

MINUTES
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
2014 PROPOSED BUDGET AND LEVY
COOK CITY COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 21, 2013 – CITY HALL – 5 PM

TIME AND PLACE: A special meeting of the Cook City Council was held at 5 PM on Thursday, November 21, 2013 at the Cook City Hall.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Harold Johnston called the Special Council Meeting to order at 5 PM.

ATTENDANCE: Present was Mayor Harold Johnston and City Councilors Kim Brunner and Karen Hollanitsch. Absent were City Councilors Jody Bixby and Elizabeth Storm. Also present were Administrator-Clerk/Treasurer Theresa Martinson, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer Cindy Palm and Maintenance Superintendent Bud Ranta.

The purpose of this meeting is to hold monthly special study sessions to discuss budget planning for 2014. The final November study session focuses on all departments and allows an opportunity for questions and comments before finalizing the 2014 budget at the regular council meeting on December 19, 2013.

The council was presented with a 3% cost of living increase for full time employees for 2014. The national and Midwest cost of living increases are approximately 1.2% and neighboring communities are seeking 3% as well for non-union positions. There is no PERA retirement percentage increase for 2014 and employees will pay higher out of pocket health insurance expenses due to federal compliance changes. The total cost of living increase is less than 1% of the total general fund budget and 60% of full time employees are either maxed out or receive incremental wage increases every other year in the city adopted step structure.

Motion by Brunner, second by Hollanitsch to approve a 3% cost of living increase for full time employees for 2014. **MOTION CARRIED**

The proposed tax levy has decreased from 7% to 5% since the preliminary adoption in September.

St. Louis County assessment fees will be reduced by 50% for 2014 and phased out for 2015. Fees will be billed directly to taxpayers on their tax statements instead of to the City of Cook.

Administrative conference expense will increase due to the ongoing initiative to form the Regional Safety Group starting in 2013.

The Planning and Zoning budget increased as a city wide mapping and comprehensive planning project will begin for 2014.

Expenses will be minimized to protect a possible unanticipated short fall of revenues due to non-collection in the latter part of 2013. Staff continues to aggressively collect revenues for the City of Cook and will seek further legal proceedings if necessary.

Administrator Martinson commented that numerous projects have happened for the City of Cook and outside funding opportunities have been utilized with liquor store funds used to support the city portion. It is important that the council minimize these expenses for 2014 and focus on preventative maintenance as a conservative spending approach to preserve the financial responsibility of the city as well.

The continued focus for the City of Cook is to increase economic development by pursuing planning for the business park and increasing the tax base.

A five year CIP Plan has been completed and is annually reviewed with department heads. This list tracks completed, future and in progress projects for budget planning.

The final budget will be approved at the Truth in Taxation Hearing at the regular council meeting on December 19 at 6 PM.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business brought before the Council, motion to adjourn at 5:53 PM was made by Councilor Hollanitsch and second by Councilor Brunner. **MOTION CARRIED**

CITY OF COOK – Cook, MN 55723

Harold Johnston, Mayor

Recorder: Cindy Palm, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer

Attest: Theresa Martinson, Administrator-Clerk/Treasurer