

**CITY COUNCIL
STUDY SESSION
April 16, 2024**

ATTENDEES: Council members Arsanto, Smith, Bergerson, Anderson, Green, Burbank and Bender.

Also in attendance were Mayor Burkett, City Administrator Brunell, Police Records Clerk Burkett and Deputy City Clerk Clark.

Mayor Pro Tem Smith called the regularly scheduled meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

6-Year Forecast and Budget Planning for 2025-2026:

Finance Director Hines wants to get an early outlook to Council for the 6-year budget forecast as the City's first biennial budget is coming forward. The 6-year baseline forecast was developed from the 2024 budget with revenue and expenditure growth assumptions for future years based on historical trends, current information, and future expectations for growth. When presented to Council before the 2025-2026 deficit was \$1,068,000 and the current forecast for next year is right around \$636,000 due to action that Council has taken by the following cost saving measures that are listed in the memo in the packet.

Ms. Hines added that although the deficit for 2025-2026 has improved, the deficit continues to grow in future years. The items remaining are ongoing or one-time resources that Council was presented in budget development. Ongoing revenue includes sales tax, property tax levy lid lift, B&O tax, and vehicle license fees. One-time options include remaining ARPA funds and cumulative reserve funds.

Council member Green would like to see added to the list to look further into the contract with Crystal Mountain and feels the City is not being compensated for the services we provide. Council member Smith agrees and adds some of the calls can take awhile which is taking away resources for aid calls within the City limits.

Council member Bergerson asked about combining our municipal court with City of Orting or Bonney Lake as an option. City Administrator Brunell has spoken to Bonney Lake, and they are at full capacity, and we will continue talks with Orting. Ms. Brunell wanted to add that the cost savings for this may not be as great in the end because the City will still need to pay for prosecution, defense and would need to continue to staff a judge. Council member Bergerson also asked about Buckley Hall and that it is still costing us money even with the revenue for renting it and would like to see the option of selling it. She also added she would not like to do B&O tax because we are trying to get more businesses to come here and we don't want to upset our current business owners which Council members Burbank, Arsanto, Smith and Anderson agreed.

Council member Bender discussed the Buckley Hall and the repairs and maintenance that keep coming up, she would prefer to keep the Foodbank in Buckley though. Ms. Bender added that she wants to come up with something that is sustainable now and, in the future, so Council isn't having to revisit this every year.

Council member Arsanto asked regarding City Hall remodel and having staff work from home and could Council use that money for public safety for fire and police departments? Finance Director Hines replied with explaining what the process would be to borrow from one fund to another, and that the fund for the remodel would have to be used for capital dollars. The general fund could be used for public safety.

Council member Anderson agrees Buckley needs to take care of their own citizens and added she would also like to take care of staff and not see staff hours be cut as an option until it must be.

Council member Smith added that when talking about taking care of our own public safety needs to come first. Police, fire and public works are the core for the City. Mr. Smith would rather see cuts that could be made like selling the Buckley Hall and if we really need to keep it.

Council member Green shared an option he sees for a long-term solution would be to increase sales tax. He would like to make Buckley an attractive place for more businesses to come and start building up our sales tax revenue.

Council member Burbank was curious what other cities are doing for their deficit and agrees with council member Bender that selling property isn't a permanent fix. City Administrator Brunell has spoken to some cities and told council members what options those cities have discussed with their Council.

Council continued to discuss their opinions and options that they would prefer to see since something has to be done. Mayor Burkett spoke that this is not a place anyone wants to be in to try and fix the deficit. He appreciates everyone's passion, and we will get through this. With Council and staff working together we have cut the deficit in half and for Council to keep doing what they can do and working together with ideas.

With nothing further, the Study Session was adjourned at 7:20 PM.

Connie & Brunell

City Administrator



Mayor

Prepared by: Jessica Clark, Deputy City Clerk