

CITY OF STERLING HEIGHTS  
MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL  
TUESDAY, APRIL 27, 2021  
IN COMMUNITY CENTER

1. Mayor Michael C. Taylor called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.
2. Mayor Taylor led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and Melanie D. Ryska, City Clerk, gave the Invocation.
3. Council Members present at roll call: Deanna Koski, Michael V. Radtke Jr., Maria G. Schmidt, Liz Sierawski, Michael C. Taylor, Henry Yanez, Barbara A. Ziarko.  
  
Also Present: Mark Vanderpool, City Manager; Marc D. Kaszubski, City Attorney; Melanie D. Ryska, City Clerk; Carol Sobosky, Recording Secretary.
4. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**  
Moved by Koski, seconded by Ziarko, **RESOLVED**, to approve the agenda as presented.  
  
Yes: All. The motion carried.
5. **BUDGET WORKSHOP DISCUSSION**
  - A. **Budget Overview**  
**Police Department**  
**Public Works Department**  
**Parks & Recreation Fund**

Mayor Taylor stated this is the second of two special City Council meetings for the budget. They will discuss a number of departments this evening.

Mr. Vanderpool stated this is the second hearing for the fiscal year 2021/2022 budget. He noted that there are a few presentations and they will have plenty of time for questions and comments from City Council and the audience. The Budget and Finance Director Jennifer Varney will begin with a financial overview

of the departments under consideration, followed by presentations from the Police Chief, the Public Works Director, and the Parks and Recreation Director. Any budget amendments need to be made this evening so they can be incorporated into the final budget adoption on May 4. He invited Budget and Finance Director Jennifer Varney to provide details on the proposed budget.

### **Budget Overview**

Budget and Finance Director Jennifer Varney stated they are continuing their budget workshop, including discussion of the last four General Fund departments, the Public Library, the Police Department, Community Relations, and Public Works, as well as the Water and Sewer Fund and the Parks and Recreation Fund. The total General Fund Budget is \$115.5 million. The Library's budget is \$3 million, or 2.6 percent of the total General Fund Budget, primarily made up of personnel costs. The Library has 13 full-time and 28 part-time positions. She noted their budget increased about \$107,000, or 3 percent over last year, and the increase is primarily related to wages, pension, and insurance costs. She also provided highlights in the capital budget expenditures.

Ms. Varney explained the Police Department is the largest department, totaling over 34 percent of the General Fund Budget, with 214 total employees in four divisions, and a budget of \$39.4 million, with over 90 percent of the budget being related to personnel costs. The total budget increased \$1.7 million, or 4.6 percent, over last year, with personnel costs increasing \$2 million with the addition of seven police officers and a social worker, as well as wage increases,

higher pension costs, and higher health insurance premiums. She also outlined some of the expenditures included in their budget, and she noted that the cost of the new officers is offset by savings due to the proposed transfer of jail operations to Macomb County. She provided highlights in the capital budget expenditures.

Ms. Varney stated Community Relations makes up 1 percent of the General Fund Budget, with 8 full-time and 2 part-time positions included, and a budget of \$1.6 million. The total budget increased \$360,000, or 20 percent, over last year, and includes a new position of Marketing and Communication Manager added as part of the Manpower Study. There are also wage increases, higher pension costs, and higher health insurance premiums, and SterlingFest costs for October of this year are also included. She clarified that, because they canceled SterlingFest last year, there were no expenses in the Budget at the time of amendments, so adding them back this year represents an increase to the budget. She provided highlights in the capital budget expenditures.

Ms. Varney explained the third largest department is Public Works which, combined with Refuse, makes up about 10 percent of the General Fund Budget, with 34 full-time and 17 part-time and seasonal employees in four divisions, along with many contracted services. The budget total is \$11.5 million, with approximately \$4.7 million of that for refuse costs. Their budget increased by \$78,000, or 1.2 percent, over last year. Personnel costs increased due to wage adjustments, pension funding, and health insurance care premiums. Irrigation

costs for the medians on M-59 and Van Dyke also increased, and a Fleet Study is also included to examine vehicle needs and best practices. Savings were seen in fuel costs and due to the transfer of the cost of police vehicle and accessories to the Capital Project Fund. She provided highlights in the capital budget expenditures and concluded the overview of the General Fund departments.

Ms. Varney continued with the Water and Sewer Fund noting it makes up 25 percent of the total City budget, at just under \$57 million, including 39 full-time and 12 part-time employees in three divisions. About \$44 million, or 77 percent, of the cost of Water and Sewer are controlled by the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) and the Macomb County Public Works Office. Of that \$44 million, approximately \$37 million, or 87 percent of those costs are fixed, so they are incurred regardless of how much water is used. Expenses in the Water and Sewer Fund increased about \$2.9 million, or 10.6 percent, with personnel increase due to the addition of four full-time employees resulting from the Manpower Study, as well as wage, pension, and health care cost increases. The cost of water from the GLWA increased by 2 percent, and sewer costs from Macomb County increased by 3.5 percent over last year's budget. A new debt service on the bonds issued for the Water and Sewer Main Work under Mound Road is also reflected. She provided highlights in the capital budget expenditures. She explained that, as discussed at Strategic Planning, a Water and Sewer Rate Study was approved by City Council in November 2019 and was completed this winter. The City contracted with Raftelis LLC, a national leader in rate design, and has

worked with cities across the country to ensure water and sewer rates are fair and equitable. This expert review of the City's water and sewer structure was performed to ensure equity in their rates across all customer classes and to ensure their rates are sufficient to bill a sustainable financial plan. As a result of this study, the rate changes are included in the proposed budget, with lower variable rates for smaller users that will help lower-income households and seniors, and higher rates for high usage, which will discourage wasteful water usage and create an incentive for conservation. The implementation of the Winter Consumption model eliminates the irrigation penalty and minimizes the large increases seen in summer water bills. The average Winter Consumption model charges sewer for the entire year based on the usage during the winter quarter, so any usage over the winter amount is assumed to be irrigation, and therefore does not receive a sewer charge. She emphasized no second meter is required, so there is no upfront investment for residents, and that ensures all residential customers will have the opportunity to benefit from this structure. She estimated about 4,000 to 5,000 customers, who are currently low users, will see a cost decrease over the current rates, and that is because they were previously paying the minimum bill charge. She added "snowbirds" will also benefit because they will not pay the minimum usage while they are away, although she indicated they will still have fixed fees, which are lower than what was previously charged for the minimum bill. The rate changes encourage outdoor watering, increase overall equity in the system by more closely aligning

rates with actual system usage. With the proposed meter replacement project, they will be able to consider Dynamic pricing in the future, which will further encourage water usage at off-peak hours, giving the City the ability to charge a lower rate for residents who choose to water during those hours. Ms. Varney pointed out that, since 2008, Sterling Heights rates have increased an average of only 4.1 percent annually, and although it is higher than inflation, she showed a chart reflecting that the average household in Sterling Heights paid \$64 per month for water and sewer services, which is less than \$1 per day for water consumption and \$1 per day for sewage treatment, also noting that the City's rates are lower than those in comparable communities. She stated the proposed budget will allow the City to continue to build up Water and Sewer reserves that have severely eroded over the past ten years and is only at 8 percent. The proposed rate changes over the next seven years will increase the Water and Sewer Fund Balance to 25 percent, which is considered a Best Practice level by the Michigan Government Finance Officers Association, and she outlined the benefits of a healthy fund balance.

Ms. Varney concluded her overview with the Parks and Recreation Department, which is a special revenue fund totaling just under \$9 million, with 15 full-time and 3 permanent part-time positions, along with numerous seasonal staff. She showed a slide reflecting the total budget, which consists mainly of personnel costs and debt service. The annual debt service on the bond of \$3 million is funded through the *Re*Creating Recreation millage and that millage also funds

operating costs arising from the new amenities and services resulting from *Re*Creating Recreation. Their pre-existing expenses and contractual park maintenance are funded through a transfer from the General Fund, which totaled \$3.5 million this year. The total Parks and Recreation Fund budget decreased \$1 million, or 10.6 percent, and Capital Expenditures decreased by \$1.4 million as nearly all of the projects funded through the *Re*Creating Recreation millage are completed, with the only project included in the current budget being the bocce ball court. Personnel costs increased by \$400,000 due to the addition of a full-time Facilities Maintenance Mechanic, but this is offset by savings in contractual services. There were also increases in wages, pensions, and health insurance premiums.

### **Police Department**

Mr. Vanderpool stated the Police Department budget includes the addition of seven police officers, enabling the department to have a stronger presence in neighborhoods and commercial areas, including the ability to focus more on speeding complaints. The additional manpower will also bolster community and policing efforts and will help raise the bar even higher in what is already one of the safest communities in the country. The proposed budget also includes funding for the City's first-ever full-time social worker, and this position will work with City departments to address the growing societal need for mental wellness, including drug addiction, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), etc. He

introduced Police Chief Dale Dwojakowski to elaborate further on the positions and other initiatives

Police Chief Dale Dwojakowski stated the highlights of the 2021 / 2022 Police Department budget include the hiring of seven new police officers, a jail restructuring plan, purchase of new vehicles, technology upgrades, and the department's performance objectives. He talked about the hiring of seven new police officers and why it is so important, noting it was very clearly reflected on the last community survey taken in 2017 that visibility of police in neighborhoods was high on the list, followed by the City's efforts to prevent crime, and visibility of police in retail areas, and the overall quality of police protection. He believed that, with these additional officers, they will target all of those concerns for the residents. Chief Dwojakowski explained they will have a new Directed Patrol Unit, with four officers and one sergeant making up this unit, working primarily during evening hours. They would be assigned to the Operations Division, so they will be full uniformed police officers in police cars, and he outlined what their duties will be, as well as the areas of focus. He explained that two officers would be assigned to the Community Services Bureau, and he noted that currently Sergeant Aaron Susalla is the one-man bureau. He indicated that when he started, there were four school officers / DARE officers; however, during the recession, they got rid of all community programming. With Council's support, they were able to secure a Community Services Bureau position, and these two positions would bolster their efforts. He



outlined their duties, including community outreach efforts, middle school and high school drug programming, programs through Parks and Recreation, the Quick Response Team, park control in the summer months, meeting with neighborhood associations, dealing with the Sterling Heights Drug-Free Coalition, to aid in officer recruitment efforts, and to work with the various houses of worship in the community for programming and outreach efforts. Many of these responsibilities were held by officers who were pulled off of road patrol, so these officers would free up their time and keep those officers on the roads. They would also work directly with the City's new social worker.

Chief Dwojakowski talked about the jail restructuring plan, with the proposed transfer of jail services to the Macomb County Jail. It is currently contracted through Allied Universal (formerly G4S), which costs approximately \$600,000 annually, and covers two jail officers working 24/7, plus the jail manager who works 40 hours a week during the day shift. The last three full years of arrest data for adults and juveniles is an average of about 3,158 arrests per year, or 8.6 per day. Their current year reflects about a 50 percent decrease, or about 4 people arrested per day. State laws have come into effect in April, with more in October, that will further limit the crimes for which they can incarcerate. He provided more data from 2019, noting that more were posting bond and not staying overnight. The cost reduction for this jail restructuring is about \$600,000 a year, and he pointed out City residents already pay County taxes, which include payment for the Macomb County Jail. Custody liability would be eliminated with

this plan as well, and the County Jail has a full medical facility and mental health facility, neither of which the City has. This restructuring would allow the City to have more police officers for the purposes he outlined.

Chief Dwojakowski explained the budget includes twelve new patrol cars, and he provided details on the vehicles. He outlined the technology upgrades, including their 152 crowd control helmets with protective face shields, with half of those to be purchased this year. This budget also includes in-car computers, in-car camera systems with body cameras, and other equipment. The body camera project was delayed because of Covid, and there was a delay of many months before the techs could come out to perform the upgrade. He provided the update on this, as well as other upgrades projected for this budget.

Chief Dwojakowski outlined their Performance Objectives, which includes the expansion and continuation of services offered by their overdose Quick Response Team (QRT), and he explained this program. He stated they have completed the Michigan Association of Chiefs of Police accreditation process, and they will be one of the largest police departments in the State of Michigan to become accredited, with 105 standards that had to be completely changed. He provided details on the process, and they hope that by June 1, they will become officially accredited through the State of Michigan. Their objectives also include the body camera project, to be completed in the next couple of months, as well as expansion of their drone unit, the feral cat issue, marijuana farms, and

targeting and addressing increased auto thefts, and he provided detailed information on these objectives as well.

Mr. Vanderpool noted there is a lot of value-added services in the Police Department. He invited Public Works Director Mike Moore to give a presentation on the new DPW Building construction and highlight other initiatives in the proposed Public Works budget.

### **Public Works Department**

Public Works Director Mike Moore noted that three of their highlights, including the Environmental Safety Supervisor, the Water Meter Replacement Program, and the DPW Building Construction Project, were all part of their five-year DPW goals, and they are proud they are moving through this list of items. He explained they have been watching their colleagues in the Police and Fire Departments, and they aspire to have their own training division. He indicated the objective is to have this position to “blaze the trail” and oversee the environmental side, including oil and fuel spills or anything related to the environment. This person would also serve as the safety supervisor for the entire department and would also oversee training for the entire department. He explained the responsibilities of this position and the history of the department leading up to this point.

Mr. Moore explained the Water Meter Replacement program, and he provided an overview and what residents can expect when the program is completed. He showed pictures of some of the older equipment they use for meter reading and

explained in detail the current process. He indicated that when the meters are changed out, any house with a transmitter will be able to go to monthly billing. After that six-month period, for an additional two years, they will look to get into every home and business, approximately 40,000, and replace the water meter. It would be all wireless, and there are eleven different areas in the City where a unit would be fixed to a tower. They could then go to monthly billing. He added the advantage is not only a monthly bill, but also the advantage that residents will be able to monitor their usage on their laptop computer or through an app on their smart phone. There is also the ability to pay water bills through the app, and the technology of dynamic billing will also be a possibility in the future.

Mr. Moore provided an update on the new DPW Building, adding he was pleased and thankful for everyone's support of this project. He showed photographs of the progress and some of the building, including offices, the training room, and the large area where the vehicles can be brought in. A lot of the natural lighting and bright lights, which is something the employees had indicated they wanted. He talked about some of the amenities. He concluded their department is excited about all three of these focus points, and he offered to answer questions.

### **Parks & Recreation Fund**

Mr. Vanderpool commented that the presentations throughout the budget process and all of the proposals are centered on excellence, with a lot of exciting projects going on. He stated in 2016, voters approved the *Re*Creating Recreation Initiative, which included a massive investment in quality-of-life services,

upgrading multiple parks across the City, improving Dodge Park, extending bike/hike trails, building the City's first-ever dog park, and constructing a state-of-the-art Community Center. He also mentioned the improvement of the Clinton River for recreation uses. He invited Parks and Recreation Director Kyle Langlois to provide an update on the Parks and Recreation budget.

Parks and Recreation Director Kyle Langlois provided an update on the single largest Parks and Recreation investment in the City's history and discussed a couple of exciting initiatives within their department's proposed budget. He stated they are almost done with the *Re*Creating Recreation projects approved in November 2016 and completed in less than five years from that date. He provided a brief summary, including renovations to the Nature Center, opened a new dog park, installed an athletic field and court lighting in four parks, installed two universally-accessible paddle docks, installed seventeen new park signs, renovated athletic courts, installed twenty-two new playgrounds, surfaced three new parking lots, resurfaced paths and added the nature trail to their non-motorized inventory, renovated all park restrooms and pavilions, and installed two new restrooms to their park system. They opened a skate park, a new Community Center, and they renovated Dodge Park, including a splash pad, ice rink, Farmer's Market Pavilion, amphitheater, and miniature soccer field. They have one project remaining, scheduled to be completed this fall, being indoor bocce ball courts at the Senior Center. It will be a three-season facility, and it is anticipated to open later this year. He noted the advantages of it being indoors.

Mr. Langlois talked about the fleet of SMART busses operating through the Senior Center. The City joined a successful partnership with the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART) for many decades. They have provided funding to operate the City's transportation program annually, but also have been instrumental in seeking and allocating grant dollars to subsidize the process. As busses age and become unreliable, the vehicles must be replaced. One of their 28-year-old busses has reached the end of its useful life and was scheduled for replacement by SMART through proposed grant funding; however, SMART made a new policy change which included no longer replacing large-capacity busses through their community partnership program. He explained their goal is to provide 13-passenger or smaller transit vans that do not require drivers to possess a commercial driver's license, which may work for some trips, but it does not fit the City's needs for day trips throughout the City and tri-County area. After a number of conversations, SMART has agreed to replace the larger-capacity bus and commit funding for the City of Sterling Heights, acknowledging their high utilization of these greater capacity vehicles is superior to other communities. He noted in 2019, they transported 36,000 patrons with their SMART bus system through the Senior Center. Through this arrangement, SMART would be procuring this new vehicle on behalf of the City, after June 2021 and expected delivery in January 2022 at a cost of approximately \$130,000, but no General Fund monies will be spent on this. SMART will cover

\$88,000 through a grant, with the remaining balance to be covered by the City's SMART Community credits balance.

Mr. Langlois explained the installation of an Esports Arena inside the Community Center. He stated Esports / Egaming is one of the newest trends around the country, giving children, teens, and adults a new way to participate in team and individual competitions without the traditional physical activity. He stressed the popularity of this activity, which is expanding across the country and throughout the world, noting that high schools and colleges are starting varsity-level teams, higher learning institutions have developed Esports management programs, and tens of millions of dollars are given away for prize money each year. To date, Parks and Recreation has started smaller scale gaming activities, including drop-in play, league play, and tournament play, which has all been done remotely due to the pandemic. He provided details about the Esports Arena, to be housed inside the Teen Room in the Community Center, and it will not disrupt or negatively impact other functions of that room. He talked about the layout, furniture, and equipment, with the estimated cost at \$50,000. They are confident user fees will help offset the costs for existing and new programs at this gaming facility, but he is proud to say that one of the City's recently relocated businesses, Christian Financial Credit Union, has stepped up to be part of this initiative. Christian Financial Credit Union has been a supporter of the Parks and Recreation's programs for ten years, and they have signed on for a seven-year presenting sponsorship for the Esports Arena, contributing \$25,000 toward the

new gaming space. He showed a sign that will be on display for the length of this sponsorship, or longer if the sponsorship is extended. Mr. Langlois indicated he will have a presentation before City Council in June or July of this year. He provided some of the advantages of in-person gaming, and noted they have one Supervisor who will be taking the lead to develop and implement this initiative with the assistance of other department personnel as needed. He concluded his presentation by stating that Parks and Recreation continues to bring desirable recreational opportunities to their residents, and he offered to answer questions. Mr. Vanderpool stated that concludes the presentations this evening. He thanked the Directors who presented tonight, adding they put a lot of time and effort into their presentations, and months of time and effort into their budget proposals.

Mayor Taylor opened the floor for public comments, but no one spoke. He called for a brief recess prior to the Council asking questions and making comments. The meeting recessed at 7:35 p.m. and reconvened at 7:45 p.m.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski thanked the Department heads and staff members who put these budget presentations together. She stated she is excited to have more police officers and that they have found a way to do that without taking a tremendous hit on the budget. She recalled the City had a lot of high expectations when they went to County dispatch, but there were some downsides in the process, and although it is still working, she expressed concern that they removed all of their dispatch officers and relocated them to the



County. She is concerned about not having their expectations met with the jail transition. She inquired as to whether the additional police officers can be funded by moving the jail services to the County.

Chief Dwojakowski replied affirmatively.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski felt that will be a push of about \$600,000 annually. She heard the capacity of the County Jail has decreased a little due to Covid, and if they are going to increase the usage of that jail, they may have a challenge getting incarcerated people placed when they need to be placed. She questioned whether they have the option to reopen the City's jail if they find that this is not working as well as anticipated.

Chief Dwojakowski replied they currently have 24 jail cells, and he assured there are no plans to demolish it, but they want to leave it as is for that exact reason. The ability to reopen is there, and they will not get rid of that area until they knew this plan is fully functional and operational. He admitted when they went to the County for dispatch services, there was a lot of "doom and gloom", and there were problems in the beginning. He assured that they got through the problems, and he felt the officers would now say it is pretty good service. He stated if he were questioned whether it was better when the City had its own dispatch, he would admit it might have been a little better; however, the County is very well trained, they are happy with the service, and the consolidation has worked. He cited the example of a dispatcher at the County who can look at the

large cameras directly in front of him and provide information on an accident or traffic situation.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski stated she has been in the Dispatch Center, and is amazed at the technology they use. She just wants to make sure if this does not work, they have the option of reopening the City's in-house jail. She questioned whether they would rehire the security team or use current officers.

Chief Dwojakowski replied the security team is definitely less expensive. They used to have nine officers working that jail, so they stopped doing that because the cost of the officers was much more than hiring a security team.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski stated she has an acquaintance who is relocating from a home on Lake Orion to move to Sterling Heights because of the amenities, which she felt are beautiful. She likes to see the City continue to grow with residents of all ages. She recalled Mr. Langlois had referred to the bocce courts as "three-season," so she assumed that means there is no heat and it will not be open in the winter. She questioned whether it will be locked.

Mr. Langlois replied it will be open throughout the winter. It will have four walls, closed windows, and the building is insulated, so it can be used year-round.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski felt that is good, adding that a lot of people have found over this last year that they can do things outside, even in the colder temperatures. She felt this is a great idea. She liked that the SMART bus will be covered by the SMART grant, in addition to using a portion of their existing credits. She commented that the Esports Arena is an interesting but different

concept to her, noting that she has always appreciated physical active sports. She noted that the Teen Room was set up for teenagers, but she recalled Mr. Langlois indicating there will be adults using the Esports Arena as well. She questioned how they will make sure the adults are not hanging around the teens and that they are supervised.

Mr. Langlois replied that, as they continue to evolve the use of their spaces, there will be times that the Teen Room will not be used as a teen room in the sense they originally planned. They found in the ten days the Teen Room was open prior to closing for Covid, there were certain times of the day that teens would utilize that space, and it was mainly after school until about 5 or 6 p.m. He noted that they may be able to program that space in the evenings after most of the teens go home, or on weekends. They can schedule it more than originally planned. He replied to further inquiry that anytime there is an activity that is related to Esports, there will be a staff person there for multiple reasons to protect the equipment and assure people are not getting onto websites they should not be accessing.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski thanked Christian Financial Credit Union for their sponsorship. She questioned whether they are contributing \$25,000 per year or a total over the seven years.

Mr. Langlois replied it is a total over the seven years, but they will actually frontload that in the first four years of their sponsorship.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski thanked Mr. Langlois. She addressed Mr. Moore and requested clarification on the water meters and whether there will be a cost to the residents for these meters.

Mr. Moore replied it is a budgeted item, and he believe they will go out to bond for that amount. He added they are looking at a cost of less than \$12 million for that project. He replied this will be done throughout the entire City, and the plan is that six to eight months from the date of award, they will convert everyone to monthly billing. After that six-month period, it will take an additional two years to install all of the meters, so it is anticipated to take thirty months.

Mayor Pro-Tem congratulated Public Works on their new building. She inquired whether they included a workout facility for the DPW personnel.

Mr. Moore replied affirmatively but clarified that will be completed during Phase 2. Covid gave them some challenges so they are using that area to keep staff socially-distanced, but the workout room is in the plan for Phase 2.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski stated she is happy with this budget as it has been presented.

Councilwoman Koski understood that two of the new officers are proposed to be in the Community Services Division, and the other five are going to work the neighborhoods. She inquired as to whether the two Community Services officers will work like the former DARE Program or SMART Moves.

Chief Dwojakowski replied two of the officers would be assigned to Sergeant Aaron Susalla and would be taking over their Quick Response Team. They want

to start a middle school program where they do some anti-drug programs, as well as outreach programs in the high school. He anticipated that part of their summer will be spent on patrol at Dodge Park and other parks, whether it is on bicycle or Segway. They would also work with the City's new social worker. The road officers have runs for which they are responsible. The Community Services Bureau could go out the same day with the Social Worker and make house calls. Councilwoman Koski stated she is not in favor of a social worker at this time because she has not seen a job description to detail how that person would be used. She will be asking that this position be deleted from the budget at this time. She did not feel it is well-planned at this point, although it is something they can look at in the future. She suggested the City rely on the County to use their social worker. She expressed concerns with the jail restructuring. She heard that the County is down to an occupancy of 500 to 600, and they are closing down older portions of their building. She questioned their security and the kind of liability they will get if they send their prisoners there, or whether they are completely covered because they pay taxes for this type of service.

Chief Dwojakowski replied they met with the Macomb County Sheriff a couple of times, and they took a tour of the jail, looked at their lock-up facility, their booking facility, and he assured they definitely have the deputies there. He stated it is a well-oiled machine. He agreed that they are at lower capacity for two reasons: Covid-19 has resulted in less lock-ups; and changes in state laws stop incarcerations for certain crimes. He explained that they cannot drop off

someone who should clearly be in a hospital, adding Macomb County would not accept them, so it is the job of the Sterling Heights Police Department to bring them to the hospital before they bring them to the County. He estimated, however, that 98 percent of the prisoners they would bring over are "normal" and can be housed immediately. They do a quick risk assessment questionnaire, drug/alcohol screen and test, fingerprints, and photographs, and once they become an inmate of the County, they become their responsibility and he cannot think of a case where the County would not be liable.

Councilwoman Koski questioned whether all of the cameras at the County Jail are functioning, even with fewer inmates.

Chief Dwojakowski replied the County Jail provides full security every day, and they have professional staff. He noted that when he toured the facility, all of their monitors were up and running, and everything seemed to be up and running. They had five arraignment booths, and it seemed very organized.

Councilwoman Koski recalled there was talk about building a new county jail facility because the current jail was in disrepair. She recalled they were going to pursue that with the voters, and she is concerned as to the condition of the jail. She reiterated her question that once Sterling Heights drops their prisoners off at that facility, they are done and there is no liability to the City.

Chief Dwojakowski replied that is correct.

Councilwoman Koski questioned whether Sterling Heights can reopen their jail if it is determined that the County Jail is not a good option for them. She further

questioned what it will cost to use the County Jail, and how many officers they will have off the roads to deliver the prisoners this distance.

Chief Dwojakowski replied that when someone is arrested, it is generally one officer who drives them to the station, so they would drive to the County. He agreed it is longer to get to the County, being 6 miles from their eastern border, or 8.5 miles from the Police Station, but it is one officer who goes. He explained the proposed procedure as to how they are dropped off, and he added if the prisoner is combative, they will have two officers go, just as they do when they are bringing that prisoner to the current facility in the City. He replied to further inquiry the County Jail is already paid for by the taxpayers so there is no additional cost. He replied to still further inquiry he is in favor of this proposal.

Councilwoman Koski likes that Chief Dwojakowski is keeping up on the vehicle replacement and have a five-year plan.

Chief Dwojakowski explained that they go to the fleet supervisor in the DPW, who looks at all of their cars, taking into consideration the mileage, condition, and he decides how many need to be replaced. He informed that they take the old patrol cars and those vehicles are repurposed for DPW and Parks and Recreation, with a lot of the decommissioned police cars being utilized in other departments throughout the City.

Councilwoman Koski inquired as to the mileage deadline.

Chief Dwojakowski replied it varies on the number of repairs that vehicle has had, including whether there have been transmission or engine problems. Some

are taken off of patrol at 70,000 to 80,000 miles, while others get up to 100,000 miles. He stressed these vehicles are driven aggressively because of the nature of the work. The officers have to drive in emergency situations, pursuits, etc., and the cars get "beat up" faster than normal vehicles.

Councilwoman Koski inquired as to whether any of the "Big Three" automotive companies build police cars specifically.

Chief Dwojakowski replied affirmatively and cited the Ford Explorer as an example. He explained the police car version of the Ford Explorer is the Ford Interceptor, noting it has bigger tires and brakes, bigger transmission cooler units, and it is meant to handle quick starts, slamming on brakes, driving at high rates of speed, etc. They have all vinyl floors and no carpet so they can be hosed down if someone is bleeding or throws up. There is a metal plate between the seats for mounting their computers and their control systems.

Councilwoman Koski questioned how the task force works for dealing with the marijuana farms.

Chief Dwojakowski replied the task force is comprised of the Fire Inspector, an officer who works in their Narcotics Division, and a Code Enforcement Officer. They travel to the complaint site, knock on the door, and find out if they are registered to grow marijuana. If they are not registered, he stated the Fire Inspector has powers to get them into the houses and backyards if he sees there is a violation. They determine if they are illegally hooked up to power or water, whether they are running three or four air conditioning units outside of the



house, whether they can smell marijuana from the street, etc. Once they get into the house, they can determine if they are growing the right number of plants, and he explained what is legal. He added they are often not in compliance, not registered with the City, or are in violation in any number of ways. He stressed that is why they have the task force because they can make those determinations.

Councilwoman Koski asked what residents should do if they suspect a grow house in their neighborhood.

Chief Dwojakowski recommended they call their general front desk number at (586) 446-2800 and let them know they want to report a marijuana grow operation. It is usually investigated within a couple of days, and they are doing tremendous work, letting those who are doing it legally to continue, but shutting down those who are doing it illegally.

Councilwoman Koski inquired as to how the canine unit is doing.

Chief Dwojakowski replied they are doing great, with four dogs up and running. He noted they did not have the National Dog Training canine trials last year due to Covid, and he is excited to get them back again. He replied to inquiry he will let them know when it is going to take place.

Councilwoman Koski commended Chief Dwojakowski on doing a fantastic job. She inquired as to when Mr. Moore is anticipating a ribbon-cutting on the new DPW building.

Mr. Moore replied the completion of the new DPW building is set for fall, so they will have the ribbon-cutting at that time.

Councilwoman Koski requested some information on the new Environmental Safety Supervisor.

Mr. Moore replied this is an exciting position in the proposed budget. He explained they want to set a standard in their industry, and to have this position allows them to be similar to their colleagues in the Police and Fire Departments, where they have dedicated employees to train their staff. He stated they do not have that, and they have had to do their best, but they need someone dedicated as their core responsibilities to do the training and to keep their staff safe. He pointed out their department is so diverse, noting one person has to make sure they have fresh drinking water, while another individual has to make sure they have operating machinery, and yet another takes down trees, etc.

Councilwoman Koski felt this position is necessary. She questioned whether there is someone on staff whom residents can call about plants in the event they are trying to determine the species of a strange plant or vine, trying to determine whether it is poison ivy.

Mr. Moore replied they have a very educated employee, and he would defer such a question to their tree inspector. He added many of their employees are very knowledgeable about plants and trees. He assured if a resident has a question, they can call them at (586) 446-2440.

Councilwoman Koski questioned the process of swapping out the water meters.

Mr. Moore replied that, if approved by Council, within six months they will have in place a very thorough education program. Within six months, they would visit every home but they would not have to enter at that point. They would cut wires, remove the current black box, and install a new box. During that time, the City will work closely with the finance team to get monthly water bills ready to go, and those people would be on monthly billing. After that six-month window is closed, they will look at the situation with Covid-19, and if they can go into homes at that time, it will take approximately two years to get inside of every residential home to swap out the meter.

Councilwoman Koski inquired as to whether that meant it would be actual billing and there would be no more estimates.

Mr. Moore replied that during the six-month window when they are replacing the transmitter on the outside, they do not all have the technology to do that with the software; however, once the meter is physically replaced, they will have that capability with the software.

Councilwoman Koski felt Mr. Moore has some great ideas, and she is looking forward to a tour of the new building. With regard to Parks and Recreation, she felt the Egaming is a great idea, and she was confident City Council will be ready to help if there is anything else they can do to support it. She thought that SMART automatically replaced their transportation busses, and she inquired as to whether there was a problem with the 28-passenger bus.

Mr. Langlois replied that SMART was prepared to get a new grant but did not want the 28-passenger capacity because it is difficult to find drivers with the proper CDL licenses, they use more fuel, and they are clunkier to drive around. They were willing to commit to \$88,000 and would agree to support the larger capacity bus if the City would be willing to use their credits. They have a significant balance which acts as a rainy-day fund for these types of purchases. When SMART looked at the volume of people they transport to places like the Fox Theater, ball games, SterlingFest, etc., having the additional capacity is important.

Councilwoman Koski commended Mr. Langlois for the great job he has done with the Community Center and the parks. She questioned whether there are any plans to patrol some of the paths and trails, such as those at Delia Park.

Mr. Langlois replied the Police Chief talked about it, possibly assigning more people to have additional patrols out there. He added his staff is out there more than they have ever been. He clarified that they do not have plans for a 24-hour patrol of their trail system, but they have a much higher presence in all of their parks than they had prior to *Re*Creating Recreation. He knows that is one of the major initiatives that Chief Dwojakowski is planning with his Community Policing resources.

Councilwoman Koski questioned whether they could use teenagers in some type of teen patrol where they would be put into pairs and assist.

Mr. Langlois replied he will take note of that suggestion.

Councilwoman Koski stated she has heard good comments this evening, but she stated she is not in favor of any kind of tax increase and will be asking for a motion to eliminate any new millage and cover any expenses with the Fund Balance.

Councilman Yanez noted that a fire inspector costs the City \$135,000 annually, and he felt that, while a police officer is most likely less, he used the \$135,000 to calculate the cost of seven new officers. He indicated that \$135,000 multiplied by seven new officers equates to \$945,000, which is much higher than the amount they anticipate gaining by the jail restructuring. He understood they feel the Directed Patrol Unit may be able to generate funds through enforcement, but he questioned whether Chief Dwojakowski anticipated they will be able to generate \$345,000.

Chief Dwojakowski replied that a fire inspector costs much more than a patrol officer. He informed that a patrol officer is their lowest-paid person on the police staff, generally starting at \$50,000, and when considering pay raises, they may get up to the \$80,000 to \$90,000 range with benefits. The jail cost \$615,000 this year, and next year there is an increase in that jail cost. He pointed out that, conservatively, they could be around \$700,000, but eventually that money could exceed the dollar amount.

Councilman Yanez inquired as to the "evening hours" for the additional Directed Patrol Unit officers.

Chief Dwojakowski replied he would like to keep it flexible, noting their typical afternoon shift runs from 3 p.m. to 1 a.m. He would like to move that shift around, and if they need a little more time earlier or later, he would like the flexibility to schedule that.

Councilman Yanez felt a lot of the speeding through neighborhoods is during the daytime when school lets out at 2:30 or 3 p.m. He inquired as to whether they will have more neighborhood patrols at that time.

Chief Dwojakowski clarified they will not be working daytime hours. He felt the lowest number of calls is during the day when people are at work and kids are in school. He noted, however, that they do get some complaints about speeding cars during the day on weekends.

Councilman Yanez inquired if there are time stamps on the tickets, so they know when they write the highest number of tickets.

Chief Dwojakowski replied they get a report when their officers are writing tickets, but that does not necessarily correlate to when they have the most speeding.

Councilman Yanez questioned how the chief will determine where these patrols should be.

Chief Dwojakowski replied they have a Community Resource Unit that is their surveillance unit, and they do more covert operations in plain clothes. They have an Intel Officer who provides an intelligence update every day, not only in

Sterling Heights but in all local communities. That information helps them to decide where they need to be.

Councilman Yanez questioned whether the residents will be able to recognize that there are more police officers in their neighborhoods.

Chief Dwojakowski replied affirmatively, adding they will definitely be spending more time in residential areas, and it was clearly indicated on their Citizen Survey. He replied to inquiry that they met with the Fire Chief last week regarding the illegal marijuana grows, and they clearly see a large peak in calls. He assured the City's unit is very effective, and he can reassign someone to work on a second team if it is determined to be necessary.

Councilwoman Schmidt questioned whether the median irrigation mentioned on Hall Road is just for the south half, which is in Sterling Heights, or whether it is the entire median, and if so, she questioned whether the abutting communities are helping to pay for it.

Mr. Moore replied that Sterling Heights maintains the irrigation system on Hall Road.

Councilwoman Schmidt questioned whether they are reimbursed by Shelby Township or Utica.

Mr. Moore replied no.

Mr. Vanderpool clarified that the landscape areas and the signage are situated on the Sterling Heights side of the median, so technically, the watering is occurring in Sterling Heights. He admitted there may be some runoff benefit to

the other side, but those communities did not participate in the level of landscaping that Sterling Heights chose on their side of the median.

Councilwoman Schmidt inquired as to whether they are only watering the landscaping and not the grass on the median.

Mr. Moore replied affirmatively, noting they do not water the entirety of the M-59 median but only the landscaping.

Councilwoman Schmidt replied that makes sense to her. She felt the training supervisor position is a fantastic position to have, keeping them in compliance environmentally as well as keeping their employees safe. She questioned whether there will be an opt-out fee for those who refuse to let someone in their home to install a new meter.

Mr. Moore replied that will have to be discussed with their legal team. They are expecting their will be a small percentage, but they are confident they will find a solution of either a denial of access fee, or perhaps an ordinance change.

Councilwoman Schmidt questioned what the City will do with their meter readers once they are no longer needed to physically go out to homes to read meters.

Mr. Moore replied that was one of the first internal questions they considered, adding they look at their department as a family and would not want to do anything that would affect one of their staff members or colleagues. They have full intentions to keep those employees on in another capacity, and added they



currently have vacancies in DPW for similar type of part-time positions, so they intend to keep those staff members with them.

Councilwoman Schmidt questioned whether residents would have to sign up to use the bocce ball courts.

Mr. Langlois anticipated as they start the process of programming the bocce ball courts, they will have times during the day for scheduled activities for their 50+ age group. They may see leagues or tournaments in evenings or weekends, or possibly some private rentals. They will determine the best use and staff accordingly. He replied to further inquiry he anticipated they will have the bocce balls available for use during the normal hours of operation. He replied to still further inquiry there will be lights and large fans to circulate air, and there will be screens so the windows can be opened. He assured it will be locked at night. It will be available to all residents at certain points of the day, although there will be times it will be open to only those who are 50+ years of age.

Councilwoman Schmidt felt the Esports is a great opportunity for the teens and older teens, and this is something in which they are interested. She thanked Christian Financial for being a sponsor, and she anticipated that Esports room will become one of the busiest rooms in the Center. She thanked Mr. Langlois for the addition to the kayak situation at Utica Road and Hayes, enabling people to have the ability to pull their kayak up to the parking lot, and for getting it done so quickly.

Councilwoman Schmidt questioned Chief Dwojakowski as to whether the five officers being added to the Direct Patrol Unit will be able to help if a need arises somewhere in the City and they are on their specific duty.

Chief Dwojakowski replied affirmatively. He stressed that is a bonus because there are five additional patrol officers four nights a week, and they have never had that kind of manpower. He indicated the most runs, and the more serious runs, occur in the evening. He clarified that the Direct Patrol Unit officers are not given dispatched runs, so if there are problems with people selling drugs in a parking lot, they can sit there for two hours without being called off on a police run; however, they can be called off in a matter of seconds if something happens where they are needed.

Councilwoman Schmidt felt the jail is there if they need to revert back to the old way, and they want to make sure the restructuring is working correctly.

Chief Dwojakowski agreed.

Councilwoman Schmidt questioned how many arrests are made during an average shift.

Chief Dwojakowski replied that during the past year, there were about three or four arrests per day. He admitted that last year may not have been the greatest year to use as an average, but this year is still a record low number of arrests. Prior to Covid and the laws being changed which cut down on the number of incarcerations, they used to have between eight and nine arrests in a 24-hour period.

Councilwoman Schmidt noted the concern with having police officers outside of the City when they have to transport someone to the County Jail; however, she pointed out there are no hospitals within the City, so firefighters are also making runs outside of the City to transport the injured and sick to one of those facilities. She added that they could have ten firefighters out of the City at one time in their five ambulances, but they make it work. She stated she is comfortable with the proposed jail restructuring now but added they will all be keeping an eye on it. She questioned whether the two officers assigned to the Community Services Bureau would be doing the Quick Response Team.

Chief Dwojakowski replied affirmatively. They currently have officers coming in on overtime to do that detail, but this is something those two officers can do as part of their normal routine in their forty-hour work week.

Councilwoman Schmidt questioned what happens to the CORE officers.

Chief Dwojakowski replied their CORE officers are still in place and are used every day. He provided examples of their calls and assured they have had great success.

Councilwoman Schmidt is pleased they are keeping up with the car replacement, but she was surprised to see the Chargers on the list. She thought the officers complained those cars are too small.

Chief Dwojakowski replied some of the officers hate those cars. He noted he is 6-foot 2-inches and a Charger would not be his choice for a full shift; however, some of the younger officers love them because they are quick, sporty, stealthy,

and they handle extremely well. They will now have Durangos, Explorers, and Chargers. He provided some details on the new vehicles, and he explained how they are assigned.

Councilwoman Schmidt requested an explanation on the capability of the body cameras and whether they have to physically turn them on and off.

Chief Dwojakowski replied the body camera will be mounted to the center of their chest bone. If their overhead lights are turned on, the body camera automatically turns on, although there is a way for them to turn on the body camera manually. The proposed policy will require that if they are actively on a call dealing with someone, the camera will be on from the start of the run to the end of the run, and they will then turn off the body camera. They will also turn off the body camera when they come into the station or when they are having private conversations with police officers. He replied the body camera has the capacity for 50GB. They immediately hand their body camera to their boss when they come in at the end of their shift, the body camera is pushed into the charger rack, and it instantly downloads the ten hours of video and puts it on the City server, then charges up the battery so it is ready for the next shift. He replied that the length of time the footage remains on the server depends upon the type of event. He noted if it is a serious event, it can remain forever, but typical traffic stops are saved for ninety days, although a drunk driving stop is defaulted to be saved for six months. He explained the technology and how these are saved.

Councilman Radtke questioned whether they are proposing to install a security camera system in Dodge Park.

Chief Dwojakowski replied that there is no security camera system inside Dodge Park, although they purchased some covert cameras.

Councilman Radtke noted there was a \$38,000 line item for security cameras in the Capital Budget, but he indicated he will question Mr. Langlois later. He was pleased to hear the Directed Patrol Officers could be called off for an emergency if directed to do so. He admitted that, although two officers assigned to the Community Services Bureau may be helpful, he did not know whether they would be necessary at this point. He questioned whether the addition of one would be sufficient.

Chief Dwojakowski replied that he would like these two officers to do a lot of their park patrols, and they never send one officer alone on a foot patrol or bike patrol, adding they are always sent out two at a time. He did not feel they will have part-time officers for the parks, especially in a union environment. He stressed it is huge for him to have two officers take care of that entire section of the City that is under-policed. He would take one if that is all he can get, and that officer could tackle the eight projects he has with Sgt. Susalla.

Councilman Radtke understood what the Chief is saying, and he pointed out that some cities have reserve officers to help patrol riverways and parks.

Chief Dwojakowski replied it is a difficult process where they would have to engage with their unions to assure they would not be taking away jobs from the

union members, and they would have to look at whether they are reserve officers or part-time officers, which is something they have not studied.

Councilman Radtke stressed he is all for hiring more officers, whether they be full-time, part-time, or reserve. He hears from residents regarding speeding and also about the marijuana farms, which are commercial operations with hundreds of plants that are abusing neighborhoods.

Chief Dwojakowski clarified that marijuana is legal in Michigan, but the problem is the commercial farming of it in residential areas.

Councilman Radtke noted that a lot of the brown-outs in residential areas are a result of someone using too much power for these grow operations.

Chief Dwojakowski replied that is correct.

Councilman Radtke hoped they can draft a better ordinance to impose heavier fines. He questioned whether Chief Dwojakowski has spoken with Prosecutor Lucido about bringing some of these commercial operations to account.

Chief Dwojakowski stated that, prior to Prosecutor Lucido being elected as well as after he was elected, he had multiple meetings with him, and Prosecutor Lucido has given him assurances that if they have a house that is flagrantly disobeying their local laws with regard to a huge commercial farming operation, he assured he will help the City.

Councilman Radtke stated he is in favor of the jail restructuring and felt that manning their own jail with paid security officers is a disservice to the residents. He did not feel they constitutionally have the power to take care of prisoners. He

pointed out the County is not a long distance away, and he felt it is a better option, especially because they have the capacity and trained staff. He added that also frees up money for more police officers, and they should not have to pay for a redundant system that the County already offers through tax dollars.

Chief Dwojakowski replied to inquiry he is aware that the City of Roseville just stopped housing prisoners, but they have a hybrid model where they fingerprint and photograph the prisoner, then transport the prisoner to the County Jail. He felt that adds more steps and chances for confrontation. The County uses the same software as the City, and they can do that as part of the service.

Councilman Radtke pointed out they are not getting rid of the jail, and it will still be there, so they can bring it back if they feel the restructuring does not work; however, he is in favor of the jail restructuring. He talked about the legal changes in the law with regard to summoning people rather than arresting them for certain offenses.

Chief Dwojakowski explained that one of the big things in State legislature is that they have made it illegal to incarcerate anyone because they are poor and cannot pay their tickets and their fines on driving regulation charges. On driving while suspended, they are not to house and charge for bond, but they want them to bring them in, fingerprint, photograph, and release. He felt this is the future for less incarceration.

Councilman Radtke questioned the average cost to house an inmate overnight.

Mr. Vanderpool replied it is over \$300 per night.

Councilman Radtke hoped the City will take action to get a Deputy Police Chief, and he felt it would relieve some of the burdens of the Police Chief. He then inquired about the total cost for the Esports project.

Mr. Langlois replied the Esports/Egaming Arena is anticipated to cost \$50,000, and that includes the furniture, the computers, and the technology.

Councilman Radtke noted Christian Financial is sponsoring half of that amount, and he inquired as to whether there is any chance to obtain additional sponsors.

Mr. Langlois replied that they are confident that once approval is received, they will have the ability to go and talk to a number of entities. He assured there is no exclusivity in working with only one sponsor, although they would not get another financial institution as a sponsor, but there are a lot of other possibilities. He anticipates that they will be able to have a first-class operation like they expect.

Councilman Radtke admitted when he first saw the budget, he questioned whether this is something they need; however, he added he is sold on both the sponsorship and the ability to offset some of their costs. He questioned whether the camera system for Dodge Park in the amount of \$38,000 is a necessary purchase.

Mr. Langlois replied technology prices are high, and they have challenges on the expansiveness of the park. He explained that \$38,000 does not cover every square inch of the park. He stated they have had instances of vandalism and defacing of public property twice over the last two weeks. He noted a couple of



years ago they had a theft of an entire safe from the Splash Pad. They like to use these cameras to catch the perpetrators but they like to use it as a means to discourage negative behavior.

Councilman Radtke stated he does not want to see a "surveillance state" in their parks, monitoring their residents.

Mr. Langlois clarified they want to protect their investment, pointing out that they spent nearly \$10 million in Dodge Park. They would like to place cameras in the high-profile areas where there are a lot of people, especially in areas where they are taking in money or storing supplies and materials. Another area would be the bridge, or other areas where people are congregating. He replied to further inquiry that no one will be sitting at a monitor watching these cameras, but they will go to tape, and if there is a problem, they will be able to review the footage.

Councilman Radtke inquired as to whether the cameras are mobile or fixed.

Mr. Langlois replied it is a mixture, with some of the cameras being more constant, and they will have the ability to move others around.

Councilman Radtke stated he is not sold on this budget item, so he will have to give it some thought. He mentioned something he felt they need to examine is a stormwater utility to make sure they are apportioning costs properly so they have the funding for repairs and replacement. He inquired as to whether stormwater utility and stormwater infrastructure replacements are taken out of the General Fund.

Mr. Moore replied affirmatively.

Councilman Radtke questioned what is needed from Council to “get the ball rolling” on stormwater utility to make sure they are properly apportioning costs.

Mr. Moore replied at this point, it would be internal discussions as to the best way to move forward.

Councilman Radtke noted that other cities, including Detroit, Grand Rapids, and other communities, have a stormwater utility in place. He urged Mr. Moore to move along with this process. He requested Mr. Moore talk about the Urban Forestry Plan.

Mr. Moore replied that would be through the Planning Department, and DPW is more on the maintenance side, although they have obtained grants for trees. He replied to further inquiry that they discount street trees by \$50 per tree to encourage more purchases of trees.

Councilman Radtke expressed concern about the proposed water rates. He questioned why their rainy-day fund for water has become so depleted.

Ms. Varney explained the majority of the decrease occurred over three years during the Great Recession, losing \$5 million per year in the Water and Sewer Fund. She attributed it to a combination of trying to keep rates low for residents, and the decrease in usage, although she reminded out that 85 percent of their costs are fixed. She added weather is another unpredictable factor because when it is a wet summer, they lose money, and in drier summers, they do better. She noted over the past few years, they have been raising rates to where they

need to be, but the decrease of the fund has actually been taking place over the last ten years.

Councilman Radtke commented it appears as though they need a 5.9 percent increase just for the increases imposed by the GLWA and Macomb County Public Works Department.

Ms. Varney confirmed they need an approximate 6 percent increase just to cover their costs, but the increase varies greatly based on the customer. She replied to inquiry they need to raise 7 percent more revenue, but the rate increase varies based on the type of customer.

Councilman Radtke stated he is on the record as being opposed to the change in the water billing, and he felt it is something they need to rethink. He commented it seems like the new system is beneficial for those who use a lot of water, but not necessarily for those who conserve. He felt it is against a sustainability plan to ask people to use more water, and he pointed out that even appliances/devices, such as washing machines, faucets, and toilets, use less water, so it is predictable that water use will go down.

Councilman Radtke stated he originally questioned the \$50,000 cost for an x-ray machine at the Court, but they have a security study showing that is the best practice, and this will protect the judges.

Ms. Varney replied that is correct, and she replied to further inquiry that it is proposed to separate the Magistrate from the jail administration. She replied that she believes Shelby Township has a Court Administrator.

Councilman Radtke noted the Court in Sterling Heights is one division of a larger court. He questioned as to whether it is possible in the future to share services with Shelby Township.

Ms. Varney replied that she understood the City approached them years ago but they were not interested. She replied to further inquiry that they have not been approached recently.

Councilman Radtke stated he hoped the City can ask them once again. He questioned whether there is anything they can do to encourage abutting communities to carry the load along M-59. He noticed that there are paths that go across M-59, and no one cleared them.

Mr. Vanderpool replied when the City clears sidewalks all the way across M-59, they bill the appropriate jurisdictions. They have an agreement with the State where the City gets reimbursed for mowing all of M-59 down to I-94. He recalled years ago, the State did not do a good job with the mowing and it was a problem. He assured the City does a much better job at a much more reasonable price, and the State reimburses them.

Councilman Radtke loves the park improvements, but he would like a recreation center in the southern portion of the City. He urged City Administration to either float a bond, use CDBG funds, or a combination, to make this happen. He felt most of the improvements are in the north end, but the residents in the south end also deserve to have a local park. He felt they need to print their materials in multiple languages. He expressed opposition to utilize Fund Balance to cover

unbudgeted items. He would prefer to see the residents pay a little more, pointing out all of the improvements in the budget are what makes Sterling Heights a great place, and although they will pay a little more, they will be getting more police, as well as other things they are requesting.

Councilwoman Ziarko noted the 35 new positions, with a proposed millage increase of 0.25 mills. She inquired as to whether this millage is for all of the positions, not just the administrative positions.

Ms. Varney replied the 0.25 mills funds the General Fund positions. Some of the Water and Sewer positions are funded through increase in water and sewer rates. She pointed out some of the 35 positions were already added, clarifying this is the number of increased positions since last year. She cited the example of the firefighters, who were already funded through the SAFER Grant.

Councilwoman Ziarko stated they always show that the City has one of the lowest ratios of employees to residents in comparison to comparable communities, but she felt this is not something for which she is proud of because she felt everyone is overworked and stressed, and these positions need to come back. She commented that businesses analyze how their workforce will look in the future, and she inquired as to whether the City is doing any research as far as workforce in the future.

Assistant City Manager, Jeff Bahorski, replied affirmatively and stated they will ask each Director to analyze their current workforce, who can work remotely and who has to be in the office, and HR will analyze with every Director what their

workspace looks like. The world changed with Covid-19, and they have had to look at how to keep people separated and safe at 6-foot distances. He felt the City came up with a top-notch plan, and they provide excellent public service while keeping their employees healthy. He stated the seven police officers are different, but it will be difficult to insert the other 16 positions into their current workstations and keep them all 6-feet apart. Mr. Bahorski stated he does not know whether the future will see people working remotely.

Councilwoman Ziarko felt they are going in the right direction. She questioned whether the City would contract the jail services out if the proposed jail restructuring plan does not work and the City opts to reopen their jail facility.

Chief Dwojakowski replied they would contract it once again, as paying the nine officers who would be required to run the jail is far more costly than the current \$600,000 to contract it out.

Councilwoman Ziarko questioned whether the paperwork required to drop off the prisoners at the County Jail can be done electronically to limit their time out of the City.

Chief Dwojakowski replied they cannot fill out the form as they drive, but when they arrive at the facility, they pull into the large garage door and many times have to wait five to ten minutes, which would allow them the time to fill out the card, including their name, health issues, etc. Once they come out to take the prisoner, the police officer's job is done and they can leave. He indicated they can look into filling it out on the computer and possibly sending it through email,

so it is actually waiting for them at the jail when they take possession of the prisoner. He replied to further inquiry that they confirmed with the Sheriff their average arrest rates, and Sheriff Wickersham had assured it will be no problem for them to handle it.

Councilwoman Ziarko questioned as to which Captain the Community Services Bureau would answer.

Chief Dwojakowski replied that the Community Services Bureau officers would report to Lieutenant Bastianelli. He explained this is out of the Chief's Office, who includes himself, Lt. Bastianelli, Sgt. Allen, and Sgt. Susalla, noting it is a little different than other parts of the Police Department have a Captain/ Lieutenant/ Sargent structure.

Councilwoman Ziarko believes the social worker position is needed, although she does not feel she has enough information at this point to be in favor of adding the position at this point. She questioned as to whether the police officers have training in how to handle someone who is panhandling, or someone who is homeless.

Chief Dwojakowski replied their officers all have access to a resource card, which is an entire sheet containing information on places to call at the County level. He cited an instance where the CORE officer was sent out for a panhandler who was a repeat offender, and the officer was able to get that individual to relocate and provide different resources. He stressed some of the other issues become difficult because it is not what the police officers handle on a daily basis, and they

are not case workers or counselors. He added they do a good job on what they can when they come across these cases.

Councilwoman Ziarko commented that they do not yet have a job description for this position. She felt they can always adjust the budget later in the year for this position. She indicated they do not know if this person will be on call 24/7 because they will be working with the Police Department. They do not know whether the position will be shared with another community, and she questioned how many times a day the Police Department anticipates they would have to contact the Social Worker for a situation.

Chief Dwojakowski replied he looked at calls labeled as "mental," which is the call code for someone having a mental breakdown, and they handled 500 of those last year. He added that so many other calls, including domestic, suspicious person calls, trespassing of a homeless person, etc., would also benefit from the help or services of a social worker. He guessed that there could easily be over 1,000 calls annually where the social worker could be involved. He indicated that Livonia hired two from a psychological services hospital group, and he believed they are paying approximately \$190,000 per year for two case workers. He added Lansing has a full-time dedicated case worker, and Sgt. Susalla has talked with that person, adding they have a great system. He stressed this is what everyone is talking about nationally, and residents are demanding that cities have this tool besides officers with guns.



Councilwoman Ziarko understands that they need more positive communication in the current environment. She emphasized she is not saying they do not have a need for this, but they have to make sure the choice they are making is the best for the time. She inquired as to whether they are purchasing fifty body cameras.

Chief Dwojakowski replied all fifty patrol cars will have them, so every road patrol officer on the road will have them. At any given time, there will be twelve to fifteen cars on the road, but they have to have another twelve to fifteen so they are ready for the next shift, plus backups and spares for breakdowns.

Councilwoman Ziarko felt it is a great idea. She inquired as to whether the cameras go with the car or with the person.

Chief Dwojakowski replied that the cameras go with the person, and he explained the process. He replied to further inquiry that officers may not have the same camera each night, but they are assigned a camera that is fully cleaned and charged.

Councilwoman Ziarko asked Mr. Moore what will happen when the meters in the home are changed.

Mr. Moore replied the residents can expect a lot of information being provided first, via mailers, social media information, a door hanger, and a phone call. They want to make sure everyone is educated and understands what is going to happen. They can expect an agreed-upon appointment date and time, and at that time, one or two individuals with ID badges, and clothing and vehicle with

the name on it, will show up. They need to access the meter, which is generally in the basement. He anticipated it would take less than a half hour to use the shut off, remove, and swap out the meter. He added that a lot of the individuals who will be doing this have an expansive knowledge of plumbing as well.

Councilwoman Ziarko questioned who currently handles the responsibilities that will be passed on to the new position of the Environmental Safety Supervisor.

Mr. Moore replied he currently handles a lot of it, and the managers and supervisors also handle parts of it. He felt it should be centralized to one person, which will end up in better communication and better results.

Councilwoman Ziarko knows someone who has this type of meter in another community, and she received a call at work to alert her that there is irregular water usage in her home. She was able to stop her basement from flooding because they detected it with that meter, so she felt there is a definite advantage.

Mr. Moore replied to inquiry that they have had no luck finding replacement parts for their current meters, but the components are very old.

Councilwoman Ziarko felt the Egaming room will not be large enough, and she anticipated it will be very popular. She is pleased they have Christian Financial Credit Union as a sponsor for a period of time. She congratulated Mr. Langlois for negotiating with SMART on obtaining the larger bus. She thanked Parks and Recreation for letting the City Council use this building because even though

they have not used it as intended, they have been able to function as a City, relying on this building so much during this pandemic. She stated she is skeptical about the social worker position, and would like to wait until they get a better idea of who that person will report to, hours, etc. She suggested possibly making an adjustment to the budget at the end of the year. She felt they need another Fire Inspector because their Fire Marshall has already dedicated so much time to the illegal grow houses. She felt they have been short for at least eight years in this area and have not been able to conduct regular business inspections as they have in the past. While she does not have any problem asking the residents to raise their own millage by Safe Streets or the ReCreating Recreation millage, she is not comfortable passing on any type of millage increase to the residents. She recalled when they raised the millage by 1.9 mills, she had indicated she would not do it again. She asked Ms. Varney as to whether there is a special fund maintained for ALS Transport, where that is how they reach their "break-even," or is it something that if it is over, it goes into the General Fund.

Ms. Varney explained that, as far as Capital Funding for the transport model, each year they transfer \$315,000 to the Capital Projects fund. She indicated that is for replacing ambulances and all other equipment they know will need to be replaced. They currently have over \$1 million in the Capital Projects fund that is dedicated to transport, with the purpose of it to replace items they have already purchased. These purchases are new capital purchases, so she would not

recommend using that money; otherwise, they are using money that is intended to replace ambulances when they need to be replaced.

Councilwoman Ziarko understood that the money for the lifts is not something they would want to take out of that fund.

Ms. Varney replied affirmatively, adding that would be her opinion.

Mayor Taylor recalled Chief Dwojakowski indicating they had 1,900 people who were booked into their jail, going back to the last normal year prior to Covid, at a cost of about \$600,000 for the year. He questioned as to the average stay in the jail.

Chief Dwojakowski replied it is generally a one-night stay until the next day when they can be arraigned by the Judge. Arrests have occurred on a Friday, when they cannot see a judge until Monday, but if they cannot post their bond, later that evening they are taken to the County Jail and they sit there until they can post their bond.

Mayor Taylor inquired as to the fewer arrests because of the changes in the law. He questioned when those changes went into effect.

Chief Dwojakowski replied they went into effect on April 1 for the first batch of changes.

Mayor Taylor felt that is not a good sense of where they will be in the future, but he questioned whether they look at the statistics from the past to determine who would have not been arrested based on current laws.

Chief Dwojakowski replied he has not pulled the exact arrests, but he indicated there were a lot of arrests for driving on a suspended license, and there were a lot of warrant arrests. There are also arrests for domestic disputes and drunk driving, and those will still take place. He estimated there was an average of about 3,100 arrests per year prior to Covid-19, and he felt that possibly 500 to 800 of those would "fall off the books" and will not occur under the new laws. He added that this year they had about 1,500 arrests, which is less than half from the year before. He did not feel they will hit 3,100 again.

Mayor Taylor hoped they do not reach that number. He felt they have done very well in the last several years as far as safety ratings, and the City has a very low violent crime rate.

Chief Dwojakowski agreed they are extremely low, especially in comparison to other cities of this size. They attribute it to great neighborhoods and people looking out for each other, being a bedroom community with a lot of gainful employment, and their Parks and Recreation amenities and school districts are phenomenal. There are so many things working in their favor in Sterling Heights. Mayor Taylor stated a lot of what they hear from the Fire Department is run volume, which determines the number of people needed, and the kind of equipment and training. He questioned as to the number of police runs their department goes on in a typical year.

Chief Dwojakowski believed they go on 55,000 calls a year. They talked about all of the reports and calls.

Mayor Taylor stated they do not have a lot of violent crimes, so he would guess there are traffic incidents to which their police officers report. He felt other touchpoints for police are incidents in which some additional skill set would be beneficial, such as that of a social worker. He stressed the Police Department does a phenomenal job, and they have 152 sworn officers, so he found it hard to believe that they will not be able to figure out what to do with one person who is trained in dealing with mental health issues, difficult situations, etc. He stressed they have a serious mental health crisis in the country, and when their police officers are going in to deal with people who are having a mental health crisis, they do a great job, but having a partnership with a social worker is important. He pointed out it is working with the Quick Response Team. He felt if the right person is hired and they are told the problem, they will be the solution. He expressed full support of the social worker, and he felt the jail restructuring is a good plan. He questioned how many officers they had running the jail.

Chief Dwojakowski recalled they had nine dedicated police officers to run the jail 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Mayor Taylor pointed out that is why it is considerably more expensive than contracting it out. He will be supporting the transition of the jail to the County, and he pointed out it will enable the City to get more police officers on the street. He does not want to postpone or push out the social worker, because he felt it is

an important step for the City. He commended Chief Dwojakowski for all of the work he has done over the last several years as their Police Chief.

Mayor Taylor inquired as to whether there is any update on the State's guidelines regarding the opening of outdoor water parks.

Mr. Langlois replied the most recent epidemic orders, which expire on May 24, 2021, still do not permit the splash pad to open; however, since they could pivot either way, the Parks and Recreation Department is preparing to open the Splash Pad on Memorial Day weekend, with the expectation that things will change as they get closer to that date. The City has pushed to getting people vaccinated, and that will play a huge role in getting these types of facilities open again. He pointed out that the design of splash pads encourages a lot of people to be clustered together, so he can understand why they remain required to be closed. He hoped as they venture into the season where these types of facilities are open, it will be a topic of conversation by the Governor and her team.

Mayor Taylor noted that today, the CDC relaxed outdoor restrictions on masks for people who have been vaccinated. He questioned whether Parks and Recreation has any plan to revisit it in light of the new CDC guidelines.

Mr. Langlois explained that policy poses a number of challenges because they have to try to determine who is and is not vaccinated. They like to err on the side of caution and keep it simple for everyone. He explained they continue to have conversations, and he felt they have done a great job of following the guidelines and working within the spirit of each order. He added they are optimistic that,

as they get into the warmer months and more people are vaccinated, they may be able to have their programs with less restrictions.

Mayor Taylor commented Mr. Langlois on doing a great job. He appreciates the Esports, noting he has talked with Mr. Langlois about it for years. He felt it is an incredible growth industry. He commented how much it costs to construct and maintain a baseball or soccer field, and he felt \$50,000 for Esports is a bargain, especially since they will have sponsorships, and user fees will underwrite the rest of it. He anticipated that Sterling Heights will be a leader in this, and they will be able to have leagues. He pointed out that this is attractive to a portion of the population that is not as interested in physical recreation activities, and it brings it into the City in a controlled environment, where kids learn social skills of interacting with people next to them, and learn how to participate with a coach, learning rules and etiquette. He thanked Mr. Langlois for bringing this forward, and he added that Mr. Langlois has been a model for the entire State of Michigan. He questioned if there is a reason why there needs to be paper bills generated by the Water & Sewer Department.

Ms. Varney replied they currently have the ability for electronic billing. She does not know how many they have signed up to receive the bill electronically, but leading up to the monthly billing, they will be having a much more visible campaign and try to increase the number of people who sign up for electronic billing, adding that monthly billing will be three times the amount of the current postage. She added that automatic debit will also be offered.



Mayor Taylor felt there could be something they can do to incentivize people to sign up for this, possibly a discount on their first bill. He appreciated Mr. Moore's responsiveness when residents have a concern, and he commended him for doing a good job. He felt a lot of people are frustrated because whether they are using less water or more water, they are still paying more. He inquired as to the fixed costs.

Ms. Varney replied that 100 percent of the costs from the Macomb County Public Works are fixed costs. They determine the amount, and the calculation of that fee is based on a five-year average of the total usage of the sewer system, but when she sets the rates, she is collecting a fixed charge on a variable commodity. She added that 60 percent of the GLWA costs are fixed, and 40 percent are variable. She pointed out that, when considering City costs, people who work for Water and Sewer, as well as the equipment, are fixed costs. She pointed out a DPW worker does not make less money because less water is used.

Mayor Taylor inquired as to how many of the new hires are directly related to the proposed 0.25-mill increase.

Ms. Varney replied 13 of the new hires are directly related to the proposed millage increase. She replied to further inquiry that the proposed 7 new police officers will be paid for by closing the jail, plus about a \$100,000 increase in fines through the tickets they write, which she added is a conservative number. She added that 4 of the proposed new hires will be paid through water and sewer rates.

Mayor Taylor indicated two of his colleagues seem to be in support of these positions but they are not in support of a millage increase, so he does not know if this will go through as proposed. He questioned how much 0.25 mills generates in tax revenue to the City.

Ms. Varney replied 0.25 mills generates about \$1.2 million, which covers the thirteen positions within a few thousand dollars. She replied to further inquiry that they currently have \$30 million in their Fund Balance, but this budget already includes the use of Fund Balance of \$2.1 million, which would have them at \$28 million at the end of 2022. She replied to still further inquiry they consider 25 to 30 percent of their expenditures as a safe cushion in the Fund Balance. She stated the \$28 million equates to about 24 percent at the end of 2022. If they use more fund balance, that percentage will go down.

Mayor Taylor noted they have been adding to the fund balance for the last several years. They have some money from the federal government that will help, but it cannot be programmed into the budget because it is a one-time amount. He questioned how they pay for 13 new positions out of fund balance and still keep a healthy cushion in their fund balance.

Ms. Varney replied the only way to do that would be to cut something else. She felt it is not sustainable, noting they are not hiring these positions for one year but for long-term.

Mayor Taylor felt it is not a long-term solution to continue to use the fund balance, so he felt their options are to eliminate the 13 positions from the budget

and not spend over \$1 million in fund balance or hire the 13 positions and adjust the millage rate up by 0.25 mills. He agreed it is a difficult decision, but one he felt needs to be made. He questioned on a home with a taxable value of \$125,000, that would equate to \$25 annually.

Ms. Varney confirmed it is about \$20 annually for the average homeowner, based on the average taxable value of \$81,000.

Mayor Taylor stated he would not vote in favor of a budget that uses fund balance to fund those 13 new positions.

**6. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS**

There were no comments from citizens.

**5. BUDGET WORKSHOP DISCUSSION**

**B. Budget Amendments**

Mayor Taylor stated they have at least one budget amendment proposed at the last meeting, and that was to increase the number of Stryker power load systems for ALS Transport.

Moved by Yanez, seconded by Koski, **RESOLVED**, to increase the 2021/22 General Fund Proposed Budget by \$167,500 to purchase five (5) additional power load systems for ALS Transport.

Councilman Yanez stated they heard from the Fire Chief at the last budget hearing the importance of having this safety equipment, protecting the firefighters from back injuries and other injuries. He did not feel it makes sense to have only two ambulances with these devices, which still leaves the rest of their firefighters at risk.

Councilman Radtke commented that they currently have five ambulances in service, with two in reserve. He questioned how often they use the reserve ambulances. He assured they do their best to make sure everyone is protected, but when they are spending capital, they have to make sure they can afford it. He is not opposed to equipping their ambulances, but he suggested they purchase an additional three lifts at this time so that their five main ambulances are equipped. He noted that the two reserve ambulances would not be equipped at this time, not that he wants them to be unprotected, but he wants to be fiscally responsible. He inquired as to whether this purchase would dip them farther into their reserves.

Ms. Varney replied that is correct.

Moved by Radtke, seconded by Taylor, **RESOLVED**, to amend the previous motion to reduce the amount of increase for the 2021/22 budget from \$167,500 to \$100,500 to purchase three (3) additional power load systems for ALS Transport rather than the five (5) as originally proposed.

Discussion took place regarding the motion on the floor and whether it is being reduced by three units or two units.

Councilman Radtke withdrew his motion to amend the previous motion.

Moved by Radtke, seconded by Taylor, **RESOLVED**, to amend the previous motion to increase the 2021/22 General Fund by \$100,500 to purchase three (3) additional power load systems for ALS Transport.

Councilman Yanez noted he made a motion and it was seconded. He questioned whether they have to vote on his motion first, or whether Councilman Radtke has to request that he make a friendly amendment.

Mr. Kaszubski clarified that Councilman Radtke has made a motion to amend Councilman Yanez's motion, which has to be voted on. If it passes, they will then vote on that amendment, and if it fails, it will go back to the main motion for a vote.

Councilman Radtke stated he wants to do what is fiscally responsible while protecting their firefighters, and he felt this does both.

Councilman Yanez disagreed, and felt this is playing Russian Roulette with the health of the firefighters, pointing out they utilize the reserve ambulances. He stated he cannot support this amendment to his original motion.

Councilwoman Schmidt reached out to Chief Edmond to ask whether they are interchangeable in the ambulances; however, he informed her they are bolted to the floor so they cannot be interchangeable between ambulances. She wished the Fire Chief or the Assistant Fire Chief were here tonight to answer the question as to how often they utilize the reserve ambulances. She imagined they are in service quite often.

Mr. Moore replied he does now know the answer to that question.

Mr. Vanderpool replied he does not know the run volume on the reserve ambulances, but he indicated they may be able to get an update in the next five to ten minutes.

Mayor Taylor explained that every department has a list of projects they want, and it is whittled down to what they can afford while meeting their highest priority.

Ms. Varney stressed that every year, the directors, and managers put in their requests for capital, and she assured that there were no frivolous requests and each asked for what they feel they need for their department. This year, the requests originally totaled \$10 million. What they have been doing over the past year is, when there are replacements needed for multiple items, they schedule it over time to spread large costs over two or three years. The ambulance lifts are an expensive item, so they opted to purchase two in this budget year, with the commitment to purchase the rest over the next two years. She stressed it is hard when everyone's requests are legitimate, but they prioritize replacing equipment over purchasing new items they never had before.

Mayor Taylor emphasized they did not have \$10 million to purchase everything, and there could be other applications that are just as important to employee safety or maintaining what they need. He asked Mr. Bahorski about firefighters experiencing injuries related to not having this equipment.

Mr. Bahorski recalled that they did have one firefighter injured some time ago, but he believed it occurred when transporting a patient down a flight of stairs so it was an uneven surface. He indicated their work experience only dates back to 2017/2018 when they started transport. He is not aware of any claim. He did see a comp claim come through that involved a back injury, but he does not know the details on it. He cannot identify one direct cause and effect for loading into the back of an ambulance. He sits on the Capital Committee with Ms. Varney, and the department prioritizes their capital needs, ranked from 1 to 35,

and that is taken into account. He does not know if the lifts were ranked on their list, and he does not recall it coming up.

Ms. Varney replied this particular item was not requested in the Capital budget. They requested it in the Operational budget, which was too late to request; however, it was still considered. She replied they had other Capital requests, and some of those were cut.

Mayor Taylor pointed out the Fire Chief is not here, but if he were, he might have indicated that if the Council is willing to approve an expenditure of another \$100,000, they may want it to be spent in another area. He felt it sounds like this was originally being proposed to be purchased over a three-year period. He would like to have this information before they amend the budget, but he noted they can amend the budget again if necessary.

Councilwoman Ziarko felt some of the employees may have thought they could use the transport funds to take care of this expense, and she understood the explanation that is not good practice. She felt it is needed and added in the past when they went to purchase anything, they never purchased it all at the same time because they were worried about technology. She commented that the technology seems to be in place for this, so they could purchase more at one time.

Councilwoman Koski inquired as to whether there is enough extra money in the Transport fund to cover the \$167,500 to complete the purchase for the ambulance lifts.

Ms. Varney replied they could take it out of there but that money has been put aside to replace ambulances, which will need to be replaced sooner rather than later based on the number of miles. The money set aside in the Transport fund is enough to first re-chassis the ambulances and eventually replace them. She replied that money is added to this fund every year because ambulances will continue to need to be replaced every five to seven years. Ms. Varney replied to still further inquiry that, although they are doing a good job collecting funds for the runs, but the runs decreased slightly due to Covid-19, and they added six firefighters. The ten-year forecast model is very close to breaking even, so using money from that fund for other purchases would take them out of the "break-even" amount.

Councilwoman Koski felt they are only talking about \$167,500.

Councilman Yanez questioned Mr. Bahorski as to whether they have had Fire Department employees leave under Article 19, and whether any of those were back injuries.

Mr. Bahorski replied they have had a few in the last five years, and he recalled there were back injuries.

Councilman Yanez inquired as to what that cost the City to pay for all of the injuries and replace that person.

Mr. Bahorski replied he never put a cost on it. He explained Article 19, which is included in the firefighters' union contracts and provides guaranteed benefits for certain conditions, paying them full wages for a significant period of time. He



recalled the one case he worked on, but he was fairly certain it occurred prior to 2017 when ALS transport service was taken over by the Fire Department.

Councilman Yanez noted it was a back injury, and he inquired as to whether handling a claim such as that would exceed \$167,000.

Mr. Bahorski replied affirmatively, noting that comp claims are expensive. He explained in Article 19, the City pays above and beyond comp claims and makes the firefighter whole for on-duty injuries.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski stressed she has witnessed how physically difficult it is for the firefighters to get some of these patients out the door and into the Fire Department rigs, and she is in favor of having these lifts on every rig. She felt preventing one injury by having these lifts will pay for them. She stated she is not in favor of adding more to this budget, so she agreed with Councilwoman Koski that they find a way to use \$167,000 from the rainy-day fund to make all of the rigs whole. She recalled talking with the Captain at the open house when they began transport, and she claimed he was not happy that they did not have this equipment.

Councilman Radtke did not disagree with Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski, but he felt when they proposed transport, the agreement was that it would be cost-neutral. He indicated he was not on Council at that time, but if they take this money from the funding that was intended for future ambulances, it is no longer cost-neutral, and it costs more than expected. He expressed concern they are "playing budget games."

Councilwoman Schmidt questioned whether the amended motion is still proposing that the cost be paid for out of the General Fund.

Mayor Taylor replied that is correct but to reduce the additional number being purchased from five to three. He confirmed the motion is not to take the funds out of the ALS Transport fund.

Ms. Varney replied to inquiry that if they are approving this, the money should come from the Capital Projects fund, which has a balance of approximately \$1 million of money they have been putting aside to purchase future ambulances.

Mayor Taylor requested clarification because the motion stated, "to increase the 2021/2022 General Fund proposed budget by \$167,500 to purchase five (5) additional power load systems for ALS Transport." He pointed out the motion does not clarify whether the funding comes from the Capital Projects dedicated for new ambulances, or whether it would come from Fund Balance.

Ms. Varney clarified the motion indicates it would come from General Fund.

Councilwoman Ziarko questioned whether any of the seven ambulances have been replaced, or whether they are all the same ambulances they have had for the last three years.

Ms. Varney replied those are all the original ambulances.

Councilwoman Ziarko explained she was told they do not necessarily have to replace and older ambulance but they can replace the chassis. She felt that would bring down the cost of an ambulance.

Ms. Varney replied the model already assumes they are going to replace the chassis first, and eventually replace the ambulance, so that is already worked into the budget.

Mayor Taylor pointed out if they take the money from the Capital Fund that was intended to be used for the purchase of ambulances, and they then need to replace the ambulance, there will not be enough money in that fund and they will have to take it out of Fund Balance. He commented that the money can be moved around. He felt the bigger issue is whether they can afford it. He suggested that purchasing five power load systems this year and two more the next year would be a good balance between being fiscally responsible and protecting their employees. He commented that there is most likely a lot of equipment they could buy to better protect their police officers and their firefighters, and if they had an endless supply of money, they could buy it all.

Discussion took place on the exact cost and the original intent to purchase the seven of these systems over a period of three years.

Ms. Varney replied to inquiry that the price of each unit was rounded up to \$33,500.

Councilman Yanez felt that was just for the system, but not for the maintenance contract.

Ms. Varney stated they based the cost on what they requested for seven, and she budgeted for two in the upcoming budget, assuming there would be some inflation in the future.

Councilwoman Schmidt stated she would prefer to see this taken out of the Capital Equipment Fund rather than the General Fund. She inquired as to whether the maker of the motion would be willing to amend their motion to specify this, she would be more comfortable voting for it.

Councilman Radtke replied that, regardless of where the money comes from, they have to pay for it, because there is only so much money in the budget.

Councilman Yanez found the original quote sent to him by Assistant Chief Miller, and it quoted seven (7) power loaders was \$170,253.23; and if they purchased the extended warranty for all seven, that was over \$9,000. He suggested they do not have to purchase the extended warranty and can purchase just the power loaders for \$23,736.24, plus \$585.64 for the fasteners, which equates to the \$170,253.23. He stated he would be willing to amend his motion to purchase seven (7) power load systems for ALS Transport for \$170,253.23; however, he pointed out they already had two included in the budget.

Roll Call (on Councilman Radtke's motion to amend the original motion):

Yes: Radtke, Taylor

No: Koski, Schmidt, Sierawski, Yanez, Ziarko

Motion failed.

Moved by Radtke, seconded by Taylor, **RESOLVED**, to amend the previous motion to increase the 2021/22 Capital Improvements Fund budget by \$100,500 to purchase three (3) additional power load systems for ALS Transport.

Roll Call:

Yes: Radtke, Taylor

No: Schmidt, Sierawski, Yanez, Ziarko, Koski

Motion failed.

Councilman Yanez questioned if this is approved based on Ms. Varney's calculations but discover later that it is only \$22,000, they only have to pay the \$22,000.

Ms. Varney replied affirmatively.

Councilman Yanez pointed out that if the quote is still valid, the most they would pay would be \$170,253.23. His current motion is for \$167,500 for five, but he added that, according to the quote, they can purchase all seven for just \$3,000 more.

Ms. Varney explained that number was based on what the Fire Department requested, and that included extended warranties. If the Fire Department wants to purchase them without the warranties, they would get them cheaper.

Councilman Yanez had conversations with fire departments in other communities, and he claimed they do not purchase the warranty, so they pay only the cost for the system.

Councilwoman Schmidt requested that Councilman Yanez amend his motion and have the funding come from the Capital Improvements Fund instead of the General Fund.

Councilman Yanez stated he would be happy to amend the motion.

Discussion took place regarding whether to amend the motion on the floor or withdraw the motion.

Councilman Yanez withdrew his original motion.

Moved by Yanez, seconded by Sierawski, **RESOLVED**, to increase the 2021/22 Capital Fund Proposed Budget by \$167,500 to purchase 5 additional power load systems for ALS Transport.

Mayor Taylor stated he did not quite understand the difference between the Capital Improvements Fund and the General Fund because they are coming from the same place. He inquired as to when the ambulances are scheduled to be replaced.

Ms. Varney replied she believed they are scheduled to re-chassis them starting next year.

Roll Call:

Yes: Schmidt, Sierawski, Yanez, Ziarko, Koski

No: Taylor, Radtke

Motion passed.

Moved by Yanez, seconded by Ziarko, **RESOLVED**, to increase the 2021/22 General Fund Proposed Budget by \$135,000 to hire one (1) Fire Inspector.

Councilman Yanez felt it was very clear from the discussion a couple of weeks with the Fire Chief that the Fire Inspector is overwhelmed with the marijuana grow houses, and they are unable to keep up with their annual city inspections.

In order to get back on track with the regular city inspections, they need the additional help of another Fire Inspector.

Councilwoman Ziarko stated she is not sure about the amount of money, because it would be a promotion for someone already working for the City. She did not feel the increase would be as much as what is included in the motion.

Councilman Yanez stated he got the figure of \$135,000 today from Ms. Varney.

Ms. Varney replied to inquiry that this would be a new Fire Inspector position so someone would get promoted, but there would eventually be a trickle-down replacement. The true addition to the budget would be the Fire Inspector, and the Step 1 rate of a Fire Inspector is \$98,000 salary plus benefits, which equates to approximately \$135,000.

Discussion took place regarding the true cost, which is for the cost of the Fire Inspector, rather than the cost to backfill that position.

Mayor Taylor questioned whether this will be paid for out of the General Fund balance. He further questioned as to the long-term plan if it is going to be paid for out of the General Fund balance this year. He questioned whether it would continue to be budgeted out of the General Fund balance each year, whether there is a plan to reduce the budget by \$135,000 in some other area, or whether they intend to increase the millage rate to cover that amount. He pointed out they have three needs: A Fire Inspector, a fund balance, and a funding source.

Councilman Yanez stressed that Sterling Heights is one of the safest cities in Michigan and in the country, and that is based on police reports, police runs and FBI reports. He felt the money will need to come from the General Fund and questioned whether the balance in the General Fund is more important than public safety. He pointed out they have the money, but they have to determine where to take it from; however, he stressed they need another Fire Inspector to get rid of the marijuana grow houses and to make sure the businesses in the City

are safe and executing safe practices. He felt they cannot do that without having proper fire inspections.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski questioned whether the new Fire Inspector was on the request list from the Fire Department.

Ms. Varney replied no and indicated when they submitted their request based on the manpower study, it did not include a Fire Inspector.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski stated she will be voting no on this motion. She understood the need, but she stressed they cannot give everything to one department in one year. She indicated they can be creative with managing the grow houses, pointing out they can use DTE as an ally, and they also have drone opportunities as well.

Councilwoman Schmidt agreed with Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski. She understood the need but emphasized they cannot continue to add to the budget. She stated she is not going to take from one fund to pay another, when the first fund is already hurting. She indicated that, although these two big expenditures in one department may be worth it, there are other departments that are worth it as well. She stated she is not sure she is in support of this motion.

Councilwoman Ziarko stated she supported Councilman Yanez's motion because it should be discussed. She assured she would like another Fire Inspector, but because the lifts passed at the rate they did, she stated she would like to postpone this until another time. She questioned whether she could vote against her support, or whether it would be better to withdraw her support.



Mayor Taylor advised that Councilwoman Ziarko can vote against her support.

Councilwoman Ziarko felt they do need another Fire Inspector, but she cannot vote to continue to increase the budget and she does not want to raise the millage.

Mayor Taylor stated 0.25 mills raises about \$1.2 million. He questioned what the millage increase would have to be to add another \$135,000.

Ms. Varney calculated that 0.28 mills would add another \$143,000.

Mayor Taylor calculated the 0.03 additional mills would cost the average taxpayer \$1 or \$2 per year, so it is not a lot of money. He added he would support it if there was a dedicated way to pay for it. He trusts Councilman Yanez's experience as a firefighter and his belief that this is a high priority for the Fire Department. He referred to the argument that the Fire Department did not request this position, but he emphasized City Council is the policy-maker, so if they feel it is needed, it is well within what they should be deciding; however, without a reduction somewhere else for a corresponding increase, he cannot support it at this time.

Councilwoman Koski questioned whether Ms. Varney has costs on all of the recommended positions, and the possibility of postponing the hiring of a social worker. She inquired as to the budgeted cost for that position.

Ms. Varney replied the social worker is budgeted at \$82,000.

Councilwoman Koski questioned what position would give them an additional \$60,000 if they were to cut it.

Ms. Varney replied that she is not comfortable cutting positions.

Moved by Koski, seconded by Ziarko, **RESOLVED**, to amend the 2021/2022 General Fund Proposed Budget and not impose the 0.25 mill increase, and request City Administration to make any required adjustments.

Mayor Taylor stated Councilwoman Koski's motion does not amend the motion on the floor.

Mr. Kaszubski clarified the motion on the floor needs to be dealt with first.

Councilwoman Koski stated she was not actually making a motion and withdrew it to make a suggestion. She indicated the motion on the floor is to add another Fire Inspector, and there will not be support for that unless they can show ways to fund it. She felt they should go through the list comprising the 0.25-mill increase and see what can be delayed until a later date. She felt they need to prioritize the order of the positions. She felt City Administration can best determine the priority.

Councilman Radtke felt they need to hire more people, including a Fire Inspector. He claimed employees are feeling overworked and are leaving the City to go to other communities, so he felt if they do not hire more employees, they may lose even more. He is proud for what they have done to deliver the best city services in the State at the lowest cost, but he reminded that everything has a cost. He is not opposed to a Fire Inspector but indicated if they are going to be honest in their budgeting, they have to increase the millage rate; otherwise, he cannot support this.

Roll Call (on Councilman Yanez's motion to increase the budget by \$135,000 to hire one Fire Inspector):

Yes: Yanez

No: Sierawski, Taylor, Ziarko, Koski, Radtke, Schmidt

Motion failed.

Moved by Radtke, **RESOLVED**, to decrease the budget by \$38,000 by not purchasing security cameras for Dodge Park.

Motion failed for lack of support.

Councilman Yanez inquired as to the cost for one of the seven new police officers.

Ms. Varney replied the annual cost for the first year is \$80,000; however, they are only budgeted for six months in the current year. It is budgeted at \$40,000 each in the current year because it is only for six months. She stated a police officer starts at approximately \$48,000, so it is about \$80,000 annual cost for a first-year police officer, including pay and benefits. The contract for the jail services goes through January, so if they opt to go with the jail restructuring, they would not be closing the jail until January, which is when they would then hire the police officers.

Moved by Koski, seconded by Ziarko, **RESOLVED**, to amend the 2021/2022 General Fund Proposed Budget and not impose the 0.25-mill increase, and request City Administration to make any required adjustments.

Councilwoman Koski would like to suggest that City Administration consider not hiring a social worker at this time until they are able to have a job and performance description, as well as with whom the position would be shared.

She replied this is not an additional motion but is a comment only.

Mayor Taylor inquired as to whether the social worker in the Police Department part of the thirteen new hires that make up the 0.25 mills.

Ms. Varney replied no.

Councilwoman Ziarko noted the motion does not impose the millage increase, but it does not eliminate the social worker position.

Councilwoman Koski replied that is correct. She replied to further inquiry that if she were going to amend her motion, she would have to include that, but she is not amending her motion.

Councilwoman Ziarko agreed with Councilwoman Koski. She has no problem asking residents to vote a millage increase in for themselves, but she does not want Council to impose it.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski agreed with not raising the millage based on principle, especially because many people are struggling financially during this pandemic.

Councilwoman Schmidt stated she is in support of the motion as well. She pointed out all of these millages add up, and with the increased water bills, it becomes a lot for homeowners. She stressed they cannot continue to raise taxes to residents during these tough times.

Councilman Radtke felt if they are not adding positions and put the budget together the way they did, he felt they have spent several months in a pointless exercise, and he expressed concern this will lead to further staff departure and decreased city services. He stated he will vote against this motion.

Councilwoman Schmidt stated her intention is for all of the positions to be filled. She felt they need to “sharpen pencils and bring out erasers,” but not by eliminating positions. She claimed they are losing some of their best employees because of how stressed and overworked they are.

Mayor Taylor emphasized this is the Council’s job to pass a budget. They have to determine the policy of this City, either by hiring these people and taking it out of the “rainy day” fund, which is stressed and is being depleted, or they will do it by raising taxes. He commented those are the only options, other than cutting spending somewhere else. He felt this is not clear direction for City Administration to come back with a new budget. He emphasized they have to adopt the budget in a week. He questioned whether the budget must be approved next week, acknowledging that they are still under a declared State of Emergency.

Mr. Vanderpool acknowledged that they are still under a State of Emergency, but this delay would not be related to Covid. He indicated they have suspended rules before, but May 4 is when the budget needs to be approved. He explained that it took a couple of years to get through all of the manpower studies because they are very comprehensive, and seventy positions need to be added back into the organization, which still does not get them back to what they eliminated during the Great Recession. He added they eliminated over 120 positions in the Great Recession, and 70 of those are being identified as a high priority. They whittled it down to the 13 positions in the proposed budget. It would be

extremely difficult to get it down any further based on the concerns by City Council and the need to reduce some of the stress levels in the organization. He interpreted the direction of Council that there is a desire to hire the thirteen positions, to fund it out of Fund Balance for the next year, and that they continue to look for ways over the ensuing years to cut costs and/or reconsider the millage required for these 13 positions next year or after, when the current pandemic effects may not be as great.

Mayor Taylor understood Mr. Vanderpool's interpretation is that this Council would like to hire 13 people now, use the Fund Balance to pay for permanent positions, and they will figure out a way to pay for it next year. He questioned how they will "figure it out" in the future. He does not feel it is responsible, and he will be voting against it. He stressed they have to have a plan in place to pay for these permanent positions, and it cannot be fund balance.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sierawski stressed they are asking for City Administration to try to find ways to pay for this and paying for it out of Fund Balance was one option and not a specific direction.

Mayor Taylor inquired as to where this money can come from if it is not from the Fund Balance.

Mr. Vanderpool replied the only other place it can come from is through cuts. There are three ways to get the money, and he agreed Fund Balance is not a viable long-term option. The money can come from the Fund Balance, increased

taxes, budget cuts, or a combination of all three. He indicated at some point there has to be a permanent funding solution.

Mayor Taylor stated it is Council's job to pick that option. He questioned what they are going to do to pay for the 13 positions. He heard the sentiments that they do not want to raise taxes, they do not want to use Fund Balance, and they want to hire 13 people. He stressed the bills have to be paid.

Mayor Pro-Tem felt their options are to accept the budget presented to them, or to ask for additional options and changes. She does not accept the budget as is with the 0.25-mill tax. If they cannot come back with changes, she will reject those positions. She felt there is a way to get some of those positions, but they are asking Administration not to raise the taxes.

Mayor Taylor stated they have an Appropriations Ordinance that has been introduced, and it is coming back for adoption on May 4. The motion on the floor is to reduce the millage rate proposed in the Appropriations Ordinance by 0.25 mills. The budget is comprised of line items for each department, so unless they go in and make corresponding cuts to the rest of the budget, they will be budgeting for revenue well below their spending, which is an unbalanced budget.

Ms. Varney replied if they reduce revenue and do not reduce expenses, they would be using more Fund Balance.

Mr. Vanderpool replied to inquiry his interpretation, based on the motion, is to bring back the budget as proposed but without the 0.25 mills, which means they

would be using approximately an additional \$1.2 million out of Fund Balance. He clarified that is not deficit spending because they have a Fund Balance, and if they did not have that balance, they could not pass the budget. He suggested the only other option is to defer the 13 positions until the December amendment to give them time to gather more data. He indicated this has been done before, but that direction needs to be given tonight.

Roll Call (on Councilwoman Koski's motion to amend the proposed budget):

Yes: Ziarko, Koski, Schmidt, Sierawski

No: Taylor, Yanez, Radtke

Motion carried.

**7. REPORTS FROM CITY ADMINISTRATION AND CITY COUNCIL**

Mr. Vanderpool noted to the listening audience that there was a malfunction earlier on the website livestreaming; however, the live meeting was broadcast on all three cable channels, and it is being recorded tonight, so he believed they can post the recorded meeting on their website.

Councilwoman Ziarko requested that City Administration consider doing some public service announcements (PSA's) to encourage people to get the Covid vaccinations, providing some of the "mythbusters" about the vaccines. She felt they should ask some of the healthcare leaders from the hospitals to do those PSA's.

**8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

There was no unfinished business.

**9. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

**10. CLOSED SESSION**



Mr. Kaszubski stated there are no items for Closed Session this evening.

**11. ADJOURN**

Moved by Radtke, seconded by Taylor, to adjourn the meeting.

Yes: All. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 11:58 p.m.

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MELANIE D. RYSKA, City Clerk