement to determine if there are any major concerns in either building. Firefighter protective clothing is replaced on a rotating basis.

They are hoping to replace an ambulance out of capital funds and a fire truck may need replacing in a couple of years. They keep an eye on their equipment and apply for grants when there are opportunities to make improvements without increasing taxes. There are no big increases in calls to any one area. As Highway 120 corridor traffic increases there may be more calls. There does not seem to be any trends in any areas. There were over 500 calls for lift assists in homes, picking someone up and putting them back in a chair. That need should decrease with the new MIH Program. The health programs they are doing are going to greatly benefit the community. Once the data has been compiled it is hoped those programs will expand in future years.

The work with vaccinations has been decreasing compared to when covid vaccinations were first getting started. They believe the need to assist will continue to decline. They do participate in some area clinics when asked. The State reimburses the cost of off duty staff to provide vaccinations.

D. **Airport** (pages 13-15), November 15, 2021, agenda packet)
Requesting $1,479,310 an increase of $121,060 or 8.9% from the 2021 budget

This presentation was postponed until a later date.

City of Lebanon 2022 Operating Budget found at: https://lebanonnh.gov/1556

The meeting was adjourned at 6:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted
Linda Billings
Recording Secretary