

MINUTES
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
2015 PRELIMINARY BUDGET AND LEVY
COOK CITY COUNCIL
NOVEMBER 20, 2014 – CITY HALL – 5 PM

TIME AND PLACE: A Special Meeting of the Cook City Council was held at 5 PM on Thursday, November 20, 2014 at the Cook City Hall.

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Harold Johnston called the Special Council Meeting to order at 5:35 PM. (Pre-scheduled Special Meeting - Comprehensive Plan 4 PM to 5:30 PM).

ATTENDANCE: Present were Mayor Harold Johnston and City Councilors Jody Bixby and Karen Hollanitsch. Absent were City Councilors Kim Brunner and Elizabeth Storm. Also present was Administrator-Clerk/Treasurer Theresa Martinson, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer Cindy Palm, The Timberjay and Cook News Herald.

The purpose of this meeting is to hold monthly special study sessions to discuss budget planning for 2015. The final November study session focuses on all departments and allows an opportunity for questions and comments before finalizing the 2015 budget at the regular council meeting on December 18, 2014.

The council was presented with a 3% cost of living increase for full time employees for 2015. The national and Midwest cost of living (CPI) is approximately 1.7% and some neighboring communities are seeking 3%. PERA retirement costs will increase .25% for employees and health insurance costs have increased due to federal compliance changes for both employee payroll deductions and out of pocket expense. The total cost of living increase is less than 1% of the total general fund budget and approximately 60% of full time employees are either maxed out or receive incremental wage increases every other year in the city adopted step structure.

Mayor Johnston would like to see additional information on COL in the future and more detail on health care increases.

Administrator Martinson stated that the City of Cook has an excellent staff.

The preliminary budget levy has been eliminated from 8% in August to 0% which includes the requested 3% Cost of Living request.

City Hall is in need of exterior and interior upgrades and funds have been budgeted. These upgrades have been put off to other city projects but should be considered in 2015.

City staff eliminated the preliminary levy of 8% by eliminating projects for 2015 and focusing more on operating costs within each department. The entire financial picture was reviewed and the city has focused on many projects for the last 15 years utilizing both outside funding opportunities and liquor store funds to support the city portion. It is time to evaluate the multitude of projects and perform much needed departmental maintenance for 2015 by focusing on preventative maintenance and preserving 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 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 18 at 6 PM.

Motion by Hollanitsch, Second by Bixby to approve a 3% Cost of Living increase for full-time employees for 2015. **MOTION CARRIED**

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business brought before the Council, motion to adjourn at 5:57 PM was made by Councilor Hollanitsch and second by Councilor Bixby. **MOTION CARRIED**

CITY OF COOK – Cook, MN 55723

Harold Johnston, Mayor

Recorder: Cindy Palm, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer

Attest: Theresa Martinson, Administrator-Clerk/Treasurer