



ORIENTAL BUDGET Meeting
Wednesday, May 16, 2024
507 Church Street, Oriental, NC
Mayor Sally Belangia Officiating

6

7 The Town Board of Oriental Budget Meeting #3 was held on Wednesday, May 16, 2024.
8 Mayor Belangia noted Mayor Pro Tempore Price was not present. Members of the Public, Manager Miller, and Dep
9 Finance Officer Tammy Cox.
10
11 FR: Cost of cell service-(pre-meeting conversation). Additional discussion on PW budgeted positions.
12 Hands out Frank's thoughts on budget (attached).
13
14 BL asks if we have heard from mowing contractors- Mgr: not yet.
15
16 SB calls meeting to order. Asks Mgr where to start. Mgr suggests Water Fund (WF) because it should be easier.
17 Most important number is the zero on the last page. WF is balanced right this minute. What's added in is yellow
18 highlighted \$18,139- portion of PW health costs. Admin salaries are at lower rate- notes anything on the proposed
19 column on admin sheet affects all other columns except health. Keep in mind, those health care costs are estimates
20 because health care is age-banded. Went back to old dental plan (\$1 less per month per employee). Health care
21 costs up 7%. Copays, prescriptions same as old plan, increased total out of pocket. Quoted from Blue Cross, Aetna,
22 MedCost. State is in conflict in movement from BCBSNC to Aetna- in lawsuit. State rates are unknowable at this
23 time.
24
25 Other than those additions in WF, Salaries for admin not changed- that will translate to GF. Suggestion from BL to
26 raise admin salaries- adjust from \$43K to \$45K.
27 BC suggests we do the admin sheet first. Mgr agrees- that changes numbers everywhere. Admin to 17.25, 17.50. FR:
28 \$1500 phones in budget- what is it? Our guys on ATT FirstNet that prioritizes our phones in an emergency - strike
29 from wish list.
30
31 BL: Trying to raise admin staff to sustainable wage from US Census. Changed the total admin funds. If we move
32 that contract out of water fund and into GF, raise admin salaries in GF, can add the leftover in WF for depreciation.
33 BC: if water plant goes away, do you still allocate those funds. Given Water Plant or not, that financial contract will
34 still be there. Depreciation will appease the UAL folks. FR: ratio- operating ratio- this makes us better on that ratio.
35 Mgr: operating in green, yellow, red... operating ratio shows coverage of costs. FR: do we look at water rates? Is
36 someone getting better rates than others? Are big users disproportionately better off with current rates? Mgr: Hard
37 to say- this is the time that we have that kind of uses. WF back to 0. Anything at the end of the year can go into
38 unrestricted savings OR into depreciation. Mgr: for example, we used WF appropriated to balance the budget, BUT
39 we never pulled anything ACTUALLY from that fund- because we had an overage in revenue. FR: Justify the pay
40 raise by listing/reorganizing the duties. Mgr gives the board a 20 minute old listing of job duties. CO: This is
41 guaranteeing the checks and balances? Mgr explains the division of duties.
42
43 FR: What percent increase is that? 19% increase. Enough. This year until next July. Question is what matters more-
44 large increase on the daily, or check at Christmas. Staff weighs in and says through the year. Mgr explains why we
45 went to a merit system- productivity increased significantly when merit was related to evaluation- calling out down,
46 meter reading accuracy went up. Having said that, staff increases that allow them to cover daily expenses at this
47 point is more important. Mgr explains weighted averages- that is a ten year employee in that position- Josh is a 26
48 year employee- so higher. BL: Merit line: CO: Let's take merit out (\$16K). BC: did research- more specific to
49 ENC- Town of Belhaven- 15 employees with water, tourism- avg is \$17.29- not picking a number out of the sky.
50 Pamlico County and New Bern comparables. All in very close to those. These numbers aren't made up- they are
51 from local. Want to see concise job descriptions for Water Clerk, Financial Clerk and Finance Director- this is what
52 we're paying for. CO: No merit this year. Where does it go? Back to GF.
53

54 Mgr: back to Admin sheet- take out merit. PW Laborer 1- significant raises also. Only admin not getting merit-
55 (some confusion on is merit going away altogether or just for some) YES- merit goes away. Adjusted salaries from
56 admin sheet to GF, WF. All corrections made.
57
58 Mgr inserted dog park line. Take that back out. Moving into GF not the best thing- leave it in parks and rec- journal
59 over whatever revenue taken in into P&R. Commissioner Crosser thanks all for Parks and Recreation consideration.
60 FR: Offers a longevity bonus at Christmas time- \$200 each- whatever taxes come out, come out.
61
62 FR: Funding of open positions in PW. PW Supervisors- BL: we voted on that. Mgr: I have not gotten that far in
63 retreat minutes but our notes say you voted on splitting the position because it was not a two-position budget, just
64 one. Passed 5-0. FR: notes Mgr makes that call- Board designates this funding. Number of human beings- costs are
65 high- not funding road repair and ditchwork if we do. Underfunding road work. Ditches are funded at 24K. CO:
66 Why we should- Pineview, Norman, Whittaker, Supervisor at PCS, prior military, worked with this crew before.
67 Knows the town, heavy equipment operator, lives in town. Pool of potential employees is slim. Can bring all these
68 things to the table- even if it means one open position unfilled. FR: The targeted potential employee is a good guy
69 who has done good work for us, but if we can go with 4 humans instead of 5 humans - with that open position
70 potentially being filled if we need it down the road. Worried about perception of two bosses- this does not work-
71 need one boss. Setting up failure- can be a foreman and a supervisor- getting a benefit for the citizens- cleaned up
72 for the Town. Right now we could not do it. CO: known entity- why don't we do what we can to take care of
73 citizens? FR: We do not have heavy equipment. Mgr: We have \$150K of heavy equipment that current staff cannot
74 operate. Cannot change out the implements on the big tractor.
75
76 BL: Take \$250K out of GF- after hurricane season, can put that at roads. Decreasing staff by \$85K. Before
77 Andrew, it was two positions- unable to fill and Andrew took it on, while we had contracted ORC. Once he was the
78 ORC, tasks mounted too hard for one person to do. We need someone to operate heavy equipment. BL: wish list is
79 5 humans. CO: 5 if we get the PW 3. Mayor notes we have approved these already. Mgr: correct- in THIS budget-
80 once you approve new budget, it includes funding X number of humans. Allen said he wanted a floater position that
81 is not funded, but available if we get there.
82 BL: We had 6 people in PW, now 4. BC: Outsourcing meter reading and mowing. Mgr: Keep in mind at Retreat,
83 they told you that outsourcing meter reading and keeping 5 people would allow them to get to everything they
84 needed to do. BL: Will \$55K make a substantial difference? CO: Every bit we can get. If we get backed up, we will
85 re-evaluate. Mgr asks what is the metric that we use to measure that we are behind. BL: Staff will get overworked
86 and burnt out by working themselves over to get to it all. They feel like they fail if they don't get to it. CO: That's
87 where the Mgr has to step in. CO: Even with 5 people we were OK...but not un-burying. Tammy: trying to spread
88 out the work to new guys- it gets overwhelming quickly. Daniel does not know where to order, how to order, which
89 vendor holds what- not for water or public works. It will take time to get used to all that. Mgr: Josh has the
90 institutional memory to know Diane's meter is up under the bush on the right side of the property.
91
92 Mgr explains budgetary process- we have to be able to LIVE WITH the decisions- it should be a unanimous vote-
93 everybody will give up something- nobody will get everything they want.
94
95 FR: With Town outsourcing meter reading and mowing, we are taking work away, so can get away with fewer
96 people. Move ahead with 4.
97
98 CO: What about contracting high school students to mow? Has not been successful in the past. TC: Bringing
99 someone to the table with expertise we do not have on staff, not coming in blind- worth more than one human. CO:
100 During hurricane season, it would be nice to have that person.
101
102 Mgr and TC make further adjustments to the admin sheet.
103
104 BC: difference between last year's numbers and this year's numbers- labor budget. 4% increase- very good.
105
106 Break: 5 minutes.
107
108 BC: Fluffing the mulch extends life of the mulch by bringing it up.

109 SB: Let's get back to it.
110 FR: Do we have Capital Reserve for the Police Car we just sold?
111 BL: Longevity number? How is that taxed? Mgr: According to each individual's tax take. Good with \$200 each, and
112 then whatever taxes take out. Must be past their 90 day probation period.
113
114 BC: Question on Finance by contract. Why budgeting half a year? Will cost more to use Logics than to have
115 Tammy remote in. Audit will be done and submitted in time for October- backing in and filing annual reports-
116 workers comp, gas tax, end of year, etc. Tammy- 3 month contract or none. 6 month contract can be stopped with
117 30 days notice. FR: After 90 days she gets another job, she can end, or we can end. BL: We have no intent of
118 stopping the contract in August? BC: Why would you ask that? BL: It seems like the intent. 6 months at \$40/hr.
119 Time, questions, etc. Tammy: Powell has 3 dates - if you miss one of those, you lose \$50K. Just one example.
120 Workmens Comp audit- routinely gets us money back. And we are trying to get a replacement engaged. BC: You
121 are happy with 6 months, \$40/hr? Tammy- yes. Starting July 1.
122 SB: Let's go on.
123 BC: Thank you Tammy.
124
125 Mgr: Josh and I are at 4% increase. BC: We did not even look at those. FR: Josh at the upper end of his paygrade.
126 All good with that.
127
128 Revenues next and fee schedule:
129 Water rates have gone up last two years. We raised them all the same prior. BC: Consider raising the higher
130 usages?
131 Mgr: BRMSD: rates going up \$2/month flat fee plus all upper tiers going up. We do not currently have a
132 representative on BRMSD.
133 Looking at our flats: also raising the large meters we do not have. Besides long taps- we need to add something that
134 has an asterisk- additional charge for installation across NCDOT roads as charged to the Town.
135 Tampering charges should also be raised to compensate for the new costs of those events. Turning on a locked off
136 meter and busting the angle stop.
137
138 BC: NC SB now allows a \$35 check insufficient funds charge- then again, that hurts those who struggle most. We
139 charge \$25. We don't want low income people in any more pain. Would like high end water rate (currently at \$4.95)
140 my opinion- conscious effort to use more water. Could incentivize conservation. Asks Mgr- Could go to
141 \$5.15/\$5.25. BL: Agrees at \$5.25.
142
143 Change in larger meters - (17) 2" meters - these are your heavy users- marinas, boatyards, fish houses. High end
144 users - not small businesses. System auto-calculates. County rates are \$5.25 flat- all usage. BC: Asks Tammy if they
145 go over 25K gallons - TC: Yes - in the summer. Takes both tanks going. BL: Is it covering the cost? Chemical costs
146 go up, processing goes up. Currently at \$6.50/1000 gallons. Mgr: If you're going to encourage conservation at the
147 residential level, should encourage conservation at commercial level also - replacement of commercial 2" meters is
148 much more expensive. If users not doing well, won't use as much water. CO: Are they less accurate? Yes - how
149 much are we losing. We do replacement at residential- as PD meters for limited usage. The 2" meters are not
150 positive displacement- ultrasonic- last longer. Increased meter replacement costs- faster time to higher numbers.
151 Mgr suggests \$7.50 for 25K+.
152
153 Costs associated with costs to the Town. Driveway - send out Public Works to check alignment of driveway with
154 meters, tree Board to see if trees to be protected. BL: Change LUP to 350? That should cover costs.
155 Dog Park- BC: we want to encourage visitors to the dog park- for safety and other reasons.- personal opinion.
156 Amazing how many people find it online. Leave costs as they are.
157
158 Mgr: If we look at GF Sanitation fees vs revenue. We are paying as an enterprise fund- however- the subsidizing is
159 only impacting green waste. Up to you- a service provided, reduces burning, reduces debris in ditches- all we are
160 paying from the GF is green waste. We are stopping contractors hauling in from out of town. We can't close it off
161 to be open for the weekends inside the yard. Contractors working IN TOWN SHOULD be able to use it IN
162 TOWN- not whole trees. Older people can't haul it- I don't have to go pick it up. Others have had a rolloff that is
163 there only a few days - then gone. Mgr: We are being charged more for the pickup/dropoff than the actual tipping

164 costs. BL: How much are we not covering? \$29K- \$.0110-\$.0125 on the taxrate. CO: This just might be one of
165 those things we need to provide to our citizens. FR: Is there any license- business license? Mgr: Business licenses
166 became illegal in 2015. Could look at different configurations. Would be nice to have that cleared and hidden by
167 shrubs. Can also go to electronic access. Sticker system that allows you to dump.

168
169 Mgr: This is what is not in here- your newly acquired land that is still full of trees - perimeter fencing with shrubbery
170 outside the fence. Awaiting estimates.

171
172 FR: Can part of the grant go toward fixing the land?- Access.
173 It is a mistake to fund movies in the park. Should have a Police Appreciation day with cars, trucks, etc. Mgr: It's
174 already ordered on this year's budget. They spread it across two years to buy the equipment and then pay a rental fee
175 for movie. FR is absolutely opposed to movies in the park.

176
177 BC: Is there funds for replacing the tree in Lou Mac? In tree board budget. Tree Board has \$4,000. Parks and Rec
178 and Tree Board are working together on location.

179
180 Extra \$57K+ in GF- to hold somewhere for roads or drainage. We have traditionally held that in storm for
181 emergency, roads, break, etc. Discussing the PW Supervisor. Manager suggests taking out the \$10K in contracted
182 drain. Also mowing and lot clearing are not in there. Discussed mowing contract- taking additional bids. April to
183 October- same as our mowing Ordinance. Discussion about social media contractor and Tourism. FR: Need a Public
184 Relations thing with Police Officers. BC: P&R will help. CO: will try to get the dogs demo set up. FR: Do we have a
185 Finance Director description. Mgr: We have a description used for the ad. Job descriptions coming for clerks, PW,
186 etc.

187
188 SB: We're meeting Monday, 4PM (May 20) to finish. Mgr: If I get the number before the weekend and plug it in
189 and you're good with that, we're good, or if we don't get it and/or you're not good with the number- we'll need to
190 meet. You can cancel a meeting at the last minute, but you can't call a meeting at the last minute. Cancelled the
191 May 22 meeting. BL: Should be pretty quick. FR: good work.

192
193
194 **MOTION** to Adjourn Unanimous vote: 5-0.

195
196 _____
197 Sally Belangia, Mayor _____ Diane H. Miller, Town Manager/Clerk
198 Approved _____, 2024_____