



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

DAWN M. JONES, CITY CLERK

PERSONNEL AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

SEPTEMBER 27, 2022, 5:00 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Sheila Niezgodski*, Troy Warner*, Eli Wax

Committee Members Absent: Rachel Tomas Morgan, Henry Davis Jr.

Council Members Present: Canneth Lee*, Sharon McBride, Karen L. White, Lori Hamann

Others Present: Dawn Jones, Victoria Trujillo, Bob Palmer*, Justin LePla*, Zoe Tembo*, Jordan Gathers*, Amanda Pietsch*,

Presenters: Michael Patton*, Dan Parker, Sandra Kennedy

Agenda: Personnel and Finance — Budget Session

Members marked with an asterisk (*) are present digitally

Please note the attached link for the meeting recording:

<https://docs.southbendin.gov/WebLink/browse.aspx?dbid=0&mediaid=357969>

Committee Chair Sheila Niezgodski called to order the Personnel and Finance Committee at 5:00 p.m.

Common Council 2023 Budget Hearing

Committee Chair Sheila Niezgodski reviewed the budget process for the public and introduced presentations from the Legal Department, Mayor's Office, Clerk's Office, and Council.

Legal Department – 2023 Budget Presentation

Corporation Council Sandra Kennedy, with offices on the twelfth (12th) floor of the County-City building presented the 2023 Legal Department goals as follows:

- Continue to provide high quality partnership with City departments.
- Bring more tasks in-house to lower outside legal costs.
- Increase attention to behavior modification and/or other factors that may help reduce exposure and legal costs.

The proposed 2023 budget showed an overall decrease of twenty-one percent (21%) and detailed the following:

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- A fifty-four-point five percent (54.5%) increase in Travel to allow Assistant City Attorneys to travel for in-person Continuing Legal Education seminars not offered virtually.
- A thirty-two-point three percent (32.3%) increase in Other Services and Charges to reflect increased costs for research database access, memberships, and dues for bar and municipal organizations, and printing and mailing.
- A thirty-point eight percent (30.8%) increase for Legal Services for outside legal work performed for the City that are not otherwise paid through other accounts.
- A twenty five percent (25%) increase for Education and Training to reflect increased costs of online legal education access and includes additional funding to reflect fees for other education opportunities for attorneys and paralegals.
- A one hundred percent (100%) decrease for Professional Services used to pay for temporary legal assistance due to staff departures.
- A one hundred percent (100%) decrease for Beck’s Lake due to work completed in 2022.

Council Questions and Feedback

Councilmember Hamann inquired about the new goals the Legal Department would like to accomplish in 2023, besides having full staff.

Corporate Council Kennedy responded that the goal for 2023 is to have one litigator and a complaints manager work together to reduce outside legal costs and to do proactive training with various departments to reduce claims.

There was no public input on the proposed 2023 legal department’s budget.

Mayor’s Office – 2023 Budget Presentation

Chief of Staff Kacey Gergely, with offices on the fourteenth (14th) floor of the County-City building, presented the Mayor’s Office 2023 budget proposal with an overall decrease of fifty-three-point nine percent (53.9%) and detailed the following:

- No positions will be added to the Mayor’s Office.
- A standard three percent (3%) increase to salaries, wages, and fringe benefits for all eight (8) current staff members, including the Mayor.
- Realigning Community Initiatives to the VPA budget.
- No proposed changes to other budgetary line items.

Council Questions and Feedback

Councilmember White inquired about how the Mayor’s Office and Council can keep the public advised of all the upcoming initiatives for 2023.

Chief of Staff Gergely replied that time and resources will be focused on a social media presence in addition to traditional avenues such as press releases.

Councilmember Hamann inquired whether the Mayor accepts interns and if the position is paid.

Chief of Staff Gergely replied that the Mayor currently has a paid intern.



There was no public input on the proposed 2023 Mayor’s office budget.

Clerk’s Office – 2023 Budget Presentation

Clerk Dawn Jones presented the challenges faced by the Clerk’s Office, highlighting staff retention, recruiting, and burnout, and presented the following solutions:

- A five percent (5%) salary increase addresses inflation rates of three to five percent (3-5%) and as much as nine percent (9%) in some cases.
- Professional development and personal growth, such as tuition reimbursement considerations of up to five thousand two hundred dollars (\$5,200) per full-time employee as recommended by the Cares Act, and quarterly staff retreats to provide coping skills to balance life challenges and an intense work schedule.
- Becoming certified clerks by attending Accelerated Indiana Municipalities statewide scheduled clerk conferences.

The proposed 2023 budget showed an overall four-point one percent (4.1%) increase and detailed the following:

- An eighty-four percent (84%) increase in Professional Services for meetings, minutes, office cleaning, and legal services.
- A four hundred- and eight-point three percent (408.3%) increase in Education & Training as part of the tuition reimbursement plan which will only be used when employees take advantage of the option. It was noted that this could be an excellent recruiting opportunity.

The Clerk’s Office’s goals and accomplishments were presented, and a demonstration of public-facing informational videos was given.

Council Questions and Feedback

Council President McBride inquired about the increase in Professional Services.

Clerk Jones responded that this increase reflects the Clerk’s Office taking minutes for all meetings which resulted in falling back on other work.

Committee Member Warner inquired how minute-taking is charged and how much each set costs and raised concerns about the quality of the minutes.

Clerk Jones responded that minutes are not charged hourly; however, there are over one thousand one hundred (1,100) pages of transcriptions that need to be listened to and summarized.

Committee Member Warner inquired whether the Clerk’s Office will be using an outside firm to record minutes going forward.

Clerk Jones responded that with newer staff at the Clerk’s Office and higher processing and reporting rates, it is not feasible to have the Clerk’s Office staff complete the minutes as well.

Committee Member Warner inquired about a reasonable turnaround time for a set of minutes.

Clerk Jones responded that due to constant interruptions in the Clerk's Office, the average turnaround time is more than two to three (2-3) weeks.

Committee Member Warner inquired about Council training on the minutes system.

Clerk Jones responded that this system is used to update the agenda and videos are available to train the Council, but the Clerk's Office staff still needs to be trained on it.

Committee Member Warner inquired about the details of the minutes and verbatim minutes.

Clerk Jones responded that they were the only ones who did verbatim minutes and while they no longer do this, they do provide more detail than most.

Councilmember Hamann inquired about the tuition reimbursement proposal and whether other departments offer this option.

Clerk Jones responded that this has been offered in the past but has since stopped, but it encourages professional development, helps recruitment, and positively impacts the City.

City Controller Dan Parker, with offices on the twelfth (12th) floor of the County-City building, noted that in the past four (4) years, no office provided tuition reimbursement.

Committee Member Warner followed up to confirm the average turnaround for minutes.

Clerk Jones responded that the minutes usually take one to two (1-2) months to complete due to the amount of work in the Clerk's Office and the process of preparing and proofing the minutes.

Council Member White inquired about the Clerk's Office plan to keep Council up to date on events.

Clerk Jones replied that as the new staff communicates more with the City and as information becomes available they will communicate it with Council. It was noted that the Clerk's Office schedules meetings and informs Council of them.

There was no public input on the proposed 2023 City Clerk's office budget.

Common Council – 2023 Budget Presentation

Council President Sharon McBride presented Council priorities for 2023 as:

- Neighborhoods
- Community Safety
- Infrastructure
- Economic Opportunity
- Youth and Workforce development
- Good Government and Leading City Team

The proposed 2023 budget showed an overall increase of twenty-five-point nine percent (25.9%). It was noted that the Common Council accounts for point two percent (0.2%) of the overall City budget. Details were provided as follows:

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- A standard three percent (3%) increase in Salaries and Wages.
- An increase of two hundred fifty percent (250%) in Professional Services for website upgrades and updates.
- An increase of fifty-five-point one percent (55.1%) for Legal Services to account for the 2023 trial with the Tates.
- An increase of sixty percent (60%) in Education and Training to allow for travel to in-person events.
- An increase of fifty percent (50%) in Repairs and Maintenance for new surfaces and upgrades.
- An increase of two hundred percent (200%) in Office Supplies to return to the pre-COVID budget in anticipation of increased community engagement.

Council Member Questions and Feedback

Committee Chair Niezgodski inquired about the increase in the Professional Services budget.

Council President McBride responded that this is for publication updates, website upgrades, updates, and videos for different districts.

Committee Member Warner noted that there are updates that are necessary on the website and publications as some information is out of date and asked what the Council President’s goal is for 2023.

Council President McBride responded that engagement, retreats, and relationship building are the main goals for 2023 to bring the Council together.

Councilmember Hamann inquired about opportunities for the Council to have education and training.

Council President McBride responded that there are training programs throughout the country that Council can participate in annually following an approval process.

There was no public input on the proposed 2023 Common Council’s budget.

With no further business, Committee Chair Sheila Niezgodski adjourned the Personnel and Finance Committee meeting at 6:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sheila Niezgodski, Committee Chair

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