

## Personnel Committee Report-5.12.21

The Personnel Committee, consisting of Mayor Preiner, Elizabeth Mursko and Janet Hegland, met on May 11, 2021.

### Tax Assessor Update

As was reported at the April 14, 2021 City Council meeting, Columbus' contract Tax Assessor Todd Smith submitted notice that he would be terminating his Columbus contract, with his last day on June 30, 2021. Since that report, we have learned that the availability of contract tax assessors is sparse. Ms. Mursko received two names of possible assessors from the area who may be interested in contracting with Columbus, but on follow-up one returned her call but decided not to submit a proposal and the other was not available. We learned that Anoka County is experiencing the same lack of a qualified candidate pool and is recruiting their new hires from a pool consisting of Realtors, interested in pursuing a different career path, Bachelor degreed candidates who have an interest in real estate or private real estate assessors; then trains them in-house. The training period is 3-5 years. This "grow your own" strategy is not feasible for Columbus.

As such, half of the municipalities in Anoka County have now contracted with Anoka County to provide property tax assessor services and several more are in negotiations as, like Columbus, they have received notice of retirement or resignation from their own assessors. We were in a similar situation in 2019 when the Personnel Committee interviewed Anoka County (Alex Guggenberger) and Todd Smith. Their proposals were similar in cost and scope, but at the time we felt it advantageous to continue with our own contract assessor and Mr. Smith was available upon his retirement from Cook County. We don't appear to have that option currently.

The Personnel Committee met with Mr. Guggenberger on May 11<sup>th</sup> to learn more about the evolution and status of the County's new property tax system, staffing levels and established procedures since our last interview in 2019. The new tax system is now fully implemented and as was evidenced by this year's on-time tax valuation statements, the County is back on track in meeting their timelines and metrics. Mr. Guggenberger indicated that the County would have capacity to take on Columbus and expressed interest in preparing a proposal for consideration.

### Requested Action

The Personnel Committee is seeking direction from the Council to request a proposal for Property Tax Assessor Services from Anoka County. The proposed timeline is as follows:

- Proposal to be received by May 21<sup>st</sup>.
- Mr. Guggenberger presents the proposal to the Council and answers any questions at the May 26<sup>th</sup> City Council Workshop (similar to the presentation format for the Building Official Contract)
- Official action to be taken at the May 26<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting, immediately following the Council Workshop.
- Goal is to have an executed contract, effective July 1, 2021.

Respectfully,

Janet Hegland

Columbus City Council and  
Personnel Committee Member



**TO: Mayor & City Council Members**

**FROM: Elizabeth Mursko, City Administrator**

**DATE: May 14, 2021**

**RE: Internal Fund Transfers – FY December 31, 2020**

---

In reviewing the 2019 Land Sale from the City of Columbus to HyVee (NE Quad Block 1 Lot 1), the City Council approved 20% of the proceeds to repay the interfund loan to the general fund and allocate the remaining to the Bond Fund (2015A) (Refunded 2020A). This allocation was complete in our accounting system. During the 2021 Budget meetings, the City Council discussed the further allocation in the General Fund of the 20% paying the interfund load from the EDA Land Fund to the General Fund.

**Land Sale Revenue \$665,542.57 20% Interfund Load Payment \$130,000**

Allocation of 100,000 from General Fund 100 to Blacktop/Gravel Fund 125  
Allocation of 30,000 from General Fund 100 to General Fund Capital Fund G (General Gov't Capital)

**Action:**

Transfer Cash \$100,000 from Fund 100 to 125  
Allocation Cash \$30,000 to Capital Fund G

---

**Proposed Motion:**

Approve Transfer Cash Balance of \$130,000.00 as recommended by City Administrator as indicated in the Internal Funds Transfer Memo dated 05.14.2021 effective 12.30.2020.



**TO: Mayor & City Council Members**

**FROM: Elizabeth Mursko, City Administrator**

**DATE: May 27, 2020**

**RE: Internal Fund Transfers – December 31, 2019**

---

In reviewing the 2019 Land Sale (HyVee), and under past practice to pay back the general fund interfund loan for the Quad Land Purchase we have allocated approximately 20% of the proceeds to repay the general fund and allocate the remaining to the Bond Fund. The City Administrator is recommending the following Fund allocation for 12.31.19:

Land Sale Revenue Receipt #20547 \$655,642.57 Fund 480 Land Sales Revenue  
Allocation of Proceeds:

\$525,542.57 Bond Fund 360 (Payment of 2015A Bond Fund)  
\$130,000.00 General Fund 100 Cash to GL & Repayment of Interfund Load to 481 (Allocation in 100 Fund will be determined in the 2021 Budget Discussions)

During the 2018 Budget process, the City Council allocated revenue funds in the total amount of \$13,000 from charitable gambling fund (10% Fund) to the Police Fund 142-4210 (\$7,000) and Fire Fund 142-4220 (\$6,000) the transfer did not take place in December of 2018. The following transfers are reflective the 2018 allocation as we collected the revenue each monthly from Lakes Area Youth and Families, Inc. in 2018 and completed in February of 2019.

**Action:** Transfer Cash of \$7,000 from 230 to Police Fund 142-4210

**Action:** Transfer Cash of \$6,000 from 230 to Fire Fund 142-4220

---

**Proposed Motion:**

**Approve the transfer action items listed in the memo dated 05.27.20 effective February 2019 for the Charitable Gambling allocation to the Police and Fire Fund and the allocation of funds as indicated in Memo for Land Sale Revenue dated 12.31.2019.**

**City of Columbus**  
**Special City Council Budget Meeting**  
**Alternative Meeting Format**  
**MN Statutes 13D.021**  
**12.16.20**

The 12.16.20 special meeting of the City of Columbus City Council was called to order at 6:44 p.m. by Mayor Preiner at the City Hall. Present were Council Members Jeff Duraine (via teleconference), Shelly Logren (via teleconference), Janet Hegland, and Denny Peterson; City Administrator Elizabeth Mursko, Public Works Director Jim Windingstad, and Public Communications Coordinator Jessica Hughes.

Also in attendance were (via teleconference): Sue Wagamon.

**A. CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING**

**1. Call to Order - Regular Meeting – 6:44 P.M.**

**B. CONSENT AGENDA**

**2. Motion – Agenda Approval**

**Motion by Peterson to approve the Agenda. Seconded by Hegland. Roll call votes; Peterson – aye; Hegland – aye; Mayor Preiner – aye; Duraine – aye; Logren – aye. Motion carries.**

**C. PRESENTATIONS**

**3. 2021 Levy and Budget Discussion**

The Council discussed the 2021 levy at their 12.09.20 meeting. At that time there was an issue with the value of a commercial property in Columbus, which was affecting the City's tax rate. The updated value has since been provided to the City.

The preliminary levy number has not changed since September. A tax calculator has been used to determine the overall tax rate for the City. Many factors go into the tax calculation formula. One factor is the amount the City receives back from the fiscal disparities program. The City received \$22,000 less from the fiscal disparities program from the previous year, as a result of the decrease in tax rate.

After updating the value on the commercial property, the new tax capacity number is \$6,811,485. The preliminary levy is at \$3,491,304, and the amount received from fiscal disparities is \$216,900. That represents a 2.4% increase in the tax rate over last year. Mursko's recommendation is to keep the levy at the current rate established in September.

The City has an opportunity to dedicate \$130,000 from a land sale to pay back the general fund loan. The recommendation is to dedicate \$100,000 to the blacktop fund and \$30,000 to the general 100 fund.

The Council considered how to address the fiscal disparities issue. There is general concern that a decrease in tax rate causes less money to be returned from the program, which is a result

unique to Columbus. Mursko is consulting with the City's financial attorney to understand if there are alternative ways for Columbus to participate in the program and receive better return on funds.

Discussion continued regarding the increase in administrative wages planned for next year's budget. Duraine expressed concern about the need to hire another employee because of the cost impact. Hegland said that the employee would be brought on halfway into 2021 and would cover City Clerk duties. Some of the Council felt that the pandemic has shown the City is staffed too lean to handle any bumps in the road, especially because the workload has stayed consistently high since the pandemic began. There is concern about City Staff's ability to turn applications around on a timely basis due to the high workload. The Council noted that the additional Public Works' employee has been removed from the budget for next year.

The Council considered a resolution adopting the final tax levy. There is still work to be completed on the budget, which will likely be adopted at the 12.30.20 City Council meeting.

**Motion by Hegland to approve Resolution 20-25, a resolution adopting the 2020 final tax levy and tax abatement for property taxes collectible in 2021. Seconded by Peterson. Roll call vote; Peterson – aye; Hegland – aye; Mayor Preiner – aye; Duraine – nay; Logren – aye. Motion carries.**

## **E. ANNOUNCEMENTS & REMINDER**

### **4. Calendar of Meetings.**

The next City Council workshop is on 12.30.20 from 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

The next regular City Council meeting is on 12.30.20 at 7:00 p.m.

## **F. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion by Peterson to adjourn. Seconded by Hegland. Roll call vote; Peterson – aye; Hegland – aye; Mayor Preiner – aye; Duraine – aye; Logren – aye. Motion carries.**

Meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jessica Hughes, Public Communications Coordinator