MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL COMMON COUNCIL MEETING HELD AT THE GREENFIELD CITY HALL ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 31, 2018

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Neitzke at 7:00 p.m.

1.	ROLL CALL:	Alderperson Lubotsky	Present
		Alderperson Bailey	Present
		Alderperson Akers	Excused
		Alderperson Saryan	Present
		Alderperson Kastner	Present
		Mayor Neitzke	Present
		Brian Sajdak, City Attorney	Present

2. Discussion and decision to approve exceeding levy limit referendum question and hire six police officers ($900,000/year) and three fire department personnel ($300,000/year).

Mayor Neitzke said Police Chief Brad Wentlandt and Fire Chief Jon Cohn have revised their request.

Police Chief Wentlandt said he and Fire Chief Cohn believe it is much less likely a referendum will pass if it exceeds $1 million. Accordingly, they have revised their request to five police officers and two fire department personnel, for a total of $975,000.

Alderperson Kastner said if the city is short on money in three or four years, it would be up against the wall under the Expenditure Restraint Program.

Police Chief Wentlandt said the additional $975,000 should carry the police and fire departments through for the next 5 years.

Alderperson Kastner said if the city loses $600,000 every 5 years, it is still not a bargain.

Police Chief Wentlandt said if the city levies an additional $975,000, then $600,000 of the additional money in the first year would be dedicated to offset the loss of the revenue sharing. The additional hires would not be made until mid-year.

Mayor Neitzke said the state's levy limits do not allow the city to manage its public safety needs as desired. The city is being transparent about what the additional funds would be used for, and is using a high turnout election to accurately gauge the public's wishes.

Alderperson Saryan asked why the chief had originally requested six police officers.

Police Chief Wentlandt said it takes 6 bodies to staff one position 24/7. In looking at staffing, there is not a need to staff the third shift as deeply as the other shifts, so that is why they can get by with 5 more officers. If he was trying to project the need for additional manpower for the next 10-15 years, they might need 20 more officers, but he wants to be realistic. He and Fire Chief Cohn would like a referendum to let the public decide what level of service they want.

Alderperson Kastner clarified that if the referendum passes, the city could choose to exceed its levy limit but is not required to do so. The city cannot exceed its levy limit without a referendum.

Police Chief Wentlandt said yes, but if the additional levy is approved, it has to be spent according to the way it is outlined in the referendum.

Mayor Neitzke said the objective is to staff to the proper level so constituents are protected. The departments could always use more manpower, but the city has to be realistic.

Alderperson Lubotsky asked if the city would save money from decreased overtime by adding the additional staff.

Police Chief Wentlandt said maybe. Overtime is difficult to predict. For instance, you can't predict crime trends or the types of crimes. A certain amount of overtime is expected for every officer. Using historical data, he can predict the city will incur a certain amount of overtime per officer, due to an officer making arrests late in a shift, or being subpoenaed to go to court. Overtime is increasing, despite cost containment efforts, because call volume and the complexity of crimes keeps going up.

Mayor Neitzke said although overtime could go up, it is likely with the additional officers that it would stabilize.

Alderperson Bailey asked what can the Council say to critics of the additional spending, since in general, costs can only rise about 2%?

Police Chief Wentlandt said about 95% of his budget is people. The other 5% of the budget is an amount that has not changed significantly over time. To cut a budget, the city would have to cut people, and that is not what the city should do.

Alderperson Bailey said the amount the city is allowed to increase its budget annually is generally consumed by rising health insurance costs and cost of living increases.

Mayor Neitzke said sometimes people ask why doesn't the city take the money spent on park improvements and spend it on funding more police officers instead? But the city taps other funding sources for park improvements that are not available to use for funding more police officers. For example, the city uses gifts or grants that cannot be used for operating expenses to pay for park improvements. When it comes to basic spending per capita, Greenfield falls in the middle of the range compared to nine surrounding communities (Franklin, St. Francis, South Milwaukee, Greendale, Brown Deer, Cudahy, Hales Corners, Oak Creek, and West Allis). But when it comes to operating spending, only Franklin has a lower operating spending level than Greenfield. Maybe Greenfield should increase spending on public safety. In Brown Deer, the operating spending per capita is $1,346. Greenfield's is $777. Most of the nine surrounding communities are in the $873 - $976 range. West Allis is in the $1,100 range.

Police Chief Wentlandt said the city has been incredibly frugal. The budget now compared to the 2009 budget is essentially the same, when adjusted for inflation. Other cities that max out their Expenditure Restraint Program funding every year may have more money to spend – whereas Greenfield has less to spend because it does not do that.

Mayor Neitzke said Greenfield spends $232 per person for police. Franklin is the only community that spends less (out of the 9 surrounding communities), at $222 per person.

Police Chief Wentlandt noted Franklin's figure did not include communication costs.

Mayor Neitzke said "shared revenues" from the state is another source of funding – and Greenfield receives about $1.5 or $1.6 million, which is "near the bottom" from the statewide perspective. Per person, Greenfield gets $44 per person from the state. Cudahy gets $200 per person, Oak Creek gets $178, St. Francis gets $226, South Milwaukee gets $152, andWest Allis gets $146. Beloit gets $15 million in shared revenues from the state, and has an operating budget about twice the size of Greenfield's, although it is similar in population. By every metric, the referendum request for an additional levy of $975,000 is not unreasonable, but it is up to the taxpayers.

Alderperson Bailey asked if Greenfield is last in number of officers for its population. Chief Wentlandt said that is correct.

Mayor Neitzke said the statistic to focus on is how many officers are available per call.

Police Chief Wentlandt said compared to Franklin, Greenfield has more commercial development, more daytime population and a freeway that bisects the city – resulting in more call volume. Franklin has 1/3 of the call volume and ¼ of the crime of Greenfield – yet they have more police officers.

Mayor Neitzke said population is concentrated around the new development in Greenfield, in some cases more so than in other cities. Within 5 miles of 84 South, there are 370,000 people – more than the population around the Mayfair Collection, the Corners of Brookfield, and other developments in Oak Creek and Menomonee Falls. Within 5 miles of 84 South, there are 170,000 households, also generating service calls.

Police Chief Wentlandt said new development is good for the city, but also creates additional demand for services. When tax incremental financing districts are used, the demand for services occurs before the funding from taxes is received by the city. With this referendum, they are asking taxpayers to give up the equivalent of a cup of coffee a month – for the typical Greenfield home, about $5-$6 a month - to help fund these additional police and fire services.

Alderperson Lubotsky said the city owes it to its residents to have departments that are fully staffed.

Alderperson Kastner said he would like to be a part of how residents are informed of the pros and cons of voting on the referendum. Another issue is does the city want to put two referendums on the ballot, which would double the need to inform residents?

Discussion ensued over how many referendum questions should be asked.

Fire Chief Cohn said some communities have spent over $50,000 to gauge voter support prior to a referendum, to try to determine what funding level increase would be acceptable to voters. Then, if a referendum fails, these communities come back with another referendum requesting a lower funding level. In Greenfield's case, he feels the request for 5 police officers and 2 fire department personnel is at a funding level that would be palatable to voters.

Discussion touched briefly on whether both referendums should be approved. Alderperson Kastner said citizens need to be informed of the Dark Store referendum issue as well, because Walmart's request for a lower assessment alone shifts 18 cents to each taxpayer's bill in his district.

Mayor Neitzke said he is not in favor of paying a consultant to prepare educational materials about the referendum. There is in-house expertise. Drafts for public release first should be provided to alderpersons. However, these drafts can't be discussed privately amongst alderpersons because it would violate open meetings laws (even if done via email).

Alderperson Kastner suggested drafts be presented at Finance & Human Resources Committee meetings.

Mayor Neitzke said the Council would have to approve the referendum and its wording; then the City Clerk would work with Milwaukee County to get it placed onto the November ballot. There is time to educate the public, so the public can decide how to vote. The role of the alderpersons is not to say "yes" or "no" to the referendum question itself, but to provide factual information and the reason the referendum question is being asked.

Alderperson Lubotsky asked whose logo would be on the publications – the police and fire departments' logo or the city's?

Mayor Neitzke said it doesn't matter whose logo is on it.

Alderperson Lubotsky said the police and fire departments should develop the factual information and present it to the Council. They are the experts. She asked if the two additional fire department personnel would be firefighters.

Fire Chief Cohn said one position would be a firefighter – getting the fire department back to its 1996 staffing levels – a battalion chief in charge of training. The fire department taps into mutual aid when it reaches capacity. The other added position could potentially help both the fire and police departments.

Alderperson Lubotsky said someone might question why it says "personnel" instead of "firefighters".

Police Chief Wentlandt said these details are minutiae that should be addressed in community meetings. If one of the fire personnel is a public safety social worker, for instance, then that person keeps firefighters and police officers from handling those issues and keeps them available for more critical issues and relieves some of the burden.

Fire Chief Cohn said the referendum wording has to be somewhat precise, yet the money must be used as described in the referendum.

Mayor Neitzke said the goal is to keep high level personnel freed up to perform their responsibilities, while other staff perform duties that can be handled by others. Also, the point is to keep response times low.

Alderperson Bailey said the fire and police response time in Greenfield is good right now, and he wants to keep it that way. He is glad the city is not paying a consultant to work on the referendum question.

Alderperson Kastner said the city needs to be responsible for how the referendum question is asked and how the information is presented.

It was moved by Alderperson Kastner, seconded by Alderperson Lubotsky, to approve the referendum question:

"Shall the City of Greenfield be allowed to exceed state imposed levy limits by $975,000 in 2019 for the purpose of hiring five additional police officers and two additional fire department personnel?"

City attorney Brian Sajdak said the wording of the question will have to be tweaked to conform to statutory requirements. Some of the required information is not available tonight. The required wording must be:

"Under the state law, the levy of the (political subdivision) for the tax to be imposed for the next fiscal year is limited to __%, which results in a levy of __. Shall the city be allowed to exceed this limit?" and then it will continue with other wording about percentages and the levy.

The City Attorney said a lot of that information is not known until after August 1 when the Department of Revenue does its net new construction numbers, and then the city starts piecing in some of the information. The referendum question will look slightly different, but what is needed tonight is to nail down "we're going to ask for five cops and 2 fire department personnel and this is how much it's going to cost."

On a roll call vote, the motion carried unanimously. Mayor Neitzke said the City Attorney, the City Clerk and the Finance Department will work on filling in the necessary information.

3. Discussion and decision to approve "Dark Store" referendum question.

Mayor Neitzke said he's concerned this referendum question cannot be written so it can be easily understood by voters. He also is concerned the big box retailers could use the referendum question to justify the validity of their position when they challenge their assessments. He thinks the city needs to educate its residents about what "Dark Store" means. He sent alderpersons a mailing from West Allis about their "Dark Store" referendum, to be voted on in August, which could be used as a model.

Alderperson Lubotsky suggested this type of information be put in the Recreator, and posted at the Library.

Mayor Neitzke said it could be posted on the city's website. As far as a referendum is concerned, the city is not in a position itself to change the state law. State legislators such as Representative Skowronski and Senator Craig know the city's position on this issue. A committee has been created to look into the issue by state legislators, and it is supposed to be a priority later this year when they come back into session. However, organizations representing commerce will oppose Dark Store legislation, and it is an election year.

Alderperson Kastner said he would be more in favor of asking the referendum question when West Allis asks it, at a later date.

Mayor Neitzke said the deadline to get the referendum question on the November ballot is around Aug. 23-25 – very close to the date for the West Allis referendum.

Alderperson Saryan asked what is the purpose of the West Allis referendum? What is it going to accomplish?

Mayor Neitzke said while all representatives on the Intergovernmental Cooperation Council agree on the need for Dark Store legislation, it is almost as if local governments need to become lobbyists to persuade the state legislature to make changes. Some are even donating money to the League of Municipalities to lobby for this legislation.

Mayor Neitzke said he recommends waiting until after the West Allis referendum to decide if Greenfield should place a Dark Store referendum on the ballot in November or at a later time.

It was moved by Alderperson Bailey, seconded by Alderperson Lubotsky, to table a decision on placing the Dark Store referendum on the ballot at this time. Motion carried unanimously.

4. It was moved by Alderperson Bailey, seconded by Alderperson Lubotsky, to adjourn the meeting at 8:04 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

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Jennifer Goergen, City Clerk

Minutes transcribed by Sheryl Hartman, Deputy Clerk
Distributed: August 3, 2018