

Meeting Minutes  
FINANCE COMMITTEE  
March 18, 2002

CITY WATER DEPARTMENT

Present: Chairman Barr, Ald: Rackow, Phillips, Nealis, Molski

Also Present: Mayor Wescott, C/T Schlice, City Clerk Zdroik, Directors: Van Alstine, Gardner, Schrader, City Assessor Kuehn, Personnel Specialist Jakusz, Op. Supt Krieski, Chief Barnes, Chief Carpenter, Ald: Walther, Sevenich, Seiser, Moore, Sowiewa, Filipiak, Gene Kemmeter, Barb Martin, Matt Mattano, Ann Kulinski, Tony Patton

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1. Assessor's Report
2. Activation of deferred special assessment ( Hagness/Stanley St)
3. Update on the State Budget
4. Approval of payment of claims
5. Adjournment

Chairman Barr called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

1. ASSESSOR'S REPORT

Motion made by Ald. Rackow , seconded by Ald. Phillips to accept the report and place it on file.

Ayes: All Nays : none Motion carried

2. Activation of deferred special assessment- Hagness on Stanley St

Motion made by Ald. Molski, seconded by Ald. Nealis to approve activating the special assessment.

Ayes: All Nays: none Motion carried

3. UPDATE ON STATE BUDGET

C/T Schlice gave a brief update on the events of the past week relating to the State budget. (comments attached). Mayor Wescott said he wants to impress a key element to all the Alderpersons: change is coming, there are a lot of us working hard to undo the damage but change is coming. He does not know of any Municipal leader that is happy with what is going to be impacted in their Municipality, Village. County or Town. \$850,000 to reduce next years budget by is a lot of money. There are those in Madison that believe that we will take some type of reduction this year. Every forecast he has seen calls for an even greater reduction in 2004. 2003 and 2004 are going to bring about some of the most dramatic changes in the history of this State. I want to make sure that you are mentally preparing yourself for the difficult decisions that lay ahead. The biggest problem the Mayor has with this is that this is a State Budget Crisis and they have done nothing long term to solve the State budget crisis. They have applied one time tobacco settlement money, which is a dramatic mistake to fund ongoing annual operations. They will have the same budget crisis within 18 months (if not bigger) than they have today. They have come up with a budget trick that gets them through the election but it doesn't solve the problem.

Ald. Nealis stated that this is an improvement over the Governors bill compared to where we were at. C/T Schlice stated that while the City of Stevens Point fairs slightly better with this particular budget depending on what the formula is(we do not know what the formula will be for 2004), we would lose about half instead of all but that is not a real victory if you consider we would lose 10% of our operation. You have to consider the impact across the entire State as this will take away 75% of the shared revenue and really impact the economy. Mayor Wescott stated if you have a 75% reduction in revenue in 03 & 04 that's a dramatic shift in framework of how we govern in the State.

Chairman Barr stated that consolidation of services has not been touched upon and we have been given a reprieve, municipalities throughout the State have a couple of years to be working on a very key issue of consolidating services where they are being duplicated now. Mayor Wescott stated that the City of Stevens Point is one of the leaders in this State in consolidation between City and County and City and surrounding Municipalities. We have a way to go but lets keep in mind that no one has proven that consolidation really saves you money. We have to be careful with the assumption that with consolidating services that you automatically save money. We know we can improve efficiencies as we have with the County wide Paramedic services and in the telecommunications area. There are a number of areas that work with each other.

The issue isn't about local areas of government, the universities and vocational schools spending exorbitant sums of money. The issue is the State of Wisconsin has a budget crisis and they are unable to get focused on solving the problem. The reality is that if they don't solve this in Madison we are simply going to do this again in two years. It will be even more devastating because they will now have to look at schools and other areas that they haven't touched on yet. The solution is that they will have to make those tough decisions in Madison.

Ald. Rachow said it is ironic that while the City of Stevens Point has been successful in a fair amount of combining, we are going to get hit regardless. That is not going to relieve us and we don't have the potential in those areas . Combining services takes along time, if we would do it now, it won't do any good in the current budget cycle.

Ald. Nealis asked if there was any plan to carve out a portion of the sales tax or some other revenue source to cover this problem, they can't just leave you hanging. Mayor Wescott said that there is nothing active right now that would cut out a portion of sales tax for local government. Ald. Rachow said that he could not see how taking money from the sales tax would help the problem. If you take money away from the State they would have a bigger hole to deal with.

4. Approval of Payment of Claims

Motion by: Ald. Rachow seconded by Ald. Nealis to approve the payment of claims.

Ayes: All Nays: none Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

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